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AT THE GREAT LAKES FOLK FESTIVAL**

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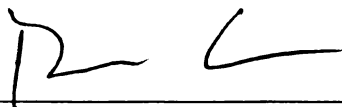
PAUL DANTE PIERANTOZZI

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**MASTER OF
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**CULTURAL CONNECTIONS
AT THE GREAT LAKES FOLK FESTIVAL**

By

Paul Dante Pierantozzi

A THESIS

**Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of**

MASTER OF ARTS

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2004

ABSTRACT

CULTURAL CONNECTIONS AT THE GREAT LAKES FOLK FESTIVAL

By

Paul Dante Pierantozzi

The Great Lakes Folk Festival celebrates cultural heritage through the public presentation of many distinct cultural practices including those strongly tied to ethnicity. It attempts to persuade all individuals to learn something about the customs of others, and to have knowledge of the customs in their own background.

Through the production of a television documentary, this thesis project explores how the festival demonstrates the importance of appreciating traditional practices, and examines whether learning about the customs of others can inspire appreciation of one's own cultural background. A survey conducted of those who viewed the documentary reveals that there is willingness to learn about the practices of other cultures but also indicates a lack of knowing about one's own cultural background.

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INTRODUCTION

In a democracy such as ours—built on the contributions of numerous immigrant populations—the existence of many diverse cultures living side by side is considered by many an exciting characteristic of our society. Yet misconceptions about many of these cultural groups reinforce established stereotypes and uphold negative preconceptions due in large part, it can be argued, to ignorance of the customs of others. For example, as folklorist Marsha MacDowell points out, it is difficult today to find those who know how to recognize traditional art forms from cultures other than their own. Fewer and fewer people are truly aware of the specific and distinct cultural traditions their forebears shared and imparted to the generations that followed them. However, The Great Lakes Folk Festival's multicultural atmosphere provides a place where these traditions are upheld and proudly displayed for all to experience.

The television documentary “Cultural Connections at the Great Lakes Folk Festival” is a half-hour visit to this celebration of cultural heritage and features selected “tradition bearers” speaking about the importance of keeping their cultures alive. Merging these comments with musical performances, craft demonstrations and statements from the folklorists who organized the event, the documentary is a descriptive testimony of how necessary it is to sustain customs.

After watching the program it is hoped that the viewer will have learned how this Festival can promote respect for the distinct cultures that make up our society and how this recognition impacts a cultural group's members.

CHAPTER 1: THE IMPORTANCE OF ETHNIC IDENTITY

There are many art forms that help to characterize a particular culture but the traditions of music, dance, crafts, and food are among the most noticeable due to their ability to be passed down and demonstrated. Before the development of the information age, these art forms tended to stay within limited geographic regions and were relatively free from outside influence. Today, such traditions are all too often seen as cultural baggage new immigrants bring with them. Without some kind of positive reinforcement, these traditions, which have largely been passed on orally and informally over generations within a community, are in danger of being lost (Auerbach 225).

The Link Between Traditions and Ethnic Identity

As technology increasingly enables the rapid and unlimited worldwide exchange of information, the time honored passing down of revered traditions is diminishing. The overload of contacts and constant exposure to all forms of messages deteriorates the homogeneity of individual cultures. The mainstream media can present us with ethnic stereotypes as was the case immediately following the Oklahoma City bombing. When news reports insinuated that terrorists were responsible, Arab groups were the first to be named as the suspects. It has also been discovered that migration tends to leave many traditions back in the old country and favor assimilation with new surroundings while mass tourism propagates fast-food stores in nearly every country of the world further encouraging the extinction of cultural practices (Melucci 367).

Unfortunately these conditions can negatively affect an individual or a group's sense of worth and self-respect. Questions of who and what one is and how he or she is to be valued relate directly to group affiliations - the group with which one identifies and through which he or she is identified by others. Closely connected with social groups are the customs of their members. A group's customary practices are, like it's language or dialect, a badge of identity for its members. If people can take pride in the customs and traditions of their group, they can feel good about themselves. But they can take pride in them only as others with whom they deal show respect for them - especially those others whose respect, or lack of it, is likely to influence the opportunities they have in their lives (Goodenough 21).

Sustaining the Preservation of Cultural Traditions

The setting offered by events such as The Great Lakes Folk Festival, held annually in East Lansing, Michigan where multiple cultural groups are brought together to present their customs before a variety of people, encourages admiration and high regard for these distinctive cultural practices (Auerbach 236). This kind of positive reinforcement and public appreciation of traditions defies the conventional media portrayals and counteracts their decline.

The Festival creates a venue for genuine awareness of cross-cultural differences and ethnic identities that otherwise may be ignored or reduced to stereotypes by dominant society. As the world become more diverse and complex, opportunities that enhance ethnic/cultural worth and self-respect must prosper to promote the equality of individual cultures.

CHAPTER 2: THE GREAT LAKES FOLK FESTIVAL

The 2003 Great Lakes Folk Festival drew an estimated 80,000 visitors to the streets of downtown East Lansing, Michigan for three days during the weekend of August 8. Nearly 100 musicians and dancers presented traditional cultural performances and demonstrations amid dozens of traditional food and craft vendors. The wide variety of music and other cultural treasures attracted both young and old audience members. Contributions by numerous cultural institutions, businesses, over 1000 volunteers and visitor donations made the event free to all who attended.

The Festival's Past

What is now The Great Lakes Folk Festival began in 1983 as the Michigan Whosestory? Festival which brought together dozens of musicians, storytellers and crafts demonstrators. The idea to showcase the folk arts and traditions indigenous to the Great Lakes was developed by The Michigan State University Museum to help people better understand the history and culture of the region. In 1987, the year of Michigan's sesquicentennial celebration of statehood, the MSU Museum staff worked closely with the Smithsonian Institution for the presentation of Michigan's cultural traditions at the national Festival of American Folklife in Washington D.C. The Museum then brought the festival program to East Lansing as the centerpiece of the first Michigan Festival - a showcase of the state's performing and creative arts. Renamed the Festival of Michigan Folklife in 1998, the event became the largest annual museum exhibition of the state's

traditional cultural contributions. Over its twelve-year history, the Festival of Michigan Folklife provided a platform for more than 1,400 artists—most of whom had never been presented by any other arts organization in the state.

In 1999, the MSU Museum began a new partnership - this time with the City of East Lansing and the National Council for Traditional Arts - to locally present the traveling National Folk Festival for three years. The success of the national served to launch the Great Lakes Folk Festival in 2002, a continuation of the MSU Museum's festival tradition.

The Present Festival

Today, The Great Lakes Folk Festival continues to teach us about ethnic diversity and the importance of celebrating our cultural traditions while serving as a vehicle of cross-cultural understanding. Bringing dozens of traditional and folk art performers to one location provides residents of the Great Lakes region the opportunity to experience these art forms through the performance of dedicated individuals who are immersed in their cultural traditions and, in many cases, have had their craft passed down to them from previous generations (MacDowell).

Michigan State University and the City of East Lansing's annual support of the traditional arts demonstrate their conviction that events such as this confirm the importance of cultural practices and ethnic identity.

CHAPTER 3: PRE-PRODUCTION

Choice of Medium

The goal in choosing the Great Lakes Folk Festival as the topic of this thesis project was largely educational: to increase Michiganders' awareness of the festival's existence, to interest them in attending the festival's activities, and thereby to increase their understanding of their own and other cultures. The most effective means for accomplishing this goal was to create a video for television broadcast. A televised video can both reach a large viewing population and convey the rich visual and auditory dimensions of the festival.

Choice of Subjects

Since the Festival hosted over 80 different presenters from a wide range of the world's cultures, deciding which of them to feature was the first step. A methodical process was needed to determine how many presenters could reasonably be included in the program while also showing an appropriate cross section of all the cultures represented at the festival.

Analyzing the cultural groups listed in the festival's official program and distinguishing the three types of events held at the festival (music/dance, food and folk arts), made it possible to count each culture and the number of presenters/events to represent them. The information was then categorized by geographic region so to see from which areas of the world they originate.

From this analysis the cultures were chosen that would represented a good cross section of those represented at the Festival while also having general representation from all global regions.

Table 1 illustrates a breakdown of each type of event by culture and art form or vendor. Table 2 presents the number of events or vendors each culture held. Table 3 categorizes by geographic region, where each of the cultures originate.

<u>Music and Dance</u>		<u>Food</u>	
African	Mbira (thumb piano)	American	Turkeyman
American	Barn Dancing	American	Zemer's Root beer
American	Cajun	American	Yoooper (pastys)
American	Tejano Conjunto	Arab	Woody's Oasis
American	Slack Key Guitar	Czech	Kolache Kitchen
American	Old-time Country	Dutch-American	Methodist Women
American	Bluegrass	Eastern European	Old World Foods
American	Yoooper Bones & Spoons	Ethiopian	Altu's Cuisine
American	Blues	Indian	Taste of India
American	Blues	Mexican	Lopez Bakery
American	Blues	Mexican	Fonda Celaya
American	Blues	Mexican	Maria's Tacos
Croatian	Tamburitza	Mexican	Fruit Drinks
Finnish	Accordion	Native American	Anishnabe Meejim
Finnish	Finnish-style fiddle	Polish	Federated Home
Indian	Kathak Dance	Polish	Kowalski Sausage
Irish	Vocalist	Thai	Feighner's
Jewish Folk	Klezmer		
Scandinavian	Dance and Vocal		
Scottish	Highland Bagpipes		
Slovenian	Polka		
Swedish	Swedish Key Fiddle		
Swedish	Nyckelharpa (fiddle)		
<u>Folk Arts</u>			
American	Braided Rugs		
American	Handspun Yarns		
American	Musical Instruments		
American	Quilts		
American	Duck Decoy carving		
American	Saddle making		
Amish	Rocking Chairs		
Chinese	Silk Cords, Jade		
Finnish	Rug Braiding		
Finnish-American	Rag Rugs		
Laotian	Hmong Embroidery		
Indian	Meh'ndi (Henna art)		
Native American	Ash Basketmaking		
Native American	Quill work		
Native American	Birch Bark canoes		
Native American	Birch Bark cutouts		
Polish	Wycinanki (paper art)		
Polish	Pisanki (egg writing)		
Ukrainian	Embroidery		
Ukrainian	Pysanka (egg writing)		

Table 1. Cultures and their art forms from the three event categories

African	1
American	20
Amish	1
Arab	1
Celtic	1
Chinese	1
Croatian	1
Czech	1
Dutch	1
Eastern European	1
Ethiopian	1
Finnish	4
Indian	3
Irish	1
Jewish	1
Laotian	1
Mexican	4
Native American	5
Polish	4
Scandinavian	1
Scottish	1
Slovenian	1
Swedish	2
Thai	1
Ukrainian	2

Table 2. Number of events for each culture represented

North America	American Amish Native American Yooper
Central America	Mexican
Middle East	Arab Jewish
Europe	<p>Western</p> <p>Celtic Irish Scottish</p> <p>Northern</p> <p>Dutch Finnish Swedish Scandinavian</p> <p>Eastern</p> <p>Croatian Czech Polish Slovenian Ukrainian</p>
Africa	Ethiopian Zimbabwean
Asia	Chinese Indian Laotian Thai

Table 3. Cultures grouped by geographic region

This information made it possible to more clearly see a) how many cultures would be represented, b) the number of events (or presenters in the case of food vendors) each culture was holding, and c) which the regions of the world these cultures were from. Therefore one presenter from each world region was chosen, with the exception of the North American subcultures for which three subjects were chosen given that these cultures are more heavily represented in the festival's events. Table 4. illustrates how at least one presenter from each type of event was chosen while including all the major geographic regions.

	Presenter	Culture	Geographic Region
Music/Dance	Alberta Adams Feufollet Ashoka Rao Stella Chiswese The Barra MacNeils Steven Greenman	Blues Cajun Indian Zimbabwean Celtic Jewish	North America North America Asia Africa Western Europe Middle East
Folk Arts	Ronald Paquin Roman Senuik	Native American Ukrainian	North America Eastern Europe
Food	Fonda Celaya	Mexican	Central America

Table 4. Festival subjects chosen for interviews

Contacting Interview Subjects

Not wanting to “ambush” these people at the festival by asking for an “on the spot” camera interview, this researcher spoke with the organizers of the event to inquire about prior contact. Lora Helou, Media Relations Director of the MSU Museum provided a master list of every presenter scheduled for the event. The list included contact information for these individuals and in many cases those of the agents that represent them. Four of the musical acts chosen to be included listed their agents as their contact persons, and the other folk arts and food presenters simply listed themselves as contacts. Needing first to get in touch with those who had representation, this researcher called their agents a few days before the festival started and obtained information about how to contact them locally in their hotels or, in one case, by way of her tour manager’s cell phone number. All the agents and performers were polite and agreed to be interviewed on camera for five to ten minutes about the Great Lakes Folk Festival and the importance of carrying on traditions.

This researcher was able to arrange the interviews with all the presenters that were contacted during the day on Saturday either just prior to, or immediately following their scheduled performances. With this knowledge, plans to get footage of their stage performances and the other festival activities were set for Friday and Sunday.

CHAPTER 4: PRODUCTION

Shooting at the Festival

On Friday evening, footage was needed from two different performances to supplement the interviews scheduled for Saturday. The Barra MacNeils would open the musical activities of the festival on the M.A.C. Stage at 6pm and Feufollet went on at 7pm at the Valley Court Stage. For these events this researcher was the camera operator while Evan Woodward, a Telecommunications Senior who specialized in audio production volunteered to operate the sound equipment.

For maximum mobility, these two performances were shot “hand-held”. The advantages of this shooting method were evident in the shots from directly in front of the stage and below the performers. This angle revealed compelling close ups of faces and musical instruments while allowing relatively smooth camera pans and tilts. The wider shots from this location disclosed good “head to knee” perspectives of the players, interesting background elements and also allowed for smooth camera moves.

The disadvantages of not using a tripod became evident in shots taken further back from the stage, behind the audience seating area. While an effective steady “extreme wide shot” of the entire stage and the backs of the audience’s heads could be executed, any increase in focal length of the lens from its widest field of view resulted in unsteady and shaky footage. The producer recalls thinking, at the actual time of shooting these unstable shots that they wouldn’t end up looking as bad in the edit suite. The reality, however, was completely

opposite. They were even more shaky and wobbly when viewed later on a monitor.

On Saturday and Sunday, Jared Daniel, a Telecommunications Junior volunteered as camera operator. Although the producer has been accustomed to doing his own camera work for the past several years, it was necessary to have someone else take on this role while the researcher conducted interviews with the presenters. The crew that day consisted of Evan Woodward as audio tech and Amol Pavangadkar, another DMAT graduate student who volunteered to work with the lighting reflector and help out in other ways as necessary.

The time spent recording presenters' comments was brief, between five and ten minutes for each of them. On the advice of Bob Albers, Thesis Advisor, this researcher pared down the initial questions prepared for the interviews to shorter "bullet point" phrases that could be kept on an index card. This turned out be a successful method of keeping the questions close at hand and short. When needed, the list could be momentarily glanced at to easily see what was needed in order to keep attention and eye contact focused on the interviewee. As the afternoon and the interviews progressed, the list of questions was needed less frequently.

Two slightly different lists of questions were used; one list for the craft artisans, the other for musicians:

Craft Artisans:

Why your interest in...?
Describe process
Do you pass it on, teach?
Why important to keep traditions alive?

Musical Artists:

Why your interest in...?
Describe basic elements
Who influenced you?
Do you pass it on, teach?
Why important to keep traditions alive?

Audio at the Festival

In order for the camera to be fully mobile and untethered, a Sennheiser “shotgun” style microphone connected to a wireless “cube” transmitter was used with a camera-mounted receiver. During the Friday and Saturday shoots, with the assistance of Evan as audio tech, this microphone was mounted on a boom pole with a fuzzy windscreen and was operated by Evan. This wireless mic rig was used to capture the primary audio for the stage performances and secondary audio for the interviews. The secondary audio source for stage performances was acquired with the camera’s built-in uni-directional microphone mounted above the lens. A hard-wired lavalier condenser microphone was placed on each of the subjects as the primary audio source for all the interviews.

Interviews at the Museum Gallery

After logging and reviewing the tapes of the festival interviewees, this researcher requested interviews with Marsha MacDowell, Director of the Festival, and Yvonne Lockwood, Folklife Curator of the MSU Museum. They were asked general questions about the festival, the importance of cultural traditions and to say a bit about each of the festival presenters who had been previously interviewed. These interviews needed to be longer and more in-depth because their statements were to be used as the narrative, which would tell the story in the documentary.

Earlier this year, the main gallery at the MSU Museum had a long term exhibit entitled "Fascination with Fiber" featuring many colorfully woven wall-hung tapestries. Textile weaving is a craft with its own rich traditions and would make an appropriate and interesting backdrop for these two subjects. Although this researcher has experience with, and to a certain extent can enjoy, location interview lighting, Brian Kusch, the department's Technical Specialist and Lighting Instructor was asked to assist with lighting the gallery interview sets. After surveying the gallery a few days before the scheduled interview date, he came up with some great ideas on how to light the gallery exhibit for the interviews. This involved using two different sized Chimera softboxes as both key and fill lights and an Arri, low wattage, fresnel fixture as the backlight. The tapestries in the background were subtly illuminated with an Arri 650 watt light holding a colored gel.

Despite a request to have the gallery closed to the public for an hour or so during the recording, it was not going to be possible. Extraneous noise and people wandering into the background were of major concern so it was arranged for the taping to occur as early as possible in the morning when the gallery had the least amount of visitation. The morning of the interviews the video crew arrived at the museum at 7:45 am and was able to set up and begin taping by 9 am. Each interview lasted a little less than thirty minutes and was completed by 10 am, just before a group of middle-schoolers arrived to tour the gallery where the interviews occurred.

During the interviews the guests were asked to comment on these areas:

Marsha MacDowell:

The festival's beginnings.
The benefits of the festival for the community, visitors.
How the festival promotes cross-cultural understanding.
What does the folk festival of the future look like?

Stella Cheweshe - The Mbira
Chris Segura and Chris Stafford of Feufollet - Cajun Music
Alberta Adams - Blues and original American art forms
Kyle and Stuart MacNeil - Celtic Culture

Yvonne Lockwood:

The importance of maintaining cultural traditions.
How the information age affects the passing down of traditions.
Brief definition of ethnic identity.

Neeta Erinjeri and Sharmil Kulkarni (apprentices to Ashoka Rao) - Kathak Dance
Ronald Paquin - Native American Traditional Crafts
Roman Senuik - Pysanka
Maria "Lupe" Aguilar - Mexican Food

CHAPTER 5: POST PRODUCTION

Transcription

An attempt to transcribe the statements recorded from the festival presenters was successful but very time consuming. Since there was nearly one hour of taped conversation from the festival organizers, it was decided to find someone for hire that could transcribe these interviews. Although there were a few professional transcription services listed in the phone book, a posting was found on campus for an individual who offered typing services. Linda Meeks, a professional typist, had never done any transcribing before but was willing to take the job. She was given an audio CD of the interviews and five days later the task was finished. She was paid more than her regular rate for standard typing services, but less than the fee professional transcription services charged.

At this point, all the passages in the transcripts found to be germane to the story were noted. Descriptive and concise phrases were singled out which could serve as narration during b-roll segments and statements that could be used as transitions between each of the documentary's segments. While it was found that all the questions were answered during the interviews, the core remarks were unfortunately "spread about" in the responses and would require a lot of short audio edits to remedy this issue.

After a good deal of thought on how to arrange all these important phrases in a flowing manner, this researcher could think of no better way than to literally cut the text which was wanted out of each page and tape each one to a different index card. It was somewhat perplexing that a more efficient electronic means of

shuffling all these short phrases around couldn't be thought of but in the end it worked remarkably well. The nearly one hundred "flash cards" of narrative bits that resulted from this could be moved and shuffled around easily. This visual and most importantly, physical method of juxtaposing the words was a great help to finding an order that flowed and created a sense of story. The researcher now felt he was really on to something and had some great material to work with.

Editing Challenges

Construction of the segments that featured the craft artisans proceeded relatively well. Before achieving a gratifying version of each, the researcher attempted numerous arrangements of these individual's comments interwoven with b-roll of their wares and techniques along with statements from the festival organizers.

A genuine editing challenge was found while piecing together the segments featuring the musical acts. Because there was only one camera to cover the stage for these performances, it was difficult trying to create a segment that flowed smoothly for a portion of a song yet still maintain its visual believability. In order to capture the audio portion of an entire song, the camera recorded continuously during performances. While the operator changed positions, adjusted focus or tried different angles, the recording continued. Although this resulted in a lot of unusable footage that would need to be covered with other shots, having the audio in entire "song segments" offered better choices while choosing which tunes to feature in the documentary. When the time came to find suitable covering shots for these "missing" video segments, much footage was

used of the same performers from other songs along with audience cutaways. Finding suitable footage to fit in from other songs was an editing challenging like none other experienced by this researcher. While editing these sections this researcher became intimately familiar with the chosen tunes. Proficiency was gained at the painstaking task of singling out short video segments from other songs that closely or nearly matched the performers' actions with their instruments, body positions and lip movement but from a different camera angle.

The final result proved to be quite acceptable, but many frustrating hours were spent in order to make it look like it was shot with multiple cameras.

CHAPTER 6: EVALUATION METHODS

Target Audience

This program is intended to be viewed by people eight years of age and older who reside in the vicinity surrounding the Great Lakes. Its primary intent is to make them aware of this Festival that celebrates many of the cultures that populate the region.

It also is designed to educate those who have an interest in learning about the significance of the ethnic traditions in their own background or of others but do not or cannot attend public cultural events.

Viewer Evaluation

To determine the extent to which the researcher / producer has met the desired objectives, a viewer survey was given to a group of 12 voluntary participants. Individuals were selected from a list of volunteers/members of WKAR-TV and contacted via telephone and asked if they were willing to participate.

When the documentary was completed, a survey package was mailed to the homes of these participants. The package included a copy of the documentary, an instruction sheet, consent form, survey form and postage-paid return envelope. This allowed the participants to view the program at a time and location of their choosing within the requested two-week time period, and permitted more attentive viewing and thorough responses.

Of the twelve willing participants who were sent survey packages, nine were filled out and returned.

The Survey

The survey contained two sections. The first section addressed the content objectives of the program and the second section concentrated on the production and technical qualities of the program. Appendix A contains the survey form as it was delivered to the participants.

Evaluation Summary

A general summary of the completed survey forms indicates that the project's primary objectives were achieved. A more detailed analysis reveals areas of the documentary that could be improved as well as indicators that the survey questions and/or instructions might be understood more clearly with some rewording.

The first question asked whether the documentary adequately achieved its goal to promote respect for the distinct cultures that make up society. Eight of the nine responses said it did and one said "no" explaining in question two: "I see the documentary as a mode to increase the audience's understanding of folk life and folk music. Respect may follow with that." This was interpreted this to mean that it is up to each individual to foster respect for other cultures, that this documentary by itself won't make that happen. Nevertheless, the overwhelming majority of those questioned, found the documentary quite effective.

The third question asked how the documentary affected their perception of their own cultural or ethnic background. Four said it did not while four others

indicated that they didn't know enough and wished they knew more. One survey left this unanswered.

Question four asked if the documentary caused them to remember any past or present family traditions. The majority, five said yes it did. The next two questions inquired about the entertainment and educational value of the program. Both questions garnered equal responses with five that strongly agree, three that agree and one that strongly disagrees. When asked in question seven about recommending the program for others to watch, four said they strongly agree, three said they agree, one somewhat agreed and one disagreed.

Part two of the questionnaire addressed the production and technical quality of the program. The eighth question, which asked about the quality of the production values yielded two surveys which left this question unanswered. These respondents wrote comments here saying that they didn't understand what "high quality production values" meant. Three surveys strongly agreed, three more agreed and one strongly disagreed. The next inquiry about sound quality had five who strongly agree, two agree, one somewhat agrees and one strongly disagrees.

The tenth question solicited comments about the visual and sound qualities. Here, most of the surveys listed positive comments about the music, camera angles and pacing. One individual thought the music was too loud to hear the voices over and two surveys left this blank.

The last question called for general comments about the program and produced many encouraging statements. It made some individuals want to go to

this event that they had heard of but never attended. Other positive comments mentioned that it was well-edited and provided good coverage of the entire event. The constructive criticisms pointed out that some of the titles used to identify the persons in the program were hard to read, that the artist interviews were more interesting than the organizers, that there was too much Alberta Adams, and that a shot of an elderly gentleman in the audience was unflattering.

An overall positive reaction disclosed by the completed surveys indicates that the main objectives of this thesis were realized. The majority of the respondents felt the goal of “promoting respect for the distinct cultures that make up society” had been achieved. Many also indicated that the program reminded them of their own family’s traditional practices and prompted a desire to learn more about their background.

The documentary in and of itself cannot and was not designed to change any preconceived notions an individual may have about a particular cultural group or groups. It must be noted however, that the survey results point out that learning even a small amount about cultures unfamiliar to us, can be an effective way to develop a respectful way of thinking about people who may not look or behave the same way we do.

* * * * *

Although the number of respondents is small—only nine—their comments are nevertheless useful in identifying some possible strengths and weaknesses of this documentary. The documentary’s strengths seem to include its success in promoting respect for the distinct cultures that make up society, its entertainment

value, its educational value and arousing interest in the festival. In fact, the large majority of the respondents (88%) reported that they would recommend the program for others to watch.

Those responses that indicate a need for improvement were equally helpful and can be used in the creation of future documentary projects. Specifically the addition of more probing questions could have been useful at times. For example in question number three, half the respondents indicated that the documentary had no effect on their perception of their own cultural or ethnic background. While this may be true, a further query could have revealed whether it was because these individuals already knew about their cultural backgrounds, or if the documentary was simply not effective in provoking such thoughts. In addition, the importance of avoiding technical terms on survey questions was shown. For example, on question number eight, the term “high quality production values” is not commonly used and might have been better understood if phrased “high quality production”.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

Overall favorable responses given in the survey express that this project has sufficiently conveyed its primary message. Additionally, having the documentary receive approval by both the executive producer and the programming director of WKAR shows it is in line with the station's goals to inform, educate and entertain. The program was broadcast on August 4 and 8, 2004, approximately one week prior to the 2004 Great Lakes Folk Festival, and promoted the event to potentially 250,000 households. The MSU Museum has also indicated its contentment with the documentary and plans to use it for fundraising and as a showpiece to visitors of the Museum.

If given a chance to approach it again armed with knowledge of the viewer's feedback, some subtle changes would be implemented. Including a few more interviews of people involved with organizing the event would have given a more interesting variety of perspectives on why and how the festival exists. One or two brief responses to questions similar to those in the first part of the survey from individual festivalgoers would also be planned. This would have provided a good way for viewers to potentially identify with those in attendance. Additionally, some rewording of the questions on the survey form would be made for better clarity.

"I'm producing a documentary about the Great Lakes Folk Festival", said this researcher to many people during the course of this project. Most thought it was an excellent and interesting idea, but others wondered how such a large event could be covered with only a few volunteers to help out, and no budget to work

with. The results of this plan to feature a few methodically selected presenters, interspersed with the organizers narrative and a moderate amount of general b-roll footage adequately conveyed the feeling of a whole festival representation.

The matter of recognition and respect of one's own ethnic identity is important whether or not its traditional practices are followed. Of equal importance are efforts to extend that respect to include cultures and practices that are not our own. Hopefully, the result of this researcher's decision to focus a thesis on this event that celebrates the cultures of others can play a part in fostering that recognition and respect.

APPENDIX A

Viewer Survey

Cultural Connections at the Great Lakes Folk Festival

This documentary is intended to promote respect for the distinct cultures that make up our society. Please keep this in mind as you answer the survey.

1. Do you think the documentary adequately expressed this point?

Yes

No

2. If not, please explain how was this point missed?

3. How did the documentary effect your perception of your own cultural or ethnic background?

4. Did the documentary cause you to remember any past or present traditions practiced by your family?

Yes

No

Please answer the following questions using this scale of 1 to 5 where:

1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Agree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree

5. I found the documentary to be entertaining.

1 2 3 4 5

6. I found the documentary to be educational.

1 2 3 4 5

7. I would recommend this documentary to others.

Production/Technical Quality

8. The documentary used high quality production values.

1 2 3 4 5

9. The documentary sound quality was adequate.

1 2 3 4 5

10. Please list any comments regarding the visual or sound qualities.

11. Please list any other general comments regarding this program.

APPENDIX B

CONSENT OF VOLUNTARY SURVEY PARTICIPATION

Cultural Connections at the Great Lakes Folk Festival

This survey is being sent to a group of people identified as members of the target audience for the above documentary. The information provided by the survey participants will help determine if the objectives of the program are met and its message adequately communicated.

Please read the following information carefully and return this form in the postage paid envelope.

- Your participation is voluntary.
- You may choose not to participate at all.
- This survey will take less than one hour to complete.
- You will not receive any monetary compensation for your participation nor will you have any ownership rights to the survey results.
- By participating in this survey you authorize the producer, Paul Pierantozzi to use all the information provided by you for completing the project.
- You must be 18 years of age or older to participate in this survey.
- The completed survey forms will be anonymous. Although you must provide the information below, the survey will not require any information that identifies you. Should any survey inadvertently reveal person information about a participant, it will not be used and destroyed.
- You indicate your voluntary agreement to participate by completing and returning the questionnaire.
- Your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law.

If you have any questions about this study, please contact the investigator:
Paul Pierantozzi by phone at work (517) 432-3120 ext. 235, or at home (517) 339-2481,
or by email: paulp@wkar.org

If you have questions or concerns regarding your rights as a study participant, or are dissatisfied at any time with any aspect of this study, you may contact – anonymously, if you wish – Peter Vasilenko, Ph.D., Chair of the University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects (UCRIHS) by phone: (517) 355-2180, fax: (517) 432-4503, e-mail: ucrihs@msu.edu, or regular mail: 202 Olds Hall, East Lansing, MI 48824.

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone _____

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