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GENERATIONAL AWARENESS OF FOLK FIGURES IN THE AMERICAN MIDWEST

by

Addison Jensen

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The members of the Honors Thesis Committee appointed

to examine the thesis of Addison Jensen

find it satisfactory and recommend that it be accepted.

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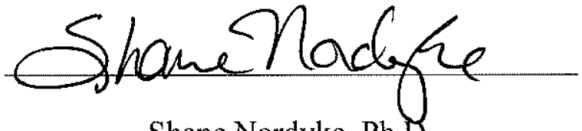

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ABSTRACT

Generational Awareness of Folk Figures in the American Midwest

Addison Jensen

Director: Robert Welch Ph.D

The popular folklore of a region can clearly reflect how its citizens understand themselves and their nation. The goal of this study was to determine the number of individuals who can be considered “well-versed” in traditional folklore and to speculate on the possible reasons for the differences in recognition that arise. Five figures (Johnny Appleseed, John Henry, Paul Bunyan, Annie Oakley, and Rip Van Winkle) were selected to serve as a representative sample of folk characters that have been historically significant to the country. An online survey of 279 Midwesterners and interviews with various age groups in South Dakota, found that younger generations have much lower levels of recognition of traditional pieces of American folklore compared to older individuals. Several interrelated factors contribute to this decline, including changing national values, inundation with other types of popular content, and a reduction of schools including cultural history in their curriculum.

Keywords: Folklore, Generational differences, American identity

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION & LITERATURE REVIEW

As a form of, by design and definition, widespread and low class culture, traditionally important pieces of American folklore and music are elements of the national zeitgeist which are essential for establishing and decorating an American culture outside of mass media influences. As Daniel G. Hoffman, a transcriber of 19th century folk legends, wrote:

> Folktales are much more closely related to the folk public than is popular literature… All folk literature has a strongly communal flavor; it is a reflection of a whole group… rather than the voice of only one element or individual. This is so because "the traditional nature of the material" is the guarantee that it has been widely accepted and enjoyed. If it had not met these tests, it would be neither retold nor remembered. (Hoffman 18)

As globalization and commodification grow their presences in the average American's lives, knowledge of cultural history grows in importance. Knowledge of long-established American lore and figures serves to tether individuals to their time and place while strengthening community ties through collective knowledge (Maydard; Nelson). The quantifiable amounts of individuals who can be considered "well-versed" in this traditional folklore is thus-far unknown, and the aim of this study is to demystify these ratios. The primary goal of this research is to determine the differences in awareness of American folklore between age groups and other demographics and to speculate on reasons for gaps that arise. The most important aspects of historical American folklore research to be considered when providing context for this question are its ties with race, labor, and its linguistic variability.

In America, folklore and folk music have been transmitted in similar ways. Musical genres, social movements, and racial identity have been constantly connected in American history. William Roy, in his discussion of Aesthetic Identity, writes that folk music (one of the

most common transmitters of folklore) lies outside the traditional social and genre boundaries, promoting itself as the music of the "folk" (or proletariat). Before commercial recording, the music now classified by academics as "folk music" was written and performed by people of all races, with unity between lower social classes trumping race loyalties. Obvious influence in musical style, vocal patterns, and production techniques come from the blues and older English, Irish, and Scottish musical traditions (Roy). When folk music was revived by American communists in the late 1930s and 1940s, folk was promoted as a "racially unified genre" but quickly became gentrified, possibly due to commercial categories for the production and selling of music and the cultural misunderstanding of the goals of folk music (Roy). It is also possible that black Americans might value folk culture less because of a national understanding of folk music as the music of the "other" during a period when African Americans were trying to gain access to a system that white middle-class youth were rejecting (Roy). This is not to say that folk music is a white genre. Many of the traditional tales and songs included in this survey were created and propagated during slavery and reconstruction. Jake Maynard dissects the intersectionality of labor politics and the use of the folktale in different campaigns and ideologies, especially industrialization. John Henry's myth, for example, has been used as a symbol of labor and the masculine ideal of work (Maynard). The connotations of John Henry and other figures with labor, unions, and positive masculine ideals contributed to the organized left's attempted revival of the genre (Eyerman). Socialist and historical discussions of folk music must consider the racial history of folk music in addition to its associations with lower economic and social positions.

Folk music has been artificially revived by American socialists and the organized left in the past in an attempt to revitalize a culture outside of the popular commercial expectation. Alan

Dundes, one of the most influential American folklorists in our nation's history, defined the distinction between a folklore revival and survival in his article "The American Concept of Folklore" by writing that "A survival, by definition, is marked by a continuity of tradition. It is the result of an unbroken historical chain through time. A revival, however, may well follow a break in tradition. It may even occur after the item has, for all practical purposes, died out" (Dundes 234).

Social context, especially economic and political context, is important to consider when noting the surges of popularity in folk music and in understanding how the individuals involved consider their actions. Many folk singers considered themselves as influencing intellectuals who were attempting to preserve and rediscover disappearing forms of proletariat culture (Eyerman). Contrasted with European folk music's ties to national socialism and conservatism, interest in American folk music has been consistently associated with left-wing politics, particularly communism. As Roy confirms, the concept of "folk music" created by academics was unfamiliar to the average person until the left's focused revival in the late 1930s to 1960s. Both political activists and academic and political elites manufactured the genre as an alternative to the highly segregated genres of the commercial recording industry (Roy). The unique cultural and political conditions promoted a search for national identity seconded by the American government as it attempted to capture the culture and music of the "common people."

The Library of Congress hosts a substantial collection of folk music compiled from hundreds of performers across America, primarily by ethnomusicologist Alan Lomax (Lomax; Eyerman). Dundes also includes in his definition that "American folklorists do not insist on the anonymity of folklore creators… Songs of protest known to be composed by Woody Guthrie, e.g., "So Long, It's Been Good to Know You," are considered to be folk songs, since they are

sung by the folk, but the authorship of most folklore is not known" (Dundes 235) A great number of American tales promote the sacred duty of labor (John Henry and Paul Bunyan songs being the most common) though nearly as many encourage community unity and union ideals (Maynard). This socialist propagation greatly contributed to the evolution of American folklore by creating specific cultural surroundings.

Folklore fluctuates constantly as a result of the several concurrent evolutions ongoing in various social groups and regions. Oral tradition archives social values and acts as a voice for their expression. Via faulty memory and adapting formulae, repetitious retellings shift texts through a process of refinement, alteration, and additions (Bohlman). It is also very common for folklore to be radically changed in the public understanding because of the actions of one influential retelling. As discussed in depth further in this paper, this style of transmission was especially relevant in Paul Bunyan's history.

Purposeful mis- or retellings of oral traditions have been occasionally branded as "fakelore" by folklorists and sociologists, as they do not accurately reflect the cultural elements the original tale would have. Dundes dismisses these intrusions into the canon by remarking "The reason for this conscious composition is partially aesthetic, but ultimately capitalistic. The popularizer is not interested in scholarship, but in selling many copies of his book of "folklore"' (Dundes 234).

Traditional stories are also often changed for purposes of ideological propaganda. The forms of folk music and the ways in which these songs are transmitted are both influenced by changes in the social structure. This reliance on social structure relates to the eras during which folklore characters have grown in popularity, such as the 1930s and 1960s (Eyerman). As Bohlman claims, music is one of the most effective mnemonic devices of oral tradition; the

rhythm and syntax reinforces the memory of its text. He also discusses consolidation, in which new lyrics are superimposed to the melody of older songs or multiple figures or narratives are combined, which Bohlman titles the "Top of Old Smokey Effect." There are over a hundred recorded versions of John Henry songs, for instance, each with different details and character backgrounds (Marynard). The fact that different generations and demographics of survey subjects may know different versions of the same song or figure will be relevant to question results.

In his article "Why Students Think There Are Two Kinds of American History," Tony Waters discusses these differences in historical knowledge. As he says: "Positively privileged groups have nostalgia for the past, and are likely to "celebrate" it through telling and retelling of their history" (Waters 15). The stories of the dominant groups are passed along through official publications and history textbooks while the stories of subordinate groups are transferred privately through myths, art, and gossip. This phenomenon of history being written by "the winners" is responsible for legends about George Washinton and other founding fathers (e.g., George and the cherry tree) being included in some elementary history books. Before he was canonized, the figure of John Henry emerged as a myth spread through railroad and mining communities. Waters theorizes that in order for a historical narrative to gain popularity, "There must be a foil in the story, a messiah figure, and a theme of triumph against odds," and the story is meant to be "rooted in a past which is plausible, creditable, and credible to a dominant group" (17). The events and figures historical narratives are built around are typically "beyond the lived memories of people within the society" which prevents them from being "challenged by the memories of the living" (17). K-12 history, including fictive cultural narratives, must express the dualism of nationalism and patriotism while remaining creditable to the present understanding of

the country. As students are exposed to more complex narratives of history, they lose faith in the idealistic versions of history and become disenchanted with the national narratives they were presented with in their youth.

METHODOLOGY

The Research Process

This section's focus is the methods used to conduct the study and why they were selected. The purpose for conducting this research was to determine what differences in knowledge of folk figures, if any, existed between generations and if other demographic differences impact folk legend recognition. As previously indicated, the hypothesis is that folk figures will be less recognized by younger generations, likely due to globalization and other complicating factors that de-emphasize national identity. The main research question was:

- What differences exist between generations in the American midwest in regards to their awareness of folk legends?

Other questions included:

- In what ways are folk myths passed down from generation to generation?
- If differences are obvious, what factors are contributing to them?
- Have participants noticed these differences, and do they believe they are significant?
- Do modern Americans believe that it is worthwhile to preserve this element of historical American culture?

The process of collecting data for this study included both quantitative and qualitative methods. The data included in the Results section was developed from a survey of a sample population of 279 participants. The survey was created on Qualtrics and distributed through Prolific, a platform that allows researchers to select requirements for participants and pay them for completing the survey. Qualtrics participants must have been 18 years of age or older and from the American Midwest. For the purposes of this study, the American Midwest includes

South and North Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Minnesota, Iowa, Montana, Wisconsin, and Illinois. This region was selected to align with the in-person interviews and limit possible variables.

Participants were paid through a USD Council for Undergraduate Research and Creative Scholarship (CURCS) grant of $750. The desired number of participants was 280; Prolific offered 287 surveys that had been started by its users. 6 were excluded for being incomplete and 2 were clearly done by bots or insincere participants: one selected the first option for every question, and the other copy/pasted their text responses from the first sentence of Wikipedia articles. The other respondents were paid and had their answers analyzed. Due to the demographic of Prolific users, most survey answers were in the 18-55 range. Participants outside of this range were primarily met in person.

The qualitative elements of this study were three focus groups with various age groups. These discussions took place in the Edith B. Siegrist Vermillion Public Library, during a period of an American history class under Dr. Kathleen Cook at Harrisburg High School, and at Avera Prince of Peace Retirement Community. Minors at Harrisburg High School signed their consent to participate before the researcher arrived and had the option to complete a survey with the same questions after the researcher left. Members of the retirement community were given the same option, but none chose to. The input of those above 71 years of age are thus primarily through the spoken word.

Selected Folk Figures

Folklore is entrenched in American culture to an extent difficult to overstate, which directly correlates to the difficulty hopeful academics have of studying and recording it (Belden). In order to create a representative sample of the folk figures that have been historically important to the American zeitgeist, five folk figures of various backgrounds were selected. Three of these

myths developed from specific known origins and two developed from regional occupational groups. The varied nature of the selected figures allows for broader generalizations and the introduction of questions about which features of these figures contributed to their longevity. While the term "folklore" can refer to many different traditions that solidify cultures, such as oral tradition, song, dance, and material artifacts of many kinds, this paper will limit the term to historically significant pieces of oral tradition that interact with standard understandings of American national identity. Folk legends are an instrumental tool of reinforcement for American ideology and reproduction of the national status quo (Dundes; Maynard; Waters). Various retellings of these five figures have been used to perpetuate historical understandings of America.

Johnny Appleseed is a mythologized version of Johnathan Chapman, an American pioneer alive from 1774 to 1845 who introduced apple trees to large swaths of the lower Great Lakes region. His apples, since they were grown from seed instead of being grafted, were more often used to create cider than eaten alone (Geiling). He became well-known during his lifetime as a symbol of colonial innovation and is the namesake of nurseries and parks across the nation. Seen as a non-controversial figure from the age of Westward expansion, his name was often used to teach children about the process of planting trees and about the path pioneers took while leaving the East coast and had his own feature in Disney's 1948 *Melody Time* (Geiling).

John Henry is a folk hero from the southern states best known through the hundreds of versions of the classic blues folk song that describe him as a "steel-driving man" who died "with [his] hammer in [his] hand" (Gates 25). According to most versions of the legend, Henry challenged a steam-powered rock drill to a contest of steel driving, the process of hammering a steel stake into rock faces to make holes for dynamite to blast railroad tunnels (Aspell). While

Henry bested the machine, he died at the end of the contest from exhaustion and was buried either underneath the tracks or “in the sand” of “the White House.” Historian Scott Reynolds Nelson makes a convincing argument that the origin of the John Henry myth could be traced to a 19-year-old African American convict named John William Henry who was assigned to tunnel work as part of the convict labor system of the 1870s. The documents unearthed by Nelson imply that the contest would have taken place at the Lewis Tunnel outside of Millboro, Virginia, and that John William Henry, after dying of silicosis (a lung disease caused by inhaling rock dust) or other dangers of drilling work, was buried on the land of the Virginia State Penitentiary (Nelson). The John Henry myth was popularized by railroaders and miners and kept alive through black communities as both a symbol for the idealized worker and as a warning against overwork (Maynard; Aspell). John Henry highlights the racialized aspect of folklore longevity, as he is the only popular non-white figure in American folklore who relied on black art for survival.

In the same vein as the myth of John Henry, the character of Paul Bunyan does not have a definite origin. His story originated in the oral tradition of loggers in North America, primarily in Minnesota and Wisconsin, but also as far as Maine, Oregon, British Columbia, and regions of Southern Canada (Stewart 640). Bunyan is depicted as a giant of variable height– original stories label him as seven feet tall, the same height as his ox (Stewart 643). Later adaptations have fluctuated between this height and closer to fifty feet tall, with Disney’s popular 1958 adaptation making him significantly larger than a schoolhouse. Bunyan is usually accompanied by Babe the Blue Ox, an enormous creature that, though born white, became blue because of the North’s freezing winters (Stevens 21). The legend of Paul Bunyan was first printed in 1914 in *Introducing Mr. Paul Bunyan, of Westwood, California*, a promotional pamphlet for the Red River Lumber Company written by William Laughead, the company’s public relations manager

(Hoffman 74). Laughead's Bunyan stories were highly inaccurate versions of the tales told by loggers. Laughead not only inserted characters of his own creation, he also sanitized the stories so much that later folklorists dubbed his stories "fakelore." Laughead's inventions were incredibly influential to the modern understanding of Bunyan– he was responsible for the first instance of Bunyan having colossal proportions, and gave his ox the name "Babe" for the first time. Luckily, K. Bernice Stewart, a student of Wisconsin Academy, published a collection of as-heard-from-loggers tales of Bunyan two years later, preserving the original narratives. There are many oversized statues of Paul Bunyan throughout the American midwest and north east, and Minnesota has made him a mascot of sorts in the modern age as they claim to be his birthplace.

Annie Oakley was an American sharpshooter who starred in *Buffalo Bill's Wild West and Congress of Rough Riders of the World*. Annie, born Phoebe Anne Mosey, was famous during her lifetime and mythologized shortly after her death in 1926 (Riley xvi). Her life story inspired multiple shows, films, characters, and stage musicals, including *Annie Get Your Gun*, though they often mischaracterize her into a western caricature. She was the second-highest paid member of the Wild West, after Buffalo Bill himself, and was close friends with Chief Sitting Bull. After retiring, Oakley taught thousands of women how to shoot, promoted the United States armed forces to women and saw Theordore Roosevelt's "Rough Riders" named after their old acts. The Annie Oakley myth was included to see if female figures would be less recognized than males, or if figures closer to the present day would have an advantage.

"Rip Van Winkle" is a short story published in 1819 by "America's first writer of international renown," Washington Irving (Coutris 68). The story follows a lazy husband in a colonial American village in the Catskill Mountains who meets "Dutchmen" and drinks mysterious liquor with them and falls asleep. He awakes twenty years later, missing the

American Revolution entirely, and is forced to explain himself to his adult daughter and other villagers. Rip Van Winkle contributed to the emerging category of American literature and the story's fairytale simplicity in the European tradition allowed it to remain in popularity. Similar to Johnny Appleseed, Rip Van Winkle is emblematic of how colonial ideas were a part of the American identity, though Van Winkle is a less emulatable character.

Survey Questions

Participants were asked the same five questions for each of the figures. The first four questions were multiple choice and the fifth gave them the option to include a written response in order to allow them to submit a more detailed answer. While some participants took advantage of this opportunity, most detailed depictions of experience came from in-person conversations.

Every participant was also asked three questions about the status of American folklore in general, meant to determine how the average American interacted with folk studies and if they considered themselves to be actively involved with the process of preserving folk literature. Age groups were included to sort the rest of the data into groups, approximately aligned with generations, in groups of 15 years. Other demographic questions were included to determine if other obvious factors impacted awareness of folk figures. The full survey questions are included in Appendix A. The data was then sorted by age groups for analysis. Other demographic data was used to contextualize results and corroborate the answers given during in-person interviews.

Limitations of the Study

The participants in this study were all residents of the American midwest, particularly South Dakota; in-person interviews were conducted in Sioux Falls, Harrisburg, and Vermillion, South Dakota. There is also a small possibility that some responses to the survey were done by

AI, bots, or by insincere human actors, though those that were obviously artificial were excluded from the analysis pool.

RESULTS

This section will be sorted by presenting general results first, followed by a breakdown sorted in the order figures were presented in the survey. The four multiple choice questions per figure are represented in tables, with the free response answers informing later Discussion. Most participants did not give much thought to these answers, with many offering a variant of "I had no unique experience." The answers to the free-write question also offered the names of some of the pieces of media people learned through, including many mentioning Disney by name.

The most pressing result made obvious by the data is that every surveyed figure was consistently more recognized as age increased. Though the increases are not linear, all followed the general pattern of least to most awareness. There was also always a consistent increase in name recognition between the under 24 age group and the 25-40.

Demographic Information

Demographic information was collected to investigate which, if any, had an impact on the amount of traditional folklore the participants were exposed to. Race, gender, and level of education had no significant impact on knowledge, where figures were first encountered, or importance placed on figures. Conservative participants were slightly more likely (with a mean of 2.83 compared to liberals' 2.72) to consider themselves well-versed in folklore and to believe in its preservation, but were not more likely to have high rates of recognition. For charts and numerical data, see appendices B-G.

Age groups	Count
Under 24	38
25 to 40	148
41 to 55	68
55 to 70	21
Above 71	4
Total	279

Participant Ethnicity	Count
Asian	28
Black or African American	19
Latino or Hispanic	19
Other/Prefer not to say	9
White	204
Grand Total	279

Participant Gender	Count
Female	136
Male	134
Non-binary / third gender	7
Prefer not to say	2
Grand Total	279

Johnny Appleseed

Johnny Appleseed was the most recognized character by participants under 24. Recognition increased by every generation with a slight dip in the 56-70 age range. Confidence in retelling the story was variable, and worse in the older generations. In every age group, the most likely first interaction with the myth was through public schooling. Significance placed on Appleseed increased with age despite the little confidence in story knowledge.

Johnny Appleseed was only the figure where under 24 awareness was comparable to the older age groups. This level of knowledge and the percentage of those learning from schools imply that this legend remains actively taught in schools, which written answers confirmed.

John Henry

Conversely, John Henry was the least known in the youngest generation. Awareness increased as age did, though compared to other figures, John Henry had the worst performance among all generations. Confidence in retelling also was better with age except in the 56-70 year group. Significance was also low, but was not the worst of the characters in numbers nor in ratio to significance. Several participants mentioned their first exposure to his story was through the Disney short shown on VHS or DVD at school.

All but one black participant recognized the name, though nine of 19 selected that it was "Not at all" significant to them. A 40-year-old black participant in a focus group insisted that the myth was more popular in black communities than in white ones, which would align with other literature and the oral tradition in blues music that preserved the myth (Nelson, Maynard). The one 25-40 year-old participant who marked the story as "Extremely" significant self identified as African American and wrote: "This story is unique to black American folklore, and was one of the first I heard as a kid."

In a paired *t* test wherein 1 was “no” and 3 was “yes,” the mean of recognition from black participants was 2.37 and the mean of other races was 2.26. Though there is an observable difference in recognizing John Henry’s name, it was not statistically significant.

Paul Bunyan

Paul was the most enthusiastically recognized by focus groups, with participants more likely to volunteer story information and facts than other figures. Most could not retell specific Bunyan myths but could name tropes, such as his height, ox, and association with Minnesota. A black participant from the 41-50 group expressed that they had learned of Paul Bunyan in school, but believed that historical figure “Venture Smith's story should be told as well” or instead of his. After schooling, most people’s first experience with the story came from books or short stories, likely as part of an anthology of children’s stories.

Notably, Paul Bunyan was the only figure whose awareness peaked in the middle instead of in the oldest group, with the 25-40 and 41-55 groups both having 91% recognition. Significance continued to grow with age despite this drop.

Annie Oakley

While Annie was not the least popular character, her results exhibited the most dramatic difference between the participants under 24 and the older age groups by over 30 percentage points. Oakley has a terrible ratio of name recognition to story knowledge compared to other figures. She was also less significant than less popular figures, such as John Henry. Many said they could not recall any specific anecdotes about her or details about her life, but those who knew her associated her vaguely with “the Wild West” and guns. Those who were confident in their knowledge volunteered a justification for it, such as living in a town she toured through or one who wrote their family was distantly related to Oakley’s husband. Many survey participants

had free-write responses similar to “not sure if I've heard what her story is, I just recognize the name and I think of the wild west when I hear it.”

Oakley was more likely to be learned of in school or through media in older generations, with the youngest group learning of her from a large variety of sources including “a reference in *The Parent Trap,*” overhearing her name at a science camp, and other inclusions in pop culture, such as the 1946 musical “Annie Get Your Gun” and the 2018 video game “Red Dead Redemption 2.”

She was only “Extremely” significant to female participants. In a paired *t* test wherein 1 was “no” and 3 was “yes,” the mean of recognition for self-identified female participants was 2.53 to male 2.00. This gave a *p* value of less than 0.0001, marking the difference as extremely statistically significant and demonstrating that the figure of Annie Oakley is much more likely to be known by women than men.

Rip Van Winkle

Awareness of Rip Van Winkle increased by generation with no exceptions, with participants more likely to be able to recall specific features of the character as they aged. Older generations found Van Winkle more significant than younger generations, in a similar range as Paul Bunyan. More participants identified knowledge of Van Winkle from reading than any other character in this study, for the obvious reason that his origin is a short story still in print. Van Winkle garnered the least enthusiastic responses, both through the survey and in person, with few people offering unique experiences with the figure.

DISCUSSION

The results of the survey of figures demonstrate an often large difference between levels of recognition and knowledge of folklore between generations. The differences vary in significance, but a pattern of decreased cultural knowledge in younger generations is clear. The outcome of this study functionally proves that American myths have been either passed down less frequently by older generations, forgotten in younger generations, or both. These results were not unexpected, but they do open many doors for further research questions. While further research would be required to solidify these theories, possible explanations for the decreased folk knowledge of recent generations are below.

Cowboys and the American Mythos

During an interview, a 77-year-old participant enthusiastically recalled her experiences with the *Annie Oakley* show created by Gene Autry's Flying A Productions, saying:

> "Annie Oakley! I used to love Annie Oakley! (And her brother Tagg). On Sunday morning I used to lay on the living room floor in front of the tv, because I had a plastic rifle. I'd probably have on my jean skirt and cowboy boots, because I'd always wanted to be a cowboy! I'd always wanted a horse, but I never got one, so I had to name my bicycle, my blue Schwinn bicycle, some Indian name, and ride it like Target.
>
> I remember going to my Grandma and Uncle Dick's house – he had a TV before Sioux Falls had a station – and we watched some of the coronation of Queen Elizabeth – through "the snow" – but it was the first thing we saw on TV and thought it was wonderful. Of course it was black and white, but my uncle had some cellophane taped to the TV screen. It was blue at the top – the sky, orange in the center for people, and green for grass at the bottom. He thought it was great!"

The show aired on ABC intermittently between 1954 and 1965, starred Gail Brooks as the eponymous Annie, and introduced a (fictionalized) version of her life story to a new generation (Brooks 47). *Annie Oakley* was only one of a slew of daytime television westerns: *The Cisco Kid, The Gene Autry Show, Hopalong Cassidy, Sky King, The Roy Rogers Show,* and *Davy Crockett* all aired between the late 1940s and mid-sixties.

The myth of the American cowboy has been a prominent part of the national zeitgeist since Westward Expansion. By 1890, "The West" had been so thoroughly settled that the Superintendent of the Census declared the period had come to an end, and the United States "mourned its passing by raising the Wild West to the space of national legend." (Fee 15; "The Closing of the American Wilderness"). By 1893, Frederick Jackson Turner presented a paper on the significance of the Frontier at the World Columbian Exposition, wherein he claimed that westward expansion had helped to create a national consciousness from a regional history by entrenching nationalism and idealism as American values (Fee 10). Lee Clark Mitchell agrees that "Popular culture has celebrated the cowboy," as a narrative figure descended from "American frontiersmen, as an independent laborer posed against the industrial working stiff" (Mitchell 498). Most importantly, Mitchell expresses that the American cowboy is a mythical ideal "believed in *despite* all contrary evidence" created by writers such as Henry Nash Smith (501. Emphasis in original). The idea of the American cowboy as it is traditionally depicted – a rugged, independent, free yet morally devout white man – was never a significant amount of the pioneers that populated the West. Instead, the epic hero was created by the larger urban populations of the East Coast projecting fantasies onto the West that would give a meaning to America (Mitchell 501). This fantasy figure of the West was already prominent by the 1890s.

The independent cowboy had now become a myth and symbol for the American identity as a whole. *Buffalo Bill's Wild West* used this nostalgia for unseen territory to promote his act and the act of Annie Oakley. Bill intended to convince an international audience that their romanticized thoughts about the American plains were true (Mitchell 504). Through methods now familiar to American audiences, the Wild West show combined fact and entertainment and "focused national identity around a simple frontier morality play," which "tied up history in a tidy package that could be opened cheerfully by Americans, without fear of releasing the malevolent bats that racism, exploitation, and imperialism tend to produce" (Herman 230). By employing sharpshooters like Oakley, Native American stars, and other circus acts, Buffalo Bill created a show that ignored the human suffering and displacement caused by settler-colonial expansion in the American West and would continue to cause while allowing Americans to feel proud of their nation. While Bill was the first to make a fortune with this technique, he would not be the last.

The t-test demonstrated that Annie Oakley is much more well known among women than men. Some difference was expected, but not to the extreme displayed. It's possible that children of all genders were exposed to the Oakley legend, but that she was more memorable to young girls, or that girls were more likely to search for female historical role models. As the other cowboy characters of the 60s largely faded into obscurity, the singularity of Oakley's gender prolonged her time in the public eye. She is often included in books for children that compile female historical figures, such as Michelle Roehm McCann and Amelie Welden's *Girls Who Rocked the World* series.

While she may last longer in the minds of America's women than its men, Oakley's longevity is in question. The sharp decline in recognition in the youngest generation implies that

knowledge of the Oakley legend may fade out in the coming decades. While it's unlikely that she will fade into obscurity, it's possible that Oakley is merely a long-lasting pop figure who will be added to the historical leger without truly passing into legend.

Disney and Sanitization of Legend

One of these cowboys was Davy Crockett, Disney's "Indian Fighter" from Frontierland, which promised "tall tales and true from the legendary past" (*Disney's Americana Storybook Collection*). *Davy Crockett* aired from December of 1954 to February of 1955, with a quarter of the American population tuning in by the final episode. Susan Douglas, a Media Historian, described Davy Crockett to PBS as "the rugged individual who… embodied a nostalgic, idealized view of American male values." The character of Davy Crockett and the Frontierland of Disneyland "seized upon a powerful cultural memory that many, fatigued by urbanization, desperately hoped had been real;" as Disneyland added to and altered their theme parks, they subtly rewrote the collective memory of the American frontier and the 'Wild West' (Fee 26).

Several participants made reference to being exposed to one of the selected folk figures, especially Paul Bunyan and John Henry, via a Disney production. It has been known since the very beginnings of folk study that if "folktales are to be made interesting, or even palatable, to other classes of people sharing little in common [with the original creators], the tales cannot be transmitted intact" (Hoffman 20). *Disney's American Legends* (2001) includes animated versions of four stories of "the doers and dreamers who made America great," including John Henry, Paul Bunyan, Johnny Appleseed, and Casey Jones (Shapiro). This compilation of earlier-released animated segments is technically available for physical purchase but is not included in Disney's streaming service's catalog. Disney's versions of the tales are also recorded in 2002's *Disney's Americana Storybook Collection,* which anthologized several more stories with traditional

American themes. Disney's version of the tale depicts Henry and his "little woman" Polly Ann as former slaves recently freed by the Emancipation Proclamation, working on the railroad to earn acres in "the Canaan Land," and claims the moral of the tale is "the value of believing in oneself" (Shapiro). The animation makes a point to include Henry being opposed to group action, by having the character single-handedly stop the rest of the railroading men from tipping the steam drill (*Disney's Americana Storybook Collection*). The deradicalization of John Henry is a slap in the face to the dozens, if not hundreds, of miners and railroaders killed during disputes between unions and authorities over unsafe working conditions in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Polenberg). Similarly, Disney's Paul Bunyan follows in the (enormous) footsteps of William Laughead's tales. This animated compilation was only the most recent of Disney's retooling of American legends. *Wonderful Worlds of Walt Disney: Walt Disney's America* is another anthology of short stories that includes adaptations of Johnny Appleseed, Davy Crockett, and Uncle Remus stories, along with various tales about fictionalized versions of Switzerland, The Navajos, The Grand Canyon, and the "Nomads of the North," among others.

Walt Disney's impact on America's cultural zeitgeist remains arguably unforeseen and unfollowed. Since Walt founded the company in 1923, Disney has been involved in driving the nation's collective memory towards the "historical by the nostalgic," as Fredric Jameson calls it (Jameson 150). Bethanee Bemis, a museum specialist currently focusing on the Disney theme parks as bastions of the national narrative, writes that "the past can be remembered one way and exist factually in another, and that many different versions can have their place in the American mind," and elaborates that Disney fans do not enjoy Disney's depictions of history because they assume it is accurate, but because it "gives life to a folk history we would like to have, one that gives us a sense of optimism and unity. It makes easily accessible a version of American history

that shows visitors less the nation that we have been than the nation that we want to be, and, indeed, hope that we are" (Bemis).

Disney has already been criticized for its involvement in sanitizing American history. For example, even in 1946, Disney's *Song of the South*'s portrayal of happy former slaves in a post-emancipation South drew sharp criticism from film reviewers and was boycotted by NAACP. New York Times critic Bosley Crowther famously recommended Mr. Disney "Put down the mint julep!" (Crowther). The Uncle Remus stories that inspired *Song of the South* were also a piece of American folklore which Walt felt personally attached to due his boyhood in the American south. Also for PBS, art historian Carmenita Higginbotham remarked that Walt's treatment of the Uncle Remus stories demonstrates a "stunning" divorce from social context.

A similar but more extreme version of the treatment of *Disney's American Legends,* the film *Song of the South* has been officially inaccessible in America since 1986, the same year that the attraction themed after it, "Splash Mountain," was approved for construction. The Disney CEO at the time, Michael Eisner, explained ceasing American circulation of the movie by saying:

> [Song of the South is] a great, innovative movie with the combination of live action and animation, but we'd never released that movie on home video because you'd have to do so much explaining, historically, about the time it was made and the attitudes people had. But that doesn't negate the strong music, or the characters other than Uncle Remus. (Rafferty)

The philosophy of the Disney company derives from the neuroses of its founder, which have been well documented. Walt believed strongly in creating a perfect and "idealized rendering of small-town America… [and in trying] to create an image of America that people would like to

think exists." He saw himself and his company as "the exemplar of the simple and steadfast virtues of middle America: a small-town boy made good" (*Walt Disney*).

Many of their adaptations come about post-1945 and throughout the Cold War. It would not be too far afield for Disney to create political propaganda, as the company was incredibly involved in popularizing World War II efforts through animated short films, licensing their characters on bond certificates, and creating over one thousand insignias for military units (Chase). Historical nostalgia served to idealize the American past to counter soviet messaging with no concern towards its misrepresentation of folk characters. Though in Disney's version, John Henry is a loyal anti-communist worker, older versions use him to warn against the dangers of following the boss too far. Disney has been perhaps the single most influential force in creating the modern national identity, due to its enormous audience and affluence. Its often incidental but occasionally deliberate sanitization of historical narratives has had echoing effects across the American zeitgeist (Fee). It also lessens American cultural touchstones to "content" as one of hundreds of fictionalized semi-historical narratives rather than the unique markers of national identity they are.

How We (Don't) Teach Cultural History

Participants of this survey could have gone through K-12 education anytime between the 1950s and 2024. The ways in which folklore and history have been taught in elementary schools have changed dramatically in this period. Long history and Grand Narratives, along with the *Annales* school and its emphasis on *durées*, especially popular between the 1940s and 60s, fell out of favor in the postmodern era (Corfield). Social history replaced the Great Man Theory, before being itself replaced by a "myriad new perspectives on, and approaches to, studying the past have been jostling for space, creating as their ideas collide huge but fissile sources of

historical energy" in the past four decades (Evans). These constantly changing 'best practices' develop to resolve the ongoing friction that emerges when graduated K-12 students begin to question the grand narratives they have been taught. Historian Tony Waters strove to resolve this in his article "Why Students Think There Are Two Kinds of American History," wherein he picks apart the dichotomy between K-12 history, taught in a patriotic and "triumphal 'grand sweep' perspective" which affirms "the logical basis for our being a people with a past, and, by implication, a present," and college history, which emphasizes the "broader 'contingent' story" and "draw the student into the wider conversation about the problems of the past" (Waters 12). K-12 history first and foremost must uphold a belief in a common origin and serve to demonstrate why today's values, whatever they may be, are the best they could be:

> There is a problem, however, with maintaining a patriotic story for our children. The story needs to be *plausible* with respect to both what significant adults remember of the past, what is happening in the present, and the dreams a society has for a future. These three things of course never quite match, but they at least need to be consistent enough to avoid too much dissonance. When there is too much dissonance, the old story becomes "wrong," and a new "more accurate" story emerges, creating a new version which is still optimistic and patriotic (Waters 12).

Waters gives the example of the depiction of race relations through versions of history. History books of the 1950s discussed the Civil War as "saving the union" with little mention of slavery. This history could not explain the present segregated America, and the impact of England and slavery in American history was re-emphasized in Elementary education beginning in the 1970s. He is confident that the story will continue to change in the future as well.

While the rest of American history is split in these various ways to supplement ideological needs, canonized folk stories remain somewhat consistent (though this is often not the case with smaller, unrecorded folk stories). Stories such as John Henry, Johnny Appleseed, and Rip Van Winkle can be analyzed through both the patriotic K-12 lens and the critical academic one, creating opportunities for increasing levels of study as students age. Folklorists have been involved in education for decades and have seen the positive impacts including folklore in the K-12 curriculum can have on students. These benefits include teaching "observing, listening, interviewing, mapping, analyzing, organizing, and presenting their fieldwork findings," along with that "all of us contribute to creating culture" (Bowman 67). Folklore also provides "an inherently interdisciplinary body of authentic content and skill-building methodologies of documentation and analysis that educators can integrate into existing Curricula" (Bowman 69). It is also a unique method of pluralistic education, which can help to reduce inter-group stereotypes through exposure to unknown cultural artifacts (Haut 46). Lynne Hamer's "Folklore in Schools and Multicultural Education: Toward Institutionalizing Noninstitutional Knowledge" lists many of the studies that have contributed to discussions on multicultural education, including:

> to provide "bridges to the curriculum"... to refute cultural deprivation theory… to remediate through schools the perceived "spiritual satisfaction" in contemporary life… to illuminate the course of children's aesthetic and psychological development and social learning… To break down the illusion of a homogeneous mainstream by recognizing multiple types of folk groups… to elucidate the nature of cultural incompatibilities between home and school… to promote the value of folklore in education for connecting

> schools and communities… and to problematize the likely disempowering assimilation of folklore brought into classrooms. (Hamer 45)

Folklorists' interest with the K-12 curriculum reached its peak in the 1990s and 2000s, though their actual involvement in classrooms around the nation was limited. Though folk performances funded by government agencies such as the National Endowment for the Arts were common in the 1970s, by the 1990s, tightening budgets, higher national standards, and more intense test requirements had forced teachers to trim the fat from their curriculum, and materially inconsequential education such as folklore was first to go (Bowman 73).

Supplementing the fact that most folklore courses focus on teaching students the skills to recognize and appreciate the folklore around them rather than rote memorization of established stories, many participants interviewed doubted that any type of folklore education would result in widespread knowledge of folk legends due to the physical size of America and the variety of people who call it home. The diversity of experience included in the American identity makes it much more difficult to spread non-institutional cultural touchstones that can truly be called universal. Current high school students did not see this as a problem as much as their older peers did and speculated that it would be possible if the figure were reinforced enough – the group fixated on Santa Claus as an example of a folk legend “everyone knows” and that they had participated in spreading through reassuring younger siblings and cousins of his presence. Answers by participants pointed towards it being incredibly unlikely that multiple folk figures would ever be ubiquitous.

While primary and secondary schools are disconnected from folklore studies, college-level folklore courses have seen a boom. A report from 1948 found only nine universities which offered folklore studies. However, study in 1986 found a significant increase to 509

American and 19 Canadian institutions, with others offering minors and concentrations, and introductory courses being the most popular (Pryor 439; Baker 51). This growth is interesting by itself, but may point to college institutions fulfilling a gap in education left by the exclusion of folklore from K-12 curricula.

A Changing World

These trends are not all unique to America; the increased awareness of the average American has of the rest of the world has dramatically changed since the normalization of the internet and the rise of late-stage international capitalism. Constant awareness of the rest of the world may be related to the deprioritizing of American cultural history. In addition to the real political news globalization offers, the internet also inundates individuals with inconsequential content, which also may impact the mental space one has for traditional stories. Academics have noticed the endangerment of the fine and folk artist for decades now, lamenting that "The popular arts are widely accepted because they appeal to the common denominators of groups whose differences are often more significant than are the interests they share" (Hoffman 64). It is also likely that the decreased rates of recognition relate to a relative change in how audiences and the country values manual labor. Characters like John Henry and Paul Bunyan have lost cultural value as people move away from physical work.

When meeting with high school students, it became evident that some of the social purposes of folklore had been functionally replaced with references to popular figures and characters from various forms of mass media. Compared to other generations, the students had little recognition of the figures examined, or of any of the several other figures mentioned during the conversation to prompt them, including Davy Crockett and Bigfoot. When asked to supply their own examples of folk figures, their examples included internet Creepypastas, Santa Claus,

George Washington, and Shrek, which indicates both a misconception about the definition of historical folklore and points to students deriving their cultural identity from mass media. The folk figures investigated had their stories included in the elementary curriculum as recently as the 1980s; when visiting with high school students, their teacher expressed surprise at their lack of knowledge, recalling that she had been taught them all as part of her early education.

Compounding the youngest group's lack of institutionally-given knowledge is the intermediate generations' unwillingness to be associated with stories with values they no longer identify with. As a 17-year-old participant put it, after confirming the legend was, in fact, the namesake of John Henryism (a slang term for stress-induced medical problems): "Isn't the John Henry story, like, racist?" At another session, a 20-year-old participant summed up their generation's thoughts on preservation by saying "The idea that I don't know stories from a hundred years ago doesn't bother me, because they'll be replaced," and agreed that "Some perpetuate stereotypes we could leave in the past." Preferring that folk legends reflect the speaker's values is nothing new. One of the reasons for Disney's success upon its opening was that elementary age baby boomers were "looking for a kind of set of cultural values that are a bit different from the privations of the Depression and the war," which they found in Disney's "no edge, devoid of any kind of distinctive ethnicity, any kind of diversity… white, middle class, Protestant values" (*Walt Disney).* By the sixties and later, the dissonance between Disney's version of America as presented in their films and theme parks and the reality of the country was becoming too large to ignore. It was at this point that American generations who had previously swallowed Disney's rhetoric began to distance themselves from its traditional values: "You're conservative. The values you're selling are conservative. We no longer agree with them. Those are not our values" (*Walt Disney*). As it became more mainstream to acknowledge the Disney

company's mishandling of the American zeitgeist and the impact its sanitization of history has had on our present day, passing down folk legends they had adapted became less popular.

CONCLUSION

Folk legends fulfill an important role in creating and maintaining a shared national identity. This study demonstrated that many of the historically important folk myths are being passed down through generations at a rate far below replacement levels, though different figures showed different levels of severity. There are many contributing factors to this decline: the myth of expansionism and "the West" that was so foundational to the spread of these stories has become less relevant to the national identity; mass media sanitization has stripped folk narratives of the special role they formerly played; and younger generations are more critical about the myths they chose to pass on. It is important to explicitly state that *folklore* is not in danger. Folklore includes not only the stories of a folk group, but their customs, songs, sayings, jokes, body language, mythology, dances, art, and much more. This study was concerned with only traditional American folklore of great significance, examined as a microcosm of the generational differences in perceptions of America itself. While the legends of American folk will continue to develop, it is worthwhile to know where we come from while we continue to invent new myths. For better or worse, these are the stories that used to be the cornerstones of an American identity.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

These interviews were conducted in the state of South Dakota, with survey respondents from surrounding Midwestern states. These physical limitations mean that these results should not be not misconstrued to apply to other regions or to other folk figures. It is possible that the conclusions would differ drastically in other regions of America or if other historical folk figures had been selected.

There are a number of gaps in our knowledge around the transmission of folk legends in contemporary America. Further research could include replicating this work in different regions, other prioritized folk figures, or alternately grouped ages. Although methodologically challenging, it would be a great contribution to the field to conduct investigation into the figures that are now most significant to the American population and why they became so.

Other potential research ideas involve trials of various methods to reintegrate folklore with younger generations, should researchers agree that is a worthwhile goal. This research could include, for example, trials monitoring how myths are included in elementary education, summer camps, and media. Research could also be conducted into the differing reactions individuals have when exposed to a story presented as a local legend than from mass media.

Appendix A: Survey Questions

The survey questions were given to participants as below, shorted to one example:

1. Do you recognize the name [of the figure, e.g., Johnny Appleseed]?
   A. Yes
   B. No
   C. Maybe

2. Where did you first hear the story of [the figure, e.g., Johnny Appleseed]?
   A. I don't know it
   B. From a parent or relative
   C. From a friend
   D. From a song
   E. From a teacher at school
   F. At church
   G. At a summer camp
   H. From a book/short story
   I. From a movie, television show, or cartoon
   J. I feel like I've always known it

3. How confident are you that you would be able to tell another person the story of [the figure, e.g., Johnny Appleseed]?
   A. Not at all
   B. Somewhat
   C. Mostly
   D. Extremely

4. How significant is the story of [the figure, e.g., Johnny Appleseed] to you?
   A. Not at all
   B. Somewhat
   C. Mostly
   D. Extremely

5. What unique experiences do you have with [of the figure, e.g., Johnny Appleseed] or their story? (e.g., you were taught the story in a unique way or passed it on to another person?)

1. Do you consider yourself well-versed in American folklore?
   A. Not at all
   B. Somewhat
   C. Mostly
   D. Extremely

2. Do you believe the preservation of American folklore is important?
   A. Not at all
   B. Somewhat

C. Mostly
D. Extremely

3. Have you ever shared a piece of American folklore with someone who did not know it?
A. Yes
B. No
C. Maybe

1. What is your age group?
A. Under 24
B. 25 to 40
C. 41 to 55
D. 56 to 70
E. Over 71

2. Please specify your ethnicity:
A. White
B. Black or African-American
C. Latino or Hispanic
D. Native American
E. Asian
F. Native Hawaiian or other Pacific islander
G. Multiple
H. Other/Prefer not to say

3. What is your gender?
A. Female
B. Male
C. Nonbinary/other
D. Prefer not to say

4. What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?
A. Less than high school degree
B. High school degree or equivalent (e.g., GED)
C. Some college but no degree
D. Associate’s degree
E. Bachelor's degree
F. Graduate degree
G. Prefer not to say

5. How would you describe your political views?
A. Very Liberal
B. Slightly Liberal
C. Neither/Moderate
D. Slightly Conservative

E. Very Conservative
F. Prefer not to say

Appendix B: Johnny Appleseed Survey Results

Do you recognize the name Johnny Appleseed?	Count
Maybe	7.9%
No	2.6%
Yes	89.5%
Grand Total Under 24	38

Where did you first hear the story of Johnny Appleseed?	Count
At a summer camp	*
From a book/short story	2.6%
From a movie, television show, or cartoon	7.9%
From a parent or relative	*
From a song	2.6%
From a teacher/school	73.7%
I don't know it	7.9%
I feel like I've always known it	5.3%
Grand Total Under 24	38

How confident are you that you would be able to tell another person the story of Johnny Appleseed?	Count
Extremely	7.9%
Mostly	10.5%
Not at all	55.3%
Somewhat	26.3%
Grand Total Under 24	38

How significant is the story of Johnny Appleseed to you?	Count
Extremely	2.6%
Mostly	*
Not at all	78.9%
Somewhat	18.4%
Grand Total Under 24	38

Do you recognize the name Johnny Appleseed?	Count
Maybe	0.7%
No	2.7%
Yes	96.6%
Grand Total 25-40	148

Where did you first hear the story of Johnny Appleseed?	Count
At a summer camp	0.7%
From a book/short story	6.8%
From a movie, television show, or cartoon	5.4%
From a parent or relative	6.1%
From a song	2.7%
From a teacher/school	63.5%
I don't know it	4.1%
I feel like I've always known it	10.8%
Grand Total Under 25-40	148

How confident are you that you would be able to tell another person the story of Johnny Appleseed?	Count
Extremely	4.1%
Mostly	18.2%
Not at all	32.4%
Somewhat	45.3%
Grand Total Under 25-40	148

How significant is the story of Johnny Appleseed to you?	Count
Extremely	1.4%
Mostly	3.4%
Not at all	65.5%
Somewhat	29.7%
Grand Total Under 25-40	148

Do you recognize the name Johnny Appleseed?	Count
Maybe	*
No	7.4%
Yes	92.6%
Grand Total 41-55	68

Where did you first hear the story of Johnny Appleseed?	Count
At a summer camp	*
From a book/short story	16.2%
From a movie, television show, or cartoon	4.4%
From a parent or relative	8.8%
From a song	4.4%
From a teacher/school	47.1%
I don't know it	10.3%
I feel like I've always known it	8.8%
Grand Total Under 41-55	68

How confident are you that you would be able to tell another person the story of Johnny Appleseed?	Count
Extremely	2.9%
Mostly	22.1%
Not at all	27.9%
Somewhat	47.1%
Grand Total Under 41-55	68

How significant is the story of Johnny Appleseed to you?	Count
Extremely	*
Mostly	4.4%
Not at all	57.4%
Somewhat	38.2%
Grand Total Under 41-55	68

Do you recognize the name Johnny Appleseed?	Count
Maybe	4.8%
No	9.5%
Yes	85.7%
Grand Total Under 56-70	21

Where did you first hear the story of Johnny Appleseed?	Count
At a summer camp	4.8%
From a book/short story	19.0%
From a movie, television show, or cartoon	*
From a parent or relative	9.5%
From a song	*
From a teacher/school	47.6%
I don't know it	14.3%
I feel like I've always known it	4.8%
Grand Total Under 56-70	21

How confident are you that you would be able to tell another person the story of Johnny Appleseed?	Count
Extremely	9.1%
Mostly	9.1%
Not at all	45.5%
Somewhat	36.4%
Grand Total Under 56-70	21

How significant is the story of Johnny Appleseed to you?	Count
Extremely	*
Mostly	*
Not at all	61.9%
Somewhat	38.1%
Grand Total Under 56-70	21

Do you recognize the name Johnny Appleseed?	Count
Maybe	*
No	*
Yes	100.0%
Grand Total Over 71	4

Where did you first hear the story of Johnny Appleseed?	Count
At a summer camp	*
From a book/short story	25.0%
From a movie, television show, or cartoon	*
From a parent or relative	50.0%
From a song	*
From a teacher/school	*
I don't know it	*
I feel like I've always known it	25.0%
Grand Total Over 71	4

How confident are you that you would be able to tell another person the story of Johnny Appleseed?	Count
Extremely	25.0%
Mostly	25.0%
Not at all	25.0%
Somewhat	25.0%
Grand Total Over 71	4

How significant is the story of Johnny Appleseed to you?	Count
Extremely	*
Mostly	*
Not at all	25.0%
Somewhat	75.0%
Grand Total Over 71	4

Appendix C: John Henry Survey Results

Do you recognize the name John Henry?	Count
Maybe	31.6%
No	52.6%
Yes	15.8%
Grand Total Under 24	38

Where did you first hear the story of John Henry?	Count
At a summer camp	*
From a book/short story	5.3%
From a movie, television show, or cartoon	5.3%
From a parent or relative	*
From a song	*
From a teacher/school	18.4%
I don't know it	68.4%
I feel like I've always known it	2.6%
Grand Total Under 24	38

How confident are you that you would be able to tell another person the story of John Henry?	Count
Extremely	*
Mostly	2.6%
Not at all	84.2%
Somewhat	13.2%
Grand Total Under 24	38

How significant is the story of John Henry to you?	Count
Extremely	*
Mostly	2.6%
Not at all	92.1%
Somewhat	5.3%
Grand Total Under 24	38

Do you recognize the name John Henry?	Count
Maybe	21.6%
No	32.4%
Yes	45.9%
Grand Total 25-40	148

Where did you first hear the story of John Henry?	Count
At a summer camp	*
From a book/short story	4.1%
From a movie, television show, or cartoon	9.5%
From a parent or relative	3.2%
From a song	4.1%
From a teacher/school	31.8%
I don't know it	47.3%
I feel like I've always known it	*
Grand Total 25-40	148

How confident are you that you would be able to tell another person the story of John Henry?	Count
Extremely	4.7%
Mostly	7.4%
Not at all	71.6%
Somewhat	16.2%
Grand Total 25-40	148

How significant is the story of John Henry to you?	Count
Extremely	1.3%
Mostly	4.1%
Not at all	76.4%
Somewhat	18.2%
Grand Total 25-40	148

Do you recognize the name John Henry?	Count
Maybe	17.6%
No	26.5%
Yes	55.9%
Grand Total 41-55	68

Where did you first hear the story of John Henry?	Count
At a summer camp	2.9%
From a book/short story	8.8%
From a movie, television show, or cartoon	7.4%
From a parent or relative	4.4%
From a song	11.8%
From a teacher/school	25.0%
I don't know it	35.3%
I feel like I've always known it	4.4%
Grand Total 41-55	68

How confident are you that you would be able to tell another person the story of John Henry?	Count
Extremely	1.5%
Mostly	9.0%
Not at all	61.2%
Somewhat	28.4%
Grand Total 41-55	68

How significant is the story of John Henry to you?	Count
Extremely	*
Mostly	7.4%
Not at all	73.5%
Somewhat	19.1%
Grand Total 41-55	68

Do you recognize the name John Henry?	Count
Maybe	23.8%
No	23.8%
Yes	52.4%
Grand Total 56-70	21

Where did you first hear the story of John Henry?	Count
At a summer camp	*
From a book/short story	4.8%
From a movie, television show, or cartoon	*
From a parent or relative	4.8%
From a song	4.8%
From a teacher/school	38.1%
I don't know it	47.6%
I feel like I've always known it	*
Grand Total 56-70	21

How confident are you that you would be able to tell another person the story of John Henry?	Count
Extremely	*
Mostly	14.3%
Not at all	85.7%
Somewhat	*
Grand Total 56-70	21

How significant is the story of John Henry to you?	Count
Extremely	*
Mostly	4.8%
Not at all	81.0%
Somewhat	14.3%
Grand Total 56-70	21

Do you recognize the name John Henry?	Count
Maybe	*
No	*
Yes	100.0%
Grand Total Over 71	4

Where did you first hear the story of John Henry?	Count
At a summer camp	*
From a book/short story	*
From a movie, television show, or cartoon	*
From a parent or relative	25.0%
From a song	25.0%
From a teacher/school	25.0%
I don't know it	*
I feel like I've always known it	25.0%
Grand Total Over 71	4

How confident are you that you would be able to tell another person the story of John Henry?	Count
Extremely	25.0%
Mostly	*
Not at all	25.0%
Somewhat	50.0%
Grand Total Over 71	4

How significant is the story of John Henry to you?	Count
Extremely	*
Mostly	*
Not at all	50.0%
Somewhat	50.0%
Grand Total Over 71	4

Appendix D: Paul Bunyan Survey Results

Do you recognize the name Paul Bunyan?	Count
Maybe	13.2%
No	23.7%
Yes	63.2%
Grand Total Under 24	38

Where did you first hear the story of Paul Bunyan?	Count
At a summer camp	*
From a book/short story	7.9%
From a movie, television show, or cartoon	5.3%
From a parent or relative	5.3%
From a song	5.3%
From a teacher/school	28.9%
I don't know it	34.2%
I feel like I've always known it	13.2%
Grand Total Under 24	38

How confident are you that you would be able to tell another person the story of Paul Bunyan?	Count
Extremely	*
Mostly	7.9%
Not at all	63.2%
Somewhat	28.9%
Grand Total Under 24	38

How significant is the story of Paul Bunyan to you?	Count
Extremely	*
Mostly	2.6%
Not at all	81.6%
Somewhat	15.8%
Grand Total Under 24	38

Do you recognize the name Paul Bunyan?	Count
Maybe	4.1%
No	4.1%
Yes	91.9%
Grand Total 25-40	148

Where did you first hear the story of Paul Bunyan?	Count
At a summer camp	0.7%
From a book/short story	10.1%
From a movie, television show, or cartoon	10.8%
From a parent or relative	12.2%
From a song	1.4%
From a teacher/school	47.3%
I don't know it	8.8%
I feel like I've always known it	8.8%
Grand Total 25-40	148

How confident are you that you would be able to tell another person the story of Paul Bunyan?	Count
Extremely	6.1%
Mostly	14.9%
Not at all	39.9%
Somewhat	39.2%
Grand Total 25-40	148

How significant is the story of Paul Bunyan to you?	Count
Extremely	2.7%
Mostly	1.3%
Not at all	66.9%
Somewhat	29.1%
Grand Total 25-40	148

Do you recognize the name Paul Bunyan?	Count
Maybe	1.5%
No	7.4%
Yes	91.2%
Grand Total 41-55	68

Where did you first hear the story of Paul Bunyan?	Count
At a summer camp	*
From a book/short story	19.4%
From a movie, television show, or cartoon	6.0%
From a parent or relative	7.5%
From a song	1.5%
From a teacher/school	40.3%
I don't know it	14.9%
I feel like I've always known it	10.4%
Grand Total 41-55	68

How confident are you that you would be able to tell another person the story of Paul Bunyan?	Count
Extremely	8.8%
Mostly	8.8%
Not at all	27.9%
Somewhat	54.5%
Grand Total 41-55	68

How significant is the story of Paul Bunyan to you?	Count
Extremely	1.5%
Mostly	2.9%
Not at all	63.2%
Somewhat	32.4%
Grand Total 41-55	68

Do you recognize the name Paul Bunyan?	Count
Maybe	9.5%
No	4.8%
Yes	85.7%
Grand Total 56-70	21

Where did you first hear the story of Paul Bunyan?	Count
At a summer camp	4.8%
From a book/short story	33.3%
From a movie, television show, or cartoon	*
From a parent or relative	9.5%
From a song	*
From a teacher/school	42.9%
I don't know it	4.8%
I feel like I've always known it	4.8%
Grand Total 56-70	21

How confident are you that you would be able to tell another person the story of Paul Bunyan?	Count
Extremely	4.8%
Mostly	23.8%
Not at all	23.8%
Somewhat	47.6%
Grand Total 56-70	21

How significant is the story of Paul Bunyan to you?	Count
Extremely	4.8%
Mostly	4.8%
Not at all	52.4%
Somewhat	38.1%
Grand Total 56-70	21

Do you recognize the name Paul Bunyan?	Count
Maybe	25.0%
No	*
Yes	75.0%
Grand Total Over 71	4

Where did you first hear the story of Paul Bunyan?	Count
At a summer camp	*
From a book/short story	25.0%
From a movie, television show, or cartoon	25.0%
From a parent or relative	25.0%
From a song	*
From a teacher/school	25.0%
I don't know it	*
I feel like I've always known it	*
Grand Total Over 71	4

How confident are you that you would be able to tell another person the story of Paul Bunyan?	Count
Extremely	25.0%
Mostly	25.0%
Not at all	25.0%
Somewhat	25.0%
Grand Total Over 71	4

How significant is the story of Paul Bunyan to you?	Count
Extremely	*
Mostly	25.0%
Not at all	75.0%
Somewhat	*
Grand Total Over 71	4

Appendix E: Annie Oakley Survey Results

Do you recognize the name Annie Oakley?	Count
Maybe	15.8%
No	60.5%
Yes	23.7%
Grand Total Under 24	38

Where did you first hear the story of Annie Oakley?	Count
At a summer camp	2.6%
From a book/short story	2.6%
From a movie, television show, or cartoon	2.6%
From a parent or relative	7.9%
From a song	2.6%
From a teacher/school	7.9%
I don't know it	71.1%
I feel like I've always known it	2.6%
Grand Total Under 24	38

How confident are you that you would be able to tell another person the story of Annie Oakley?	Count
Extremely	2.6%
Mostly	7.9%
Not at all	84.2%
Somewhat	5.3%
Grand Total Under 24	38

How significant is the story of Annie Oakley to you?	Count
Extremely	2.6%
Mostly	*
Not at all	81.6%
Somewhat	15.8%
Grand Total Under 24	38

Do you recognize the name Annie Oakley?	Count
Maybe	8.8%
No	35.8%
Yes	55.4%
Grand Total 25-40	148

Where did you first hear the story of Annie Oakley?	Count
At a summer camp	2.0%
From a book/short story	4.7%
From a movie, television show, or cartoon	11.5%
From a parent or relative	6.1%
From a song	1.4%
From a teacher/school	18.2%
I don't know it	52.7%
I feel like I've always known it	3.4%
Grand Total 25-40	148

How confident are you that you would be able to tell another person the story of Annie Oakley?	Count
Extremely	4.1%
Mostly	3.4%
Not at all	70.3%
Somewhat	22.3%
Grand Total 25-40	148

How significant is the story of Annie Oakley to you?	Count
Extremely	1.4%
Mostly	2.7%
Not at all	82.4%
Somewhat	13.5%
Grand Total 25-40	148

Do you recognize the name Annie Oakley?	Count
Maybe	5.9%
No	17.6%
Yes	76.5%
Grand Total 41-55	68

Where did you first hear the story of Annie Oakley?	Count
At a summer camp	1.5%
From a book/short story	8.8%
From a movie, television show, or cartoon	17.6%
From a parent or relative	11.8%
From a song	*
From a teacher/school	22.1%
I don't know it	29.4%
I feel like I've always known it	8.8%
Grand Total 41-55	68

How confident are you that you would be able to tell another person the story of Annie Oakley?	Count
Extremely	1.5%
Mostly	13.2%
Not at all	55.9%
Somewhat	29.4%
Grand Total 41-55	68

How significant is the story of Annie Oakley to you?	Count
Extremely	1.4%
Mostly	1.5%
Not at all	70.6%
Somewhat	26.5%
Grand Total 41-55	68

Do you recognize the name Annie Oakley?	Count
Maybe	9.5%
No	19.0%
Yes	71.4%
Grand Total 56-70	21

Where did you first hear the story of Annie Oakley?	Count
At a summer camp	*
From a book/short story	9.5%
From a movie, television show, or cartoon	28.6%
From a parent or relative	*
From a song	*
From a teacher/school	28.6%
I don't know it	28.6%
I feel like I've always known it	4.8%
Grand Total 56-70	21

How confident are you that you would be able to tell another person the story of Annie Oakley?	Count
Extremely	4.8%
Mostly	9.5%
Not at all	47.6%
Somewhat	38.1%
Grand Total 56-70	21

How significant is the story of Annie Oakley to you?	Count
Extremely	4.8%
Mostly	4.8%
Not at all	71.4%
Somewhat	19.0%
Grand Total 56-70	21

Do you recognize the name Annie Oakley?	Count
Maybe	*
No	*
Yes	100.0%
Grand Total Over 71	4

Where did you first hear the story of Annie Oakley?	Count
At a summer camp	*
From a book/short story	25.0%
From a movie, television show, or cartoon	*
From a parent or relative	25.0%
From a song	*
From a teacher/school	*
I don't know it	25.0%
I feel like I've always known it	25.0%
Grand Total Over 71	4

How confident are you that you would be able to tell another person the story of Annie Oakley?	Count
Extremely	*
Mostly	25.0%
Not at all	25.0%
Somewhat	50.0%
Grand Total Over 71	4

How significant is the story of Annie Oakley to you?	Count
Extremely	*
Mostly	*
Not at all	75.0%
Somewhat	25.0%
Grand Total Over 71	4

Appendix F: Rip Van Winkle Survey Results

Do you recognize the name Rip Van Winkle?	Count
Maybe	34.2%
No	28.9%
Yes	36.8%
Grand Total Under 24	38

Where did you first hear the story of Rip Van Winkle?	Count
At a summer camp	*
From a book/short story	10.5%
From a movie, television show, or cartoon	5.3%
From a parent or relative	13.2%
From a song	5.3%
From a teacher/school	10.5%
I don't know it	50.0%
I feel like I've always known it	5.3%
Grand Total Under 24	38

How confident are you that you would be able to tell another person the story of Rip Van Winkle?	Count
Extremely	2.7%
Mostly	2.6%
Not at all	84.2%
Somewhat	10.5%
Grand Total Under 24	38

How significant is the story of Rip Van Winkle to you?	Count
Extremely	*
Mostly	2.6%
Not at all	81.6%
Somewhat	15.8%
Grand Total Under 24	38

Do you recognize the name Rip Van Winkle?	Count
Maybe	15.5%
No	22.3%
Yes	62.2%
Grand Total 25-40	148

Where did you first hear the story of Rip Van Winkle?	Count
At a summer camp	2.1%
From a book/short story	16.9%
From a movie, television show, or cartoon	11.5%
From a parent or relative	5.4%
From a song	2.0%
From a teacher/school	14.2%
I don't know it	43.2%
I feel like I've always known it	4.7%
Grand Total 25-40	148

How confident are you that you would be able to tell another person the story of Rip Van Winkle?	Count
Extremely	3.4%
Mostly	7.5%
Not at all	67.3%
Somewhat	21.8%
Grand Total 25-40	148

How significant is the story of Rip Van Winkle to you?	Count
Extremely	1.3%
Mostly	2.7%
Not at all	84.5%
Somewhat	11.5%
Grand Total 25-40	148

Do you recognize the name Rip Van Winkle?	Count
Maybe	5.9%
No	8.8%
Yes	85.3%
Grand Total 41-55	68

Where did you first hear the story of Rip Van Winkle?	Count
At a summer camp	1.5%
From a book/short story	26.5%
From a movie, television show, or cartoon	5.9%
From a parent or relative	10.3%
From a song	*
From a teacher/school	23.5%
I don't know it	23.5%
I feel like I've always known it	8.8%
Grand Total 41-55	68

How confident are you that you would be able to tell another person the story of Rip Van Winkle?	Count
Extremely	4.5%
Mostly	20.9%
Not at all	34.3%
Somewhat	40.3%
Grand Total 41-55	68

How significant is the story of Rip Van Winkle to you?	Count
Extremely	1.5%
Mostly	2.9%
Not at all	63.2%
Somewhat	32.4%
Grand Total 41-55	68

Do you recognize the name Rip Van Winkle?	Count
Maybe	14.3%
No	4.8%
Yes	81.0%
Grand Total 56-70	21

Where did you first hear the story of Rip Van Winkle?	Count
At a summer camp	*
From a book/short story	42.9%
From a movie, television show, or cartoon	14.3%
From a parent or relative	14.3%
From a song	*
From a teacher/school	4.8%
I don't know it	9.5%
I feel like I've always known it	14.3%
Grand Total 56-70	21

How confident are you that you would be able to tell another person the story of Rip Van Winkle?	Count
Extremely	9.5%
Mostly	14.3%
Not at all	28.6%
Somewhat	47.6%
Grand Total 56-70	21

How significant is the story of Rip Van Winkle to you?	Count
Extremely	*
Mostly	4.8%
Not at all	52.4%
Somewhat	42.9%
Grand Total 56-70	21

Do you recognize the name Rip Van Winkle?	Count
Maybe	*
No	*
Yes	100.0%
Grand Total Under 71	4

Where did you first hear the story of Rip Van Winkle?	Count
At a summer camp	25.0%
From a book/short story	50.0%
From a movie, television show, or cartoon	25.0%
From a parent or relative	*
From a song	*
From a teacher/school	*
I don't know it	*
I feel like I've always known it	*
Grand Total Under 71	4

How confident are you that you would be able to tell another person the story of Rip Van Winkle?	Count
Extremely	25.0%
Mostly	25.0%
Not at all	25.0%
Somewhat	25.0%
Grand Total Under 71	4

How significant is the story of Rip Van Winkle to you?	Count
Extremely	*
Mostly	25.0%
Not at all	50.0%
Somewhat	25.0%
Grand Total Under 71	4

Appendix G: Reasons for Surveying and Demographics

Reasons for Surveying

Do you believe the preservation of folklore is important?	Count
Extremely	53
Mostly	107
Not at all	16
Somewhat	103
Grand Total	279

Do you consider yourself well-versed in American folklore?	Count
Extremely	4
Mostly	16
Not at all	126
Somewhat	133
Grand Total	279

Have you ever shared a piece of American folklore with someone who did not know it?	Count
Maybe	88
No	121
Yes	70
Grand Total	279

Demographic Information

What is the highest degree you have received?	Count
Associate degree	19
Bachelor's degree	106
Graduate degree	53
High school degree or equivalent (GED)	33
Less than high school degree	3
Prefer not to say	1
Some college but no degree	64
Grand Total	279

Participant Political Views	Count
Neither/Moderate	48
Prefer not to say	2
Slightly conservative	34
Slightly liberal	86
Very conservative	19
Very liberal	89
Grand Total	279

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