

Theorizing Practice and Practicing Practice – Public Folklore in US Higher Education

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Higher education learning programs in folklore and ethnology should include training for the mastery of ICH and public folklore practices that are integrated with core curricula, grounded in theory and designed to build comprehensive professionalization of these disciplines. It should theorize practice and include engagement in actual projects with impacts beyond the classroom. A disjunction between theory and public practice which persisted for decades is now being addressed in graduate programs in ethnology and folklore, reaching towards what Bourdieu calls the “reconciling of theoretical and practical intentions”. The theories, issues and practices of public folklore currently and potentially taught in the United States suggest approaches that can be used for ethnology and ICH training. Topics can include cultural brokerage, intervention, heritage policies, cultural representation theories, dialogism, cultural sustainability, recontextualization, activism and advocacy, how community is defined, ethics and informed consent along with topics in heritage studies and the study of tourism. Practices taught can include multiple modes of presentation, media production, archiving, organizational and financial management, folklore in education and community engagement. Graduate training should include the intellectual history and contemporary dimensions of intervention in ongoing cultural practices transformative for communities and relationships of practitioners to their traditions. Folklore should be viewed as a practicing profession integrating comprehensive university training and reciprocal relationships between knowledge production in universities and the public sphere.

Keywords: public folklore, intangible cultural heritage, higher education, professionalization, public humanities

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Folklorists and ethnologists in academic institutions long held tightly to a sharp divide between academic scholarship and public practice. In Europe, manipulation of folklore by authoritarian regimes sharpened antipathy to applied work in the postwar period. Ethnologists and folklorists pursued public practice careers distanced from academic programs and professional societies.¹ This division loosened in Europe during the past decade and in the United States beginning in the 1970s. In Europe, the 2003 UNESCO intangible cultural heritage (ICH) convention generated explosive growth of programs to inventory and otherwise safeguard ICH. University based scholars increasingly act as advisors, consulting with governments about documentation and safeguarding practices. ICH programs are serving as a venue for employment for graduates of ethnology and folklore graduate programs. Heritage sessions now constitute a substantial component of International Society for Ethnology and Folklore congresses. The extensive current engagement of its members in heritage professions is noted in a 2021 SIEF position paper that speaks of the multiple roles of ethnologists and folklorists as “researchers, academics, trainers, community workers, cultural brokers, and policy advisors” engaged in ethical heritage practice in close association with communities and grounded in expertise about heritage topics. It states that its members are involved with “networking, training, teaching, and research, bringing academic and applied work together with community co-creation in pursuit of equitable participation and mutual recognition” (International Society for Ethnology and Folklore, 2021). Coursework relating to ICH theory, policy and practice have been introduced in recent years in a number of European ethnology and folklore programs, although there are relatively few courses primarily oriented to training practitioners.

Folklore Studies in the US realigned relationships between the academic and public spheres over the past half century. Concerns of folklorists about the academic professionalization of their discipline were associated with increasing marginalization of applied folklore through the late 1960s (Green, [1992] 2007; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, [1992] 2007, 29–31). The tide turned as many academically trained folklorists began to work in the public sphere and public folklore became recognized as integral to the discipline as a whole (Abrahams, 1999). Most folklorists working in the public sphere now began to call their work “public” rather than “applied” folklore.

Public folklore involves mutual engagement with communities, the use of multiple modes of representation, cultural brokerage, recontextualization of cultural practices as they are presented to new audiences and sharing authority with communities. At the time the term public folklore was coined, “applied” folklore generally involved applying and disseminating expertise and scholarship in a unidirectional manner, assuming that expertise and interpretive authority resides with the folklorist designing programs on behalf of a community (Baron, 2010: 71). The rapid growth of public folklore led to institutionalization of scores of folklife programs directed by academically trained folklorists. University graduate folklore programs began to follow suit, with most now offering coursework in public folklore theory and practice. Almost half of the members of the American Folklore Society (AFS) are engaged in public folklore (Lloyd, 2021), frequently occupying leadership positions. Programs devoted to the documentation

1 For discussion of the divide between academic and applied work in Germany see Bausinger (1999) and Köhle-Hezinger (1999).

and presentation of folklife of an entire state are situated within universities with folklore programs as well as in government agencies and NGOs nationwide, constituting a national infrastructure of folk arts and folklife programs.

These developments suggest the possibility of envisioning new paradigms integrating theory and practice. They point to configurations of ethnology and folklore which incorporate public practice as a core component of all academic training. My consideration of these potentialities here explores theories, issues and competencies for public practice along with descriptions of public folklore curricula. While the US has not ratified the 2003 UNESCO ICH Convention, our experiences with training and praxis should be instructive to colleagues in other countries engaged in developing and expanding higher education ICH programs. Throughout this article what I will say about folklore also generally applies to ethnology and ICH. In both the US and Europe we need to achieve fuller integration of theory and practice and see our fields as both practicing professions and academic disciplines.

TRAINING FOR THE PROFESSIONS IN HIGHER EDUCATION AND THEORY/PRACTICE INTERRELATIONSHIPS

Higher education institutions are fundamental for the training of professionals of all kinds, providing much of the knowledge base possessed by professions. A functionalist approach of the sociology of occupations identified two branches of each profession that together create a systematized body of knowledge, with two branches. The “profession of learning” engages in research and scholarship along with transmitting knowledge to others. The applied branch applies the intellectual discipline in practical ways. Together the two branches create technical competence in the mastery and use of a profession. The university sits at the center of all professional worlds, providing professional training along with teaching theory and skills applied in the practice of a profession (Parsons, 1968: 536–547). Both the “production of practitioners and researchers and the producing of knowledge pure and applied tend to become increasingly integrated and coherent within the modern university” (Larson, 1977: 50). Recent scholarship eschews such a dichotomy of practice and theory in professional training. Serrano and Kreber stress “practical reasoning” in professional practice, and assign a more equitable role to “communities of practice and communities of experts” in learning and sustaining professional practice. “Understanding professions from the notion of “practices”, they aver, “allows us to recognise the mutual relationship between them and the university, where both parties need and benefit from each other” (2014: 560).

While most public folklorists continue to learn practice primarily on the job apart from academic institutions, folklore is moving towards greater integration as a profession by providing training for practice through universities in association with communities of practice. However, public folklore is yet to be comprehensively integrated within the core theories and academic competencies taught through graduate training. A robust academic program integrating theory and practice within a fully professionalized field should entail preparation for carrying out these practices within a university through learning programs that encompass theory and practice across the curricula. Current coursework providing overviews of public folklore theory and practice, internships,

practicums and experiential dimensions of coursework, point the way to more comprehensive professionalization.

Theory and practice must not be viewed disjunctively, with practice seen as limited to skill and technique. Practice is informed by theory, with, as de Certeau contends, a “logic of the operation of actions relative to types of situations” (1984: 21). The theorization of practice reaches towards what Bourdieu calls the “reconciliation of theoretical and practical intentions” ([1980]/1990: 2). There is a logic of practice to all of the practices of public folklorists. Cultural representations produced through documentary media illustrate this relationship. As the philosopher Goodman points out, representations “make or mark connections, analyze objects and organize the world.” They do not merely imitate objects but classify them, characterize rather than copy (1968: 31). Photography employed in public folklore, like photography of any kind, is not a mechanical transcription of reality providing a neutral record of events. The selectivity of the observer, conventions of representation, relationships with subjects, culturally specific factors and what is included or excluded within the framing of the object photographed all shape how reality is rendered.² What a photograph represents is also shaped by the range of the lens, detail as conditioned by the number of megapixels, moment of exposure and choices in the use of natural or artificial light. As an ethnographic medium, photography embodies transformation from the “messy lived experience of social life” (Jacknis, 1984: 3), fixing selected aspects of sociocultural meaning in permanent form. In a similar vein, logics of practice can be adduced for aural representations through audio recordings, sound reinforcement and radio production, for film and video as well as any kind of safeguarding practice and for modes of presentation like exhibitions, festivals or the production of public performances of traditional performing arts (Baron, 1999).

What could a comprehensive folklore graduate program integrating theory and public practice look like? I begin with considerations of key issues and domains of theory in public folklore, heritage studies and tourism studies that can inform practice, suggesting some logics of practice along the way. This is followed by a listing and discussion of professional competencies that can be learned through graduate training. Then the current state of training for public folklore is illustrated through profiles of university graduate programs conjoining theory, practice and experiences practicing practice outside of the classroom.

PUBLIC FOLKLORE ISSUES AND CONCEPTS

Intervention underlies everything that public folklorists do. Following from David Whisnant’s foundational examination of this topic, they recognize that their work is “unavoidably interventionist” (Whisnant, 1988: 233). Documentation and presentation involves intervention in ongoing cultural processes that inevitably impact traditions and the communities that possess them. Documentation inscribes a cultural practice in a fixed form preserved in an archive. The form and content of the tradition is adapted to

2 Discussion of many of these issues appears in Barrow, Armitage and Tydeman (1982), Edwards (1992) and Wright (1992).

public presentation, altering it with enduring impacts. Communities may develop a new consciousness of the tradition as something worthy of documentation and presentation to outside audiences. Acknowledgement of the beneficial, negative, and ambiguous impacts of interventions upon traditions can engender critical reflexivity about these challenges and an ethical imperative to act in the best interests of communities.

Intervention also involves government support and manipulation, ideological control and the advancement of nationalist interests. These are all topics to be examined in teaching *the history of public folklore, heritage policy and government engagement with heritage*. Government manipulation and ideological control are particularly salient for nations that have experienced centralized authoritarian regimes controlling heritage policy and practice. In the US, central government involvement with folklore programming was pronounced during the Great Depression but activities have been highly decentralized since that time. However, public folklore is heavily dependent upon government funding, with guidelines by cultural agencies determining what can and cannot be supported. In most agencies providing dedicated support for public folklore activities, folklorists write guidelines, shape policy and serve on peer review panels evaluating grant applications. While they have considerable freedom in these regards, general agency policies shape the overarching parameters of what can be supported.

Public folklorists act as *cultural brokers* as they intervene in communities to produce programming, apply expertise, engage advocacy and facilitate access to resources. Brokerage entails multiple mediations with long term consequences for both broker and brokered. It involves power dynamics, with asymmetries of authority. Public folklorists seek to share, and – ideally – yield authority. Cultural brokerage requires awareness and critical reflexivity of these authority issues and of the interests at play. These interests include both mutual and self-interests that may consist of the sustaining of traditions, broadening and expansion of audiences and markets, fostering social justice, career advancement and the concerns of institutions and the folklore discipline. Folklorists are generally highly conscious of their positionalities, which come into sharp focus through cultural brokerage (Baron, 2021).

Dialogism is intrinsic to public folklore practice. In contrast to a previous paradigm of “applied folklore”, it entails mutual engagement and collaboration. It eschews a “top down” approach that assumes that expertise and interpretive authority resides with the folklorist designing programs on behalf of a community or group (Baron, 2016).

The emergence of the term “public folklore” was concurrent with the dialogic turn in anthropology and other disciplines. Following from Bakhtin, dialogism in public practice, as in scholarship, involves constructing meaning through multiple voices, heteroglossia rather than fixed meanings and monologism, and an open, ongoing process not finalized within a particular interaction (Bakhtin, 1981). Local knowledge is incorporated within public folklore programs, in association with the folklorist’s expertise. Dialogism is concretized in public folklore programs through such methods as “cultural conversations”, where the communities represented and the folklorist “negotiate mutual representations in the media, on the festival stage or in the text” (Spitzer, [1992] 2007: 99). Enabling agency for community self-representation serves to minimize, mitigate or eliminate negative objectification that may occur when traditions are presented to the public outside of source communities (Baron, 2010).

Some public folklorists contend that their work should be devoted to *activism* in pursuit of social justice. Kodish has called for a “public interest folklore” that as “activist, responsible and engaged practice” is concerned with “what is equitable, where power lies, and how people in positions of inequality make significant art and change” (2011: 32, 33). Folklorists should prioritize programming “traditions that come out of engagement with systems of oppression” (ibid: 39) and work towards achieving social justice.

While most public folklorists do not explicitly identify as activists focusing primarily on combatting social injustices, they see their work as involving *advocacy*. They advocate to elected officials for legal protections for the pursuit of traditional occupations, for advancing opportunities for artists and communities to practice their traditions, and for establishing and adequately funding folklife programs in government agencies. Their advocacy is also directed to the general public towards valorizing neglected traditions, promoting cultural democracy, fostering access to cultural spheres by the historically excluded, and cultural self-determination. Advocacy may entail moral dilemmas when there are divergent political views – such as when cultural practices express the ideologies of extremists, the far right and ethnonationalists. While cultural conversations provide opportunities for dialogue, sometimes conflicts are so fraught that dialogue is not practicable.

Recontextualization is central to the logic of public folklore practices that present traditions outside of customary community contexts. It is consonant with the shift in folklore studies in the 1970s from a text-centered discipline to reconceptualization of folklore as emergent in performance. The performance centered approach sees folklore as situated behavior shaped by contexts of situation and performance. Presentations of folklore outside of source communities are often grounded in the settings and situations in which they are customarily practiced. Recontextualization stimulates performances that replicate cultural practices carried out in everyday life or ceremonial occasions. The *framing* of presentations by the public folklorist spatially, psychologically and interpretively define them in a new setting, distinguishing the activity from ongoing community life and shape them as cultural representations. Frames are often created in consultation and collaboration with practitioners of the traditions represented (Bauman, Sawin, Carpenter, 1992; Baron, 2010).

These key public folklore issues and theories have had limited penetration within the thriving transnational heritage studies field, and vice versa. In the last few years there have been some efforts to relate public folklore to heritage studies, including a few publications (Jacobs, 2014; Stefano, 2016, 2021) as well as a 2021 AFS online webinar and salon, “Heritage, Folklore and the Public Sphere” and AFS panels occurring from time to time at their annual meeting. Heritage studies has begun to be introduced to the curricula of graduate folklore programs but awaits a much more robust integration which incorporates parallel and converging concerns such as those about to be discussed here. Tourism studies is also a multidisciplinary field which exists in a distinct universe of discourse from public folklore, is highly relevant to public folklore theory and discourse and has had occasional publications like Lucy Long’s *Culinary Tourism* (Ed., 2004) that speak to both fields.

WHAT HERITAGE STUDIES AND TOURISM STUDIES CAN CONTRIBUTE TO PUBLIC FOLKLORE TRAINING

American public folklore developed its own integrated approach to the conceptualization and safeguarding of heritage beginning in the 1980s. Cultural conservation became a major focus of public folklore, with Mary Hufford proposing “moving from a fragmented approach to heritage protection dominated by elite and professional constituencies to an integrated approach based on grass-roots cultural concerns and guided by ethnographic perspectives” (Hufford, 1994: 3), viewing cultural conservation as encompassing natural, intangible, and tangible heritage. Cultural conservation as term and concept diminished in public folklore discourse but the application of ideas and approaches about sustaining the natural environment within an integrated approach to heritage was reborn in the past decade as *cultural sustainability*. Drawing parallels between natural and cultural systems, Titon rejects “conservation” as a term for public folklore practice and stresses fostering resilience as a primary objective of cultural sustainability. Resilience is seen as a “system’s capacity to recover and maintain its integrity, identity, and continuity when subjected to forces of disturbance and change” (2015: 158), in contrast to conservation, which means maintaining “an object or system insofar as possible in its present state” (ibid: 159).

Heritage studies, which emerged as an interdisciplinary field of study during the last two decades, engages issues and theories largely overlooked in public folklore, including within cultural conservation and cultural sustainability frameworks. It is producing a wealth of empirical studies of the impact of ICH recognition and safeguarding upon tradition bearers and communities that is highly relevant to public folklore. This scholarship contains critique, construction of theory, analysis and case studies that are of value to higher education training for public practice. They include much food for thought about how communities and groups modify, reframe, resist and acquiesce to heritage designation. While many of these studies elide or minimize the value of ICH designation for a community’s self-esteem, revitalization of its cultural practices and economic benefit, they contain difficult truths that practitioners need to recognize.

Critical heritage studies recognize and examine pervasive *contestation* about heritage. Public folklore – like heritage regimes carrying out ICH programs – tends to provide consensual representations of culture. As an alternative, cultural conversations and other interpretive methods such as those presented at the Smithsonian Folklife Festival point the way to multiple perspectives on cultural issues. They occur for general audiences, in contrast to the heritage studies critique confined to academic spheres. The African immigrant programs at this festival, for example, developed multiple modes of interpretation in consultation with participants trained as community scholars. They included “workshops, performance formats, lecture demonstrations, didactic panels with photos and text, and program book essays aimed at providing a multivocal forum on community culture” (N’Diaye, 2016: 286).

Heritage scholars critically examine how *community* is defined in conceptualizing a term loosely used by public folklore and heritage practitioners. Hertz contrasts the 2003 ICH Convention’s “fixist notions” of “ethnicized, historically constituted minority groups and populations” with a relational approach. She notes that the relational

approach was articulated in UNESCO's 2006 Expert Report on Community Involvement as "networks, contingent, practice – or performance based collectives", a concept she views as similar to "communities of practice" (Hertz, 2015: 35). Graduate programs training public folklore practitioners should interrogate how the term "community" is conceptualized and embodied in practice. Public folklorists tend towards a fixist notion of community but in practice their work encompasses a broad spectrum of social and cultural groups connected in a variety of ways. A community is often viewed in a relatively monolithic manner, lacking adequate recognition of such social differentiae as social class, gender or age in how communities are characterized. Public folklore practitioners also often neglect to render exogenous cultural influences on communities and groups resulting from interactions with other cultures and societies. *Creolization* scholarship points the way to representing the cultural creativity resulting from interactions that generate emergent cultural forms with elements drawn from each of the interacting groups (Baron, Cara, 2011).

Heritage and cultural property studies, along with other disciplines, examine topics bearing on the question "who owns culture" that include *repatriation, cultural appropriation and intellectual property*. While they are not among the core theories and issues covered in most programs training public folklorists, they should be dealt with in a truly comprehensive learning program.

Tourism Studies should also be included in public folklore curricula. Increased and often out of control tourism frequently results from heritage designation and programming. It is a challenging topic that engenders hand wringing about the deleterious effects of commoditization and the alteration of cultural practices to meet the perceived expectations of tourists. While negative examples of tourism's impact are legion, public folklorists should learn to foster beneficial interventions.

Commoditization occurs inevitably in tourism when cultural objects and activities become goods and services within a trade context with an "exchange value stated in terms of prices from a market" (Cohen, 1988: 381). While form and content change, these changes can help revitalize traditions and instill cultural self-esteem. What was "a religiously meaningful ritual for an internal public may become a culturally significant self-representation before an external public" (ibid: 382). Balinese dances performed for tourists include shorter and simplified versions of traditional dances. Performances for tourists provide experience and training for dancers. They generate revenue used to purchase materials and equipment for rituals and ceremonies performed within communities (Picard, 1990). Through understanding the beneficial possibilities of tourism, public folklorists will be better equipped to work with the private and public sectors to develop tourism contributing to cultural sustainability.

Tourism studies also provide polysemic approaches to *authenticity*. It is a term often evaded in ICH and public folklore, for reasons that include aversion to the notion that a cultural product can be deemed inauthentic if not the "original" instance of an ICH element or production carried out in a putatively genuine way. Employing a constructivist approach embodying continual invention and reinvention of culture, Bruner delineates multiple definitions of authenticity. It can refer to a reproduction that gives the appearance of a period in the past in a credible and convincing way, an accurate rendering based upon historical evidence; the first, "original" instance of an object, or something that has been authorized and certified as legally valid by an authoritative

source (2005: 149–150). Bruner’s nuanced approach to authenticity respects the views of tourists about what they consider authentic, an approach which is also applicable to culture bearers and community members with regard to how they see their own cultural productions. Emic views of authenticity articulated by communities can be learned during fieldwork through listening to bearers about what is seen as genuine from their perspectives and about how they feel about heritage interventions. These perspectives on authenticity have great resonance beyond tourism studies, applicable to multiple dimensions of public folklore.

All of the concepts and issues discussed here warrant inclusion in the core curricula of folklore graduate programs. They should inform training for public practice as well as general curricula. And they deal with social and cultural realities which all twenty first century folklorists and ethnologists encounter as educators or practitioners. Public folklore training also requires specific learning of competencies of practice within and outside of the classroom.

PRACTICE, LEARNED AND EMBODIED

Learning about public folklore practice entails the acquisition of competencies employed by practitioners in their workaday lives. Courses of study should involve reading, viewing and understanding relevant scholarship, case studies and materials produced by practitioners along with immersion in actual practices. Programming needs to be experienced and evaluated. Mastery of practices is fostered through the production of public folklore activities by students.

Making and knowing as conjoined processes are viewed by a growing number of historians and material culture scholars as key to understanding the production of science and craft as well as intersections between the two. Making things is a form of knowledge that places into question distinctions between practical and theoretical knowledge, reconciling practice and theory (Smith, Meyers, Cook, *Eds.*, 2014). In a similar vein, learning public folklore practices needs to involve the embodiment of knowledge through carrying out actual practices. When taught by scholar/practitioners experienced in producing public folklore activities, faculty convey the tricks of the trade, drawing from their experiences in conveying the actualities of cultural productions.

Learning about the practices listed here engages multi-faceted modes of learning through scholarship and observing public folklore productions along with making and knowing through producing public folklore activities. These are taught through overview courses and class projects, supervised internships and practicums. Through such comprehensive training, structured classwork and experiential learning can work together hand in hand in curricular encompassing the following practices:

Documentation of living traditions serves as a foundation for programming, safeguards through generating enduring records and generates materials incorporated in media productions, exhibitions and publications. Learning how to document includes technical practices for using audio, video and photographic equipment. This learning needs to recognize, as previously mentioned, that employing these media does not create a transcription of reality but rather embodies selectivity by the documentarian and informs logics of practice distinctive to each medium.

Documentation for public folklore requires realistic expectations about the duration, objectives and intensiveness of field research. In contrast with the holistic ethnography of classic anthropological field research lasting many months, public folklore documentation is of much shorter duration and specifically focused upon providing a foundation for programming. It may include surveying communities to identify artists and traditions currently practiced, with interviews and recording of their repertoire and researching cultural contexts of practice and performance. Training can also involve learning how to carry out field research undertaken for the development of public programs and exhibitions.

In carrying out documentation, students learn how to follow protocols of obtaining informed consent through release forms and generating data sheets to accompany the deposit of recorded materials in archives. Obtaining consent, respecting restrictions on access and learning how to appropriately engage with communities are key components of learning *ethical standards*. Students need to know how *archives are managed, learn how materials are indexed and catalogued, and how they are rendered in finding aids*. Visits to archives and experiences managing archival materials can be valuable parts of this training. All of these ethical and archival practices should be part of any folklore training, public or otherwise.

Archives are becoming more proactive in presenting their materials to the public and are increasingly associated with public folklore activities. Digitization and streaming of materials on archive web sites affords wide public access to materials generated through research and public programs. They provide an important vehicle for community engagement by public folklorists. Repatriation of materials collected in archives through presenting high quality digital copies to source communities is used as a basis for projects that revitalize the traditions documented in these communities.³

Video productions, digital storytelling, podcasts and other forms of audio productions incorporate documentation and apply folklore research. Production is ideally learned from professional producers who have skill sets not typically possessed by folklore faculty, but the fundamentals can be learned through public folklore classes. The availability of inexpensive editing software and the ubiquity of outlets for productions through podcasts and social media means that folklorists are now able to present their productions through vehicles unavailable to previous generations. Requirements for public folklore classes can include the creation of such less technically demanding productions as podcasts and digital storytelling videos of practitioners.

Production of public programs encompasses festivals, concerts, lecture demonstrations, participatory workshops, narrative discussion sessions and craft demonstrations. Learning about public programming issues and practices should be a central part of public folklore training. Producing public programs involves curation, framing, construction of interpretative components and understanding technical dimensions of presentations. While the public folklorist designs the overarching theme for an event, preferably in consultation with participants, framing and design of its components should involve consistent sharing and yielding of authority. All public programs have participatory dimensions that can include hands-on making of crafts, dancing to live

3 See, for example, the repatriation program of the Association for Cultural Equity, <http://www.culturalequity.org/initiatives/repatriation>.

music, sharing traditions relating to the theme of a presentation or a culturally specific audience response to a performance.

Cultural brokerage is intrinsic to all of these activities discussed here. They involve multiple mediations and collaborations with a variety of stakeholders and organizational personnel. These include participants presenting their traditions, administrators of the venues where activities occur and technical staff (Baron, 2021). Public folklorists cannot be expected to master all of the competencies required for the production of the more complex modes of presentation such as festivals. However, they should be acquainted with the specialized expertise of production personnel and assert their perspectives when necessary. For example, public folklorists can indicate to sound engineers how a musical performance should sound if the mixing in sound reinforcement does not properly balance the various instruments.

Since most public folklore course faculty are experienced in the production of public programs they can convey how they are planned and implemented, recounting challenges encountered along the way. Coursework may include attending, describing and evaluating a public program. It might also involve mock or actual production of a specific mode of presentation.

Museums present public programs featuring traditional artists as accompaniments to exhibitions as well as in stand-alone events. They also mount exhibitions on folklore themes. Museums are the most highly professionalized type of cultural organization, with professional exhibition designers and curators, established standards of collections management, codes of ethics and museum education programs associated with school systems. Given their complexity and distinctive multi-faceted character, graduate folklore programs may have specific courses devoted to museums. Students may engage as individuals or as a team in the curation of an exhibition. Or they may produce a public program in association with museum educators.

Public folklorists engage with primary and secondary education through projects that enable students to explore the cultural resources of their own families and communities. These *folklore and education programs* may include the learning of a tradition from local practitioners, students acting as field researchers recording local traditions, and the creation of a comprehensive curriculum that relates to multiple subjects in the curriculum. Students with a special interest in folklore and education who take courses in a graduate education program learn to speak in a language understood by educators, enhancing their ability to articulate their work to educational systems. Actual classroom experiences with a folklore in education program and interaction with educators provide valuable preparation for this type of public practice.⁴

Many public folklorists are handicapped by their lack of experience in *organizational and financial management* when they begin to work in an organization or agency. They should be equipped to understand and manage budgets, work with boards of directors, supervise employees within a collegial and collaborative workplace and engage in strategic planning. Even if they are not in senior executive positions, these practices are worthwhile for them to know in order to be a fully engaged employee and advance in

⁴ Local learning, a national program, provides training for educators, folklorists and culture bearers. It also publishes the annual *Journal of Folklore and Education* (<https://jfepublications.org/>).

their careers. They could be learned in a management course or they could be part of a public folklore overview course introducing financial and organizational management skills employed in non-profit organizations and government agencies.

Grantwriting is an essential practice for any folklorist working in a nonprofit organization or as a freelancer. Crafting an application involves case making, meaning the articulation of the substance, objectives and significance of the proposed project, translated and directed towards the funding entity's interests, cultural preferences and priorities. Case making is best made by someone with a deeply internalized understanding of the subject matter and project. In most cases, this means that the public folklorist must be substantially involved in writing the grant application for the organization hosting a project.

Most American folklore graduate programs have made great strides in incorporating many of the competencies outlined here in their graduate public folklore curricula. Courses are taught by folklorists who have worked in both the professoriate and as practitioners, typically continuing to maintain both roles and often carrying out programming through a public folklore program housed within their university.

A LOOK AT PUBLIC FOLKLORE TRAINING IN AMERICAN GRADUATE PROGRAMS

Coursework in public folklore conjoins theory and practice, with substantial experiential dimensions. Curricula may also include faculty supervised internships and practicums. Students read a variety of kinds of publications, including case studies, reports of projects, white papers, web sites of projects and organizations, and ephemeral materials published to accompany public programs along with academic writing. While many students in these courses intend to work in the public sphere, they also include students with aspirations for careers in the professoriate. With the academic job market tight and getting even tighter, public folklore is often the only viable career option. Those who are able to obtain an academic job will find themselves teaching students interested in a career in the public sector. Academic folklorists increasingly recognize that a comprehensive folklore education needs to include public folklore scholarship and practice. Many folklorists teaching in universities have feet in both worlds as consultants for public folklore programs and panelists reviewing applications for funding. And since researching folklore anywhere in the world frequently entails observing traditions transformed through heritage interventions and programming, many folklorists know that public folklore and heritage will enter into their sphere of research and analysis.

Indiana University (IU), Western Kentucky University (WKU), George Mason University (GMU), the University of Wisconsin (UW) and the University of Oregon (UO) each offer multiple public folklore courses and practicums where students engage in actual projects. The public folklore overview course in IU's folklore program covers modes of presentation, activism, folklore in education, historic preservation, exhibitions, the history of American public folklore and its relationship to the academic sector, the politics of cultural representation, fieldwork in public folklore and the national infrastructure of national, state and local folk arts programs. Many of these

topics are included in overview classes at other folklore programs. Students interview a working public folklorist for the class, write a mock grant for a project and serve as a review panel evaluating the mock applications. A practicum course is carried out with Traditional Arts Indiana, a statewide folklife program housed in the university and directed by a folklore faculty member. Students in the practicum have collaborated as a team to produce an exhibition that toured to state parks, libraries, community festivals and the state fair, worked with traditional artists to create portfolios of their work that can be used in grant applications and assisted community members with creating interpretive materials programs presenting their traditions. Course offerings also include cultural heritage and property, and a museums and material culture course where students are required to write an exhibition proposal. A growing number of students include a public practice concentration in their degree program (J. Kay, personal communications, June 11, 2021, November 26, 2021).

Public folklore is a core focus of WKU's Program in Folk Studies. It offers a course on folklore and education as well as a Public Folklore Policy and Practice course in Washington DC, where students visit government and nonprofit programs to learn about cultural policy pertaining to public folklore documentation, presentation and conservation. Students in the public folklore track may also take courses in historic preservation and museum studies. Practicing practice in WKU public folklore courses includes running a narrative stage at a festival, internships, presenting public programs and engagement in other projects at the Kentucky Museum, producing a lesson plan for an exhibition and the planning and production of the folk arts area at the Kentucky Crafted Marketplace, which involves presenting folk artists and leading hands-on activities. Students often carry out projects with the Kentucky state folklife program, which, like the Kentucky Museum, is directed by a folklorist who teaches in the Folk Studies program and is housed at WKU. The Kentucky Arts Council's Community Scholars Training Program often includes student participants. Culminating capstone projects involve collaboration with cultural organizations and local communities to produce a public folklore project (T. Evans, personal communications, June 3, 2021, November 27, 2021).

Through designing innovative pedagogies of practice, graduate folklore programs create new methods for students to carry out projects with impact beyond the classroom. GMU folklore program includes a digital storytelling course that teaches video production skills employed to create short videos about practitioners of traditions. Students produce these videos in collaboration with public folklore programs in the Middle Atlantic region, which helps these programs advance their mission and expand audiences. The course develops skills in audio and video documentation, marketing, promotion and ethnographic methods. Public folklore overview course requirements includes a job application letter, evaluating a public folklore program and interviewing a public folklorist. Students participate in an American Folklife Center field school and obtain internships in national and federal folklore programs in nearby Washington, DC. A folklife festival management course in collaboration with the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage includes one semester in a classroom environment learning the theoretical, methodological, and practical aspects of festival management followed by the opportunity to apply these skills in a hands-on practicum working at the Smithsonian Folklife Festival. A class preparing students for capstones includes

discussion of professionalization both within and outside of academia. Project-based fieldwork classes during the COVID-19 pandemic have included virtual fieldwork, podcasts and videos interviews in a collaborative project with Calvert County, Maryland on local agriculture (L. Gilman, personal communications, June 3, 2021, November 9, 2021).

Courses in public folklore often involve working closely with communities of practitioners and cultural organizations. Public folklore at UW has centered recently around its Sustaining Scandinavian Folk Arts in the Upper Midwest program. Students have carried out field surveys in collaboration with Minnesota and Wisconsin state arts councils, produced participatory crafts demonstrations and musical performances, films and documentary sound recordings and symposia. They also developed archival collections accessible online. UW supports two post-doctoral public folklore positions (J. Leary, personal communications, June 3, 2021, November 20, 2021).

The Oregon Folklife Network (OFN) is housed at the UO Museum of Natural and Cultural History. Folklore and Public Culture students may take a public folklore track, which can include coursework in arts administration, historic preservation and museum studies. During fieldwork internships students assist with OFN's regional surveys, which include mentorship by independent folklorists. Students also conduct ethnographic interviews with master artists involved in OFN's Traditional Arts Apprenticeship Program. They learn about the relationship of their research to OFN programs, produce metadata and write co-authored photo essays and newsletter articles about their work. Graduate employees at OFN participate in a variety of community-engaged projects, which have included folklife field schools with the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs K8 Academy and annual visits to Astoria, Oregon to attend the FisherPoets Gathering and interview commercial fishermen. In the classroom, students serve on mock panels to review past apprenticeship applications, and they write detailed project proposals – many of which have turned into actual films and exhibits. Recent graduates are offered paid summer folklore fellowships, which serve for many as a springboard to folklore positions in the Western US (R. Saltzman, personal communications, June 3, 2021, December, 1, 2021).

The Ohio Field Schools Project is an ongoing initiative of Ohio State University's Center for Folklore Studies providing an immersive experience of collaboration with community partners. Students help community members develop projects, documenting their collaboration as it is in process and depositing project materials in a community archive. Course requirements include designing a public facing project (C. Patterson, personal communication, June 3, 2021).

Public folklore curricula engage making and knowing in a dynamic interrelationship. Practice is theorized and practiced through carrying out the work public folklorists actually do in collaboration with communities. The range of topics presently and potentially covered in courses draw from theoretical and empirical scholarship, case studies and products produced by public programs. They encompass issues of positionality, intervention, ethics, activism, mutual engagement with communities, recontextualization, cultural policy, mediation and cultural self-determination that students will confront in their careers, whether pursued in the academic or public spheres. These curricula demonstrate that learning public folklore involves far more than the acquisition of skill as technique.

Public folklore practices are also learned through coursework in other disciplines taught by folklorists. Many of Goucher College's Master of Arts in Cultural Sustainability Program (MACS) faculty members are public folklorists. Coursework covers documentation theory and practice, cultural partnership issues, project management, interpretive planning, exhibition development and cultural policy topics encompassing ICH, cultural property, public folklore and sustainable tourism. A course taught with the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage focusing on shared authority, representational practices and festival modes of presentation includes development of a mock narrative discussion session and co-authorship of a Smithsonian Folklife Magazine article. Capstones, which often have a tangible impact on the sustainability of traditions, have included a white paper used by a government agency to support a local African American music tradition.

Arkansas State University's Heritage Studies Program has a substantial public folklore dimension. Its public programming course includes an overview of genres and media used in presenting historical and folklife practices to the public. Students produce a plan for a public event that includes a grant application, project budget, delineation of the responsibilities of project personnel and a description of interpretive materials and approaches. Public folklore practices and perspectives are also integrated into other heritage studies classes. A required course on cultural resource methods includes scholarship on public folklore that addresses how to use fieldwork techniques in projects that serve the public. Public folklore perspectives also are incorporated into a range of special topics classes that focus on ICH, material culture, festival and display, and roots music (G. Hansen, personal communications, June 12, 2021, November 29, 2021).

A large majority of folklorists in the US teach outside of university folklore programs. The graduate programs at Arkansas State University and Goucher College exemplify how public folklore perspectives can be incorporated in non-folklore departments. These perspectives are also embodied in projects initiated by folklorists in disciplines like American Studies that involve collaborations with local community groups to carry out such activities as oral history documentation, videos and mapping projects. These activities are at the forefront of community engaged activities associated with the growing public humanities movement in US universities. While there are few folklore departments relative to much larger humanities disciplines, the approaches of public folklore have an influence that outstrips what might be expected from a small discipline which still places public folklore outside of core curricula.

CONCLUSION – TOWARDS COMPREHENSIVE PROFESSIONALIZATION

Although public folklore is now a primary dimension of the field of folklore it is at best peripheral to received views of core folklore theory as taught to graduate students and rendered in academic publications. Public folklore is largely confined to specialized courses and within a public folklore track. Its integration within field school courses is a promising development that should be extended more broadly within curricula.

Folklore in the US is now, for all intents and purposes, a practicing profession that has yet to fully integrate the public and academic spheres. Any professional training

should endeavor to achieve “universalization”, enabling the professional to “carry on his work in a wide variety of situations, so that his skill may meet the needs of any client whatsoever” (Hughes, 1958: 62). In considering how this might be accomplished for folklore it is more instructive to look at social science disciplines rather than “applied” professions like nursing or social work. Economists, who are typically vitally interested in the viability and application of their ideas in society, conduct research and analysis in venues that include government, non-profit organizations and corporations. Many are employed in the public sphere. Clinical psychology doctoral programs stress training in theory and practice through foundational courses in psychology theory and methodology, experiential learning through field experiences, practicums and clinical internships, with leading programs emphasizing the interrelationship of research and clinical training. Clinical psychologists, as both researchers and practitioners, engage in counseling and therapy along with teaching, participation in seminars and academic publishing.

Comprehensive integration should involve *reciprocal* relationships of public folklore with the academic branch of the profession. Public folklore practice should shape knowledge construction in the academy, and vice versa. Practice theorists and many folklorists recognize everyday theorizing as a universal, emic making sense of the world, with logics of practice and explanations of expressive behavior. Public folklore has developed logics of practice and conceptual frameworks that resonate with, and should expand, main currents of folklore thought. Its theory has developed both through discourse presented through academic channels and “institutionally-based knowledge-making practices,” among which Charles Briggs includes those of public folklorists (2016: 135). The practice of public folklore can be viewed as providing a laboratory for advancing folklore scholarship in general through research generated by its engagement with continuity, change and transformation of cultural forms and processes; transmission, representational practices and dialogical relationships with community collaborators. Practice theory in general is also now a topic of theoretical interest to folklorists.

Robust relationships of higher education with folklorists working in the public sphere could include continuing education that enhances public folklore practice and attunes graduates to new scholarship through such methods as short term seminars. Opportunities for the presence of public folklorists in graduate programs could be expanded, which would enhance student and faculty understanding of public folklore issues and practices. Field schools with graduate program faculty, students and public folklorist practitioners point in this direction. Other kinds of new relationships could include ongoing mentoring of graduate students by public folklorists, who could also serve as visiting faculty members.

In a comprehensively professionalized and integrated folklore field the academic and public sectors would mutually nourish each other, enriching a profession engaged in the world with a more robust intellectual foundation and informed practice. It would be better equipped to meet the needs of a rapidly growing heritage sphere that requires professionals who are appropriately trained with critical acumen, able to apply research and possess solid competencies in a wide range of practices along with strong community engagement skills.

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