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Dewey Meets Bluegrass: Progressive Educational Theory in the Establishment of Traditional
Music Programs in Higher Education

A thesis
presented to
the faculty of the School of Continuing Studies and Academic Outreach
East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Master of Arts in Liberal Studies

by
John Curtis Goad
May 2015

Dr. Ron Roach, Chair
Dr. Marie Tedesco
Dr. Nathaniel Olson

Keywords: Traditional music, Music education, John Dewey, Pedagogy, Appalachia

ABSTRACT

Dewey Meets Bluegrass: Progressive Educational Theory in the Establishment of Traditional Music Programs in Higher Education

by

John Curtis Goad

The study focuses on connections between the Progressive era educational theories of John Dewey and present-day bluegrass and traditional music programs in higher education in order to explore a pedagogical basis for such programs. The research specifically examines Dewey's beliefs in experiential learning, individualization, and vocational education and their current applications in traditional music education. The study included two major components: historical research into Dewey's writings and primary and secondary sources regarding traditional music education in the United States, and interviews of faculty members in college and university bluegrass and traditional music programs. The thesis of this study is that experiential learning historically has been part of traditional music education and that it is an essential aspect of bluegrass and traditional music programs in higher education in the present day, leading to students taking part in meaningful learning experiences that contribute to their occupational goals.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In December 2012, I became one of the first ten East Tennessee State University students to graduate with a bachelor's degree in Bluegrass, Old Time, and Country Music Studies. Although I was certainly glad to have completed that aspect of my education, I soon found that many members of both the academic community and the general public were unfamiliar with the purpose of such a degree. In the two and a half years since I received my degree, I have been asked what I plan to do with my degree, how my degree will help me get ahead in society, and even if I feel like my degree was a waste of time and money. While obtaining a degree in the study of bluegrass and traditional Appalachian music is not a standard educational path, I believe that it does provide students with an individualized, practical education that cannot be found in some more traditional academic disciplines. However, as I searched for research that supported my personal beliefs, I found that few scholarly studies focused on the educational offerings of such programs. My study of interdisciplinarity as a student in the Master of Arts in Liberal Studies program at East Tennessee State University prompted my search for connections between educational theory and the historical use of traditional Appalachian music in educational settings.

Preeminent Appalachian scholar Cratis Williams taught the first course in traditional Appalachian music, "Appalachian Ballads and Songs," at Appalachian State Teachers College (now Appalachian State University) in 1943.¹ Beginning in the 1970s, several other colleges and universities began incorporating the music's study into their curricula. Today, the International Bluegrass Music Association (IBMA) lists seventeen colleges and universities in the United

¹ Appalachian Studies Association, "ASA Timeline," Appalachian Studies Association, last modified 2015, accessed March 1, 2015, <http://appalachianstudies.org/resources/timeline.php>.

States that offer courses in the study of traditional Appalachian music. The extent of these courses ranges from instrumental instruction and band performance ensemble classes to associate, bachelor's, and master's degrees.²

Because the academic study of traditional Appalachian music education is a fairly recent development, only a few scholarly works have focused on the topic. Perhaps the most thorough treatment of the subject is Nathaniel Olson's 2014 dissertation, "The Institutionalization of Fiddling in Higher Education: Three Cases." Olson included a case study of one university (given the pseudonym of Cumberland State University) that offers a bluegrass and traditional music degree program. Olson presented impressions gathered from observations of classes and interviews with faculty and students within the program. While his main focus was the teaching of fiddling within the program, he also contributed valuable insights about the program's overall pedagogy, describing how both the past and the future inform its coursework. According to Olson, the program's curriculum recognizes its historical roots in musicians "who learned through imitation and by listening to recordings" and "at the same time, the Program is responsive to the current trends of the industry... which emphasize musical virtuosity, recording capabilities, and web distribution."³ The program's director Tim detailed how students learn through various experiences such as performing music in public, setting up sound equipment, and selling albums at record tables, in addition to learning through research into the history of the music and its theoretical basis, and in summation, said that "They learn how to do it by

² International Bluegrass Music Association, "University Bluegrass & Music Business Programs," International Bluegrass Music Association, last modified 2015, accessed February 26, 2015, <https://ibma.org/resources/university-bluegrass-programs>.

³ Nathaniel J. Olson, "The Institutionalization of Fiddling in Higher Education: Three Cases" (EdD diss., Columbia University, 2014), 222, accessed March 21, 2015, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1545887806?accountid=10771>.

actually doing it.”⁴ The students in the Cumberland State University program seemed to be invested fully in a number of experiential learning activities that could lead to an ultimate career within the traditional music field.

In her 2014 master’s thesis, “‘That’s the way I’ve always learned’: The Transmission of Traditional Music in Higher Education,” Alexandra Frank corroborates Olson’s analysis. Frank included brief case studies of three institutions that offer bluegrass and traditional music programs: East Tennessee State University, Hazard Community and Technical College, and Volunteer State Community College. Within these case studies, she investigated how the institutions have incorporated traditional methods of musical transmission into the higher education setting, as well as how the institutions prepare students for life after college. In discussing Hazard Community and Technical College’s Kentucky School of Bluegrass and Traditional Music, Frank mentioned that “in their final semester at the college, students create a portfolio that they will be able to use to promote themselves when they leave the program.”⁵ This shows another example of the incorporation of experiential learning into the traditional music curriculum and again demonstrates the connection between the curriculum and vocational goals. Frank also explained that students of traditional music are encouraged to individualize their learning experiences. Adam Steffey, an instructor at East Tennessee State University, told Frank that one of his favorite aspects of traditional music is that musicians often shape the music they play to fit how they personally interpret the piece. Dan Boner, the director of East Tennessee State University’s Bluegrass, Old Time, and Country Music Studies program, built upon Steffey’s statement, saying that he is “a proponent of creating music and students writing their

⁴ Olson, “The Institutionalization of Fiddling in Higher Education,” 227.

⁵ Alexandra Frank, “‘That’s the way I’ve always learned’: The Transmission of Traditional Music in Higher Education” (Master’s thesis, East Tennessee State University, 2014), 55, accessed March 21, 2015, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1536352488>.

own material.”⁶ These examples emphasize the promotion of creativity and student-directed learning in such programs.

As the major claim of my thesis, I propose that the aspects of the traditional music curriculum mentioned by Olson and Frank, and discussed in more depth in the following chapters of this thesis, stem from traditional music education’s adherence to Progressive era educator John Dewey’s belief in an experiential education that provides students with meaningful learning experiences that connect to their life and goals. My work is based in interdisciplinarity, which Joe Moran, in his book *Interdisciplinarity*, defines as “any form of dialogue or interaction between two or more disciplines.” Moran furthers this basic definition by suggesting that “interdisciplinarity is always transformative in some way, producing new forms of knowledge in its engagement with discrete disciplines.”⁷ For this thesis, I draw from the disciplines of history and education to discuss the historical development of traditional Appalachian music education and to apply concepts of educational theory to such educational programs. I seek to explore the parallels between bluegrass and traditional music pedagogy and the theories of Dewey, who promoted experiential learning, vocational education, and students’ freedom in learning. I will trace a path from late nineteenth- and twentieth-century educators in Appalachia whose work paralleled such educational theories to present-day educators throughout the United States who have used much of the same pedagogical basis to transform a regional folk music into accredited college and university coursework.

Because this work focuses on the teaching of a regional music, regional theory also informed my research. Douglas Reichert Powell explains that critical regionalism is a pedagogy in and of itself, “one that teaches students how to draw their own regional maps connecting their

⁶ Frank, “‘That’s the way I’ve always learned’,” 76.

⁷ Joe Moran, *Interdisciplinarity* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 14-15.

experience to that of others near and far, both like and unlike themselves.”⁸ According to Powell, “regions are not so much places themselves but ways of describing relationships among places.”⁹ Although the music taught in the programs I investigated has roots in the southern Appalachian Mountains, it has spread throughout the United States. Colleges and universities both inside and outside of the geographic region have added it to their curricula. This thesis explores the ways in which a traditional style of music, linked with a specific region, has become a part of formalized education. I will offer further definitions of the region, the music, and educational terms below.

College and university traditional Appalachian music programs frequently express the goal to prepare graduates for careers based in traditional music, either as professional musicians or within the music industry as publicists, managers, or educators. They seek to prepare students to participate in life outside of the school environment. In order to accomplish these goals, as Olson and Frank stated, they offer students meaningful learning experiences with explicit learning outcomes. I will show, through critical and reflective analysis of historical data and interviews with faculty members at six of the seventeen institutions on the aforementioned IBMA list, that present-day traditional Appalachian music programs at institutions of higher education represent recent manifestations of Dewey’s educational theory.

The rest of this chapter outlines the methodology of my study and offers definitions for several terms used throughout the thesis. In Chapter Two, I review the incorporation of traditional Appalachian music into educational curricula between the turn of the twentieth century and the present. I also briefly summarize the historical roots of music education in America, beginning in the seventeenth century. Chapter Three discusses the growth of bluegrass

⁸ Douglas Reichert Powell, *Critical Regionalism: Connecting Politics and Culture in the American Landscape* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 8.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 10.

and traditional music programs in higher education, utilizing historical interviews, periodical and journal articles, and publicly available information from bluegrass and traditional music programs. In Chapter Four, I summarize the findings of my interviews. This chapter also includes the bulk of my analysis comparing Dewey's educational theories and current bluegrass and traditional music programs. This chapter incorporates evidence from interviews and historical research. Chapter Five concludes the thesis by summarizing my findings, determining if the study was able to meet its intended goals, and providing recommendations for future research and program planning.

Methodology

This thesis combines historical research with semi-structured interviews. As mentioned previously, my research mainly draws from the disciplines of history and education and combines research methods from both disciplines. For much of my research, I relied on historical primary and secondary sources about bluegrass and traditional music education. In their book *From Reliable Sources*, Martha C Howell and Walter Prevenier wrote that historical research depends on historical sources. They defined sources as “artifacts that have been left by the past.”¹⁰ These artifacts can take many forms, including relics and oral and written testimonies, but must reference past events.¹¹ In contrast, the interviews I conducted specifically focused on present-day bluegrass and traditional music programs. In the chapter “Interviewing as Educational Research Method(s),” contained within the book *Educational Research and Inquiry*, Andrew J. Hobson and Andrew Townsend referred to interviews as one “of the most frequently

¹⁰ Martha C. Howell and Walter Prevenier, *From Reliable Sources: An Introduction to Historical Methods* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 17.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 17-18.

used methods of generating data in educational... research.”¹² Hobson and Townsend noted that interviews are especially beneficial in the education field because they allow researchers to “cover a broader range of issues” than observations or surveys.¹³ In the text *Educational Research: Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed Approaches*, authors Burke Johnson and Larry Christensen discussed the combination of historical and educational research. Johnson and Christensen wrote that readers “might wonder why a chapter on historical research is included in a textbook on educational research methods. Historical research obviously has to focus on events occurring in the past, and our primary concern is with improving the current and future educational process.”¹⁴ However, Burke and Johnson also noted that “historical research provides a means for capitalizing on the past.”¹⁵ By combining historical and educational research methods and applying historical research methods to a topic based in education, I will show how the past has influenced the present and what implications it might have for the future.

In an attempt to understand the history of traditional Appalachian music education, I have used both primary documents and secondary articles and books about historical efforts at teaching traditional Appalachian music, beginning in the late nineteenth century and continuing through the first several decades of the twentieth century. I have also utilized historical documents, mostly of a secondary nature, to inform my knowledge of the beginnings of modern-day bluegrass and traditional music programs. In addition, I have used historical primary and

¹² Andrew J. Hobson and Andrew Townsend, “Interviewing as Educational Research Method(s),” in *Educational Research and Inquiry: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, ed. Dimitra Hartas (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2010), 223.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 227.

¹⁴ Burke Johnson and Larry Christensen, *Educational Research: Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed Approaches* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2012), 410.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

secondary documents related to John Dewey's educational theories, specifically Dewey's own writings concerning educational theories and philosophies.

My research will focus specifically on three aspects of John Dewey's theories: experiential learning, freedom and individualization in learning, and vocational education. Dewey was a prolific writer throughout the first several decades of the twentieth century, but my research will draw from two specific works: *Democracy and Education* (originally published in 1916) and *Experience and Education* (originally published in 1938). In *Democracy and Education*, Dewey outlined much of his philosophy of education, underscoring the importance of preparing students for participation in a democratic society. *Experience and Education* is one of Dewey's later works, and as such, includes an expansion of his early theories on learning through experience. Dewey wrote this book in order to clarify his theory of experience in education as an aid to schools that had attempted to put it into practice. I chose the first work due to its status as one of the most well-known and most complete statements of Dewey's educational theories. Several recent scholars of educational theory referred to this text as essential to understanding Dewey's beliefs about education. John Novak called it a "seminal text," while Patrick M. Jenlink wrote that "John Dewey articulated his educational philosophy in many of his writings... but perhaps nowhere more comprehensively than in his *Democracy and Education*."¹⁶ David T. Hansen, in his book *John Dewey and Our Educational Prospect: A Critical Engagement with Dewey's Democracy and Education*, noted that teachers, students, and higher education faculty in a number of disciplines have read the book since its publication and

¹⁶ John Novak, ed., *Democratic Teacher Education: Programs, Processes, Problems, and Prospects* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 2; Patrick M. Jenlink, ed., *Dewey's Democracy and Education Revisited: Contemporary Discourses for Democratic Education and Leadership* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Education, 2009), ix.

that it “has been the most widely translated of all Dewey’s works.”¹⁷ I chose to consult the second book, *Experience and Education*, because it specifically relates to this thesis’s examination of experiential learning.

Dewey’s works were products of the Progressive Era, the time period between the 1890s and the 1920s in which Americans looked toward the future and the new technologies, economic prospects, and societal changes it might bring. Social reformers hoped to instigate positive change by improving older (and often corrupt) forms of government and education, among other institutions.¹⁸ James Campbell characterizes the era by writing, “the intellectual life of the New World had to develop from the practices of those living this new life, rather than from the continued cultivation of an imported inheritance.”¹⁹ The idea of using Progressive, forward-looking educational theories to provide a pedagogical basis for music programs steeped in tradition and the past initially might seem unusual. However, I propose two reasons that Progressive educational theories are applicable to traditional music education. First of all, as Chapters Two and Three will demonstrate, the use of traditional music in formalized education is a relatively new concept, especially when compared to European music-based programs. As mentioned by Olson and Frank in their previous scholarly works on the topic, institutions historically have taught traditional Appalachian music and Western European music using different methods, as well. Daniel Boner, director of East Tennessee State University’s

¹⁷ David T. Hansen, “Introduction,” in *John Dewey and Our Educational Prospect: A Critical Engagement with Dewey’s Democracy and Education*, ed. David T. Hansen (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), 2.

¹⁸ For more information on the Progressive Era, see John D. Buenker, et. al., *Progressivism* (Cambridge: MA: Schenkman Publishing Company, 1976); Steven J. Diner, *A Very Different Age: Americans of the Progressive Era* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998); Michael McGerr, *A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement, 1870-1920* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); and Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform* (New York: Vintage Books, 1955).

¹⁹ James Campbell, *Understanding John Dewey: Nature and Cooperative Intelligence* (Peru, IL: Open Court Publishing, 1996), 2.

Bluegrass, Old Time, and Country Music Studies program perhaps best stated this issue in an interview for this thesis, saying that “There’s a model... that works for classical music... it’s an older model, and schools of teaching that are established, and you know, they work. If you want to learn Bach, there’s a way to learn Bach... People have been taking what [composers] did and developing theories to explain it. Bluegrass is similar to that. We’re now putting theory on what it is we’re doing.”²⁰ First, traditional music educators have had to create their own best practices, looking to what has worked in the past and improving it for the future. Second, even though much of the content of traditional music programs is drawn from the past, students and faculty members within these programs constantly examine its application in the present and future. Although vast differences exist between the Progressive Era and the present, my evidence will show that lessons first espoused by scholars such as Dewey are certainly still put into practice today.

The second part of my research took the form of semi-structured interviews. I began by identifying colleges and universities that offer bluegrass and traditional Appalachian music courses. As previously mentioned, the IBMA has identified seventeen institutions, and maintains a list of them (along with contact information) on its website. In early February 2015, I issued letters of invitation via email to each of these seventeen institutions. In these emails, I described my research project and its potential benefits to the traditional music education community. I also included a copy of my informed consent form as an attachment to each email for the recipients to review. A copy of the letter I sent can be found in Appendix A at the end of this thesis.

In her book *Reflective Interviewing*, Kathryn Roulston notes that letters are a form of participant recruiting that can be used when the interviewer does not know the potential

²⁰ Daniel Boner, interview by author, Johnson City, TN, March 6, 2015.

participants.²¹ As a graduate of East Tennessee State University's Bluegrass, Old Time, and Country Music Studies program, I know all of the faculty members within that program. Through my position as a bluegrass musician, I also know faculty members at several other institutions on the IBMA list. However, in general, the population I reached out to in order to conduct these interviews was previously unfamiliar to me, which made letters a necessity for participant recruitment. Roulston also mentions that "the drawback of this approach is that the response rate may be low, unless the researcher is already known to the population, or if a gatekeeper within the community study recommends the study to members."²² I found this to be true. Of the seventeen schools I emailed, I received email replies from four. After making follow-up phone calls to schools, also using the contact information available from the IBMA, I received responses from two others. In this case, my acquaintance with several potential participants did not help secure interviews.

In late February and early March 2015, I conducted interviews with faculty members from six different colleges and universities: East Tennessee State University in Johnson City, Tennessee; Volunteer State Community College in Gallatin, Tennessee; the University of Louisiana at Lafayette; Belmont University in Nashville, Tennessee; Hazard Community and Technical College in Hazard, Kentucky; and Appalachian State University in Boone, North Carolina.²³ I conducted the majority of the interviews over the telephone due to the geographical distance between the participants and me. One interview took place on the campus of East Tennessee State University in Johnson City. The interviews each lasted about an hour, although

²¹ Kathryn Roulston, *Reflective Interviewing: A Guide to Theory and Practice* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2010), 98.

²² Ibid.

²³ The interviews conducted for this research were approved by the East Tennessee State University Institutional Review Board. Interview participants signed an informed consent form.

some were slightly longer. I recorded the interviews with a digital recording device, transferred to a computer, and then transcribed.

Before conducting any interviews, I created a list of open-ended questions to guide the interviews. This list can be found at the end of this thesis in Appendix B. The interviews proceeded in what Roulston refers to as a “semi-structured” fashion, meaning that although I had formulated questions prior to the interview, they were not always asked in the exact same order, some questions may have been eliminated based on participant responses, and the participants were free to construct their own responses as opposed to selecting from choices provided by me.²⁴ I began by asking very general questions, such as asking the participant to state his or her experience teaching bluegrass and/or traditional Appalachian music. The questions proceeded to be more specific, such as asking the participant to draw connections between the teaching of bluegrass and/or traditional Appalachian music at their institution and the teachings of John Dewey. If the participant expressed a lack of knowledge of Dewey’s theories, I provided him or her with a brief summary of Dewey’s beliefs before proceeding with the interview. The majority of the participants were eager to describe their work, although some expressed frustrations about administrative oversight of their program and were somewhat hesitant to elaborate on their answers to some questions. I made sure to assure all participants that they did not have to answer any questions that made them uncomfortable. Participants were also made aware of this through the informed consent form they signed prior to participating in an interview. Participants were also allowed to remain anonymous, and two participants chose that option.

One limitation of the study was that not all interview participants had a prior knowledge of John Dewey’s theories. Although all of the participants are currently educators at the post-secondary level, many bluegrass and traditional music programs in higher education utilize

²⁴ Roulston, *Reflective Interviewing*, 15.

music professionals as faculty more frequently than they do specialists in academic music and/or music education. A doctorate (or even bachelor's degree) is not always required or preferred. Therefore, while all participants had valuable information and opinions to contribute about the purpose and role of traditional Appalachian music education, based on personal experience, they were not all specifically able to address my main research question.

Roulston encourages interviewers to examine any subjectivities they may have in reference to the topic of their research by “examin[ing] their interests and background with respect to a particular topic.”²⁵ As I have established, I am an insider to the bluegrass and traditional music culture I am studying. I have a personal stake in how this culture is represented to those outside the traditional music culture, especially due to the sometimes critical public perception of traditional Appalachian music education. Because I am a graduate of East Tennessee State University's program, one of the faculty members I interviewed is my former professor and current employer. One is a current colleague. I am aware that this could lead to a certain amount of bias and conflict of interest on my part in conducting this research. However, I followed Roulston's suggestions for minimizing bias during interview research. She says that the researcher can address his or her bias by “asking questions that do not lead the interviewee,” and by ensuring that “open-ended questions are asked in particular sequences, usually from general to specific, with sensitive topics approached at a later stage in the interview.”²⁶ I made sure to ask open-ended questions and waited to ask questions that may have addressed sensitive topics until near the end of the interviews. I also tried to ensure that the questions I asked did not force the participant to answer in a certain way. I made my beliefs on the thesis topic clear during my initial contact with the participants, but allowed them to make their own thoughts known. In

²⁵ Roulston, *Reflective Interviewing*, 119-120.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 87.

addition, no rewards were offered to the participants, other than the personal value of having contributed to my research.²⁷

In order to analyze the data collected during these interviews, I paid attention to commonalities among the interviews, following Roulston's suggestions for thematic analysis: coding to find "conceptual categories," followed by sorting the data into "thematic groupings," and "finally, reorganization of the data into thematic representations of findings."²⁸ First, I coded the data, looking for words, phrases, and concepts found in each interview. Several topics arose, including "experience," "individualization," "hands-on," "careers," "future," "passion for music," and "practical." From these codes I located three main categories that each participant provided examples of within bluegrass and traditional music programs: learning through meaningful experiences, the ability to individualize learning, and the connection between education and ultimate vocational goals. In order to present the data, I have adhered to Harry Wolcott's design for analysis of qualitative data, including "description, analysis, and interpretation."²⁹ In Chapter Four, I present a summary of my findings and an analysis of the commonalities I found within the data. I then analyze connections between the data and Dewey's educational theories. Finally, in Chapter Five, I offer an interpretation of the data's usefulness in present-day traditional music programs.

Definitions

Because my research focuses on the topic of traditional Appalachian music, I will seek to define the terms "traditional music," "Appalachian," and "traditional Appalachian music" in this section. I also will define several educational terms, including "experience," "experiential

²⁷ Roulston, *Reflective Interviewing*, 87.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 150-51.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 154.

learning,” and “pedagogy,” as used throughout this thesis. Historian Ronald D. Cohen provided five characteristics of traditional music:

(1) its origins can perhaps be located in a particular culture or region; (2) authorship has historically been unknown, although authors did emerge over the past two centuries; (3) it has traditionally been performed by nonprofessionals, perhaps playing acoustic instruments; (4) its composition has been fairly simple, with perhaps little complexity so that it can be performed and shared communally; and (5) the songs have historically been passed down through oral transmission.³⁰

Ethnomusicologist Kip Lornell provided a similar definition in his book *Exploring American Folk Music: Ethnic, Grassroots, and Regional Traditions in the United States*. Lornell used the terms “folk music” and “traditional music” interchangeably. He wrote that folk music had six characteristics:

Folk music varies greatly over space but relatively little over time. Folk music emanates from a specific, identifiable community, such as coal miners, Louisiana Cajuns, or Native Americans. The authorship or origins of folk songs and tunes are generally unknown. Folk songs are usually disseminated by word-of-mouth, aurally, or through informal apprenticeships within a community. Folk music is most often performed by nonprofessionals. Short forms and predictable patterns are fundamental for folk music.³¹

These definitions of traditional music can be ascribed to much of the music taught within the programs I have researched. The characteristics of oral and aural transmission are especially important because their uses as teaching methods are defining differences between traditional and classical music programs, contributing to their newness as part of academic music pedagogy.³²

However, bluegrass is included within all of the programs I researched and is the driving force behind the majority of them. Bluegrass music, as defined by preeminent bluegrass historian

³⁰ Ronald D. Cohen, *Folk Music: The Basics* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 1-2.

³¹ Kip Lornell, *Exploring American Folk Music: Ethnic, Grassroots, and Regional Traditions in the United States* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2012), 13-15.

³² Robert H. Woody and Andreas C. Lehmann, “Student Musicians’ Ear-Playing Ability as a Function of Vernacular Music Experiences,” *Journal of Research in Music Education* 58, no. 2 (July 2010), 101, accessed April 2, 2015, Education Full Text (H.W. Wilson).

Neil Rosenberg, is not a traditional music. Instead, it “has been a professional and commercial music from its beginning.”³³ It solidified into a genre and spread throughout the United States largely thanks to modern technology, such as radio and records, and thrives on instrumental virtuosity that praises complicated arrangements of songs. However, Rosenberg also noted that many scholars and members of the general public view bluegrass as a “modern folk music” thanks to lyrical topics, a reliance on re-recording traditional songs, the use of acoustic instruments, and various other factors.³⁴ Folklore scholar Robert Cantwell offered a similar concept of bluegrass in his book *Bluegrass Breakdown*. He wrote that bluegrass “embodies traditional southern music, though it is not itself traditional.”³⁵ As such, bluegrass is widely accepted as a current, popular form of traditional music and will thus be included in my definition of “traditional music.”

The Appalachian Regional Commission has a very specific definition of Appalachia that includes over 400 counties in thirteen states stretching from New York to Mississippi. This definition of the region follows the “spine of the Appalachian Mountains,” covering about 205,000 square miles.³⁶ In this thesis, when using the term “Appalachia,” I am (for the most part) referring to what John C. Campbell in his book *The Southern Highlander and His Homeland* termed the “Southern Highlands,” a smaller geographic area covering the mountainous parts of Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee, Georgia, and

³³ Neil Rosenberg, *Bluegrass: A History* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 6.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 3,6.

³⁵ Robert Cantwell, *Bluegrass Breakdown: The Making of the Old Southern Sound* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 7.

³⁶ Grace Toney Edwards, et. al., eds., *A Handbook to Appalachia: An Introduction to the Region* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2006), xiv; Appalachian Regional Commission, “The Appalachian Region,” Appalachian Regional Commission, last modified 2015, accessed March 21, 2015, http://www.arc.gov/appalachian_region/TheAppalachianRegion.asp.

Alabama, and the entirety of West Virginia.³⁷ Donald Edward Davis used a similar definition in his *Where There Are Mountains: An Environmental History of the Southern Appalachians*.

Davis's "Appalachia" includes 152 counties in eight states, located roughly between the Blue Ridge Mountains and the Cumberland Plateau. He termed the area "the true heart of the southern mountains."³⁸

Some scholars have proposed that the term "Appalachia" is more of an intellectual construct than a geographic region. Henry Shapiro built upon this concept in his *Appalachia on Our Mind: The Southern Mountains and Mountaineers in the American Consciousness, 1870-1920*. Shapiro remarked that the popular concept of "Appalachia" was not set by geographical boundaries or political lines, but instead grew from the pens of late nineteenth century writers who described the people of southern Appalachian Mountains in terms of their backwardness and isolation.³⁹ Historian Richard B. Drake clarified Shapiro's thesis in his *A History of Appalachia*. Although Drake acknowledged the validity of Shapiro's statement as the history of an intellectual concept, he noted that primary source accounts of the area now known as Appalachia support the conclusion that a unique lifestyle and culture existed there prior to 1930. He asserted that "Appalachia" was not merely a concept defined only by northern writers. I agree with Drake's statement that "Appalachia represents a significant and distinct region within the larger American society."⁴⁰

³⁷ John C. Campbell, *The Southern Highlander and His Homeland* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1921), 10-11.

³⁸ Donald Edward Davis, *Where There Are Mountains: An Environmental History of the Southern Appalachians* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2005), 7-8.

³⁹ Henry Shapiro, *Appalachia on Our Mind: The Southern Mountains and Mountaineers in the American Consciousness, 1870-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 3-5.

⁴⁰ Richard B. Drake, *A History of Appalachia* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2001), ix.

Howard W. Odum, one of the first regionalist scholars, described regions in terms of both their physical and cultural characteristics. He wrote that “the region is, of course, first of all an area, a geographic unit with limits and bounds.”⁴¹ Its boundaries can be flexible. Its residents must have “some degree of homogeneity in a number of selected characteristics.”⁴² In addition, it must be part of a larger “whole or totality.”⁴³ For the purposes of this study, I will rely on the geographic definitions of Appalachia proposed by Campbell and Davis, while also acknowledging that residents of the region often share common cultural traits that are sometimes differentiated from mainstream United States culture.

Thus, “traditional Appalachian music” can be viewed as the traditional music of this region. In his essay “Music,” included within the book *High Mountains Rising: Appalachia in Time and Place*, Bill C. Malone wrote that “There is no such thing as ‘Appalachian music.’ There are instead a wide variety of instrumental and vocal styles made by Appalachian musicians... all of which have exhibited the eclectic and steadily evolving nature of life in the mountains.”⁴⁴ Traditional Appalachian music includes Anglo-Saxon ballads and songs, adaptations of popular music, religious music, the commercialized “hillbilly music” made popular by artists like the Carter Family in the 1920s, and African American blues traditions, among numerous other styles. According to Malone, Appalachian music is music made by those who live in the region or have lived there in the past.⁴⁵ Throughout this thesis, I use the terms

⁴¹ Howard W. Odum, “A Sociological Approach to the Study and Practice of American Regionalism: A Factorial Syllabus,” *Social Forces* 20, no. 4 (May 1942), 431, accessed April 2, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2570875>.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Bill C. Malone, “Music,” in *High Mountains Rising: Appalachia in Time and Place*, eds. Richard A. Straw and H. Tyler Blethen (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 115.

“traditional music,” “traditional Appalachian music,” and “bluegrass and traditional music” interchangeably. In his article “An Introduction to Bluegrass,” Mayne Smith acknowledged that bluegrass music draws from a number of musical traditions, including African American blues and gospel, “Northern popular music and jazz,” and 1920s hillbilly music.⁴⁶ However, for the purposes of this study, bluegrass is included within this definition because of its historical roots in the region and its lasting popularity with residents of the region. In addition, some of the programs included within this study use the term “Traditional Music” to describe the music they teach, even if that music includes bluegrass. Interestingly, the majority of the seventeen institutions offering coursework in traditional Appalachian music are located outside the Appalachian region. Only three of the institutions from which I interviewed faculty members (East Tennessee State University, Hazard Community and Technical College, and Appalachian State University) are located within Appalachia.

I will also seek to define several education-related terms in this section. In explaining the importance of “experience” within the educational setting, Dewey wrote that “there is no such thing as genuine knowledge and fruitful understanding except as the offspring of *doing*.”⁴⁷ Instead of learning solely through listening to a teacher or reading a text, Dewey encouraged educators to utilize a “laboratory method” in which students completed activities that not only would be of practical use but also would contribute to their intellectual growth.⁴⁸ One of Dewey’s criticisms of older methods of education was that in more traditional methods, schools

⁴⁵ Malone, “Music,” 117-9, 131.

⁴⁶ Mayne Smith, “An Introduction to Bluegrass,” *The Journal of American Folklore* 78, no. 309 (July-September 1965), 250, accessed April 2, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/538358>.

⁴⁷ John Dewey, *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1922), 321.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 321-22.

became isolated from the rest of the world. Students learned facts and ideas but were not asked to apply those concepts to their current lives. The teachers took a much more active role in the transmission of knowledge than the students did, in that they provided information to students through books and lectures in an attempt to prepare them for their future. Students were expected to receive the information passively while showing an attitude of “docility, receptivity, and obedience.”⁴⁹ In contrast, Dewey’s theories gave students more freedom to direct their own learning, through experiences, and were asked to “mak[e] the most of the opportunities of present life” instead of simply preparing for “a more or less remote future.”⁵⁰ Therefore, a learning “experience” is not just an activity completed in an educational setting, but an activity that can be connected to students’ lives, both in the present and in the future.

In using the term “experiential learning,” I build upon the idea of “experiences” and refer to the concept, promoted by Dewey, that “action and thought have to be linked.”⁵¹ In his *The Handbook of Experiential Learning*, Melvin Silberman remarked that experiential learning does not just include student participation in activities. Instead, those who practice it “help [students] derive meanings from those activities.”⁵² Scott D. Wurdinger also relied on Dewey’s theories when he explained the concept of experiential learning in his *Using Experiential Learning in the Classroom: Practical Ideas for All Educators*. Wurdinger wrote that key aspects of experiential learning include a problem, relevant to the students’ lives; application of solutions to the problem; and reflection to assess results.⁵³ In general, when students engage in “experiential

⁴⁹ John Dewey, *Experience and Education* (New York: Macmillan, 1938), 18-19.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 19-20.

⁵¹ Melvin L. Silberman, *The Handbook of Experiential Learning* (San Francisco: Pfeiffer, 2007), 3.

⁵² *Ibid.*

learning,” they engage with tangible materials. Through experimentation with these materials, students come to understand how the materials work and how they can use the materials in their lives. In music education, experiential learning often takes the form of aural learning in which students hear music, copy it, create their own interpretations of it, and eventually compose their own music. Teachers should also try to create authentic examples of experiences students might encounter outside of the classroom, such as performance and composition.⁵⁴

Several scholars have noted that they find it difficult to define the term “pedagogy.” In the essay “The Meaning of Pedagogy,” Philip M. Anderson stated that the dictionary definition of the term is “the art, science, or profession of teaching.”⁵⁵ Jenny Leach and Bob Moon expanded upon that definition in their book *The Power of Pedagogy*, asserting that pedagogy is a process of teaching “informed by theories, beliefs, and dialogue, but only realized in the daily interactions of learners and teachers and real settings.”⁵⁶ For the purpose of this thesis, “pedagogy” will refer to overall process, theories, and methods of teaching.

Although college and university bluegrass programs may be known around the country and even internationally thanks to student performances and media publicity, very little research has been conducted on them in any form. The research that has previously been completed has largely focused on teaching methods (in particular on the fiddle) and on public perception of the programs. While my research also seeks to learn more about these areas, I also hope to build

⁵³ Scott D. Wurdinger, *Using Experiential Learning in the Classroom: Practical Ideas for All Educators* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Education, 2005), 8.

⁵⁴ Roger Johnson, “Critically Reflective Musicianship,” in *Music Education for Changing Times: Guiding Visions for Practice*, ed. Thomas A. Regelski and J. Terry Gates (New York: Springer, 2009), 23-4; Brent Gault, “Music Learning through All the Channels: Combining Aural, Visual, and Kinesthetic Strategies to Develop Musical Understanding,” *General Music Today* 19, no. 1 (September 2005), 7-9, accessed April 2, 2015, ERIC.

⁵⁵ Philip M. Anderson, “The Meaning of Pedagogy,” in *Classroom Teaching: An Introduction*, ed. Joe L. Kinchloe (New York: Peter Lang, 2005), 53-4.

⁵⁶ Jenny Leach and Bob Moon, *The Power of Pedagogy* (London: SAGE Publications, 2008), 6.

upon them by connecting the teaching of bluegrass and traditional music with broader educational theory that is not music-specific. My research could potentially provide bluegrass and traditional music program directors, faculty, and staff with the pedagogical rationale needed to invite outsiders to seriously consider these programs academically valuable in the higher education setting. This research could encourage greater acceptance of bluegrass and traditional music programs at colleges and universities, stimulate the creation of additional similar programs, and provide a framework for the promotion of programs to potential students.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORY OF TRADITIONAL MUSIC EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES

Formalized music education in America dates from 1698, when the ninth edition of the popular *Bay Psalm Book* included descriptions of how to sing correctly the tunes within the book. Soon afterwards, around the beginning of the eighteenth century, community-based singing schools, in which traveling music teachers offered instruction in understanding musical notation, became popular.¹ Music as a part of the public elementary and secondary school curriculum was first promoted in the early nineteenth century after scholars such as William Channing Woodbridge and Lowell Mason observed the teaching of music in Europe. Mason taught the first formal music course in a public elementary school in Boston in 1838. Michael Mark wrote that this nineteenth century interest in music education paralleled public interest in science and new technologies, often originating in Europe. As a result, the style of music that was deemed proper for instruction was new European music (what we now think of as “classical” or “art music”) by composers such as Beethoven, Chopin, and Schubert, as opposed to the previously popular hymns and traditional music. This form of music education began in northern states, particularly Massachusetts, but spread throughout much of the nation by the end of the century.²

Since then, this style of music has dominated music education in America. Mark noted that non-European music was not generally included in any music or music education curricula until the mid-twentieth century and jazz, one of the few forms of music born in America, was not

¹ James A. Keene, *A History of Music Education in the United States* (Centennial, CO: Glenbridge Publishing, 2009), 7, 14

² Michael Mark, *A Concise History of American Music Education* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield Education, 2008), 32-33, 37, 40; Jere T. Humphreys, “United States of America: Reflections on the development and effectiveness of compulsory music education,” in *The Origins and Foundation of Music Education: Cross-cultural Historical Studies of Music in Compulsory Schooling*, eds. Robin Sydney Stevens and Gordon Cox (London: Continuum, 2010), 125-6.

formally included in school curricula until its recognition in 1967 by the Tanglewood Symposium.³ Nonetheless, a few efforts at formalizing traditional music education were made during that time. One important example of formal traditional music education dates from 1913, when the Music Supervisors National Conference published *18 Songs for Community Singing*. According to the pamphlet's introduction, it "represent[ed] a movement which will be encouraged by all interested in Education in the United States – that the whole country shall know by heart and unite in singing... some of the best of the Standard Songs."⁴ The main purpose of this instructional pamphlet was to help new immigrants adjust to life in the United States and it was sometimes used in schools to "Americanize children."⁵ The songs within the pamphlet included some that are still recognized as traditional music favorites today, such as "Home Sweet Home," "Old Folks at Home," and "My Old Kentucky Home."⁶

Around the same time, traditional Appalachian music began to be incorporated into the curricula of some schools within the region. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the education systems in many Appalachian counties lacked funding for schools and equipment. Even as late as 1937, a study commissioned by the United States Department of the Interior, titled *Education in the Southern Mountains*, found that the mountainous areas of southern states had fewer high schools, shorter school terms, and more poorly trained teachers than the non-mountainous areas of those same states.⁷ Historian William Ellis noted that

³ Michael Mark, "Music Education History and the Future," in *Music Education: Navigating the Future*, ed. Clint Randles (New York: Routledge, 2015), 4.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*, 6-7.

⁷ Sharon Teets, "Education in Appalachia," in *A Handbook to Appalachia: An Introduction to the Region*, ed. Grace Toney Edwards, et. al. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2006), 126-7.

although much of the United States was making great strides in educational progress by the turn of the twentieth century, rural areas in Appalachian states still often employed “poorly prepared” teachers “who still relied on memorization and recitation” as teaching methods.⁸ As a result, Progressive-minded educational and social reformers from northern states or urban areas of Appalachian states began moving to Appalachia in order to help improve the educational offerings of the region. Educators such as William Goodell Frost of Berea College, Katherine Pettit of Pine Mountain Settlement School, and Olive Dame Campbell of the John C. Campbell Folk School believed that incorporation into the curriculum of the region’s traditional arts and crafts could both help preserve the region’s culture and stimulate students through a sense of play-like education.

Pettit was perhaps the most prominent Appalachian educator of the time to embrace traditional music as part of her school’s curriculum. Pettit was a collector of traditional songs, and in journals kept during her first trips to southeastern Kentucky in the last years of the nineteenth century, she and her traveling companions detailed evenings spent listening to the “unusual” songs found in the mountains: “old English ballads never heard by us and only preserved now in the remote mountain districts where they have been handed down by tradition.”⁹ Pettit recorded lyrics to songs she heard, including ballads like “Barbara Allen,” “Ellen Smith,” and “Pretty Polly.”¹⁰ Once Pettit founded Pine Mountain Settlement School in 1913, singing of old songs and dancing to old tunes was a regular occurrence, particularly during leisure time. Pettit and her co-founder Ethel de Long Zande saw folk dancing and the singing of

⁸ William Ellis, *A History of Education in Kentucky* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2011), 102.

⁹ Jess Stoddart, *The Quare Women’s Journals: May Stone & Katherine Pettit’s Summers in the Kentucky Mountains and the Founding of the Hindman Settlement School* (Ashland, KY: Jesse Stuart Foundation, 1997), 62-63.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 107, 114-115.

ballads as leisure activities that also could help promote the students' cultural heritage, and so urged students to sing while working, relaxing, and spending time together.¹¹ After a visit from ballad collector Cecil Sharp in 1917, the school began making mountain ballads and folk dancing a regular part of its curriculum and by the mid-1920s, "instruction turned more formal, and devices such as ballad contests... helped teach what had formerly been part of the baggage students brought with them."¹² The formal instruction in ballad singing and folk dancing had two ultimate goals: preservation of the region's culture and public performance. Instructors communicated both of these goals to students. Students could especially see the connection between learning activities and experiences outside of the classroom when Zande frequently took her students to perform for community groups in eastern Kentucky.¹³

Olive Dame Campbell and her husband early Appalachian scholar John C. Campbell were also proponents of the inclusion of traditional music in educational curricula. In John C. Campbell's *The Southern Highlander and His Homeland* (which was completed by Olive Dame Campbell after his death), the Campbells promoted the concept of the Danish folk school as a possible solution for solving Appalachia's educational problems, such as the high rate of illiteracy that could keep men from obtaining jobs and could force young men and women to be placed with children half their age in school.¹⁴ These schools were based on the work of Bishop N.F.S. Grundtvig, who hoped to revitalize the nation of Denmark after its military defeat by Germany in the mid-1860s. Grundtvig and other educators in Denmark and Norway who built upon his work emphasized practical education, often stemming from traditional culture, with the

¹¹ James S. Greene, "Progressives in the Kentucky Mountains: The Formative Years of the Pine Mountain Settlement School, 1913-1930" (Ph.D. diss., Ohio State University, 1983), 173.

¹² *Ibid.*, 175, 179-180, 184.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 183.

¹⁴ Campbell, *The Southern Highlander and His Homeland*, 295-96.

goal of preparing students to take on productive roles in society. The Campbells wrote that in the folk school model, “much is made of song, folk-song and patriotic songs in particular.”¹⁵ United States Commissioner of Education Philander Claxton, a native of Tennessee, helped introduce these ideas to the Campbells. Claxton said that Appalachian schools should offer “courses of study growing out of [Appalachian residents’] daily life as it is and turning back into it a better and more efficient daily living.”¹⁶ Both he and the Campbells believed that this form of education, with its focus on obtaining practical skills that could relate to the lives of the mountain people, could be very beneficial to students who struggled with, and failed to see, the necessity of reading and memorization.¹⁷

Olive Dame Campbell also worked as a ballad collector in the southern Appalachian Mountains. In traveling with her husband throughout the mountains for the survey that resulted in *The Southern Highlander and His Homeland*, she encountered many old ballads and songs. She actually instigated the interest of ballad collector Cecil Sharp, who came to Appalachia upon her suggestion. Campbell and Sharp collaborated on the collection of Appalachian ballads and songs known as *English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians*, which was published in 1917.¹⁸ She went on to found the John C. Campbell Folk School in Brasstown, North Carolina in 1925. The school incorporated regional folk art, crafts, dance, and music into its classes (in addition to farming, gardening, and other tasks) in an effort to emphasize “process over product.”¹⁹ The courses featured experiential learning in which students created various crafts

¹⁵ Campbell, *The Southern Highlander and His Homeland*, 290-92.

¹⁶ Teets, “Education in Appalachia,” 125.

¹⁷ Campbell, *The Southern Highlander and His Homeland*, 295.

¹⁸ Elizabeth McCutchen Williams, ed. *Appalachian Travels: The Diary of Olive Dame Campbell* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2012), 11-13.

and learned new songs and dances by regularly participating in singing games. Today, Appalachian arts, crafts, and music are still an essential part of its classes and programs.²⁰ Elizabeth McCutchen Williams, the editor of Campbell's diary, remarked that Campbell "was esteemed for her wise and practical approach to sometimes controversial social and educational issues."²¹ Campbell used her knowledge of the region's culture, social life, and economic outlook to devise meaningful learning experiences for students at the school she founded.

Another Appalachian educator to utilize Appalachian traditions within the school curriculum was Eliot Wigginton, who began teaching high school English at the Rabun Gap-Nacoochee School in northeast Georgia in 1966. In an essay written in 1977, Wigginton detailed how he came to incorporate practical applications of the English curriculum into his students' lives. Faced with struggling readers who did not care about their success when he taught the standard curriculum, he decided to start a student-led magazine at the school. The magazine, which has since grown into the popular Appalachian folklore series *Foxfire*, incorporated oral histories of local residents in addition to students' original writings.²² An outgrowth of the magazine was the development of Appalachian studies courses at the high school, including an Appalachian music course in which students' "end product [was] record albums produced, edited, designed, and marketed by kids."²³ As with other efforts, Wigginton focused on

¹⁹ David A. Brose, "Folk Schools," in *American Folklore: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Jan Harold Brunvand (New York: Garland, 1996), 579.

²⁰ Brose, "Folk Schools," 579; Anne E. Culbertson, "Music and Dance at the John C. Campbell Folk School in Brasstown, North Carolina, 1925-1985" (DMusEd diss., Indiana University, 1985), 77-78.

²¹ McCutchen, *Appalachian Travels*, 13.

²² Eliot Wigginton, "The Foxfire Concept," in *Teaching Mountain Children: Towards a Foundation of Understanding*, ed. David Mielke (Boone, NC: Appalachian Consortium Press, 1978), 210-211.

²³ *Ibid.*, 220.

imparting practical, useful skills to his students that would also guide them to an appreciation of their non-mainstream culture.

Wigginton's work also led to the creation of the "Foxfire method" of education, which emphasizes the use of meaningful learning and instructional activities with one ultimate goal of students expanding their learning beyond the classroom. Sharon Teets outlined several of the method's core practices in a 1995 paper presentation. Among them are "work initiated by student interest and desire... peer teaching and collaboration; teachers who serve as leaders and facilitators rather than the sole source of all information and authority... an audience for student work beyond the classroom [and] involvement in the community."²⁴ This method does not have to be used in regionally-based or folklore education, as it was by Wigginton, but can be incorporated into any classroom. The method's key is allowing students to undergo learning experiences that they can easily connect to the world outside of their school. Teets related the Foxfire method to John Dewey's admonition to connect "the subject matter of the schools" with the "subject matter of life experience."²⁵

The importance of multicultural music education, with a focus on traditional music, is still emphasized today. In the 2010 work *Multicultural Perspectives in Music Education, Volume 2*, William M. Anderson and Patricia Shehan Campbell noted that the teaching of music from regional cultures can help develop an appreciation for diversity and a realization that America is not a homogeneous nation.²⁶ Throughout the text, various authors detailed cultures they believe

²⁴ Sharon Teets, "Democracy in the Classroom: Foxfire in Action" (paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association of Independent Liberal Arts Colleges for Teacher Education, Washington, D.C., February 1995), 2, accessed March 21, 2015, <http://files.eric.ed.gov/ezproxy.etsu.edu:2048/fulltext/ED386457.pdf>.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

²⁶ William M. Anderson and Patricia Shehan Campbell, "Teaching Music from a Multicultural Perspective," in *Multicultural Perspectives in Music Education, Volume 2*, eds. William M. Anderson and Patricia Shehan Campbell (Reston, VA: Music Educators National Conference, 2010), 1-2.

should be represented in American music education. Included under “Euro-American Music” are sections focusing on Appalachian folk songs, ballads, instrumental music, and religious music, as well as bluegrass music. Following the section are lesson plans that incorporate Appalachian music. One lesson plan reflects the same goals that have been present throughout historical traditional music education: increase knowledge of regional culture and provide students with meaningful learning experiences. In this lesson plan, students will learn the history behind the folk song “Froggie Went A-Courtin,” learn to sing the song through aural instruction, and hear it played on a dulcimer or guitar.²⁷ The students do not simply passively listen to the teacher tell them about the song. Instead, they engage in both active and passive activities by listening to the song and learning its history, practicing singing the song, and ultimately learning the song.

Despite the examples provided above, several scholars have noted that Appalachian music has not always been included in regional classrooms. David Mielke’s 1978 *Teaching Mountain Children: Towards a Foundation of Understanding*, spoke of the disservice done to Appalachian children by well-meaning teachers who have forsaken teaching Appalachian culture in favor of “a kind of ‘national cultural amalgam’ best described as middle class white suburban values” in an effort to help children rise above their cultural background.²⁸ Rich Kirby’s article “Our Own Music,” contained within Mielke’s book, emphasized the necessity of teaching younger generations to preserve traditional music and build upon historical traditions to create their own music based in those traditions.²⁹

²⁷ Patricia Shehan Campbell and Ellen McCullough-Brabson, “Euro-American Music,” in *Multicultural Perspectives in Music Education, Volume 2*, ed. William M. Anderson and Patricia Shehan Campbell (Reston, VA: Music Educators National Conference, 2010), 38-42.

²⁸ David Mielke, “Introduction,” in *Teaching Mountain Children: Towards a Foundation of Understanding*, ed. David Mielke (Boone, NC: Appalachian Consortium Press, 1978), xiii.

²⁹ Rich Kirby, “Our Own Music,” *Ibid.*, 108.

Educator Susan Mills expanded this charge to educators and, as shown in her 2009 article “Bringing the Family Tradition in Bluegrass Music to the Music Classroom,” developed a plan to incorporate bluegrass music and other traditional forms of Appalachian music into the classroom. Mills asserts that in accordance with United States education standards all students should learn about music as related to history and culture. She uses examples from old-time, bluegrass, and country music to demonstrate that truths about American history can be gleaned from lyrics. One example includes the lasting legacy of the Carter Family and their influences on the recording industry and numerous genres of music over the past eight decades. Mills’ work focused on K-12 education, but teachers can easily translate concepts within her work to other educational levels.³⁰

Indeed, elementary and secondary schools incorporated traditional music education much earlier than did colleges and universities. In 1962’s *The Southern Appalachian Region: A Survey*, Frank H. Smith reported that traditional music and accompanying aspects of culture such as dance were frequently included as part of school curricula. Smith made note of folk festivals, school outreach programs, and dancing classes throughout Appalachia that target elementary and high school students. He then remarked that many people dislike the notion of incorporating “folk culture, which is the antithesis of the academic” into the college curriculum. However, he also stated that traditional culture is an essential part of the study of humanities and as such should be considered for inclusion in college courses.³¹ In a more recent example, Ann C. Clements, in her introduction to *Alternative Approaches in Music Education: Case Studies from*

³⁰ Susan W. Mills, “Bringing the Family Tradition in Bluegrass Music to the Music Classroom,” *General Music Today* 22, no. 2 (January 2009): 12-18, accessed March 21, 2015, http://libres.uncg.edu/ir/asu/f/mills_susan_2009_bringing_the_family_tradition.pdf.

³¹ Frank H. Smith, “Dances and Singing Games,” in *The Southern Appalachian Region: A Survey*, ed. Thomas R. Ford (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1962), 275, 277.

the Field, directs a special note to faculty members at institutions of higher education. Clements writes that if educators expect younger students to learn about and experience music other than Western art music, then training should begin at the college level. According to Clements, if musicians and music educators alike receive training in areas other than the standard “band, choir, and orchestra,” then more students can be reached through music education.³² In the next chapter, this somewhat recent acceptance of traditional music into the post-secondary curriculum will be discussed in further detail.

Traditional music has been part of the American consciousness for many years but was not accepted into the mainstream educational system until recently, despite promotion from educators and incorporation into some schools’ music programs. However, with the recent introduction of national programs such as the Foundation for Bluegrass Music’s “Bluegrass in the Schools,” which offers traditional music lesson plans, a DVD for use in the classroom, and teacher professional development opportunities, it seems that traditional Appalachian music is becoming more widely accepted as a part of the instructional curriculum.³³ Other regional programs, including Junior Appalachian Musicians (in North Carolina, Virginia, Tennessee, and South Carolina), Appalshop’s Passing the Pick and Bow in southeastern Kentucky, and the Georgia Pick and Bow Music School in Dahlonga, have moved traditional music instruction into an after-school setting, offering K-12 students the opportunity to learn to play traditional music instruments.³⁴ The mission and vision of the Junior Appalachian Musicians program

³² Ann C. Clements, “Preface,” in *Alternative Approaches in Music Education: Case Studies from the Field*, ed. Ann C. Clements (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Education, 2010), xi-xii.

³³ Foundation for Bluegrass Music, “Bluegrass in the Schools,” Foundation for Bluegrass Music, accessed March 14, 2015, <http://bluegrassfoundation.org/programs/bluegrass-in-the-schools/>.

³⁴ Junior Appalachian Musicians, Inc., “Home,” Junior Appalachian Musicians, Inc., last modified January 23, 2015, accessed March 14, 2015, <http://regionaljam.org/wordpress/>; Appalshop, “Traditional Music,” Appalshop, accessed March 14, 2015, <http://appalshop.org/projects/traditionalmusic/>; Georgia Pick and Bow Music School, Inc.,

demonstrates that these current programs still reflect the concepts espoused by traditional music educators over the years. As the program's website states, its vision is that "all children throughout the Appalachian Mountains have access to the joy of participation in the music of their heritage." The site goes on to say that in addition to music classes, the students also learn about the history of the region's music through field trips and visiting artists.³⁵ These programs ensure that learning is experiential by providing students with hands-on experience with traditional music instruments and connecting the music lessons with the ultimate real world goal of performing publicly in a band. For instance, the Georgia Pick and Bow Music School provides music clips on its website for students to learn aurally. Photographs depict students performing in bands at festivals and other events in the community. A video shows students taking what they have learned and applying it in a teaching situation for another student who has missed class.³⁶ As with many historical examples of traditional music education, today's traditional music students embrace the regional culture, learn through experience, and often use the learned skills in activities outside the classroom.

Perhaps the most important aspect of the teaching of traditional music involves experiential learning. As used by Wigginton, Campbell, Pettit, and others, traditional music in an educational setting has focused on students not only learning the words or melodies to a song from a teacher, but also taking part in creating music, dances, and other products. In these examples, students did not passively absorb information but applied that information in meaningful experiences. The teacher may have instigated the learning process, but students took

"Home," Georgia Pick and Bow Music School, Inc., accessed March 14, 2015, <http://www.georgiapickandbow.org/home.html>.

³⁵ Junior Appalachian Musicians, Inc. "About Us," Junior Appalachian Musicians, Inc., accessed March 14, 2015, <http://regionaljam.org/wordpress/about/sample-page/>.

³⁶ Georgia Pick and Bow Traditional Music School, Inc. "Look and Listen," Georgia Pick and Bow Traditional Music School, Inc., accessed March 21, 2015, <http://www.georgiapickandbow.org/look-listen.html>.

a major role in carrying out such activities as practicing singing and dancing and creating final products in the form of musical performances. Traditional Appalachian musicians historically learned through experience. They did not read from lyrics sheets or musical notation, but listened to others sing or play the songs and figured out the melodies and words themselves. As songs were passed from one musician to another, each ‘student’ often changed pieces of lyrics and tunes to suit their own preferences or even to reflect events and conditions in their area of Appalachia, leading to such instances as ballad collector Cecil Sharp finding numerous versions of traditional songs in his travels through the region.³⁷ In a more recent example, East Tennessee State University professors Thomas Burton and Ambrose Manning also found various versions of the same songs while recording folk songs in western North Carolina and east Tennessee. The two professors conducted much of their work in the 1960s. They found several different versions of songs such as “Barbara Allen,” “B’il Them Cabbages,” and “Blackjack Davy.”³⁸ Traditional music educators of the past and present have incorporated that spirit of experience and creation into their curricula, providing students with educational activities that connected with the students’ lives and goals.

³⁷ John B. Rehder, *Appalachian Folkways* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 244-48.

³⁸ Songs/Classification Index, The Thomas G. Burton-Ambrose N. Manning Collection, Papers and Tapes 1899-1989, Archives and Special Collections, East Tennessee State University, accessed April 2, 2015, http://www.etsu.edu/cass/Archives/Collections/afindaid/a25_01.html.

CHAPTER 3

TRADITIONAL MUSIC IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Although traditional Appalachian music has been incorporated into elementary and high school curricula in various ways since the turn of the twentieth century, institutions of higher education adopted it less enthusiastically. A few universities located within Appalachia offered courses in the history and appreciation of traditional music between the 1940s and 1970s. Some of the first efforts were Cratis Williams's "Appalachian Ballads and Songs" class at Appalachian State Teachers College (now Appalachian State University) in Boone, North Carolina in 1943 and Raymond K. McLain's bluegrass and Appalachian music classes at Berea College in Berea, Kentucky, beginning in 1970.¹ Soon after McLain's courses were incorporated into Berea's curriculum, a number of other colleges and universities both within Appalachia and throughout the rest of the United States began offering traditional Appalachian music classes (and eventually, entire programs of study) of their own.

As mentioned at the beginning of Chapter Two, earlier forms of American music education had centered on European classical music in order to broaden American students' horizons and introduce them to the more technically advanced composition techniques of Western European composers. Many middle and upper-class Americans viewed European nations as culturally richer than the United States and they desired to move past what they saw as unsophisticated American culture. Even though attitudes had changed somewhat by the 1960s, Western European music was still the predominant style of music taught in both K-12 schools and in institutions of higher education. The 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision prompted the beginning of the process of integrating public schools across America.

¹ Appalachian Studies Association, "ASA Timeline," accessed March 1, 2015; Loyal Jones, "Raymond Kane McLain," McLains.com, last modified 2003, accessed March 15, 2015, <http://mclains.com/Daddy/>.

One result of integration in schools was a greater recognition of cultures outside mainstream white American culture. According to Michael Mark and Patrice Madura, “a goal of the Civil Rights Era was to prepare students to value every individual and to respect and appreciate the diversity of different cultures and traditions.”² In 1965, the federal government also created several pieces of legislation that directly impacted the teaching of music in schools. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act and the Higher Education Act both provided funding for enhanced teacher training that would allow teachers to gain greater insight into best practices in teaching the humanities. The Higher Education Act also promoted research at the college and university level that would help faculty members better shape future curricula at all levels.³

Jazz was the first form of original American music incorporated into instructional curricula, perhaps thanks to suggestions from the 1963 Yale Seminar on Music Education, a meeting sponsored by the Panel on Educational Research and Development in response to concerns about the limitations of music curricula in elementary and secondary schools. The seminar’s members recommended that music curricula expand in order to include non-Western folk music and jazz music, particularly noting that “jazz has attained international recognition as an American art product with distinctly native roots... It is the present heir to a precious national heritage, and the best of the... repertory should be part of every American’s musical experience and education.”⁴ Interestingly, neither the Yale Seminar nor several national meetings of music educators that followed emphasized American folk music, one component of which is traditional Appalachian music. In contrast, these educators viewed both jazz and the folk music of world

² Michael Mark and Patrice Madura, *Contemporary Music Education* (Boston: Schirmer, 2014), xvi-xviii.

³ Terese M. Volk, *Music, Education, and Multiculturalism: Foundations and Principles* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 68.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 76-77.

cultures as essential to the musical growth of students, as evidenced by suggested school music courses that featured “jazz, Spain and Latin America, Africa, Java, and France and Germany.”⁵

A second meeting of music educators in 1967 further clarified and refined the goals and issues outlined during the Yale Seminar. The Tanglewood Symposium intended to increase the value of music education in the United States and outlined suggestions for doing so in the Tanglewood Declaration. One of the declaration’s key points is especially pertinent to the teaching of traditional music and to this thesis. The second point stated that “Music of all periods, styles, forms, and cultures belongs in the curriculum. The musical repertory should be expanded to involve... American folk music, and the music of other cultures.”⁶ The educators present at the symposium believed that in addition to the Western European music content of most music courses, American folk music should be included in music curricula in part because it lent to music’s “rich variety.”⁷

Joseph Dinwiddie offered a possible explanation for the exclusion of traditional Appalachian music in higher education curricula in his 1998 analysis of the music program at Berea College. In his article, Dinwiddie stated that after living in California for several years, he moved back to his native Kentucky with the hope of immersing himself in the music of the Appalachian region. He enrolled at Berea due to its stated mission of serving the Southern Appalachian region and his previous enjoyment of a traditional music festival sponsored by the college. However, Dinwiddie said that he was surprised to realize that Berea offered almost no courses in traditional music. Through extensive historical research on the school’s music department, he surmised that the college historically attempted to uplift its students from their

⁵ Volk, *Music, Education, and Multiculturalism*, 77.

⁶ Mark, *A Concise History of American Music Education*, 111-12.

⁷ Ibid.

perceived backwards, rural culture through the teaching of Western European art music. Instructors only connected their students with traditional music for fundraising or publicity purposes, such as a performance on the National Barn Dance radio program in the late 1920s.⁸ As part of his research, Dinwiddie conducted an interview with noted Appalachian scholar Loyal Jones, who stated that “It’s about uplift. I think there has always been the thought of moving people up and away from folk and indigenous music toward Germanic. Liberal colleges think in terms of elite arts. The only thing I’ve got against liberal arts is that they aren’t very liberal, they are very narrow. Doc Watson and Jean Ritchie [well-known Appalachian musicians] are as fine as any *artists* anywhere.”⁹ The elitism Jones spoke of perhaps even at present has prevented additional colleges and universities from expanding their music offerings to include traditional Appalachian music. Even at one university that has a traditional music program (referred to as Cumberland State University in Nathaniel Olson’s dissertation), educators have expressed a distaste for traditional music education in the past. One music professor interviewed by Olson referenced colleagues who “refuse to see what my colleagues in Bluegrass do as...legitimate. They don’t see it as viable, as educational. I think it’s hard, particularly for the older generation, to see folk traditions used in academia.”¹⁰

Music educator Sammie Ann Wicks agreed with Jones’s opinion in her essay “The Monocultural Perspective of Music Education,” also published in 1998. According to Wicks, 98 percent of the music curriculum in American public universities at the time focused on “the elite Western tradition – that body of music originally written by Europeans for consumption by the

⁸ Joseph Dinwiddie, “Where Have All the Fiddles Gone?,” *Appalachian Heritage* 26, no. 4 (Fall 1998): 6, 9-11.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹⁰ Olson, “The Institutionalization of Fiddling in Higher Education,” 275.

upper classes from roughly the medieval era to the early 20th century.”¹¹ Reflecting the recommendations of the Yale Seminar, even ethnomusicology courses and research focused on the traditional music of other countries as opposed to that of the United States. Wicks argued against the exclusion of traditional American music in United States college and university music programs, because she claimed that by neglecting traditional music, educators act in a culturally biased manner and thus neglect students for whom those musical traditions represent historical and cultural significance.¹²

A more recent meeting of educators at Western Kentucky University in Bowling Green, Kentucky specifically examined the lack of traditional Appalachian music in higher education. While the 2005 symposium found that about twelve colleges and universities across the United States offer courses that focus on the folk music of the Appalachian Mountains, Western Kentucky University professor of folk studies Erika Brady remarked that “poor rural whites are in a sense the last examined minority.”¹³ Although this music represents a certain culture and can convey truths about that culture, “it’s not culture with a capital C.”¹⁴ If Brady’s view is accurate, the culture of bluegrass and traditional Appalachian music may be simply too distant from the more elite musical styles historically recognized by the academic community for recognition as a legitimate area of study.

¹¹ Sammie Ann Wicks, “The Monocultural Perspective of Music Education,” *Chronicle of Higher Education*, January 9, 1998, A72.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Associated Press, “Bluegrass Symposium Revives Genre and Class Debates,” *Diverse: Issues in Higher Education* 22, no. 17 (October 6, 2005): 13, accessed March 21, 2015, Education Full Text (H.W. Wilson).

¹⁴ Ibid.

Growth of Traditional Music in Higher Education

Although Brady, Jones, Wicks, Olson, and others have noted the sometimes negative attitude toward the inclusion of traditional Appalachian music in higher education from members of the academic community, both the study and performance of traditional Appalachian music have existed on college and university campuses since the 1960s. Mayne Smith conducted the earliest scholarly research concerning bluegrass music and its roots at Indiana University in 1963-64 within the folklore department. According to music historian Neil Rosenberg, who was also a student at Indiana University at the time and assisted Smith with his research, many folklorists at the time considered Appalachian culture “overstudied.”¹⁵ Throughout the late 1960s, however, *The Journal of American Folklore* featured a number of articles about traditional Appalachian music, including in the July-September 1965 “Hillbilly Issue” that featured D.K. Wilgus’s “An Introduction to the Study of Hillbilly Music,” Ed Kahn’s “Hillbilly Music: Source and Resource,” and Archie Green’s “Hillbilly Music: Source and Symbol.”¹⁶

Rosenberg remembered that the folk music revival of the late 1950s and 1960s prompted his initial interest in bluegrass and traditional Appalachian music and his later research on it. The folk music revival promoted singing, playing, and listening to traditional American music, including and in some cases centering on the traditional music of Appalachia. Although much of the revival’s promotion of traditional music took place within communities of like-minded people around the United States, its popularity boomed on college and university campuses, leading to college folk music festivals and frequent campus concerts by artists associated with the revival. The earliest festival was at Swarthmore College in the 1940s, but the trend caught on after festivals at Oberlin College in 1957 and the University of California at Berkeley in 1958.

¹⁵ Rosenberg, *Bluegrass: A History*, 4-5.

¹⁶ *The Journal of American Folklore* 78, no. 309 (July-September 1965).

Bluegrass music first appeared on a college stage in 1960 with a concert by southeastern Kentucky natives the Osborne Brothers at Ohio's Antioch College, which was the home of a local bluegrass and folk music scene. Throughout the early 1960s, more and more bluegrass groups with musical roots in Appalachian traditions began appearing at colleges, including the Stanley Brothers, the Country Gentlemen, and Flatt and Scruggs.¹⁷ In an interesting contrast to the concerns of some music educators detailed previously, folk music fans on college campuses often embraced bluegrass and traditional Appalachian music because they felt it was an authentic style of music. Tom Paley, a member of popular folk revival group The New Lost City Ramblers, remarked in the liner notes to the 1962 album *New Lost City Ramblers Volume 4* that college students became excited about hearing "genuine country musicians."¹⁸ Although Appalachian-based groups such as the Osborne Brothers still encountered some negative reactions to their music (the Osbornes faced laughter and awkward silence at Antioch College when they tried to make a joke about the Appalachian pronunciation of the word 'banjo,' for example), college students welcomed traditional songs and instrumentals.¹⁹

Perhaps it is telling that following Appalachian State University's and Berea College's offering of traditional music courses, the first college course based around traditional music with roots in Appalachia grew out of the folk music revival. Although it is located over one thousand miles from Appalachia, Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington, began offering a class in bluegrass music, focusing on band performance, in the early 1970s. The course was taught by banjo player Tom Foote, who helped students gain musical experience by booking them at the

¹⁷ Rosenberg, *Bluegrass: A History*, 3, 148-55, 175-76.

¹⁸ Ray Allen, *Gone to the Country: The New Lost City Ramblers and the Folk Music Revival* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 115.

¹⁹ Rosenberg, *Bluegrass: A History*, 156-57, 176.

Tenino Old Time Music Festival in Tenino, Washington. According to local music historian Phil Williams, western Washington was embracing the larger folk music revival at the time, and bluegrass music seemed to be a natural outgrowth of the increased embrace of traditional music. The bluegrass course at Evergreen was taught for several years, although it is no longer offered today.²⁰ This bluegrass class also seems to have embraced the experiential learning trend found in traditional Appalachian music at the K-12 level. Foote attempted to provide the students with authentic experiences that would prepare them for life outside of the classroom. Not all musicians engage in public performance. However, by preparing for and participating in public band performances, students can learn to work together in groups. They also can see that their classroom learning activities have an ultimate purpose.

Traditionally-based music courses at South Plains College, a two-year junior college located in Levelland, Texas, have endured much longer than the course at Evergreen State College, but have embraced the same concepts of experiential learning since their beginnings. In 1975, the college broadened an older traditional music program by adding courses in country and bluegrass music, renaming the program “Commercial Music,” because those styles are commercialized forms of traditional music. By 1985, 120 students had enrolled in bluegrass and country classes; close to 60 of those students had declared Commercial Music as their major.²¹ Wicks attributed the program’s success to backing from a former college president, who provided financial support for the program due to his belief that it supported the region’s culture.²² Regardless, the program has continued to grow in the forty years since its founding, by

²⁰ Phil Williams, “Early Bluegrass in Western Washington and the Pacific Northwest,” Voyager Recordings & Publications, accessed March 15, 2015, <http://www.voyagerrecords.com/arNWBG.htm>.

²¹ Paula Dittrick, “South Plains College Students Major in Bluegrass,” *Chicago Tribune*, February 7, 1985.

²² Wicks, “The Monocultural Perspective of Music Education,” A72.

continually offering core classes in instrumental instruction, band ensembles, and recording and sound technology, among other topics. Current students can earn an Associate of Applied Arts degree in Commercial Music or a certificate that requires the completion of fewer courses.²³

Articles in the January 1989 and November 1992 issues of *Bluegrass Unlimited* described the program's pedagogy. Every course offered through the commercial music program emphasized learning through experience and learning with a purpose outside of the classroom. In 1989, band ensemble and individual instruction courses were taught with the ultimate goal of preparing students for public performances. That year, the college had scheduled more than 30 performances for student groups outside of the classroom setting. The college's Tom T. Hall Lecture Series brought music business personalities to campus to give students in-person exposure to professionals from whom they might learn. The students also assisted with their professors' professional projects, including the creation of a documentary film about fiddler Frankie McWhorter and the recording of an album.²⁴ By 1992, the college had expanded the opportunities for experiential learning by adding a television production studio in which students "learn[ed] to handle TV cameras, video mixing consoles, stage lighting, and all the other intricacies necessary for a professional musical TV production" and put the knowledge they gained to use by producing a live bluegrass music program that was broadcast on the town's public cable channel. The article's author, Bryan Kimsey, mentioned several students who had realized their vocational goals and began music careers, including Ron Block, the banjo player for Alison Krauss and Union Station and the Nashville Bluegrass Band's fiddler Stuart Duncan.²⁵

²³ John Lawless, "Joe Carr, South Plains College," *The Bluegrass Blog*, August 6, 2007, accessed March 13, 2015, <http://bluegrasstoday.com/joe-carr-south-plains-college/>; Dittrick, "South Plains College Students Major in Bluegrass."

²⁴ Arlie Metheny, "Bluegrass in the Ozarks, the Ouchitas, the Kiamichis, the Bayous of Louisiana, and the Plains & Hills of Texas," *Bluegrass Unlimited* 23, no. 7 (January 1989): 33.

East Tennessee State University in Johnson City, Tennessee, began offering bluegrass and traditional music courses in 1982 after bluegrass musician Jack Tottle approached the university's music department about filling a perceived need for regional music in the department's course offerings. According to Tottle, "behind all of [his] work at this institution has been a desire to increase appreciation for this culture among ETSU students, in the surrounding community, and at the national and international levels."²⁶ In the thirty-three years since its founding, the traditional music program at East Tennessee State University has grown from a few classes contained within the music department to a Bachelor of Arts degree in Bluegrass, Old Time, and Country Music Studies now housed within the university's Department of Appalachian Studies. Courses throughout the program's history have included individual instruction, band ensembles, music theory, bluegrass and country music history, and recording and sound technology. Although several other colleges offered bluegrass and traditional music-related courses prior to the establishment of the one at East Tennessee State University, its program was the first to be taught at a four-year college or university. As a result, the program now refers to itself as "the home of Bluegrass, Old Time, and Country Music Studies in higher education."²⁷ The bluegrass and traditional music program at East Tennessee State University will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

The East Tennessee State University Bluegrass, Old Time, and Country Music Studies mission set forth by Tottle seems to have influenced additional institutions as to the value of regional culture. Program directors at other universities that have founded traditional

²⁵ Bryan Kimsey, "Return to South Plains College," *Bluegrass Unlimited* 27, no. 5 (November 1992): 31-32.

²⁶ Mark Rutledge, "A Four-Year University Discovers Bluegrass is a Sound Investment," *Bluegrass Unlimited* 32, no. 10 (April 1998): 28.

²⁷ Bluegrass, Old Time, and Country Music Studies, "Home," ETSU Department of Appalachian Studies, last modified 2015, accessed March 13, 2015, <http://www.etsu.edu/das/bluegrass/default.aspx>.

Appalachian music programs in the years since Tottle's first classes at East Tennessee State University have emphasized the importance of preserving and promoting the region's culture. Bluegrass musician Don Rigsby, who was the director of Morehead State University's Kentucky Center for Traditional Music in Morehead, Kentucky, throughout most of the first decade of the 2000s, noted in an interview with journalist Nancy Cardwell in 2007 that the program's "motto is to educate, preserve, and entertain."²⁸ Rigsby elaborated on the concept of preservation, using the term "stewardship" to point out the necessity of keeping Appalachian music alive for younger generations. Morehead State University's program also shares a similarity with South Plains College in that it has garnered support from the university's president, Dr. Wayne Andrews, who is a banjo player.²⁹ The current program director, Raymond W. McLain, previously worked as the program director at East Tennessee State University, where he helped facilitate the development of the first Bachelor of Arts degree in Bluegrass, Old Time, and Country Music Studies.³⁰ As in the traditional music programs at East Tennessee State University and South Plains College, the Morehead State University program's goals embody a focus on experiential learning. Although the bulk of the goals center on preserving and promoting Appalachian culture, one goal specifically states that the program will "mentor and prepare students to become well-rounded, business savvy, creative, productive artists."³¹ One of the ways in which the program meets this goal is by allowing students in band ensemble courses to perform at regional and national events.³²

²⁸ Nancy Cardwell, "Don Rigsby: Midnight Caller," *Bluegrass Unlimited* 42, no. 4 (October 2007): 41.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 42.

³⁰ Jack Tottle, "Raymond W. McLain: An Appreciation," *Bluegrass Unlimited* 49, no. 2 (August 2014): 46.

³¹ Kentucky Center for Traditional Music, "Mission Statement & Goals," Morehead State University, accessed March 21, 2015, http://www.moreheadstate.edu/content_template.aspx?id=9467.

Selection of Research Participants Based on Current Courses and Programs

Although traditional Appalachian music still does not enjoy the prominence of classical and other forms of Western art music at institutions of higher education, even within Appalachia, the past several decades have shown additional growth in traditional music courses and programs colleges and universities throughout the United States. As of March 2015, the International Bluegrass Music Association lists seventeen institutions that offer individual courses or programs of study in bluegrass and traditional music. These programs range from individual instruction and ensemble classes at some colleges to full associate, bachelor's, and master's degrees at others. These institutions include: Appalachian State University (Boone, North Carolina), Belmont University (Nashville, Tennessee), Berea College (Berea, Kentucky), Berklee College of Music (Boston, Massachusetts), Bethel University (McKenzie, Tennessee), Denison University (Granville, Ohio), East Tennessee State University (Johnson City, Tennessee), Glenville State College (Glenville, West Virginia), Hazard Community and Technical College (Hazard, Kentucky), Middle Tennessee State University (Murfreesboro, Tennessee), Morehead State University (Morehead, Kentucky), Shoreline Community College (Shoreline, Washington), South Plains College (Levelland, Texas), University of Louisiana at Lafayette (Lafayette, Louisiana), Volunteer State Community College (Gallatin, Tennessee), Walters State Community College (Morristown, Tennessee), and Warren Wilson College (Asheville, North Carolina). Of these seventeen institutions, eight are located within Appalachia. Seven offer full degree programs focusing on traditional Appalachian music and/or bluegrass music, while the others offer at least one course focusing on this musical style.³³

³² Kentucky Center for Traditional Music, "Mission Statement & Goals."

³³ International Bluegrass Music Association, "University Bluegrass & Music Business Programs."

I used this list as the starting point for the interviews related to this thesis. The International Bluegrass Music Association has made this list available to the public, along with a brief description of each institution's traditional music-related courses and contact information for each institution. As such, I utilized the contact information to reach out to each institution for participation. I did not differentiate between institutions that offer individual traditional music courses and those that offer full programs of study. I offered each institution an equal opportunity to participate in the research through initial contact via an e-mailed letter and follow-up via a telephone call.

As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, faculty members from six institutions chose to participate in this research. These institutions include East Tennessee State University, Volunteer State Community College, Belmont University, University of Louisiana at Lafayette, Appalachian State University, and Hazard Community and Technical College. One faculty member participated from each institution except East Tennessee State University, from which two faculty members participated. Although I gained initial background information about each program on the International Bluegrass Music Association list from periodical articles and college and university websites, these interviews provided me with additional information pertaining to the curriculums, teaching methods, and cultures specifically within these six programs. Therefore, these programs will form the basis for most of the analysis in Chapter Four.

Two common themes have emerged in my historical study of traditional music programs at both the K-12 and higher education levels: the relationship (both positive and negative) between such programs and the traditions they represent, and their focus on experiential learning. In the next chapter, I will use findings from semi-structured interviews to examine further these two themes specifically in relation to the educational theories of John Dewey. Dewey's works

Experience and Education and *Democracy and Education* will form the theoretical basis of my comparisons. Specific topics discussed in Chapter Four include teaching traditions and culture, learning through experience, freedom and individualization, and the role of vocational education in preparing students for life outside the classroom.

CHAPTER 4

DEWEY'S THEORIES AS APPLIED TO TRADITIONAL MUSIC EDUCATION

In his *Experience and Education*, John Dewey wrote, “How shall the young become acquainted with the past in such a way that acquaintance is a potent agent in appreciation of the living present?”¹ In writing this, Dewey referred to the differences in what were then traditional styles of education and the more modern theories he and others espoused in the first decades of the twentieth century. Dewey said that traditional methods of education had focused simply on conveying facts about the past to students. Newer forms of education should use the conveyance of knowledge of the past as a means for students to better understand life in the present.² As the past two chapters have shown, present-day traditional music programs rely on a knowledge of the past as the core of their curricula in the form of teaching the songs and history of Appalachian music. However, many of these programs seem to have addressed Dewey’s question in that their courses allow students to do more than simply acquire facts about historically-based music. Instead, they implement experiential learning with ultimate vocational goals and allow students an element of individualization and freedom in directing personal learning.

Ben Graves, a music instructor at Volunteer State Community College in Gallatin, Tennessee, affirmed this belief. According to Graves, the mixture of teaching instrumental skills and the historical background and culture of bluegrass and traditional music combines to “produce a new generation of players,” thus “ensuring the longevity of the music.”³ Charles Smith, an instructor in East Tennessee State University’s Bluegrass, Old Time, and Country

¹ Dewey, *Experience and Education*, 23.

² Ibid.

³ Ben Graves, interview by author, conducted via telephone, March 4, 2015.

Music Studies program agreed, noting that the program there allows students to become immersed in the entire culture of bluegrass and traditional music, including its history, performance, and theory. Smith also remarked that this cultural immersion provides students with numerous opportunities for real world, real life experiences while they are still in college.⁴ The following sections of this chapter will discuss further examples of meaningful learning experiences in bluegrass and traditional music programs as shared by the faculty members I interviewed.

Summary of Findings

I conducted seven interviews for this thesis. The participants consisted of one director of a bluegrass and traditional music program, two instructors who teach ensemble and individual instruction courses in bluegrass and traditional music programs, one instructor who currently teaches traditional music history and has taught ensemble courses in previous semesters, and three instructors who teach ensemble and individual instruction courses in addition to other courses such as music theory, music history, and music business as needed each semester. For each interview, I relied on a list of twenty open-ended questions that I had developed prior to beginning the research. I used several of the questions in order to gain background knowledge on the participant. For instance, I asked each interviewee to share their experience as a traditional music educator, both at the college/university level and in any other programs. These questions allowed me to learn more about the person I was interviewing and to begin to establish a relationship with him or her (or develop the relationship with participants with whom I had a prior relationship). In an effort to corroborate my personal experiences as a traditional music student, I also asked participants if they had experienced skepticism as to the value of a

⁴ Charles Smith, interview by author, conducted via telephone, March 20, 2015. This participant chose to remain anonymous and his/her name has been changed.

traditional music degree and, if so, what rebuttal they would offer to someone who expressed skepticism. Additional questions asked about the value of traditional music education in higher education for students, colleges and universities, and society as a whole. In keeping with this study's research problem, the rest of the questions centered on teaching methods in traditional music programs and the relationship between Dewey's theories and the pedagogical theory and technique used by instructors.

Through review of each interview, I looked for certain words that occurred throughout all of the interviews. These words allowed me to identify seven questions that yielded information particularly relevant to this research. In general, these questions also yielded similar responses from all participants. These questions included: "Why would a student want to enroll in a bluegrass and traditional music program?;" "What benefits does the bluegrass and traditional music program you currently work with offer its students?;" "What teaching methods work best in bluegrass and traditional music programs?;" "Do bluegrass and traditional music programs offer students an individualized education, and if so, how?;" "What is the value of bluegrass and traditional music coursework and what is the value of a bluegrass and traditional music degree?;" "Have you ever encountered any skepticism about the value of bluegrass and traditional music coursework and degrees?;" and "What kind of rebuttal would you offer someone who did express skepticism about the value of bluegrass and traditional music coursework and degrees?"

As I mentioned in the introduction, the majority of the participants indicated that they were not familiar with Dewey's theories. Only two participants indicated that they knew about Dewey's educational philosophy, while two others noted that they knew of Dewey but were not familiar with his work. Therefore, in most cases, the questions that related specifically to Dewey's theories did not prove to be helpful in gathering relevant information. The answers to

other questions in which participants described teaching methods, courses, and benefits of traditional music education provided answers that were more relevant to my research problem. For instance, all of the participants stated that the programs in which they work offer students learning experiences in which they work towards the ultimate goal of applying the lessons learned within their classes to their lives outside of school, which I related to Dewey's beliefs about experiential learning and vocational education. The following paragraphs summarize the answers to the seven questions listed above.

In response to the question, "Why would a student want to enroll in a bluegrass and traditional music program?," participants indicated that a love of the music and a desire to pursue a career in a related field were the most important factors in the decision to enroll in such a program. Boner stated that "for some people, it's all they've ever dreamed of doing."⁵ Jim Johnson, an instructor of Appalachian Studies at Appalachian State University, noted that many students want to become professional musicians, while others want to obtain music industry connections to further their career goals.⁶ In answering the question, "What benefits does the bluegrass and traditional music program you currently work with offer its students?," each participant stressed the program's ability to offer students learning experiences that allow them to participate in life outside the classroom in both the present and the future. Johnson, Boner, and J.P. Mathes, an assistant professor and the ensembles director at Hazard Community and Technical College's Kentucky School of Bluegrass and Traditional Music, each specifically

⁵ Daniel Boner, interview.

⁶ Jim Johnson, interview by author, conducted via telephone, February 27, 2015. This participant chose to remain anonymous and his/her name has been changed.

included the phrase “different careers,” in their answers to how their programs help prepare students.⁷

In response to the question, “What teaching methods work best in bluegrass and traditional music programs?,” all participants noted that they use a combination of teaching methods. Two participants specifically indicated that they do not often teach using musical notation (all participants referred to this characteristic of traditional music education within their interviews in response to various questions). Three participants stated the importance of hands-on, interactive experiences for students. Examples included using recording equipment to record themselves and others playing music and working within a band ensemble to arrange songs to best fit the members of the ensemble. Boner mentioned that in his program, they “certainly have a lot of practical methods.”⁸ When asked, “Do bluegrass and traditional music programs offer students an individualized education, and if so, how?,” all participants answered in the affirmative. Their explanations of individualized education varied slightly, with four participants using individual instruction courses as an example and three participants referring to ensemble courses. Smith explained that while there are “opportunities for [individualization] to happen,” its extent can vary based on teaching methods used and the manner in which students engage themselves in learning.⁹

When asked, “What is the value of bluegrass and traditional music coursework and what is the value of a bluegrass and traditional music degree?,” participants’ answers varied. Graves remarked that “education is its own reward,” while Johnson explained that in his opinion,

⁷ Daniel Boner, interview; Jim Johnson, interview; J.P. Mathes, interview by author, conducted via telephone, March, 19, 2015.

⁸ Daniel Boner, interview.

⁹ Charles Smith, interview.

traditional music education “fills in gaps in the standard curriculum.”¹⁰ Both Johnson and Mathes also said that traditional music education allows students to learn more about the past and apply those lessons to the present and future. Finally, when asked, “Have you ever encountered any skepticism about the value of bluegrass and traditional music coursework and degrees?,” all participants answered in the affirmative. Their rebuttals to the skepticism all focused on students’ passion for the music and the ability to find related careers.

Drawing mainly from answers to these seven questions and supplementing that information with other information gathered during the interviews, I sought to connect these present-day traditional music programs and courses in institutions of higher education with three aspects of Dewey’s educational philosophies. In the next section, I explain how the teaching methods, curricula, goals, and benefits the interview participants described are examples of experiential learning, freedom and individualization, and vocational education.

Three Aspects of Dewey’s Philosophies in Present-Day Higher Education Traditional Music Programs

Experiential Learning

One commonality in all of the interviews I conducted was the participants’ belief in the importance of learning through experience. All of the faculty members I interviewed concurred that students in a bluegrass and traditional music program both learn through experience and actively take part in opportunities that will prepare them for life outside of school while they are still attending college. Integral features of experiential learning in traditional music education as identified by the interview participants include aural learning, the “hands-on” method of learning, and the connection of learning activities with a purpose.

¹⁰ Ben Graves, interview; Jim Johnson, interview.

One key component of experience in a bluegrass and traditional music program is aural learning. As stated in Chapter Two, traditional Appalachian music historically has been passed down in an aural tradition. In this tradition, those learning the music heard it from others and then attempted to sing and play it themselves, sometimes (as in the case of some of the ballad singers encountered by Sharp and Burton and Manning) modifying tunes or lyrics in the process. Almost all of the faculty members I spoke with emphasized the necessity of aural learning in traditional music education, often contrasting it with classical music instruction, which contains a greater focus on learning from written notation. Smith recalled an experience he recently had while performing within a classical music program at a different university. After teaching in a traditional music program, he had become used to referencing sound recordings while learning a song, a teaching technique he often uses. While playing clarinet in the classical music program, he asked the instructor if the students could listen to a recording of the piece they were learning. The teacher denied his request and referred him back to the sheet music.¹¹ Johnson also recalled struggling to learn in a classical music class. As an undergraduate student with a background in more traditional styles, he found that he could not sight read musical notation in real time. He asked his piano instructor if he could simply memorize the piece and then play it, which frustrated his professor.¹²

Mathes spoke of the creative value of learning aurally. He said that he does not see the necessity of a traditional music student learning to read sheet music. Although he said that as music students, they should be familiar with what musical notation is, they most likely could not expect to encounter it in a future career. Mathes used talented, multi-genre banjo player Bela Fleck as an example, remarking that even someone as skilled as Fleck could not play music

¹¹ Charles Smith, interview.

¹² Jim Johnson, interview.

directly from sheet music. Instead, he would have to transpose the notation to best fit his instrument and in doing so, likely alter the written music's original integrity. Mathes noted that he expects his students to exhibit creativity when performing and that even playing from tablature (a style of notation more suited for traditional string instruments) can inhibit their creativity because they are simply playing what the author of the tablature has directed them to play.¹³

Len Springer, the director of the bluegrass ensemble at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, also emphasized the influence of aural learning on creativity. Springer said that some of the members of the traditional music ensembles within his institution are majoring in classical music but enjoy being part of a different group that plays by ear. In Springer's view, this is an expansion of their classical music education and provides them with experiences they could not receive otherwise.¹⁴ Only one instructor I interviewed professed a belief in the need for traditional music students to learn to read music. Graves, who also teaches some classical music courses at Volunteer State Community College, remarked that learning to read sheet music is an experience vital to the growth of all music students, regardless of the style of music they play.¹⁵

Another important aspect of experiential learning is the "hands-on" method of learning in which students actively take part in learning activities. In *Democracy and Education*, Dewey referenced the ways in which a small child learns through experimentation with touching objects. For instance, Dewey said that "we learn what things are hard and what things are soft by finding out through active experimentation what they respectively will do and what can be done and

¹³ J.P. Mathes, interview.

¹⁴ Len Springer, interview by author, conducted via telephone, February 26, 2015.

¹⁵ Ben Graves, interview.

what cannot be done with them.”¹⁶ The interactions between a human and his or her environment, and what he or she learns from those interactions, constitute learning.¹⁷ Mathes said that he believes hands-on experience is “one hundred percent” necessary in a traditional music education program. According to Mathes, the teaching method of lecturing might work as part of the instruction, for instance, in a music history or recording course, but students also need to see that what they are learning about has a practical application. Mathes mentioned sound recording classes as one example, stating that even though an instructor might teach the students about how recording equipment works, the students do not really begin to learn until they are “putting what they’re learning to use” by gaining hands-on experience with the equipment.¹⁸

Smith also referenced the hands-on aspect of bluegrass and traditional music programs in his discussion of the connections between Dewey’s theories and traditional music education. Smith said, “Students should try to solve problems that are present in their, sort of, everyday lived lives. And the kinds of problems that we address in the bluegrass program are real world problems. They’re not theoretical. And we try to get students to jump in to the culture of the music right from the very beginning... there’s a ton of jamming, there’s a ton of performing.”¹⁹ According to Smith, East Tennessee State University’s program encourages students to interact constantly with their environment through music-making activities with other students and the public. Students are presented with “real world problems,” as Smith referred to them, such as living the life of a professional musician. They then are provided with experiences from which they can draw meaning.

¹⁶ Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 317.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 320.

¹⁸ J.P. Mathes, interview.

¹⁹ Charles Smith, interview.

John Dewey remarked in his *Democracy and Education* that, as both Mathes and Smith demonstrated, educators must connect learning with a purpose. He wrote that “Mere activity does not constitute experience.”²⁰ Students must be able to see that there is an end value to the information they are learning and even the activities in which they are taking part. Otherwise, they are simply filled with potentially useless knowledge. Smith noted that students within his program are faced with addressing real world problems from the very beginning of their academic careers. They are provided with many opportunities to apply what they are learning in their courses. For example, they might learn to play a certain song in their individual instruction or band classes. In the class, their teacher provides them with the experience of listening to the song and practicing it themselves – thus, the original experience. Once they leave class, Smith said they then have a multitude of ways in which to use their classroom experience, such as being able to participate in student jams around campus or performing the music they learned in a public performance with a band.²¹ Tammy Rogers-King, the Belmont University bluegrass ensemble director, concurred with Smith. Rogers-King also teaches fiddle lessons at the university, and she said that she makes sure her students realize that they need to take their lesson experiences with them when they leave the classroom. In common with Smith, she mentioned the ability to take part in a music jam with other students or at a public place.²² Daniel Boner, the director of the Bluegrass, Old Time, and Country Music Studies program at East Tennessee State University, provided additional examples of how students in his program obtain practical, purposeful experience, such as in the case of students who travel outside of the university to public performances. These students have worked in the classroom to learn songs

²⁰ Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 163.

²¹ Charles Smith, interview.

²² Tammy Rogers-King, interview by author, conducted via telephone, March 4, 2015.

and performance skills such as stage talk. They then have the opportunity go to festivals, churches, conferences, and other events where they must speak with members of the public, set up sound equipment, sell merchandise, and put classroom performance experiences to use.²³

Mathes provided a broader vision for connecting experiences with a purpose in the Hazard Community and Technical College program. He said that almost everything students learn in his program is connected with each other and to life outside of the college, and that students are made aware of that from the beginning of their educations. Mathes provided an example of connections between three separate types of classes: music theory, individual instruction, and band ensembles. According to Mathes, students learn theoretical concepts such as rhythm in their music theory classes. They can then use that knowledge to inform their individual instruction lessons. Finally, they apply the songs and skills they have learned in individual instruction classes in their band ensembles, which ultimately leads to public performances.²⁴ At all times, students are putting the knowledge they gained through various classroom experiences to use.

Individualization

In *Experience and Education*, Dewey wrote that the new forms of education based upon his theories “emphasize[d] the freedom of the learner.”²⁵ This concept of “freedom” did not mean students were free to choose every facet of their education or that teachers should allow students to have complete reign over the classroom and learning experiences. In fact, Dewey criticized newer schools that had taken the concept of freedom too far and were left with no structure for learning. The key is finding a balance between imposing strict curricular restrictions

²³ Daniel Boner, interview.

²⁴ J.P. Mathes, interview.

²⁵ Dewey, *Experience and Education*, 22.

on students and giving them the freedom to do whatever they choose.²⁶ Several faculty members I interviewed mentioned that their programs attempt to give students control in directing their learning experiences, while also balancing the need for a structured curriculum.

Three instructors, Rogers-King, Springer, and Smith, used the example of band classes at their institutions to illustrate this concept. Smith was somewhat hesitant to say he believed in full individualization of learning within his program, in part due to the restrictions imposed by a university-guided program of study. However, he did note that band ensembles can be viewed as “democratic” in that students are expected to contribute to what they are learning in those classes. For example, students may bring in songs to perform or may offer their opinions as to how to change songs to best suit the band’s style or a singer’s capabilities.²⁷ Rogers-King said that in the bluegrass ensemble classes she teaches, she encourages students to bring in original songs that they have written for the band members to consider for performance. She mentioned that she believes this gives the students a feeling of ownership in the group, even in cases where the band may decide not to perform a student’s song.²⁸ Springer remarked that the band ensembles he teaches give students “artistic creativity that they might not have in other areas,” because he allows his students to work out their own arrangements of songs and choose most of their own material. He gave the humorous example of students accumulating “bluegrass cred points.” At the beginning of each semester, he provides his students with a list of songs they might want to perform as a band. He then awards them between one and five “bluegrass cred points” based on how closely related to bluegrass and traditional music the songs they choose outside of that list are. “Blue Ridge Cabin Home,” a very traditional bluegrass song, gets five

²⁶ Dewey, *Experience and Education*, 19-20, 22.

²⁷ Charles Smith, interview.

²⁸ Tammy Rogers-King, interview.

points. “Wrecking Ball,” a song by pop star Miley Cyrus, might get one point.²⁹ In each of these three cases, the teacher provided the student with guidelines (e.g., we will be learning to perform songs as a group, we will choose songs that can be performed using traditional music instruments, we will practice arranging songs) but also allows them to give input on how those guidelines will be carried out, thus giving students the freedom to individualize their learning experiences.³⁰

Mathes, on the other hand, spoke of individualization in individual instruction classes, which he said was “one hundred percent important.”³¹ In the individual lessons that he teaches, he said that he works with each student to determine a plan of study that will be best for his or her personal interests and skill level. When they begin taking lessons from him, he listens to them play and figures out what prior knowledge they have. He then tries to build upon that previous knowledge instead of forcing them to learn in a pre-determined manner. He provided the hypothetical example of a student who had taught herself to play using music tablature. Even though bluegrass and traditional music most often is taught aurally, Mathes still allowed that student to continue learning from tablature, if that is what she chose. As she grew in her musical knowledge, Mathes then gave her the choice to move into aural learning.³²

Boner also referenced freedom within individual instruction classes. At East Tennessee State University, students may choose which instructor they want to take lessons from and may switch instructors every semester, if they wish. Certain students may gravitate toward a specific instructor due to the style of music he or she plays in his or her professional life. For example,

²⁹ Len Springer, interview.

³⁰ Tammy Rogers-King interview; Len Springer interview; Charles Smith interview.

³¹ J.P. Mathes, interview.

³² Ibid.

Boner said that students who prefer a singer-songwriter style of music often choose to take lessons from instructor Ed Snodderly, who is a well-known country and folk songwriter. Boner contrasted this freedom of choice with the classical music program from which he obtained a degree. He said that he was assigned a vocal music instructor and was required to take lessons from that instructor throughout six years of college.³³

Rogers-King described another type of freedom put into practice at Belmont University. Belmont does not have a specific bluegrass and traditional music program, but offers bluegrass and traditional music classes within its large commercial music program. Although students must choose a certain major within the program, they may, as she put it, “personalize their learning.”³⁴ They may choose from a variety of concentrations, such as music business, performance, or music technology, and supplement core classes with ensemble and individual instruction classes of their choosing. At Belmont, a student might choose to focus on music management, but also decide to enroll in the bluegrass courses taught by Rogers-King.³⁵ Once again, this is an example of instructors providing students with a framework for their learning experiences but allowing them the freedom to individualize those experiences to best suit their personal goals.

Vocational Education

Similar to his discussion of historical debates centering on experience and knowledge (referenced in the introduction), Dewey also explained differences in perceptions of vocational and cultural education. In *Democracy and Education*, Dewey wrote that historically concepts of education were split between “labor and leisure, culture and service, mind and body, [and]

³³ Daniel Boner, interview.

³⁴ Tammy Rogers-King, interview.

³⁵ Ibid.

directed and directive class.”³⁶ Vocational education was for the poorer classes and focused on learning specific trades through experiences, often in the form of apprenticeships. In contrast, members of the wealthier classes received their own form of “vocational” education focusing on cultural pursuits such as “ruling and... enjoying.”³⁷ Dewey attempted to reframe the concept of vocations and vocational education, writing that “Occupation is a concrete term for continuity. It includes the development of artistic capacity of any kind, of special scientific ability, of effective citizenship, as well as professional and business occupations, to say nothing of mechanical labor or engagement in gainful pursuits.”³⁸ The modern society in which Dewey lived, with its emphasis on industrial mechanization, business, and growth of industry, recognized the efforts of men and women who engaged in forms of occupational service. As such, Dewey saw great value in translating the concepts of occupation into educational theory. In fact, he wrote that “the only adequate training for occupations is training through occupations.”³⁹

As all of the interview participants stated, much of the emphasis within bluegrass and traditional music programs is placed on what occupation the students hope to obtain after graduation. Bluegrass and traditional music programs generally prepare students for a certain occupational goal, generally within the music field. However, Dewey wrote that vocational education should not prepare students only for a future goal. He wrote that “the educative process is its own end, and that the only sufficient preparation for later responsibilities comes by making the most of immediately present life.”⁴⁰ Bluegrass and traditional music programs help

³⁶ Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 372.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 364-65.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 359.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 366, 362.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 362.

students seize current opportunities, such as performances, recording songs, and visiting with music business professionals. Students then can use those opportunities to direct their future career path if they choose. Furthermore, these programs do not prepare students only to be musicians. As Dewey stated, “no one is just an artist and nothing else... A person must have experience... if his artistry is to be more than a technical accomplishment.”⁴¹ Yes, students learn the technical skills of vocal and instrumental performance. However, instructors also provide them with activities and experiences, which will allow them to expand their artistry into a true vocation.

In Chapter Three, several experiential aspects of learning in bluegrass and traditional music programs were mentioned. These included recording music, producing television shows, and performing in public. The faculty members I interviewed spoke of the ability of these experiences to guide students into a well-rounded career related to the music industry. Springer and Johnson both referenced academic careers such as folklore, working in a museum, or historical research.⁴² Mathes described the wide range of creative careers now held by graduates of his program at Hazard Community and Technical College: audio engineering, music business and marketing, music education, and leading semi-professional performing groups. The courses at Hazard Community and Technical College prepared students for these vocations. For example, Mathes mentioned that all students who graduate from the program have completed a solo CD featuring songs that they have selected and helped record and produce. The students can then take that CD and use it as a demo to jumpstart a music career if they so choose. Mathes said that he believes this vocational outlook promoted by the college makes the students more self-reliant

⁴¹ Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 359-60.

⁴² Jim Johnson, interview; Len Springer, interview.

than they would be otherwise. In other words, the program “will allow them to live bluegrass music in whatever way they see fit.”⁴³

According to Dewey, vocational education should not focus solely on acquiring the skills needed for a future occupation. He wrote during a time in which the concept of “vocations” was frequently related to the growing industrial segment of the American economy. Dewey criticized schools that became miniature versions of industrial workplaces and instead encouraged them to “utiliz[e] the factors of industry to make school more active, more full of meaning, more connected with out-of-school experience.”⁴⁴ He worried that if technical skills were to be the only outcome of vocational education, the historical differences between vocational and cultural education would continue to exist. As such, his recommendations for a comprehensive vocational education included “instruction in the historic background of present conditions; training in science to give intelligence and initiative in dealing with material and agencies of production; and study of economics, civics, and politics to bring the future worker into touch with the problems of the day and the various methods proposed for its improvement.”⁴⁵ Although the bluegrass and traditional music programs described in this chapter have little connection to industrial jobs, this principle can and is applied within them. Students are not educated specifically to become a musician, a publicist, a music educator, or a number of other careers. Instead, the programs offer them a variety of courses, which provide them with a well-rounded education based in bluegrass and traditional music. Boner said that college-aged students often do not know what they want to spend the rest of their life doing. They might have received advice from their parents or high school teachers, but that advice is sometimes biased based on

⁴³ J.P. Mathes, interview.

⁴⁴ Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 367-69.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 372.

the adult's career and interests. A bluegrass and traditional music program ensures that the students "do not just have one idea of what it means to have a music career."⁴⁶ They are encouraged to experience many aspects of musical careers and personalize their learning to eventually obtain the vocation best suited for their own lives.

In his interview, Mathes listed skills that the program at Hazard Community and Technical College seeks to impart to its students. These skills clearly correlate to Dewey's definition of best practices in vocational education: bluegrass and traditional music history, audio recording and engineering, and music business and marketing.⁴⁷ Dewey believed that acquisition of these kinds of skills could better prepare students to be active and knowledgeable participants in society.⁴⁸ Springer, too, found connections between the skills taught in bluegrass and traditional music programs and a productive life after the completion of formal education. According to Springer, the skills students learn within these programs "will make them more mature, will make them better citizens... . I like to think that we're not just learning bluegrass, we're learning how to learn. And when they graduate, or when they're no longer taking this class, the skills that they develop will help them accomplish their goals in the future."⁴⁹ By participating in a bluegrass and traditional music program, students make a conscious choice to connect their college education with vocations. Their instructors hope that the instruction they receive will not only prepare them for those vocations, but also for life in general.

Near the end of his interview, Smith offered a rebuttal to anyone who could not understand the value of a bluegrass and traditional music program. He said that "You can always

⁴⁶ Daniel Boner, interview.

⁴⁷ J.P. Mathes, interview.

⁴⁸ Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 372-73.

⁴⁹ Len Springer, interview.

make a living doing things that you love. The purpose of life is bigger than money.”⁵⁰ As I mentioned in the introduction, one code that appeared frequently within the interviews was “passion for music.” Several participants mentioned that students enroll in bluegrass and traditional music programs because they love the music. Dewey emphasized the importance of providing students with occupational learning experiences that relate to their interests. He said that “the greatest evil” of the time in which he lived was “that so many persons have callings which make no appeal to them, which are pursued simply for the money reward that accrues.”⁵¹ The instructors I interviewed acknowledged that bluegrass and traditional music may not be a lucrative career. However, students in these programs cultivate their love of the music and are provided with opportunities to see how something they enjoy may one day translate into a career.

Throughout this chapter, I have attempted to connect the curricula and goals of present-day bluegrass and traditional music programs, as experienced by seven current faculty members at six different institutions, with three specific aspects of Dewey’s educational theories. Even though Dewey wrote for an early twentieth century audience, his beliefs seem to resonate today in the application of experiential learning, individualization, and vocational education in these programs. Students in these programs are provided with meaningful learning experiences, such as band performances and recording projects, which can be applied to their present status as students and their future lives after college. Within curricular guidelines, students are often given freedom to personalize their education through such means as performing original songs and selecting instructors with whom they share a common playing style. Furthermore, these programs ultimately provide students with a broad basis in the historical, technical, and economic aspects of this music, helping to prepare them to contribute positively to society.

⁵⁰ Charles Smith, interview.

⁵¹ Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 363, 370.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

My personal frustration at being asked the value of my traditional music degree inspired this thesis. Throughout the interviews I conducted, I found that many of the faculty members I interviewed had experienced similar frustrations. Boner noted that especially when he first began working in East Tennessee State University's program, he encountered "lots and lots of skepticism."¹ Outsiders to the program told him in reference to the perceived simplicity of bluegrass and traditional music, "It's just a 1-4-5 chord. It's just repetitive lyrics."² However, as Boner and several other faculty members explained, and as Chapters Two and Three of this thesis point out, bluegrass and traditional music are relatively new additions to the academic world, especially when compared with classical music, disciplines such as history or biology, and even jazz music. Even Appalachian Studies as an academic discipline only began in the 1960s, when several colleges and universities began to offer classes on Appalachia, and the 1970s, when Clinch Valley College in Wise, Virginia, hosted the first conference on Appalachian studies, several institutions founded Appalachian Centers and regional studies programs, and a group of scholars founded the Appalachian Studies Conference.³ In Boner's words, bluegrass and traditional music programs are simply going through growing pains, similar to what other more modern disciplines experienced several decades ago.⁴

In his interview, Johnson compared the newness of bluegrass and traditional music programs to well-established disciplines such as history or political science. He remarked that

¹ Daniel Boner, interview.

² Ibid.

³ Ronald Eller, *Uneven Ground: Appalachia Since 1945* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2008), 173-74.

⁴ Daniel Boner, interview.

since those disciplines have been a part of the academic community for a long time, the public “has a feel” for them, meaning that most people acknowledge the value of them. This leads to benefits such as additional funding, ample research to support the discipline, and that “parents would think that’s a good solid pick, that’s a useful thing to do.”⁵ To combat the wariness surrounding this newness, he remarked that bluegrass and traditional music programs share one major feature with any other degree program at a college or university. Although the content is different, students still learn a set of skills that is similar to those conveyed in many other disciplines. They learn to research, overcome challenges, and dedicate themselves to their studies.⁶ Mathes shared Johnson’s sentiments. He said, “Regardless of what degree you are getting, you have spent the effort and you can look at it. Any degree, anything you put your time in is worth something to you.”⁷ Boner concurred, asking “What’s more valuable than studying something you love and can make a living doing?”⁸

Although these statements made by Boner, Johnson, and Mathes are encouraging, they still do not get at the heart of the problem addressed by this thesis: the pedagogical basis for bluegrass and traditional music programs. In the introduction, I stated that I hoped to connect teaching methods and curricula used within present-day bluegrass and traditional bluegrass music programs with the educational theories of John Dewey. In Chapter Four, I was able to relate the two using findings from semi-structured interviews. In particular, I learned that bluegrass and traditional music programs promote individualized, experiential learning with vocational goals. Students are allowed to assist in the direction of their learning experiences

⁵ Jim Johnson, interview.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ J.P. Mathes, interview.

⁸ Daniel Boner, interview.

through selecting songs for their bands to perform, creating personalized degree programs, and selecting the type and style of individual instruction they receive. Students frequently participate in active learning experiences that directly connect to a number of vocations they may choose to pursue after graduation. In fact, several faculty members named graduates of their programs who had gone on to achieve the vocational goals they had worked towards in college. In an extension of that realization of goals, Smith perhaps summed up one of the most important aspects of bluegrass and traditional music education when he remarked upon its ability to lead to “self-actualization, finding self-identity, [and] exploring musical expression.”⁹ As Dewey emphasized in his articulation of the goals of vocational education, these programs not only can lead to acquiring the technical skills needed to obtain a job, but also can lead to personal growth and help prepare students for participation in society as an educated, aware citizen.

These findings have several implications for the teaching of bluegrass and traditional music at institutions of higher education. All of the interview participants were aware that they and other instructors within their programs use forms of experiential learning, such as providing students with educational activities that connect to present goals (performing in an upcoming concert) and future goals (obtaining a job as a professional musician, recording engineer, etc.). However, only one participant (Charles Smith) referred to the specific term “experiential learning.” In addition, as I previously stated, only two of the participants expressed familiarity with Dewey’s educational theories. The other participants were able to discuss aspects of their programs that related to those theories once I offered brief explanations, and were somewhat aware that pedagogical bases exist for the teaching methods they utilized. However, the majority of the participants couched their discussion of teaching methods in broad terms such as “practical,” “hands-on,” and “interactive.” Although those terms are all aspects of experiential

⁹ Charles Smith, interview.

learning and of Dewey's theories, most of the interview participants did not seem to have prior knowledge of the connection between the two. Two causes can explain this lack of knowledge. First, as I mentioned in the introduction, many bluegrass and traditional music program faculty members do not have an academic background in education. Instead, they are professional musicians. Others, such as Boner, Johnson, and Graves, have an educational background in classical music. Second, many of Dewey's ideas have been expanded upon by other educational theorists over the past hundred years. Although a 1991 study found that professors of curriculum in institutions of higher education believed that Dewey was one of the most influential scholars in the development of curriculum theory, many recent scholars have created their own definitions of experiential learning.¹⁰ The 2013 book *Experiential Learning: A Handbook for Education, Training, and Coaching* lists definitions from fourteen different scholars, while *A Handbook of Reflective and Experiential Learning: Theory and Practice*, published in 2004, lists twelve. These definitions are often vague and refer to applying and reflecting on knowledge.¹¹ Therefore, although Dewey was one of the first scholars to develop theories about learning through experience, the more recent theories of other scholars may be more well-known today.

Therefore, the findings of this study can be used as a reference point for bluegrass and traditional music program faculty members to promote and validate their program, especially within the academic community. In offering a rebuttal to skepticism about the value of bluegrass and traditional music programs, Johnson said that he might ask an institution why it would justify the study of classical music and not also justify the study of bluegrass and traditional

¹⁰ Sandra Hayes, "A Century of Curricular Perspectives: Which Curricularist Has Been the Most Influential?" (report, 1991,) accessed April 2, 2015, <http://files.eric.ed.gov/ezproxy.etsu.edu:2048/fulltext/ED366235.pdf>.

¹¹ Jennifer A. Moon, *A Handbook of Reflective and Experiential Learning: Theory and Practice* (New York: RoutledgeFalmer, 2004); Colin Bear and John P. Wilson, *Experiential Learning: A Handbook for Education, Training, and Coaching* (London: Kogan Page, 2013).

music.¹² Boner addressed this when, as I stated in the introduction, he noted that classical music educators have, over many years, developed theories and best practices for teaching. Bluegrass and traditional music programs do not, as of yet, have that time-tested theoretical and pedagogical background. If faculty members can specifically point to “John Dewey’s theories on vocational education” or “John Dewey’s belief that students should have the freedom to direct their own learning” as support for the courses they offer and the teaching methods they use within those courses, those who are not familiar with the bluegrass and traditional music community may recognize the faculty members as knowledgeable and their programs as beneficial and valuable.

Additionally, the findings of this study may be applied practically. The success of experiential learning, individualization, and vocational education at these six institutions, and the discussion raised in reference to them within this thesis, may be used as an impetus to implement new courses and teaching methods at other colleges with traditional music courses and programs, or to refine courses and methods at the institutions I studied. The learning activities mentioned by one interview participant may inspire another educator to implement similar activities at his or her school and may even inspire collaboration and communication between traditional music programs.

For this study, I was unable to interview faculty members from all seventeen institutions on the IBMA list of bluegrass and traditional music programs. My findings cover only thirty-five percent of these programs, which is a relatively small sample. In addition, with the exception of the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, all of the programs I studied are contained within a small geographic area (the states of Tennessee, Kentucky, and North Carolina) when compared to the multitude of states included on the IBMA list (Washington, Texas, and Massachusetts,

¹² Jim Johnson, interview.

among others). The findings of this study could be greatly enhanced in the future by including a larger sample of bluegrass and traditional music programs. In a larger study, results could be analyzed in reference to geographic area, size of program enrollment, nature of program (entire program focused on traditional music vs. traditional music courses within another discipline, for instance), and types of teaching methods. It would be particularly interesting to see how institutions that offer traditional music classes within a larger music program (such as Berklee College of Music's American Roots Program) differ from programs that exist independently (such as Hazard Community and Technical College's Kentucky School of Bluegrass and Traditional Music).

A secondary aspect of my research was the goal to trace the application of Dewey's theories from historical efforts at traditional music education in Appalachia to present-day efforts. Although I was able to locate several examples of experiential learning in historical traditional music education efforts, the lack of scholarship on traditional Appalachian music education hindered the full realization of this goal. For example, as referenced in Chapter Two, James Greene's dissertation on the Pine Mountain Settlement School and Anne Culbertson's dissertation on the John C. Campbell Folk School both included a few paragraphs describing historical traditional music education at each respective school. In both cases, the authors described learning as taking place through the experience of practice and performance. However, the authors included these descriptions in larger discussions of the schools' roles in preserving traditional culture and not of their pedagogies. Published historical research continues to grow on topics related to Appalachia, and perhaps as a result, more information about traditional music education will be made available to the public.

Near the end of my interview with him, Boner remarked that he has noticed a growing acceptance of bluegrass and traditional music both in the general public and in the academic community since he first entered East Tennessee State University as a student fifteen years ago. Boner said that new bluegrass and traditional music categories at the Grammy Awards, the growth of academic scholarship, and the increase in college and university bluegrass and traditional music programs are all indicators that more people recognize the legitimacy of this style of music.¹³ It is my hope that the research contained within this thesis will help continue that growing legitimization and inspire program faculty members with the realization that the courses they teach continue the Progressive concept of experiential learning and the stimulus to create additional meaningful learning experiences for their students.

As John Dewey continually pointed out in the works I referenced, education needs to advance beyond a reliance on the study of the past and teaching methods that historically have been employed by educators. Although bluegrass and traditional music program students learn about the past through a study of traditions and historical culture, they also apply what they learn through meaningful experiences created to prepare them for career and life goals. J.P. Mathes offered a fitting summary of the purpose of such programs when he said that they teach students “to understand the issues that popped up in the past so [they are] able to better deal with these in the future.”¹⁴ In doing so, these programs are ensuring Dewey’s theories are still applied today.

¹³ Daniel Boner, interview.

¹⁴ J.P. Mathes, interview.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Invitation to Potential Research Participants

(Date)

Dear (name):

As a candidate for the Master of Arts in Liberal Studies degree at East Tennessee State University, I am currently conducting research concerning bluegrass and traditional music education at the college/university level. The focus of my research is to draw connections between John Dewey's progressive educational theories (which, in part, emphasize art, play, and individualized education) and the programs of study offered by bluegrass and traditional music programs in the United States.

As part of my research, I am seeking interview participants who are current or former professors or instructors in any of the seventeen college and university bluegrass and traditional music programs listed by the International Bluegrass Music Association on its website. Participants will participate in at least one interview (in-person or via telephone) and will be asked to describe their participation in and experiences with a college or university bluegrass and traditional music program. Participants may be asked to participate in a follow-up interview. Participants are required only to answer those questions which they are comfortable answering.

If you, or another member of your bluegrass and traditional music program, would like to participate in my research, please contact me via email at goadjc@goldmail.etsu.edu by (date). I have also attached an informed consent document to this email for your review.

Thank you,

John Goad

Appendix B

List of Interview Questions

1. Please state your name and your position within a college or university bluegrass and traditional music program. (This question will not be included if participant wishes to be anonymous.)
2. How long have you worked with a bluegrass and traditional music program? What roles have you had within the program?
3. Have you worked with any other bluegrass and traditional music education programs, such as at colleges and universities, K-12 schools, workshops, or camps?
4. Speaking specifically about the college or university bluegrass and traditional music program you currently work with, what do you see as its purpose within the larger college or university?
5. Why would a student want to enroll in a bluegrass and traditional music program?
6. What kinds of careers are available to students who graduate from bluegrass and traditional music programs?
7. What benefits does the bluegrass and traditional music program you currently work with offer its students?
8. What do you see as the differences between bluegrass and traditional music programs and more traditional majors, such as history, political science, biology, chemistry, etc.?
9. What do you see as the differences between bluegrass and traditional music programs and other music programs at the college/university level?
10. More specifically, what are the differences in teaching methods (if any) used by bluegrass and traditional music programs and other music programs at the college/university level?

11. What teaching methods work best in bluegrass and traditional music programs? For example, lecture, hands-on, online, etc.
12. Are you familiar with the educational theories of John Dewey? If so, describe your knowledge of him and his work.
13. How do bluegrass and traditional music programs correspond to Dewey's theories?
14. Dewey believed that students learn best with an individualized education, suited to their interests, personalities, and future goals. Do bluegrass and traditional music programs offer students an individualized education, and if so, how?
15. One of Dewey's ideas was that play was very important in the education of younger children. Do you think this still applies to students at the college/university level? Why or why not?
16. Do bluegrass and traditional music education programs use the concept of play in education, and if so, how?
17. What is the value of bluegrass and traditional music coursework? What is the value of a bluegrass and traditional music degree?
18. Have you ever encountered any skepticism about the value of bluegrass and traditional music coursework and degrees? If so, describe your experience with that skepticism.
19. What kind of rebuttal would you offer to someone who did express skepticism about the value of bluegrass and traditional music coursework and degrees?
20. What kind of impact will students who have graduated from bluegrass and traditional music programs have on their communities and society as a whole?

VITA

JOHN CURTIS GOAD

- Education: Volunteer High School, Church Hill, Tennessee 2006
- A.S. History, Northeast State Community College, Blountville, Tennessee 2009
- A.S. University Parallel, Northeast State Community College, Blountville, Tennessee 2009
- B.A. Bluegrass, Old Time, and Country Music Studies, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee 2012
- B.A. History, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee 2012
- Graduate Certificate Appalachian Studies, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee 2014
- M.A. Liberal Studies, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee 2015
- Professional Experience: Graduate Assistant, East Tennessee State University, Department of Appalachian Studies, 2013 – 2015
- Conference Presentations: “The Music of the Mountains: Lifestyles of the Tri-Cities in Music and Lyrics.”
Poster presentation at the Immortal Life of Ronald E. McNair Research Symposium, Johnson City, TN, July 2012.
- “Tuned Up and Plugged In: Bettering Your Image Through Bluegrass Media.”
Panel presentation at the International Bluegrass Music Association Business Conference, Raleigh, NC, October 2014.
- “Documenting Community Traditions: Railroad History and Cultural Heritage Tourism in Northeast Tennessee.”
Panel presentation at the Appalachian Teaching Project Conference, Arlington, VA, December 2014
Poster presentation at the Appalachian Studies Association Conference, Johnson City, TN, March 2015
Panel presentation at the Appalachian Studies Association

Conference, Johnson City, TN, March 2015

Honors and Awards:

Traditional Music Foundation Scholarship
Ronald McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program
ACMA/Leon Kiser Memorial Scholarship, East Tennessee State
University Bluegrass, Old Time, and Country Music
Studies