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The people of Appalachia historically represent an American cultural group strongly influenced by the relative isolation afforded by its geographic location within the Appalachian Mountains. The region and its culture have attracted much attention since the Great Depression era when government workers began constructing roads in the mountains; yet little research documenting Appalachian culture has been conducted. The Crossnore School, founded in the Appalachians of western North Carolina in the early twentieth century, was established with a Weaving Room that still functions today. A group of weavers hand-weaves products to sell and also teaches interested students their craft. While the act of weaving embodies a cultural tradition, the process of teaching and learning the practice epitomizes an aspect of intangible cultural heritage. Through semistructured interviews with a sample of stakeholders of the Crossnore School, this research study will explore and record an undocumented aspect of Appalachian culture.

Headings:

Appalachian Region, Southern

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Mountain life – Appalachian Region, Southern

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DOCUMENTING APPALACHIAN CULTURE:
THE TRANSMISSION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE INFORMATION

by
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INTRODUCTION

The Second World War inspired member countries of the United Nations to create an organization to "establish the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind" (UNESCO, 2011, para. 2). Founded in 1946, the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has since strived to promote guidelines for the development and protection of shared global values. The concept of culture and its numerous manifestations embody a significant aspect of such ideals. Varying expressions of culture exist all over the world forming a diverse cultural heritage. UNESCO (2007) articulates that:

Fragile and threatened by natural disasters, man-made conflicts, theft and plundering, cultural heritage is losing its meaning and its transmission to future generations is uncertain. For this reason, the protection and preservation of heritage for future generations constitute ethical imperatives backed up by a series of normative instruments, which have been reinforced by the principle of collective responsibility since the emergence of the notion of world heritage (para. 3).

Smith and Akagawa (2009) note that UNESCO's 1972 World Heritage Convention (WHC) concentrated on the ideas of "'the shared heritage' of humanity through its central focus on the concept of the 'universal value' of heritage" (p. 1). More recently, UNESCO's 2003 Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention (IHC) has broadened the discussion concerning cultural heritage. Blake (2009) explains intangible cultural heritage as "one that is primarily without material form and whose expressions and physical manifestations are, in fact, secondary" (p. 45). Above, UNESCO (2007) mentions that the "transmission [of cultural heritage] to future generations is uncertain" (para. 3). Intangible cultural heritage stands most at risk to be lost because of its abstract nature.

Examples of intangible cultural heritage often stem from another cultural act. At the Crossnore School in the mountains of western North Carolina, a group of women practices the art of weaving on handlooms. Painted on the wall of the room where the weaving takes place is their mission:

Our Aim – To keep alive an almost forgotten art; to cherish in the young people of the mountains a reverence for this art; to provide a means of livelihood and pleasure for women and girls; to furnish homes with beautiful and lasting material.

The act of weaving involves specific steps on the looms. These steps can be documented for future reference, but the processes of teaching and learning the act of weaving represent instances of intangible cultural heritage. These processes embody a unique information system: that of passing on a cultural tradition. A cultural information system combines several academic disciplines, such as cultural studies and information science. Bennett (1997) characterizes cultural studies as “closely connected to developments in the fields of media and communication studies, sociology, history and art history” (p. 49). Bates (1999) describes information science in a similar manner as a “meta-discipline...that cuts across, or is orthogonal to, the conventional academic disciplines” (p. 1044). Bates further defines the field of information science as “the study of the gathering, organizing, storing, retrieving, and dissemination of information” (p. 1044). The specific case of teaching and learning the cultural practice of weaving in the mountainous area of western North Carolina exemplifies an example of the “meta-discipline” that bridges numerous areas of study. An in-depth analysis of the information system requires additional context for a more informed understanding.

Historically, the United States has been referred to as a “melting pot.” During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, immigrants from all over the world moved to the U.S. These people brought their native cultures with them but eventually adopted American

customs and mixed in with everyone else. This process oftentimes resulted from factors such as a desire to fit in, to avoid the ire of neighbors, and to find work. The nineteenth century in particular witnessed heightened xenophobia in American cities. As a result, immigrants sought to lose their ethnic identity as quickly as possible. Beaver (1984) describes large numbers of Scottish and Irish immigrants during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries settling agriculture-based communities within the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains (p. 73-4). These communities were established in areas that make up present-day eastern Tennessee, western North Carolina, eastern Kentucky, western Virginia, and West Virginia. This inward-focused network of communities supported itself. As the American timber, coal, and steel industries rapidly expanded during the late nineteenth century, the Appalachian communities were forced to move. Wilgus (1968) notes that the people retreated farther into the mountains where the soil lacked the nutrients of the foothills, and the geographic isolation separated them from the rest of America (p. 265).

Becker (1998) mentions that President Franklin Roosevelt's various New Deal government work groups of the mid and late 1930s brought about a national discovery of Appalachia (pp. 5, 7). Thousands of people deep in the mountains were found to be living in abject poverty without electricity, running water, paved roads, schools, doctors, dentists, stores, and most of the other conveniences of everyday life for many Americans. Additionally, Powell (2007) alludes to these people displaying unique cultural characteristics stemming from their original Scottish and Irish heritage (p. 5). The language, music, folktales, and crafts of the Appalachian people had evolved for decades within the isolated communities, escaping the altering influence of the rest of America. Some media generated primarily negative stereotypes of the Appalachian hillbilly mentioned by Drake (2001); others established a romanticized view of the simplicity and tradition of the past embodied by the

Appalachian communities. Appalachia received more attention during the formation of President Johnson's Great Society welfare legislation of the 1960s, and the following decade saw the creation of several Appalachian Studies programs at universities, such as the establishment of the Appalachian Center at the University of Kentucky in 1977. The natural beauty of the Appalachian Mountains, easily viewed by traveling the Blue Ridge Parkway – originally called the Appalachian Scenic Highway by project creator President Franklin Roosevelt – also brought awareness to the people of the region and their specific culture (Blue Ridge Parkway 75, Inc., 2009, para. 7).

Progressive education reformers of the early twentieth century were the first to move to Appalachia with the intention of aiding the people while maintaining their culture. In 1913, Drs. Eustace and Mary Martin Sloop moved to Crossnore, North Carolina in Avery County – one of the Tennessee border counties – to establish a school in the mountains (Crossnore School, n.d., para. 1). They chose this area for their school because of its well-known high level of poverty. The Sloops believed that “education is the best way for a child to rise above his circumstances” (Crossnore School, n.d., para. 1). Notwithstanding the founders' original intention, the school accepted children from all over the state of North Carolina, especially those who could no longer live at home. Consequently, students often came to live at the Crossnore School. With the assistance of the Daughters of the American Revolution, Dr. Mary Martin Sloop also founded the Weaving Room at Crossnore. She recognized weaving as a part of the handicraft culture in the Appalachian Mountains supported by the necessity of the mountain people to provide material objects for themselves because of their poverty and isolation. Dr. Sloop saw the Weaving Room as a place where women could “sell their wares...[and] pass on their tradition to young Crossnore residents in the process” (Crossnore School, n.d., para. 2). Over time, the

Crossnore School garnered a reputation “for effectiveness in changing lives and breaking the cycle of poverty, moonshine and child marriages of mountain families” (Crossnore School, n.d., para. 3).

Both the Crossnore School and the Weaving Room still operate nearly a century later. The school has become a charter school renamed Crossnore Academy that describes its work as producing “miracles in the mountains” (Crossnore School, n.d.). It works with the state of North Carolina’s Department of Social Services and accepts orphaned and abused children primarily from western North Carolina as well as local children with certain special education needs. The Weaving Room functions as a “Working Museum...preserving an ancient craft.” It also serves as a form of therapy for students and a place where women “pass on their tradition to young Crossnore residents” (Crossnore Weavers & Gallery, n.d.). Over the past century though, the context surrounding Crossnore has changed. In this age of globalization and economic crisis, communities no longer remain the fixed structures of eras past, and Appalachia is no exception. The mountain region of western North Carolina reflects numerous advancements of the modern day. In her 1953 book, *Miracle in the hills*, Dr. Mary Martin Sloop claims that “many mountain families trace their lines, unbroken, back beyond the Revolutionary War, and not a generation in those long years has forsaken the hill country” (p. 7). However, the isolated, inward-focused communities have opened up to the world, and outside influence flooded in. Many books record the history of Appalachia, but little research attempting to document the cultural heritage of the region seems to exist. The opportunities to record the manifestations of Appalachian culture dwindle as outside influence supplants the distinctive cultural heritage of the area. Furthermore, the abstract intangible heritage connected to the expressions of Appalachian culture become perilously at risk of extinction without any documentation for future reference.

Oftentimes, studies specifically use Appalachian people as the research sample because of the negative social statistics, such as adolescent pregnancy and high school dropout rate, prevalent amongst the population. Yet, research attempting to define the complete cultural identity of this distinctly American group is lacking; this represents a gap in the recorded knowledge of the various cultures of the U.S. and its people. Research documenting culture stands out as imperative because of the latter's constantly evolving nature. The overall Appalachian identity and culture needs to be documented in a systematic manner so that its existence and information about its characteristics can be recorded, potentially validated by others, and preserved. Additionally, thorough data about the Appalachian cultural groups would help provide an even more inclusive description of the U.S., its population, and its cultural heritage. While the field of cultural studies would obviously benefit from such research, anthropologists, sociologists, historians, information scientists, and others would also undoubtedly use the data. More information about the different American cultural groups better informs studies of these various peoples through the lens of any discipline.

The Crossnore School and Weaving Room embody a unique organization. This school established in Appalachia nearly a century ago in a different context continues to include a cultural activity as an option within its curriculum. While Appalachian culture has received attention over time, albeit without documentation of evidence, the intangible heritage created through the processes of teaching and learning the cultural tradition of weaving remain completely neglected. Without any documentation, the intangible cultural heritage of Appalachia can disappear. A study exploring this intangible heritage of the modern-day Appalachian culture at the Crossnore School and Weaving Room would help characterize this unique cultural institution as well as document an intangible feature of

Appalachian cultural heritage in western North Carolina. Thus, the purpose of this study is to chronicle information about the cultural practice of weaving at the Weaving Room of the Crossnore School.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Crossnore School and Weaving Room represent a very specific research topic. Published research concerning such a narrow topic can be lacking, but the cultural context of Appalachia attracts interest from many disciplines. A review of some of the recent literature involving Appalachia will illustrate why the specific region is chosen for research. These reasons will provide a characterization of the area and its inhabitants that fails to address the cultural identity of the region. Nevertheless, such a characterization provides a regional context for a study involving the Crossnore School and Weaving Room. A regional context lacking complete information about the regional culture further illustrates the need for research documenting the cultural identity of Appalachia.

Beginning in 2002, Brown et al. (2009) conducted an empirical study involving Appalachian youth. The study is placed within the context of creating a “straightforward way to measure culture” (p. 248). The authors wanted to develop and utilize “an ethnographically-based instrument to assess the life course perspectives of Appalachian youth” (p. 248). The life course consists of “hopes and dreams, expectations, perceived roadblocks, etc.” (p. 250). The instrument was then analyzed as a tool for predicting certain mental health illnesses (i.e. depression) (p. 248). With this study, the researchers hoped to employ anthropological concepts as a means to inform the field of epidemiology, which concerns patterns of disease and illness within large populations.

The approach to the study included “the notion that ‘culture matters’, and engages wide-ranging research methods to uncover the workings of culture in a given population” (p.

249). This approach places the study within the domain of cultural studies. The professor and author During (1999) interprets modern cultural studies as part of “a radical wing of anthropology...[that is] the voice of the other, the “marginal” in the academy” (p. 14). In this case, Appalachians serve as the marginalized group. Three hundred fifty youth in western North Carolina from two ethnic groups participated in the study (p. 255). The participants ranged in age from nineteen to twenty-four (p. 255). This sample came from a group of nearly fifteen hundred youth in western North Carolina who had participated in a study known as the Great Smoky Mountain Study (GSMS) beginning in 1993 (p. 255). The purpose of the GSMS was “to estimate the prevalence and incidence of serious emotional disturbance...in a representative population sample...[of youth] in a predominantly rural area of North Carolina” (Costello et al., 1996, p. 1137). In this case, the participants had been interviewed every one to two years over a period of three years beginning at ages nine, eleven, and thirteen (Brown et al., 2009, p. 250). These studies illustrate an awareness of Appalachian youth as prone to mental health problems; however, the studies do not supply information about the Appalachian context to suggest any reasons for this trend. As a result, readers of the studies are left with a certain perception of Appalachian youth without any further context to situate the culture of the young subjects.

The instrument developed for Brown et al.’s study asked the three hundred fifty “participants to perform a variety of sorting, ranking, and response tasks with four different sets of cards” (p. 250). The themes of the sets of cards were life course milestones, socioemotional resources, material goods, and life course barriers (p. 250). The most important part of the study is that the instrument was “specifically adapted to the life goals and concerns of Appalachian (both White and Cherokee) youths during the transition to adulthood” (p. 250). The researchers recognized the existence of a cultural model that

applies to Appalachian youth better than models for other cultural groups. To inform the creation of the instrument, the authors spent thirteen months engaging in life history interviews, focus groups, and pilot card-sort interviews with one hundred fifty participants outside of the main study (p. 250). The resulting “population-level generalization” applies to many students at the Crossnore School – members of the Appalachian cultural group (p. 250). Despite the existence of an Appalachian cultural model for the four themes of the study’s instrument, there is no universal Appalachian response. Nevertheless, the instrument embodies a tool of comparison for measuring Appalachian youth against others from another cultural context. As During (1999) notes in his explanation of cultural studies, marginalized groups typically lack a voice. A relatively small cultural group within the U.S., Appalachian people represent a marginalized group without a representative who specifically promotes their interests. Studies on such marginalized people can have a significant impact if conclusions reveal previously-unknown information that attracts more studies to be conducted and more evidence to be documented.

Blinn-Pike (1996) also conducted a study looking specifically at Appalachian youth. The author focuses on a program implemented in schools in three counties of eastern Tennessee during the 1992-1993 school-year (p. 380). These counties had exhibited particularly high adolescent pregnancy rates (p. 380), and the Preteen Enrichment project aimed to confront this situation through various objectives (p. 380). In the program, “the first objective was to improve self-concept, broaden expectations for the future, improve understanding of human reproduction, improve the mother-daughter relationship, and foster more positive attitudes toward education” (p. 380). Like the previously-mentioned studies, this research focuses on Appalachian youth because of a socially-negative characteristic prevalent amongst a segment of that population. Blinn-Pike claims that “Appalachian

residents make up a truly marginalized portion of the U.S. population” (p. 380). She denotes “differences between Appalachian and more mainstream U.S. culture [which] include, in the former, a more complicated emancipation of youth (Peterson & Stivers, 1987), close living arrangements (Keefe, 1988), lack of geographic mobility (Keefe, 1988), dysfunctional coping strategies (Yelton & Nielson, 1991), and a present-oriented worldview (Yelton & Nielson, 1991)” (p. 380); however, Blinn-Pike neglects to affirm this context for the youth in the three relevant counties in Tennessee. The author chooses not to elaborate on the characteristics of Appalachian culture, leaving readers with a limited perception of the region and its people.

In the Discussion and Implications section of her study, the Blinn-Pike states that “the results showed that the participants’ views of the likelihood of particular events occurring in their lives could be modified” (p. 385). This study of the Preteen Enrichment project demonstrates that the Appalachian youth involved in the program benefitted from the objectives and that even within a cultural group, perceptions of self can be altered. Nevertheless, these three described studies suggest that the Appalachian region consists of citizens vulnerable to mental health problems and higher instances of adolescent pregnancy. The concentration of these studies on such socially-negative features of Appalachia and its people without documentation of other aspects of the cultural context skews the representation of this cultural group. Empirical research, which can be easily replicated, is needed on the subject of Appalachian culture in order to provide a more complete and detailed picture of Appalachia. The Weaving Room at the Crossnore School epitomizes a positive facet of Appalachian culture that remains undocumented, and the intangible cultural heritage embodied by the teaching and learning of the practice of weaving exemplify an

endangered aspect of the regional culture that must be recorded for the possibility of future access.

Billings (1974) challenges the relationship between Appalachian culture and socially-negative traits. He says that “few studies of Appalachian poverty have questioned the accuracy of the stereotypic description” (p. 315). Billings maintains that “cultural theories attribute to the poor a culture at variance with the rest of society. Their poverty is seen as an outcome” (p. 315). The author sought “to test whether certain elements of Appalachian culture are, in fact, distinctive” (p. 317). The study employed a survey “primarily designed to investigate living conditions in antipoverty target areas...[and also included] several attitude items” (p. 317-18). The sample population consisted of more than eleven thousand families from twenty counties in three regions of North Carolina – the mountains, piedmont, and east coast (p. 317-18). Billings endeavored to “compare the middle-class orientation of respondents” from the different regions (p. 318). Specifically, he wanted to answer the question, “Are respondents from the mountains less middle-class oriented than other white southerners?” (p. 318).

Interest in the connection between Appalachian culture and poverty further supports the enactment of research studies on institutions such as the Weaving Room at the Crossnore School. Documentation of the association of Appalachian culture with incidents of social success would add to the body of literature on the topic within a range of academic disciplines. The original purpose of the Weaving Room at Crossnore was to provide a place where mountain women could create a product to sell and earn money to support their families and also teach a skill to children of North Carolina. The modern purpose of the Weaving Room includes preserving that skill and providing a product to sell but also serving as a therapeutic activity for children who have spent time in bad situations. This example of

Appalachian culture stems from a desire to rise above circumstances such as poverty or abuse. Studies concerned with such positive cases within the Appalachian way of life add to the overall view of the regional culture.

In his 1974 study, Billings found that “regional differences...at least for the mountain and piedmont samples, are attributable to rurality rather than to a distinctively mountain culture” (p. 319). He also observed “that nativity made little difference, attitudinally, among mountain respondents” (p. 319). Brennan and Cooper (2008) organized a study that evinces the same conclusion. The researchers set their study within the context of community culture clashes between natives of and in-migrants to western North Carolina (WNC). The authors note that “the demographic characteristics of WNC resemble the demographics of most rural areas in the United States, making the region a good case study for understanding rural America” (p. 283). Thirty years after Billings’ research, Brennan and Cooper approach their study with an acceptance that Appalachian culture is an example of a rural culture. These studies reflect a trend in diminishing the role of Appalachian culture in explaining the dominant negative social reality in the region. Also, the 2008 study would be more likely to show the progression of outside influence at modifying the cultural characteristics of the Appalachian region to resemble the rest of the U.S. more and exhibit less unique customs.

Brennan and Cooper hypothesize that “natives will view cultural heritage as more important than in-migrants,” “natives will view regional in-migration and development as more threatening to cultural heritage,” and natives and in-migrants “who perceive in-migration and development as a threat to cultural heritage will hold similar views on regional social and political issues” (p. 282). Their hypotheses rest on the general assumption that a person’s status as native or outsider creates innate differences supporting the potential for

culture clashes within a community. Brennan and Cooper operationalize the categories of native and in-migrant based on the amount of time a person had lived in western North Carolina. The results of their 2003 telephone survey show that “as proportion of life spent in WNC increases, the difference between in-migrants and natives becomes smaller and less significant with regard to perceived threat of in-migration...[and there was] no difference between natives and in-migrants who have spent over three quarters of their life in WNC” (p. 289). The study implies that a relationship with a place is established over time, and that relationship influences how a person perceives elements that could be considered threatening to the place. It is those people who have spent a large amount of time in Appalachia and have a relationship with the region who could serve as the research sample in a study intending to record the features of Appalachian culture.

Howley (2006) also considers Appalachia as an example of a rural area rather than a distinct cultural group. In her study, the author “explores the meanings three families assign to the process of schooling...[to see] how families view their relationship to school in the context of locale and community, especially in light of suburbanization and the popular devaluation of rural and Appalachian life” (p. 58). The sample consists of only three families, so the results of the study lack the qualifications to be applied to the broad population of Appalachian people. Nevertheless, Howley suggests that further research on the topic could “investigate how families in rural and Appalachian places interpret and resolve [the] tension” of striving to achieve status beyond the rural life they currently live (p. 76). The author states that “people in Appalachia and rural places have often faced considerable challenges in their efforts for self-determination and –definition” (p. 59). Schools represent a critical venue in a person’s life where “self-determination and –definition” take place (p. 59). DeYoung (1995) also contends that schools play a particularly important role in the lives of children in rural

communities. He notes that “rural communities typically do not have the types of complementary social or economic institutions that support metropolitan schooling aims...[so] rural educators often intentionally teach and model national norms, values, expectations, and skills” (p. 168). The author continues that “such teachings, [teachers] allege, are particularly critical to children’s successful participation in the national culture” (p. 168). These studies illustrate the critical need to conduct research on Appalachian culture and particularly the intangible elements of the cultural heritage because the topic itself is fading away over time. Both the influence of outside factors and the desire to fit in outside of Appalachia have affected the extent to which the parts of the regional culture even play a role within the region anymore.

DeYoung reports on five years of data that he collected on a public school system in a county of central West Virginia. Two of the families that Howley interviewed also live in West Virginia, and Howley ascribes to them an economic-based worldview. This worldview influences their perceptions of school as the two families “placed more emphasis on the utilitarian advantages of attending school...[such as] acquiring stable employment and a home” compared to the third family, who live in a wealthier, less rural area (p. 75). DeYoung asserts that “Braxton County’s economic history clearly falls within the parameters of Appalachian historiography” (p. 177). The author portrays the students of the Braxton County public schools as “primarily poor” (p. 178). He mentions that “teachers and administrators carried out many instructional and extracurricular activities explained and understood as compensatory, that is, designed to offset what they perceived as the cultural disadvantage associated with poverty and isolation” (p. 178).

DeYoung aptly explains the history of the role of the public school in rural communities as a “cultural bridge” to American national culture. Distance from a

metropolitan area results in a background that only 28% of American youth experience (as of 1995) (p. 169). DeYoung recognizes Braxton County's inclusion in the Appalachian region, but like the authors of two aforementioned studies, he accentuates the rural environment as opposed to the Appalachian culture. He states that while "Braxton County school practices and controversies obviously cannot represent the universe of rural school dynamics to be found today in the United States...they are quite suggestive" (p. 188). Like Howley's study, DeYoung leaves room for more research on the topic of schools in Appalachia. While neither author attributes the findings in their studies to Appalachian culture, DeYoung acknowledges the existence of an Appalachian subculture that exerts a very influential role within the community (p. 182-83). The modern day Crossnore School is a charter school – expressly separate and distinct from the public schools of Avery County, North Carolina. Its students come from varied but difficult backgrounds. The Weaving Room adds an explicit recognition of Appalachian culture to the school's program. This unique institution serves as a "cultural bridge" just as all of the Appalachian and rural schools but in numerous, other ways as well. Howley and DeYoung discount Appalachian culture in their studies of the roles of schools in Appalachia; however research on the Crossnore School must recognize the place of Appalachian culture within the context of the school because weaving remains a part of its curriculum.

For a more general contribution to the literature, Anglin (2004) scrutinizes the trends in studies on Appalachian culture. This overview of research in Appalachian studies provides a framework in which to consider the above-referenced literature. Claiming that "there is no singular culture that can be identified as 'authentic'" (p. 78), Anglin asserts that "the issue at hand is that of examining relations of privilege and the disenfranchisement of particular constituencies in specific political moments" (p. 77). The author focuses primarily on the

past “whiteness” that has dominated the field of research. She approves of recent works that study marginalized groups within the marginalized group of Appalachians. Anglin also says that “the critical study of culture and place offers a new basis for inquiry into what is meant by ‘region’” (p. 75). The region of Appalachia encompasses parts of twelve states, stretching from southwestern New York to northeastern Alabama. With such a large geographic location, Appalachia consists of thousands of communities that differ in numerous ways. Finding common characteristics across the entire region seems impossible, so Appalachian culture must be examined in more localized cases and then compared for the creation of a definition that distinguishes a single cultural group. The Weaving Room at the Crossnore School represents a very unique, local case of Appalachian culture, but passing on a cultural tradition is an infinitely-applicable type of information system. These examples of intangible cultural heritage embody important occurrences revealing how people share traditions. If these components of cultural heritage remain undocumented, a symbolic aspect of our civilization will be excluded from the historical record.

A review of the literature on Appalachian studies consists of research concerning many topics. The Crossnore School and Weaving Room exhibits characteristics that could be considered for study from the angles of several different disciplines. Costello et al.’s and Brown et al.’s anthropological ethnographies as well as Blinn-Pike’s sociological survey involving Appalachian youth illustrate the mindset that Appalachian culture influences the negative social elements common in Appalachia. Meanwhile, Billings’ essay and Brennan and Cooper’s survey reflect alternate views that Appalachia primarily represents a rural area of the U.S. They contend that experience with a place plays a larger role on attitudes than being a member of a cultural group. Howley’s study and DeYoung’s ethnography also regard Appalachia mainly as an example of a rural area. They look at the functions of school in the

region as characteristic of rural schools in general. Anglin's essay concludes the review with an overview of research trends in Appalachian studies. She concentrates on the recent trend recognizing that Appalachia is a multiethnic, multicultural region. All of these studies show how Appalachian culture is perceived as a subject worthy of research. Nevertheless, studies have yet to construct a comprehensive description of the Appalachian cultural context.

Weaving continues to be practiced at the Crossnore School's Weaving Room in western North Carolina, and documenting this topic would provide information about a unique institution and help define a part of the cultural identity of a region that attracts research from many different fields.

METHODOLOGY

Description of Method

The methodology for this study is semistructured interviews. Luo and Wildemuth (2009) describe an interview as “a particular type of purposeful conversation” (p. 232). Additionally, Luo and Wildemuth note that “the research interview is defined as ‘a two-person conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research-relevant information and focused by him on content specified by research objectives’ (Cannell & Kahn, 1968, p. 530)” (p. 232). Seale and Filmer (1998) also discuss the interview methodology. They remark that “the interview is a more flexible form than the questionnaire and, if intelligently used, can generally be used to gather information of greater depth and more sensitive to contextual variations in meaning” (p. 128). Furthermore, Hopf (2004) says that researchers employ the interview methodology for “the imparting of expert knowledge about the research field in question, the recording and analysis of the informants’ subjective perspective, or the collection of data relating to their biography” (p. 203). For semistructured interviews, the interviewer uses a pre-determined list of questions, but the order and wording of the questions can be changed. The interviewer also has the ability to omit and add questions during an interview if appropriate. Luo and Wildemuth (2009) observe that “semistructured interviews involve less rigidity and more leeway than structured interviews but are more organized and systematic than unstructured interviews in developing the conversation” (p. 233).

The semistructured interview stands out as the most appropriate methodology for this study because of an overall time constraint prohibiting the researcher from conducting an ethnography, which would provide a larger amount of more thorough data recorded over a longer period of time. Nevertheless, semistructured interviews allowed the interviewer to interact with and elicit information from the sample of stakeholders of the Crossnore School and Weaving Room. Also, the freedom granted by the semistructured interview allowed the researcher to pursue information not listed on the instrument guide. Since the researcher is not an expert on Appalachian culture, the freedom to diverge from the pre-determined questions enhanced the opportunity to gather the best data.

An instrument guide was utilized by the researcher during the semistructured interviews. This pre-determined list of questions to guide the interviews (see Appendix A) was geared to focus the conversation on the participant's perception of Appalachian culture and its presence at the Crossnore School. As mentioned previously, the semistructured interview method allows the researcher to omit and add questions, choose the order of the questions, and stray from the questions. The researcher took notes during the interviews and recorded the conversations, which provided more complete and accurate data to analyze.

Population and Sampling Technique

The researcher did not have direct access to the Crossnore School, so the Executive Assistant to the Executive Director and CEO facilitated the selection of subjects to be involved in the sample for interviewing. Stakeholders of the Crossnore School and Weaving Room include its Executive Director and CEO, other administrators, teachers at the Crossnore School, and instructors in the Weaving Room. Only students over seventeen-

years-old could participate in the research study, but none was included in the research sample. The sample consisted of nine stakeholders.

Ethics Issues

The researcher provided an informed consent form for all subjects to keep as an explicit guarantee that their rights were protected during the course of this research study.

Creswell (2009) comments on ethical considerations during research interviewing:

...interviewers need to consider how the interview will improve the human situation (as well as enhance scientific knowledge), how a sensitive interview interaction may be stressful for the participants, whether participants have a say in how their statements are interpreted, how critically the interviewees might be questioned, and what the consequences of the interview for the interviewees and the groups to which they belong might be (p. 90).

Furthermore, Luo and Wildemuth (2009) write that “since the interviewer communicates with the subject face-to-face, the way he or she asks questions or reacts to the subject’s responses can affect the subject’s responses and introduce bias in the data collected” (p. 236). The researcher, having had no prior experience conducting research interviews, was aware of her tone of voice and facial expressions at all times so as not to negatively affect the subjects in any way. Such an incident could have also affected the validity of the data collected. Further ethical considerations included protecting the anonymity of subjects to the full extent possible. Providing an accurate account of the data by not suppressing, falsifying, or inventing findings reflects another ethical issue that the researcher recognized.

Luo and Wildemuth (2009) mention the possibility of the interviewer introducing bias into the interview and thus compromising the credibility of the data. Murdock (1997) describes a study in which interviews were conducted and “to encourage open, non-coercive, dialogue in the interviews investigators were free ‘to choose their respondents from among or around people personally known to them’ in the hope that familiarity would ensure trust

and candour” (p. 187). Murdock explains further that “interviews are never simply opportunities for vocalizing beliefs and experiences. They are always performances in which respondents assume identities and manage impressions” (p. 188). Since the researcher was not familiar to the subjects, the interviews may not have yielded credible data. Even though the interviews took place in a familiar setting for the subjects, reservations about the research interview itself could have led subjects to withhold data; however, the familiar setting could have quelled any anxieties created by the idea of a research interview. Also, conducting interviews allowed the researcher to try and convince the subjects to trust her with their narratives and points of view through the warm-up phase of the interview. Luo and Wildemuth (2009) state that “this stage is a rapport-building step for both the interviewer and the user to get settled down for the interview” (p. 236). Regardless, the interview methodology remains transferable only to the extent that the researcher documents the research process. The aforementioned instrument guide (see Appendix A) as well as thick description illustrating the study procedures insure that the study can be replicated in the future.

Data Analysis

The preliminary plan for analyzing the data involved presenting it in an organized case study of the transmission of a tradition of Appalachian culture at the Crossnore School’s Weaving Room. In documenting this information, the researcher sought to answer her own research questions and remain true to the study participants.

Procedure

The timeline of this study reflects four months beginning with the submission of the research proposal in early December 2010. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC-CH) approved this research study in January 2011 before the researcher began the research process. A Carnegie Grant of \$200.00 from the School of Information and Library Science (SILS) at UNC-CH covered the researcher's travel costs to Crossnore, where the interviews were conducted. At least one hour but no more than two was spent with each participant to engage in a conversation that addressed the research questions. The researcher spent four days and three nights in a guestroom on the campus of the Crossnore School.

Only the Executive Director and CEO and her Executive Assistant were contacted prior to the study, and those communications were made via e-mail. All of the participants were contacted via postal mail after the study to thank them for their participation.

RESULTS

Overview

The semistructured interviews allowed the researcher to record data about the Weaving Room at Crossnore from a group of nine participants who were deemed to hold a stake within the organization. While the interview guide steered the general direction of the dialogues, not all questions listed on the guide ended up eliciting useful information. Also, unforeseen avenues of discussion were followed when considered worthwhile, which led to the generation of several new themes of collected data.

Profiles

The Executive Assistant to the Executive Director and CEO of the Crossnore School organized the group of participants for this study. In response to the researcher's request to interview a group of eight to ten people with a stake in the Crossnore School and Weaving Room, the Executive Assistant recruited four women who work in the Weaving Room, three women who work within the administrative side of the school, one woman who works within the academic side of the school, and one woman who grew up in Crossnore and is also a niece of the Sloops, the founders of the Crossnore School and Weaving Room. Per the IRB, in this study, all participants are identified by an assigned number attached to a brief description of their connection to the school.

Stakeholder 1: Executive Director and CEO of the Crossnore School

This participant has been the Executive Director and CEO of the Crossnore School for twelve years. She grew up in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains in western North Carolina.

Stakeholder 2: Niece of Drs. Eustace and Mary Martin Sloop

This eighty-two-year-old participant grew up in Crossnore, North Carolina and spent time with the students at the Crossnore School. Her uncle, Dr. Eustache Sloop, was one of its founders.

Stakeholder 3: Manager of the Weaving Room and Weaver

This participant has lived in Avery County, North Carolina throughout her entire life. Her great-grandmother was a spinner and would sell her yarn to the Crossnore Weaving Room to make money. Stakeholder 3 became interested in weaving when her sister-in-law, one of her friends from high school, got a job at the Weaving Room after graduation. She would visit her friend at work at the Weaving Room, and at the age of twenty-eight, she began volunteering there. After a year of volunteering, she got a job as a weaver. She has now been weaving for fifteen years.

Stakeholder 4: Weaver

This participant is a former student at the Crossnore School who was taught to weave by the weavers of the Weaving Room. After graduating from Crossnore, she left to go work elsewhere but returned to Crossnore soon after and asked to work as a weaver. She has now been weaving for nine years and is the youngest of the weaver participants.

Stakeholder 5: Weaver

This participant moved to Crossnore in 1975. Her mother had taught her how to sew, and she had previously worked at Hanes Hosiery for over twenty years. She has “always done things with [her] hands,” and after moving to Crossnore, she was curious about the work done in the Weaving Room. She has now been weaving for thirty-two years, and despite having retired, continues to work, albeit on her own time.

Stakeholder 6: Weaver

This participant has lived in Crossnore, North Carolina for forty-seven years. Her mother and grandmother had quilted. When she was twenty-seven-years-old, her mother-in-law suggested that she might like a part-time job at the Weaving Room. She began weaving in 1977, and even though she has retired, she continues to work noting that “it’s hard to get away.”

Stakeholder 7: Executive Assistant of the Executive Director and CEO

This participant grew up near Crossnore, North Carolina and has spent most of her life in the area. She has worked at the Crossnore School for over thirty years.

Stakeholder 8: Media Specialist and Teacher at the Crossnore School

This participant was born in Crossnore and delivered by Dr. Eustace Sloop. After growing up on the West Coast, she returned to the area and has worked at the Crossnore School for over fifteen years.

Stakeholder 9: CFO of the Crossnore School

This participant has lived in Avery County, North Carolina for over thirty years. She has worked as the CFO of the Crossnore School for eight years.

Interview Questions

The following questions from the previously-described instrument guide elicited responses of note during the interviews with the study participants. A more complete transcript of excerpts from the interview responses can be referenced in Appendix B.

How would you describe the Crossnore School?

In answering this question, six of the nine stakeholders focused explicitly on the Crossnore School's work with the children who are sent there. Most of the participants made reference to the love, care, and family that Crossnore brings into these children's lives, and Stakeholder 1, the Executive Director and CEO, remarked that:

"We have always, these ninety-eight years, almost a century, have really made mountain children a priority."

Appalachian culture and the cultural tradition of weaving were not mentioned and thus do not seem to constitute the most important aspects of the Crossnore School.

What is the purpose of the Weaving Room at Crossnore?

Overall, the participants agreed on the purpose of the Weaving Room. Its origin as a means for women from the local community to learn a trade and earn an income to support their family remains relevant to these stakeholders who are themselves women of the mountains. Their recognition of the historic lack of education and work in that area of

western North Carolina illustrates an implicit understanding of the way of life in the mountains. Weaving played its own part in helping alleviate the hardships. Only Stakeholder 1, the Executive Director and CEO, and Stakeholder 6, a weaver, mentioned weaving as a representation of the local heritage. Stakeholder 6 postulated that “*it’s a heritage thing from Dr. Sloop,*” while Stakeholder 1 elaborated:

“Dr. Sloop had a passion, first of all, for the art of Appalachian weaving and had some concern that it might become extinct...so number one, the Weaving Room continues to be our commitment to historical preservation in these mountains. A love for Appalachian weaving that began with Dr. Sloop, and the thread is woven through to my heart today. Second, she felt like there are a number of women who, this is an art that has been passed down from generation to generation – their great-grandmother, their grandmother, their mother, now them. They have this art, and it would provide some extra income for their family because...we are still getting first generation high school diplomas in the mountains, so women haven’t always had the opportunity to go to college. That was a vision that [Dr. Sloop] had, and it continues to be a vision of helping ease the poverty for mountain women and their families... Lastly, the purpose of the Weaving Room, it helps us tell our story...Everything that has happened in that building for all these decades speaks so loudly to the work of healing and hope. It’s a very important part of who we are.”

While the participants described the Crossnore School within the context of its modern-day purpose and functions, the Weaving Room inspired reflections on the past. Weaving connects the past and the present in this area of Appalachia.

How are the Crossnore School and Weaving Room related?

The responses to this question fell into two categories regarding the Weaving Room’s effect on the students and on the school. Stakeholders 3, 4, and 9 – two weavers and

the CFO of the Crossnore School – focused on the Weaving Room as a place to instill a work ethic in the student workers interested in learning how to weave. Stakeholders 1, 5, 6, and 7 – the Executive Director and CEO, the two oldest weavers, and the Executive Assistant – highlighted the Weaving Room’s monetary contributions to the Crossnore School through the selling of the woven goods. Stakeholders 3 and 9 – a weaver and the CFO of the Crossnore School – also commented on the Weaving Room serving as a door to the Crossnore School. Tourists stop at the Weaving Room, a working museum listed in guidebooks to the area, and the weavers explain the story of the Crossnore School. In this regard, weaving helps tell the story of the school as Stakeholder 1, the Executive Director and CEO, claimed.

Is there an Appalachian cultural heritage?

Stakeholder 9, the CFO of the Crossnore School, observed that “*the people and the mountains are Appalachia.*” Stakeholder 2, the eighty-two-year-old niece of the Sloops who grew up in Crossnore, described Appalachian cultural heritage as “*a way of life.*” The participants chose terms such as “*proud,*” “*hard workers,*” “*giving,*” and “*family-oriented*” to characterize the Appalachian people. Stakeholder 3, a weaver and manager of the Weaving Room, commented on the “*tough life*” experienced in the mountains. Stakeholder 7, the Executive Assistant, noted that “*a lot of the old customs are still used here.*” Two of the participants reflected that Appalachian people hold onto their roots. Stakeholder 1, the Executive Director and CEO, mentioned that:

“Maybe it’s part of the mountain culture: we never forget where we came from. Regardless of the Twittering and Facebook world, we haven’t forgotten our roots, and they’re still treasured.”

Similarly, Stakeholder 4, a weaver and former student at the Crossnore School who did not grow up in Appalachia, said:

“There’s still that sense of family, tradition, holding those roots. People really, I think, are trying to hold to those roots... There’s just something: a value, I don’t know what word I’m looking for. There’s a root – there’s just something that they hold dear to... They’re mountain people... How strong people carry that history and the roots of their people I think is important to keeping a closeness or a heritage of something... It’s a prideful thing for these men and women in these mountains.”

The responses maintain a theme of implicitly separating Appalachians from others; living in the Appalachian Mountains differentiates these people from those who do not. The “root” that the mountain people cherish represents their cultural heritage and their way of life, which was dictated by the mountains.

Is weaving an important part of Appalachian cultural heritage?

With a general affirmative consensus, the participants alluded to various reasons behind the qualification of weaving as an important part of Appalachian cultural heritage. Stakeholder 5, a weaver, and Stakeholder 8, a teacher at the Crossnore School, considered weaving to relate to the self-sufficient nature of the Appalachian people: to provide clothes and sheets for their families, women often wove them. Others saw the limited practice of weaving as indicative of its place within the cultural heritage of Appalachia. Stakeholder 6, a weaver, referred to weaving as “*a dying art*.” Similarly, Stakeholder 5, a weaver, declared that “*it’s a dying culture if we don’t teach it*.” Stakeholder 7, the Executive Assistant, said that:

“I think that we are keeping alive an Appalachian tradition. We’re keeping alive something that would have been lost...”

Stakeholder 9, the CFO of the Crossnore School, also described weaving as “*an Appalachian tradition.*” Stakeholder 3, a weaver and manager of the Weaving Room, noted that:

“I remind [my students] of it, too. That it’s a unique thing, something they need to treasure and maybe pass down to their children.”

Stakeholder 4, a weaver and former student at the Crossnore School, explained that weaving is a part of the cultural heritage because:

“It’s been passed down. It’s something that’s kept. Not a lot of hand things have been able to stay held up in society, but because it’s been passed down so strongly and held so strongly in the hearts of women and children, I do believe that it is a heritage and culture. It’s a history; it’s a part of these people and I’m sure of these places because the generation continues to pass it on...I think the love and strength of that love for it is what has kept it going.”

The concepts of teaching, learning, and passing on a cultural tradition became apparent during this part of the interviews. Preserving a tradition, which some participants mentioned earlier in the interviews, involves actively taking the initiative to protect its existence; however, it fails to communicate the active, living nature of teaching and passing on the tradition. The Weaving Room connects the past and the present and provides a forum for the transmission of cultural heritage to occur.

What are important parts of Appalachian cultural heritage?

During this part of the interviews, the participants seemed focused on the idea of mountain people leading self-sufficient lives resulting in the widespread talent throughout the region to create objects distinguished as handicraft today. Stakeholder 6, a weaver, observed “*that all goes along with mountain heritage.*” Stakeholders 7 and 8, the Executive Assistant and the teacher, both remarked that “*the past*” and “*the old way of life*” evinced by the

Appalachian people attract others to the region. Stakeholder 4 continued with the theme of Appalachians holding on to their “*root*”:

“That culture, the love for their ancestors, of why they came here, of the hard work it took in these mountains. That would really probably be it.”

Are they now different from the past?

Stakeholder 9, the CFO of the Crossnore School, admitted that she believes the Appalachian people today exhibit less of the ascribed cultural heritage traits than their older peers. Indeed, the effects of outside influence have molded Appalachian cultural heritage into its present state. Stakeholder 3, a weaver and manager of the Weaving Room, remarked that:

“We can’t find what the Appalachian people make in the Wal-Mart. The quality is not there; the love is not in it.”

As the necessity to lead self-sufficient lives waned, Appalachians adapted to their changing environment. Weaving represents an aspect of Appalachian cultural heritage since few people still practice the tradition. As “*the old way of life*” gave way to modern affordances for many, the previously-described characteristics of the Appalachian people also felt the effects; however, the Appalachian proclivity to hold on to their “*root*” represented a strong antidote to the effects of outside influence. As a result, tourists still visit Appalachia to return to “*the old way of life*” as compared to life elsewhere.

Do you consider yourself Appalachian? Why? Why not?

Five of the nine study participants grew up in Appalachia, and their affirmative responses to this question varied. Stakeholder 3, a weaver and manager of the Weaving Room, revealed a clear, personal connection to being an Appalachian:

“I try to tell [my daughter] to always hold her mountains in her heart because they’re nowhere else.

You can’t find them anywhere else.”

Others answered with a succinct explanation to such an obvious question. The four participants who grew up elsewhere recognized their status as non-natives, even though Stakeholder 5, for example, has lived in Crossnore for over thirty years now. Spending one’s childhood in Appalachia determined the distinction of being Appalachian or not.

Is the Crossnore School an Appalachian school?

Even though the Crossnore School maintains a Weaving Room on its campus located in the Appalachian Mountains of western North Carolina, the participants disagreed on the characterization of the school as an Appalachian school. Stakeholder 1, the Executive Director and CEO, and Stakeholder 3, a weaver and manager of the Weaving Room, responded with an emphatic “yes.” Stakeholder 6, a weaver, replied with a less committed “*I think so.*” On the other hand, Stakeholder 7, the Executive Assistant, viewed the Crossnore School as located in the mountains but not an Appalachian school because students can come from anywhere in North Carolina. Stakeholder 8, the teacher, concurred that Crossnore was no longer an Appalachian school because of its mixed student body. Additionally, not all students interact with the activity of the Weaving Room because it is optional to work there and learn to weave.

Could the Crossnore School exist outside of Appalachia?

In general, the participants saw the Crossnore School as an institution that could exist elsewhere but without the Weaving Room. Stakeholder 1, the Executive Director and CEO, described the Weaving Room as “*uniquely Appalachian*” and thus unable to exist outside of the region. On the contrary, Stakeholder 3, a weaver and manager of the Weaving Room, considered the school’s location in the mountains as an important part of its mission to help abused children heal from their traumas. She asserted that “*I don’t think they could heal as [well] anywhere else.*”

Where do you consider Appalachia to be located?

Earlier in the interview, Stakeholder 5, an older weaver who did not grow up in the mountains, remarked that the term Appalachia had provoked a connotation of an area of poverty when she was young. In response to this question, she observed Appalachia to be located in “*the mountains of Virginia...[and] over near Asheville...This probably is, but I just don’t consider it that.*” Having lived in Crossnore for over thirty years, Stakeholder 5 recognized differences in the area and its people; nevertheless, perhaps because of her perception of Appalachia as a child, she did not equate that area of western North Carolina with the region.

Does the Crossnore, North Carolina community differ from the rest of Appalachia? Why? Why not?

Stakeholder 5, an older weaver who did not judge the Crossnore area to be located in Appalachia, commented that “*this is a special place. There’s just something here that draws you to it, like a magnet.*” Rather than feeling connected to Appalachia, this weaver localized her personal attachment to the community of Crossnore.

Does Avery County differ from the rest of Appalachia? Why? Why not?

Stakeholder 3, a weaver and manager of the Weaving Room who has lived in Avery County, North Carolina throughout her entire life, noted that Avery County differs from the rest of Appalachia but that:

“I’m a little bit prejudiced. I love the mountains, and Avery County is my home.”

Without specifying actual differences, Stakeholder 3 stressed her personal attachment to that particular part of Appalachia.

Does western North Carolina differ from the rest of Appalachia? Why? Why not?

In accordance with the necessity to focus first on local instances of Appalachian culture in order then to document characteristics of the cultural heritage of the whole region, Stakeholder 1, the Executive Director and CEO, stated that she did not know the answer to that question. She observed that:

“The common denominator in the Appalachian Mountains has always been poverty, but there’s definitely uniqueness in these different little pockets of Appalachia.”

Studies recording the unique aspects of the region are needed for a comprehensive narrative of Appalachia and its culture.

Themes

As the semistructured interview method provided the researcher the flexibility to stray from the predetermined questions of the instrument guide, the conversations during the interviews covered unforeseen topics and provoked further inquiries. After determining that weaving represents an aspect of Appalachian cultural heritage, the participants – particularly the weavers – provided additional insight on the cultural practice of weaving. Six

themes emerged from the data collected during the interviews: The transmission of cultural heritage information; Teaching a cultural tradition; Learning a cultural tradition; Weaving as therapy; The loom; and The culture of women. The themes share connections and overlap with one another. A more complete transcript of excerpts related to the themes can be referenced in Appendix C.

The transmission of cultural heritage information

The sharing of information embodies an information system. In the context of the Weaving Room at the Crossnore School, the pertinent information being shared concerns the Appalachian cultural tradition of weaving. The participants, especially the weavers, observed that stories presented the most information about the craft. Stakeholder 3, a weaver and manager of the Weaving Room, said that *“we always tell the stories of the older women.”* Stakeholder 4, the youngest weaver, affirmed that *“I’ve learned a lot about the history just through their stories. They sit around and talk about these women and things they did...I love hearing the stories.”* Stakeholder 5, an older weaver, referred to the *“legacy”* that the former weavers passed on of their knowledge of weaving. One information system in use at the Weaving Room clearly exists in an oral form and serves the purpose of passing on knowledge about the activity of weaving and those who have performed it in the past. Stakeholder 1, the Executive Director and CEO, noted that the children at the Crossnore School typically lacked bonds with their family, and as a result, they *“have just missed the kinds of things that are passed down – family traditions or an art like weaving.”*

Teaching a cultural tradition

While manuals and printed instructions oftentimes facilitate the teaching of a new skill, Stakeholder 4, a weaver, remarked that “*weaving is something you have to kinda get the feel for.*” Additionally, Stakeholder 6, one of the older weavers, pointed out that “*it’s not that you’re using a book; you’re showing someone how to weave on looms.*” The process of teaching the practice of weaving involves a combination of oral and visual explanations. Nevertheless, Stakeholder 4 claimed that “*it’s kinda one of those things that you have to just do it and learn as you go, so there’s not really a whole lot of training... You’re always learning. We’re all still learning.*” Stakeholder 4 added that:

“It’s a laborious job, and it takes a lot of grit to sit there and push yourself to stick with that, but it’s the love you have for that and for the Weaving Room and for those women to do that, to get that product out because you want to see this place go on. It’s the love; you can’t teach that.”

As a cultural tradition, weaving involves more than the physical motions of creating a hand-woven item on the loom. The cultural tradition carries a history with it, and an appreciation of this history cannot be taught. Stakeholder 6, one of the older weavers, mentioned that “*the more you did it, the more you saw how special weaving really is.*” This information system includes a subjective component that must be experienced in order to be fully understood. The concept of cultural heritage requires a certain type of interaction from the consumer of the information.

Learning a cultural tradition

The learning of a cultural tradition ties into its teaching. It also includes a subjective component on the part of the consumer of the information because the personal connection to a cultural tradition varies for each person. Stakeholder 6, an older weaver,

reflected that “*watching those women work and seeing how they took such pride in what they were doing*” influenced her learning of weaving. Stakeholder 4 contributed that:

“I don’t really know if there’s a word to describe what I fell in love with of it: it was just the atmosphere, the self-satisfaction of making something by your hand. It taught me a lot of qualities in life – morals and values that you don’t learn in a regular job. You have to care about what you’re doing, or you’re not going to put out a good product.”

The two weavers experienced different reactions to the cultural tradition, but both recognized the presence of pride in the work. Both weavers observed an aspect of the tradition that attracted their interest and led to continued learning.

Weaving as therapy

The perception of weaving as a form of therapy manifested itself within the interviews of all four weavers. These participants chose the terms “*fun*,” “*soothing*,” “*hypnotic*,” “*relaxing*,” and “*gratifying*” to describe their craft. Stakeholder 6, an older weaver, commented that it is “*a wonderful stress-reliever*,” and after making note of the laborious nature of weaving, Stakeholder 5, an older weaver, declared that with “*the enjoyment you get out of it, you can forget all that*.” Stakeholders 3, 4, and 6 all compared weaving to therapy, and these three weavers represent a wide range of age and experience. Particularly important for the role of the Weaving Room at the Crossnore School, Stakeholder 3 observed that:

“Weaving is such a therapy that when [the students] do sit down at that loom, you want them to be able to feel like they can just weave that stuff right out of their life, whatever was bad, whatever they want to get out of their lives – just let it go.”

This insight into the art of weaving added a new dimension to this cultural tradition’s continued practice at an institution such as the Crossnore School. Earlier in the interviews,

several of the participants had characterized the Crossnore School as a place of hope and healing for its students, and weaving helps with that process. While weaving originally met the needs of the local community, the cultural activity now offers abused children an outlet for the effects of their traumas. This instance of the influence of Appalachian cultural heritage applies uniquely to the Crossnore School and Weaving Room but still exemplifies an example of Appalachian culture worth recording as a contribution to the documentation of Appalachian culture as a whole.

The loom

The existence of a personal connection with a loom manifested itself within the interviews of all four of the weavers. These participants described their bond in different ways, but each felt tied to a specific loom. Stakeholder 4, the youngest weaver, said:

“I think I can speak for all of us to say the loom is an attachment. I mean, my loom is personal to me. I talk to my loom...It’s an attachment to that because you’re using your hands to guide it. It wouldn’t do it without you. You feel it, and you know how it works. I know if something is wrong on it. I know exactly where to look when I feel it going wrong...It becomes a part of you.”

A weaver works with a loom to create the woven item; the loom is the tool manipulated by a weaver to turn material into a hand-woven object. The loom embodies an essential component of teaching, learning, and practicing weaving. Like the tradition it enables, the loom also symbolizes an aspect of Appalachian cultural heritage.

The culture of women

Even though the weavers at the Weaving Room have worked with male students from the Crossnore School, weaving typically attracts female students and practitioners.

Through the transmission of cultural heritage information (teaching and learning a cultural tradition) and working with the loom, the women weavers created relationships with one another that serve as an integral element of the weaving process. The participants recognized the existence of a close relationship amongst those in the Weaving Room, which Stakeholder 6 portrayed as “*a home away from home*.” Stakeholder 4 declared: “*I want to think of the woman behind the loom when I think of weaving*.” Others also commented on the connection between the women, both past and present, through weaving. Characterizations of “*family*” and “*sisterhood*” illustrated the closeness of these bonds to these women. Stakeholder 4 also noted the “*connection to these women and who they are and where they came from, the respect we have for them*” when discussing these relationships. This culture of women connects every part of weaving. The women passed on their knowledge of the tradition, and in so doing, developed more traditions to be passed on through stories and other methods of communication. The culture of women promoted the transmission of cultural heritage information through their “*camaraderie*,” and this vital connection continues to help maintain an Appalachian cultural tradition.

DISCUSSION

Each participant in this study provided valuable information to the pre-determined questions of the researcher's instrument guide; nevertheless, the four weavers contributed the invaluable information leading to the unanticipated themes. The interviews revealed that weaving, an example of Appalachian culture, compels an oral information system in the form of stories passed down within a culture of women. Teaching and learning the cultural tradition involves experiencing it for oneself by manipulating the loom and interacting with the other weavers. As the therapeutic effects of weaving create a connection with a loom, the connection with weavers of the past becomes clear through the stories shared by the weavers of the present. The knowledge of the weaving culture persists as the women pass on the information, further illustrating the importance of the oral exchange of their collective experiences. This communal history embodies an essential component of the cultural heritage of Appalachia.

During the interviews, the participants established that Appalachian cultural heritage stems from the way of life in the mountains. Living in isolated, self-sufficient communities, the people of Appalachia continued to use the traditions of the past to provide for themselves. This "*root*" that they cultivated endures only to the extent that Appalachians maintain these practices or at least knowledge of them. Weaving no longer represents one of the limited options for supplying clothes and linens, and considering its labor-intensive nature, the practice of weaving likely would not have survived into the twenty-first century without the dedication of those at the Weaving Room and elsewhere. The weavers have

carried a part of the Appalachian “*root*” with them, and they have also helped define it. As practitioners of a cultural tradition, the weavers interpret their craft through their modern perspective, but the innate connection with the past furnishes the true Appalachian context. These women care about this aspect of Appalachian cultural heritage because of their bond with the weavers of the past – Appalachian women of the past. The culture of women created through teaching and learning weaving promotes that bond and encourages the preservation of the tradition. This environment of undocumented , oral narratives and experiences presents an ideal situation for recording a facet of the cultural heritage of a specific group of people.

The data presented in this case study exemplifies the intangible cultural heritage described by UNESCO as highly at risk to be lost. Cultural traditions with a considerable oral component must be recorded in order to ensure their preservation, and Appalachian culture lacks such attention. Systematic research documenting the features of local instances of cultural traditions needs to be undertaken while the sources of information can still participate. The transmission of the cultural heritage information relevant to weaving at the Crossnore School reflects the history and current state of an Appalachian community and its people. This small part of Appalachia adds to the culture of the region as a whole but reflects only itself. While weaving has survived at the Crossnore School for almost a century, knowledge of that process remained undocumented until now. Unfortunately, numerous other examples of Appalachian cultural heritage undoubtedly still remain neglected.

SUMMARY

The researcher approached this study with the intention of documenting Appalachian cultural heritage at a school that offers its students the opportunity to learn the cultural practice of weaving. Teaching culture embodies an information system that is relevant to numerous academic disciplines, yet few studies have sought to record aspects of Appalachian culture that reflect positively on the region and its people. Nine stakeholders of the Crossnore School and Weaving Room shared their thoughts and experiences with the researcher and provided insight into a local instance of Appalachian culture within the mountains of western North Carolina. The four weavers presented the most relevant information concerning the impact of weaving as a facet of Appalachian culture, but each participant contributed an important point of view for the recording of the Appalachian perspective.

Culture embodies a somewhat elusive set of characteristics of groups ranging in size from small communities to regions and countries and even larger areas of the world. As an abstract concept, culture exhibits a fluidity that renders its documentation a difficult task; nevertheless, researchers should confront the challenge. Organizations such as UNESCO promote the preservation of cultural heritage, and research studies possess the potential to contribute to such missions. The twentieth century instigated enormous cultural changes within the U.S. and throughout the world, and several academic fields look at these important transformations. Appalachia represents an American cultural group that receives attention from researchers but not typically to chronicle the socially-positive cultural traits of

the Appalachian people. This research study seeks to document an aspect of Appalachian culture by examining the place of a cultural tradition within the curriculum of a unique school. The studies cited in the literature review illustrate that researchers often focus on Appalachia and its people because of the socially-negative trends prevalent in the region; however, high rates of high school dropouts, adolescent pregnancy, and mental illness (particularly depression) fail to record even a remotely comprehensive review of components of Appalachian culture. Moreover, the intangible cultural heritage connected to Appalachian traditions stands at a risk of irreparable loss if it is not recorded as soon as possible. The lack of systematic research documenting the culture of Appalachia not only justifies but encourages studies that seek to provide this information.

By focusing on the Weaving Room at the Crossnore School, this study records the role of Appalachian culture in an environment that actively acknowledges the regional culture. Through semistructured interviews, the various stakeholder participants provided their individual interpretations of Appalachian culture and its place at this unique school. This method of empirical research offers credibility to the data and transferability to the research process. The data collected for this study has been organized into a case study of the Crossnore School and Weaving Room that contributes to the body of knowledge of the Appalachian culture and people.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Instrument Guide

How would you describe the Crossnore School?

What is the purpose of the Weaving Room at Crossnore?

How are the Crossnore School and the Weaving Room related?

Were they related differently in the past? How so?

Is there an Appalachian cultural heritage?

Is weaving an important part of Appalachian cultural heritage?

What are important parts of Appalachian cultural heritage?

Are they now different from the past?

Does the Crossnore School reflect any of those attributes today?

Did it reflect different attributes in the past?

Is it possible to learn Appalachian cultural heritage in school? How so? Why not?

Do you consider yourself Appalachian? Why? Why not?

Is the Crossnore School an Appalachian school?

Could the Crossnore School exist outside of Appalachia?

Where do you consider Appalachia to be located?

Does the Crossnore, North Carolina community differ from the rest of Appalachia? Why? Why not?

Does Avery County differ from the rest of Appalachia? Why? Why not?

Does western North Carolina differ from the rest of Appalachia? Why ? Why not?

Appendix B

Excerpts from the Interview Questions Transcript

How would you describe the Crossnore School?

Stakeholder 1: *The Crossnore School is a children's home and school for abused, abandoned, neglected children from primarily the mountains of North Carolina. We have always, these ninety-eight years, almost a century, have really made mountain children a priority.*

Stakeholder 5: *A lot of people think that this is just a children's home, but these children are loved, and that's what it takes.*

Stakeholder 6: *I have never seen a place that cares for children like Crossnore School... There's just nothing that Crossnore School won't try to do for these kids.*

Stakeholder 7: *It's an amazing place; what we do is amazing. It's not just a children's home, it's a children's home and school. It's a safe haven. It's a place to not only keep them safe but to help them heal and give them hope.*

Stakeholder 8: *A haven for kids who don't have homes or families and a sanctuary to children and families. Crossnore is like a family with lots of love.*

Stakeholder 9: *Crossnore is the best place for the children. It has a family atmosphere, and it is preparing them to be successful.*

What is the purpose of the Weaving Room at Crossnore?

Stakeholder 1: *Dr. Sloop had a passion, first of all, for the art of Appalachian weaving and had some concern that it might become extinct...so number one, the Weaving Room continues to be our commitment to historical preservation in these mountains. A love for Appalachian weaving that began with Dr. Sloop, and the thread is woven through to my heart today. Second, she felt like there*

are a number of women who, this is an art that has been passed down from generation to generation—their great-grandmother, their grandmother, their mother, now them. They have this art, and it would provide some extra income for their family because...we are still getting first generation high school diplomas in the mountains, so women haven't always had the opportunity to go to college. That was a vision that [Dr. Sloop] had, and it continues to be a vision of helping ease the poverty for mountain women and their families...Lastly, the purpose of the Weaving Room, it helps us tell our story...Everything that has happened in that building for all these decades speaks so loudly to the work of healing and hope. It's a very important part of who we are.

Stakeholder 3: *The Weaving Room was started in, I'm thinking 1926, by some women that came up from a college to teach weaving to the local women and the children here. When she got here, she decided she was going to start a class, and it would be a good income for the local Appalachian women. They would take looms home with them and weave pieces and bring them back, and she would pay them by the piece.*

Stakeholder 4: *The Weaving Room actually was started right with the school. Mrs. Sloop wanted to start it to offer women in the community a place to work, provide income. She had went to Berea and learned it, and she wanted to pass that trade on to the students...It was kinda like the classroom at that time. It was more student-oriented but also for the women of the community...I think she was kinda trying to teach them a trade, something to do for themselves because there wasn't a lot of education in the mountains.*

Stakeholder 5: *The weaving here started as a way of the women making money to help support their family, and they had looms in their home. And then they brought their weaving back in, and sometimes they'd trade it for clothing at the sale store. Sometimes I think they did get paid some. It just gradually spread until the opening up of the Weaving Room.*

Stakeholder 6: *I think that the Weaving Room is the open door to Crossnore School. Now when Ms. Phillips was here – she started the weaving program – it’s just a special place. People come when they see our weaving, and they love to watch the weaving. I think the Lord has blessed this place, I really do...It’s part of the school, but yet it’s a heritage thing from Dr. Sloop...I think that the Weaving Room always needs to be here.*

Stakeholder 7: *The Weaving Room has always been vital in, first of all, providing work opportunities for students and community; for bringing visitors to the campus; it’s a huge attraction to get folks here, and once they come to the Weaving Room, it gives us a chance to tell them what we’re really all about; it’s a great self-help; it brings in funding to help take care of the children and the program.*

Stakeholder 8: *The Weaving Room originally helped local people who couldn’t get an education.*

Stakeholder 9: *The Weaving Room was a way for people in the community to make money.*

How are the Crossnore School and Weaving Room related?

Stakeholder 1: *The profit [of the Weaving Room] ends up supporting our mission of providing hope and healing for these mountain children.*

Stakeholder 3: *Once [the students] get about thirteen, they’re able to get jobs, and they come down from the school and fill out an application, and they come in, and we teach them a work ethic...We are here for the children. We’re all here for helping the children...We’re actually kinda an open door for the Crossnore School because they can’t just walk into the school buildings and walk into the office. People come [to the Weaving Room], and we tell them the story of Crossnore and the Sloops and what we’re here for – that we’re healing children.*

Stakeholder 4: *For all privileges [such as off-campus dates], we had to work for that, which I think is great because a lot of us come here without having to do things like that. A lot of us come,*

and we've got no responsibilities, no work ethic, and it pushes that, to say that if you want to do these things, you've got to work for it...It was kinda a requirement that got me there at first.

Stakeholder 5: *The proceeds from our weaving go to support the school.*

Stakeholder 6: *The Weaving Room is part of the Crossnore School, and the proceeds that we make by selling our weaving goes to support the school and the kids...It's hard to explain the Crossnore School and the Weaving Room; it just goes together.*

Stakeholder 7: *I think that everything in the back of [Dr. Sloop's] mind to me must have been a way to bring in revenue to take care of the children, but she also cared about the bigger, larger community, and I think it was a way to create jobs for community ladies.*

Stakeholder 9: *Mountain heritage had a lot to do with Crossnore being founded...The Weaving Room is part of the Crossnore package "selling Crossnore"...It is one of the front doors for donors to come in...It teaches students how to work.*

Is there an Appalachian cultural heritage?

Stakeholder 1: *Maybe it's part of the mountain culture: we never forget where we came from.*

Regardless of the Twittering and Facebook world, we haven't forgotten our roots, and they're still treasured.

Stakeholder 2: *People born and raised in this area have a lot to be proud of...We have a fine story to tell people...The mountains tell you the history...a way of life.*

Stakeholder 3: *Yes. The people that are here are very proud and very, kinda their own people. They're hard workers. You live up here in the mountains, and it's cold, and it's a hard life. It's a tough life. They freeze to death in the winter time and have to work real hard in the summer time to have enough food to live through the winter time. I think it's a rare breed to want to live up here year-round...It's hard to make money when you live up here in the mountains. You're never rich*

when you live here, but you're rich in other ways. You're rich in happiness and warmth; it's just a different place to live.

Stakeholder 4: *There's still that sense of family, tradition, holding those roots. People really, I think, are trying to hold to those roots...There's something about this place that is in [the people] – that root of a mountain man or a mountain woman that still stands out above other people. There's just something; a value, I don't know what word I'm looking for. There's a root – there's just something that they hold dear to...They're mountain people...How really kinda prideful and stubborn they are. This is their land...It's those little things that other people in other places have probably let go. That kindness, that gentle-heartedness of things...that mutual respect...How strong people carry that history and the roots of their people I think is important to keeping a closeness or a heritage of something...It's a prideful thing for these men and women in these mountains.*

Stakeholder 5: *The people are more giving and friendlier...Everybody is a part of [the terrain]. When I grew up, when you heard of Appalachia, they were poor people...but I don't think it's as cruel as it was back when I was growing up.*

Stakeholder 6: *Most of the people here are outside workers, hard workers. They don't care to get their hands dirty...I think that mountain people have good morals.*

Stakeholder 7: *I think our unique thing that we do have is the Weaving Room. I think that's unlike many of the [similar schools]...I think that [Appalachia] is a proud people. It's a region. You might want to leave, but you'll definitely want to come back. It's a beautiful area...A lot of the old customs are still used here...We're very family-oriented in this area...People say "clannish" when describing mountain people.*

Stakeholder 8: *Being self-sufficient and living on one's own...Appalachian children were financially poor but not spiritually poor. They have parents who are hard working.*

Stakeholder 9: *The people and the mountains are Appalachia. It's beautiful, low crime, and everybody knows everybody else. Mountain people are different in the way they talk and their values. They used to try to be self-sufficient and worked hard to get what they needed...Old-timey mountain people were hard working and never owed money.*

Is weaving an important part of Appalachian cultural heritage?

Stakeholder 1: *beautiful Appalachian art...a hand-woven treasure*

Stakeholder 3: *Oh yes, I think so...I remind [my students] of it, too. That it's a unique thing, something they need to treasure and maybe pass down to their children.*

Stakeholder 4: *Yes, because it's been passed down. It's something that's kept. Not a lot of hand things have been able to stay held up in society, but because it's been passed down so strongly and held so strongly in the hearts of women and children, I do believe that it is a heritage and culture. It's a history; it's a part of these people and I'm sure of these places because the generation continues to pass it on...I think the love and strength of that love for it is what has kept it going.*

Stakeholder 5: *It's mostly done in the mountains...The majority of it is done just around in the area...People had to weave to have clothes, to have bed sheets. At first they didn't have but two or three dresses a year because they had to weave the material and make them...I think that the young people need to know how they did back then to survive...It's a dying culture if we don't teach it.*

Stakeholder 6: *Weaving is a dying art. You don't see a place like [the Weaving Room] in a lot of areas.*

Stakeholder 7: *I think that we are keeping alive an Appalachian tradition. We're keeping alive something that would have been lost much like quilting and that sort of thing.*

Stakeholder 8: *The Weaving Room had a lot of respect. If you got a job there, it was respected...it was an honor to work at the Weaving Room. Weaving is significant in Appalachian culture because mountain people were self-sufficient.*

Stakeholder 9: *Weaving is an Appalachian tradition that produces well-made products made in America.*

What are important parts of Appalachian cultural heritage?

Stakeholder 3: *Craft. The people that make them have worked hard to make them as pretty as they make them. It's something they've really worked at. It's art more than a craft because it really is beautiful when they're finished, it's beautiful. There is a lot of handicraft artists in the Appalachian Mountains that make beautiful things...The mountain people are very friendly. They have this sweetness about them, especially the older people, to me. I love talking to the older weavers and feeling that sweetness that's in their voice.*

Stakeholder 4: *I know that there's weaving, but there's probably a lot of things in each small town that would stand out. The farming, the root, the grit, the toughness for people...that culture, the love for their ancestors, of why they came here, of the hard work it took in these mountains. That would really probably be it...I want to teach [my kids] that...I do want them to learn that.*

Stakeholder 6: *Living in the mountains and doing this type of work, a lot of people in the mountains create their own art. I think that years ago, when they didn't have a lot of jobs, a lot of money...people were creating little things. To me, that's art...that all goes along with mountain heritage...When I think of the mountains, I think of hard, honest, working people. They have a lot of talent.*

Stakeholder 7: *I think a lot of people are interested in the old way of life, how things used to be done...I see [the women of the Weaving Room] as true, genuine, and when I say mountain women,*

mountain women are just kind, caring. They remind me of my mom, my grandmother, my aunts...They sorta buddle around someone and support them and lift them up...The type of work allows for that...I hear things that let you know there's a special bond...We're trying to teach a better work ethic – the old-fashioned work ethic we all grew up in the mountains with.

Stakeholder 8: *Mountain people are very loyal to each other. People who live in Appalachia are very family-oriented, musically-inclined, and possibly artistic. These values were learned as a child, and Crossnore is trying to instill them in children today...People come visit to return to a simpler time, to the past. Mountain heritage is one heritage we're all from.*

Are they now different from the past?

Stakeholder 3: *I think it was such a hard place to live that they had to learn to make things to get by, so as they made their own bowls and their own chairs and their own tables because they couldn't afford to purchase them, they just became wonderful at it. It became beautiful work...We can't find what the Appalachian people make in the Wal-Mart. The quality is not there; the love is not in it. It's beautiful – it's not a Wal-Mart piece.*

Do you consider yourself Appalachian? Why? Why not?

Stakeholder 3: *I try to tell [my daughter] to always hold her mountains in her heart because they're nowhere else. You can't find them anywhere else. It's really hard to explain to your children what you feel in your heart about the mountains...I am close to the mountains.*

Is the Crossnore School an Appalachian school?

Stakeholder 1: *Yes.*

Stakeholder 3: *Yes.*

Stakeholder 6: *I think so.*

Stakeholder 7: *We're located in the middle of the Appalachians.*

Stakeholder 8: *Not today.*

Could the Crossnore School exist outside of Appalachia?

Stakeholder 1: *I think that there are pieces of us that are so uniquely Appalachian that...[no one else is] going to have a weaving program.*

Stakeholder 3: *I don't think so. Up here in the mountains, there's a peace and a tranquility to healing for children. I think that this is where we were meant to heal...I think it's just a beautiful setting and a beautiful place for children to heal. I don't think they could heal as [well] anywhere else.*

Stakeholder 7: *I think it could – maybe not the Weaving Room, but the school itself.*

Where do you consider Appalachia to be located?

Stakeholder 3: *I guess Cherokee up through the Parkway. All of the Blue Ridge.*

Stakeholder 5: *The mountains of Virginia...Over near Asheville...This probably is, but I just don't consider it that.*

Does the Crossnore, North Carolina community differ from the rest of Appalachia? Why? Why not?

Stakeholder 5: *This is a special place. There's just something here that draws you to it, like a magnet.*

Does Avery County differ from the rest of Appalachia? Why? Why not?

Stakeholder 3: *I would think so because I'm a little bit prejudiced. I love the mountains, and Avery County is my home. I would never leave. When God puts you somewhere, that's where you need to be. I feel like I was placed here for this job and this place, for Crossnore School, for the children.*

Does western North Carolina differ from the rest of Appalachia? Why? Why not?

Stakeholder 1: *I don't know. The common denominator in the Appalachian Mountains has always been poverty, but there's definitely uniqueness in these different little pockets of Appalachia.*

Appendix C

Thematic Excerpts from the Interview Transcript

The transmission of cultural heritage information

Stakeholder 1: *Always starting from scratch. I don't think I've ever in my twelve years here seen a student who actually came with weaving ability. In broken homes, if there's not a connection to your biological parents and not even your grandparents or uncles and aunts, etc., etc., a lot of our children have just missed the kinds of things that are passed down — family traditions or an art like weaving or quilting.*

Stakeholder 3: *We talk about the school. We talk about the weavers here. We always tell the stories of the older women. When I came to work here, we would weave, and they would tell the stories of Ms. Ossie, the manager that was here for thirty-something years, would tell her. They tease each other. They say, "Little Ms. Carmie would say, 'Oh, she'd put Tom Selleck's shoes under her bed anytime.'" Cute little stories of the little women chewing tobacco and spitting, and when we wind a bobbin and the yarn falls off, they call it a snotty nose bobbin. And when they walk by, they'll say, "Do you have a snotty nose?" It's really fun. It's a lot of Appalachian old sayings that we just hand down to each other as we go. It's warm and fun.*

Stakeholder 4: *I've learned a lot about the history just through their stories. They sit around and talk about these women and things they did...I love hearing the stories.*

Stakeholder 5: *The older women that worked here passed their legacy down to me...and I think it has been that way to keep it going:...your knowledge of your weaving, how you set up your loom, how you set your patterns up.*

Stakeholder 6: *I could go out to Wal-Mart and buy a throw, but it wouldn't be hand-made. There's just something about making something with your hands and knowing that you could put it*

together...the quality, and I think just knowing that it was made by someone who took pride in what they were doing.

Teaching a cultural tradition

Stakeholder 1: *They start off with very simple things like weaving, I think the first thing they're taught to do are little coasters – they're one-colored normally and small in size – on one of our smallest looms. And then they might progress from that to the old coarse-woven placemats, again, doing solid colors, and then maybe spinning some new fabrics, or new materials, rather, doing chenille or an alpaca scarf. But again, you would start with solid colors. You would progress to more intricate patterns, and you would progress over time to historic patterns. It's generally our older mountain women who truly can recreate those historical pieces that we always have...That becomes what your very sophisticated, most experienced mountain weavers could do.*

Stakeholder 3: *[Teaching how to weave] is a very long process...It takes a whole day to get your pattern threaded on your loom. It's very time-consuming...Weaving is actually the fun part. First, we let them sit down and weave a little bit just to see if they like it because if you don't like it, you're not going to like the set-up...We let them sit down and pass the shuttle a little bit and thread with some color, see what they're making, what they're going to make. And then once they see what the product is, we take them downstairs and say "Would you like to learn how to put a warp on? We'll show you how to dress your loom."*

Stakeholder 4: *Weaving is something you have to kinda get the feel for. You can't just really stand there and just show somebody exactly what to do. It's something you say, "Now this is the basic, this is how you start, this is how a loom works," and you just kinda have to go with it. And that's kinda how they did me. They put me over there – they start them now on coasters, but I started right at placemats...The thing is, say for example, a broken string, they can't teach you that until you*

break a string...It's kinda one of those things that you have to just do it and learn as you go, so there's not really a whole lot of training...You're always learning. We're all still learning.

Stakeholder 4: *I have no patience in life, but I have so much patience for my loom and weaving...It's a laborious job, and it takes a lot of grit to sit there and push yourself to stick with that, but it's the love you have for that and for the Weaving Room and for those women to do that, to get that product out because you want to see this place go on. It's the love; you can't teach that.*

Stakeholder 6: *You start out by explaining to them how the loom works and then exactly what weaving is...It's not that you're using a book; you're showing someone how to weave on looms...The more you did it, the more you saw how special weaving really is.*

Learning a cultural tradition

Stakeholder 4: *That's when I found my love for it. I loved the women, and I knew that, but the actual weaving part of it came after I graduated and kinda had matured a little. I don't really know if there's a word to describe what I fell in love with of it: it was just the atmosphere, the self-satisfaction of making something by your hand. It taught me a lot of qualities in life – morals and values that you don't learn in a regular job. You have to care about what you're doing, or you're not going to put out a good product. That was a really great thing for me being young.*

Stakeholder 6: *Watching those women work and seeing how they took such pride in what they were doing [taught me the history of weaving].*

Weaving as therapy

Stakeholder 3: *It's really fun, too. Once you get to weaving, it's almost like therapy. It's a real soothing job, and you really kinda get engrossed in it. It kinda swallows you once you start.*

Stakeholder 3: *Weaving is such a therapy that when [the students] do sit down at that loom, you want them to be able to feel like they can just weave that stuff right out of their life, whatever was bad, whatever they want to get out of their lives — just let it go.*

Stakeholder 4: *This was a therapy for me. When the students come in, I can see the same thing in them...These women helped me, and I just want to be able to help these kids.*

Stakeholder 5: *I've been here for about thirty-two years, off and on. I've left to do other jobs that paid more at that time, but this always draws me back. It's just...something hypnotic about it. You just want to be here...It is one of the most relaxing jobs I've ever had...I just love it.*

Stakeholder 5: *It's hard work; it's back-breaking, but the enjoyment you get out of it, you can forget all that. I really think everybody ought to learn to weave...It's just a job I love.*

Stakeholder 5: *[Weaving] takes patience.*

Stakeholder 6: *[Weaving] is a wonderful stress-reliever...I think it's easy to meditate, and it's gratifying, and I think that it's just a good therapy.*

Stakeholder 7: *[Weaving] is hard work; it's time-consuming, so I think that it takes a lot of patience...and talent...I think it's amazing. I'm in awe of the work that they do.*

The loom

Stakeholder 3: *I don't know how to say. It's very, the loom is very spiritual for me. I feel like I can come close to God when I'm weaving. I have lots of prayer time. As my shuttle flies, I feel like I can relate to the women years ago as they threw their shuttle. The children that I teach, I hope they feel the same thing. I hope they feel one with the loom like I do.*

Stakeholder 4: *I think I can speak for all of us to say the loom is an attachment. I mean, my loom is personal to me. I talk to my loom...It's an attachment to that because you're using your hands to guide it. It wouldn't do it without you. You feel it, and you know how it works. I know if*

something is wrong on it. I know exactly where to look when I feel it going wrong...It becomes a part of you, and the weaving is part of that because you're making that product. Your hands is what actually creates the whole thing...It's just such a tool of therapy to me. I don't know if cooking or something would do that for me as much as that loom, and I don't know if it's because so many women over the years have worked on that and it's been passed down with their sweat and their hard work to do that. There's something about it. It's a therapy.

Stakeholder 6: *The loom that I use now belonged to Ossie, and I love it...She wove on it, so the history is always there. Always. Always.*

The culture of women

Stakeholder 4: *I started when I was seventeen; I was a student worker. At first it was a student job. I was a seventeen-year-old, and I loved the women, but the job itself wasn't as exciting — it was work.*

Stakeholder 4: *When I think of weaving, I think of...I wouldn't really say I think of a place as much as I think of a culture...I always think of people when I think of weaving. I think of these women...that have probably slaved over these looms for centuries. At one point in time, this is all they had...I want to think of the woman behind the loom when I think of weaving.*

Stakeholder 4: *The connection to the people, to the women here. The connection to them, to life, like a therapy. We allow them to come into our hearts and really believe in all of the connections...It's that connection to these women and who they are and where they came from, the respect we have for them.*

Stakeholder 4: *The weaving, because of the history, the root of all these women passing that on, the women that have worked so hard for their families by weaving and providing that, it instills something in you — a self-satisfaction of putting that product out.*

Stakeholder 5: *I like the people I work with. We're all just one big family.*

Stakeholder 5: *Little jokes. We have one, she's passed on now, but she used to sit there and she'd get aggravated, and she'd say, "Ohh, let them go eat creek worms and die!" And she was so in love with Tom Selleck. She'd say, "Oh, he can put his shoes under my bed any day." You just think back, little comical phrases like that, they have said, and sometimes you just sit there and chuckle and nobody will know what you're laughing about...Camaraderie...And we always, well, we don't do it anymore, but when the older people were here...we'd have a spread for Christmas...And just little things like that. We don't do that anymore, and you kinda miss that...[My stories of the past] let them know that we had fun back then, too...And if we wanted to take off and take a walk, we'd just go, and one would say, "I'm going downtown," and "What town?" And just little comical things like that...It's just like one big family.*

Stakeholder 6: *[People come visit the Weaving Room] because of the atmosphere they feel. I think when they come in, they feel sort of a, I don't know, it's like a bonding.*

Stakeholder 6: *It's amazing how you are connected with these people that weave...It's a sisterhood...It's like a big family working together for the same reason. It's not just because you love to weave. It's because you're weaving and you're thinking, "Now if this sells, this is going to help Crossnore School get what they need." I believe that these student workers who come down here, I believe they get a lot from us...I think that we whipped up a mother and grandmother feelings in them, something that maybe some of them have never had.*

Stakeholder 6: *The Weaving Room is like a home away from home...I have never dreaded going to work...These girls down here, they're my family.*

Stakeholder 6: *[Another weaver] and I, we tell little stories about these old women...I think they like hearing stories about how we used to just, even though we were on piecework...we'd just quit*

our work and get out and take a walk. They like hearing stories about those little women dipping snuff, and they'd each have their spit pans sitting at their loom...They were all like sisters.

Stakeholder 7: *I probably would [describe the Weaving Room specifically as a women's culture].*

Stakeholder 8: *A student has camaraderie with people in the Weaving Room; it is like a home to her...I would buy a very special present at the Weaving Room because it is lovingly-made and high quality.*