Thread by Thread: Weaving as Informal Education in a Highland Guatemala Town

“It looks as though you have learned a lot in the school that is this house”
-Diego Cumez, after looking at my almost finished weaving on the day before my departure

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Abstract:

In Santa Catarina Palopo, a highland Guatemalan town, much of daily life revolves around weaving. Not only do most families rely, at least somewhat, on the money their traditional tejidos (weavings) bring in, but almost all women and some men wear items of clothing that have been woven in the Santa Catarina style. I argue that the spaces created by weaving circles, which are culturally, economically, and socially important, are also invaluable centers for informal education. Although informal learning is often "so compatible with everyday cultural life in a wide array of family and community settings that it tends to become second nature", it is a coherent and integrated set of coordinated practices (Rogoff 2009: 57). This paper examines how weaving circles in Santa Catarina Palopo, a highland Guatemala town, represent informal educational spaces. I examine the cultural and social practices that support informal education in this town and how they the affect identity, skills, and worldview of the women weavers and their communities. Although formal education is still very relevant, I posit that informal education plays a particularly important role in communities like Santa Catarina Polopo, where the dominant culture of formal education often strips students of their local culture (Tikly 2001: 151). In this case, the informal learning of weaving acts a vital continuation of a body of knowledge, identity and worldview that would otherwise be lost. In addition, it creates a space for women to collectively and actively construct their unique and every changing identity and culture on a day to day basis.

Introduction:

Santa Catarina Palopo is located in highland Guatemala on the shores of Lake Atitlan and is home to a small but growing community of Kakchiquel-speaking Maya people. The women and girls of this town have engaged in the production of traditional tejidos, (weaving created on a backstrap loom) for as long as they can remember. In recent decades, the town has experienced many changes associated with globalization, including the growth of the tourist industry. Although these changes have put a great deal of pressure on the community, the commercialization of tejidos for the tourist industry has also proved fertile ground for the development of several women’s weaving cooperatives. I argue that these relatively new businesses not only allow women to sustain themselves independently, but create unique social and educational spaces for women and their families. During my three weeks of field research in Santa Catarina, I sought to understand the “informal” education I perceived to be going on in
these weaving circles, and how this space represented a continuation of knowledge unique to this community and these people.

The family and community based learning I will examine has been variously been labeled as “informal”, “observational,” or “practical” (Briggs 1970; Chisholm 1996; Driver and Driver 1963), although I will simply refer to it as “informal” for the purpose of this paper. Although there are critiques of formal education, it is important to note that I do not see formal and informal education as opposite, nor that one kind of education hampers learning in other ways (Maynard and Martini 2005; Rogoff et al. 2007; Rogoff et al. 2003, Rogoff et al. 2009). In contrast, I see both formal and informal education as complementary. Additionally, “although informal learning is more prevalent in traditional communities where learning is highly integrated with everyday life, it is common to all societies in one form or another” (Rogoff 2009: 119)

In looking at decades of research on informal education in communities around the globe, I found several characteristics which are common to many informal educational spaces, and which I argue also apply to the informal educational space in Petrona Cumez’s cooperative. These characteristics include: (1) education is critically integrated into culturally relevant action (Bruner 1961:62), (2) it is based on intent observation and contribution (Rogoff et al. 2003) (3) learners often develop high levels of intrinsic motivation (Rogoff 2009: 63). I will analyze each of these characteristics within the context of the cooperative in turn, and show how they contribute to a unique construction of knowledge and identity within this community.

Methodology:

My research is based on three weeks of field work in Santa Catarina Palopo between February 13 and March 4, 2012 and is centered on Petrona Cumez’s weaving cooperative. This cooperative is located at the center of town and, during the day, the [Escribir texto]
women weave in the shop which has an open front, which allows community members and family to pass in and out easily. Because of its location, it is also an ideal spot from which to view the goings on of the whole central street. I augmented what I learned at this cooperative by visiting several other weaving hubs in the town of Santa Catarina Palopo. The other weaving hubs included several groups of women and girls who weave as they sell their craft on a main tourist street in Santa Catarina, as well as two women’s homes. As this project required a heavy amount of implicit information, I spent most of my time observing and participating in the daily activities of the weaving spaces. There, I spent time with everyone who inhabited that space informally (weavers, family members, community members), as well as formally (buyers and tourists, etc).

I also began to learn how to weave on the back strap loom on the second day after my arrival. This allowed me to integrate into the space more fully and gave me an insight into how women in the community teach and learn from each other. My presence as a "gringa" weaving in the cooperative attracted many curious community members, especially women weavers who wanted to see what I was going, and, as the weeks passed, how my weaving was coming along. It is in this space that I connected to most of my interviewees, although I didn’t begin to do formal interviews until the last half of my stay, when I felt I had built personal relationships that were strong enough to yield more than surface level conversations.

I ended up conducting 23 formal and informal interviews with first, second, and third generation women ranging in age from eight to 62, as well as several boys and men who were involved in the weaving spaces. The vast majority of these interviews were informal, and were conducted in the weaving cooperative, or in the other spaces where women were weaving. During these conversations, I began by asking basic questions about how each woman began to weave, what it meant to them now, and what
their favorite part of the work was. They usually asked me how my weaving was going, and gave me advice on how to improve or what to do next. From there, we talked about a variety of things as I tried to understand how weaving fit into these women’s identities, and how it fit into the rest of their lives. I asked them what they thought the most important aspect of weaving and learning how to weave was, and often built off of what other women had told me. In order to protect their privacy in the case of sensitive information, I have changed many of the women’s names in this paper.

My biggest obstacle was that most of the older women speak Kakchiquel, a Mayan language which I do not speak. This made it hard for me, at the beginning, to chime in on conversations between women, and to understand what was on their minds as they chatted casually. Although this was a big worry for me initially, the problem was alleviated by the fact that most of the younger women and girls prefer Spanish, the older women often speak a mixture of Spanish and Kakchiquel. As they became more comfortable with me, someone was also usually willing to roughly translate what was going on. In the end, I understood almost everything that was going on. My other problem was time. Three weeks was just enough time to skim the surface of this topic, and I’m sure I missed a wealth of information because of the short nature of my trip. In addition, my time in Santa Catarina was shortened due to my sickness during the first week, which caused me to miss three days of fieldwork.

**Background on Weaving in Santa Catarina**

According to various sources, 50 to 90% (Field Notes, Feb 2012) of the approximately 2,000 (Diagnostico Census Projection for 2010) women in Santa Catarina know how to weave. Although this is a broad range, I suspect the statistic is closer to 90% as almost all of the young girls I met told me that they had either started to learn already, or were going to learn very soon. Typically, girls learn how to weave between
the ages of 6 and 13, although some learn as late as in their twenties. I only met one woman, age 17, who said she had never learned how to weave and didn’t have any desire to in the future (Marta, Interview, Feb 17 2012). Normally, girls whose families require their weaving as a source of income learn how to weave earlier, while girls who weave only to create their own clothes or for leisure learn later. As I will discuss in more detail later, the individual girl’s motivation also has a lot to do with when she learns.

Almost all of the women, young and old, also wear huipiles, which are traditional blouses woven on the back strap loom. Each town around the lake has a unique style of huipil, making it a statement of localized identity as well as indigeneity. The huipil of Santa Catarina is deep blue and turquoise, with a particularly elaborate set of designs covering the entire thing, seeming to boast of the women’s patience and persistence. The style of the huipil has changed over the past decades, from red to blue, from designs of animals to that of geometric shapes. However, the most current of traditions fluctuates even within a given year, and many women add details to their huipiles unique only to their own style.

Of the women I met, all but two wove either to supplement their income, or used it as their entire form of income. Those women who supplemented other jobs with weaving often wove at night when they were done with other work and when the children were out playing or asleep. Those women who saw weaving and selling as their full time jobs wove while sitting in their stores or by the side of the road, where they had their weavings on display. These are the women I spent the majority of my time with, and who were most actively involved in the social space of the weaving circles. About half of these women also continued to weave on their own in their houses after their families had come home.
Petrona Cumezs weaving cooperative is usually filled with about six women, and various children. Besides Petrona, her three daughters, Blanca, Angelina, and Carolina, and two sons, Alex and Cristian, are all there for most of the day. The three daughters also bring their children, Petronita, Alfred, and Alan, all of whom are under five years old. Suzanna, who works at the cooperative also often brings two of her children, Cristina, age 9, and William, age 5. In addition, Encarnacion, who is married to one of Petronas sons, spends time there nursing her infant daughter. Throughout the day, various women, including Marta, Claudia and Sylvia stop by to chat or help out. A diagram of the store front, where everyone spends the majority of their time, can be seen in the appendix under Image 1.

**Motivation: Learning and Initiating with Purpose**

It was a sunny afternoon in Santa Catarina Palopo, and I was sitting in my usual spot at the front of Petrona’s weaving cooperative, working on my weaving and chatting with several women, one of whom was weaving a belt for her daughter to wear at her upcoming third birthday. I was confused again – I thought I’d done everything correctly, but the threads weren’t lining up the way they should the pattern I was trying to create. Seeing my distraught face, Suzanna, a small 35-year-old woman with a quick smile who works at the cooperative, came over to see what was going on. Seeing the mess I made, she leaned over my work and deftly rearranged the strings, undid some of the knots I’d made, and showed me where to start over, her hands flying so quickly I barely had time to register what was going on. “There you go”, she said, “now just keep going like that. If you really want to learn, you will do it right,” (Field Notes, Feb 17 2012). Initially I was startled – did she think I wasn’t trying hard enough? Later I would discover what she really meant: personal motivation is a very important part of informal
learning in this community, both from the point of view of the “teacher” and the “learner”.

In formal schooling, it is common for teachers to spend large amounts of time thinking of creative ways for students to learn the material (Rogoff 2012: 209). In the weaving circles of Santa Catarina, this is seen as not only unnecessary, but downright a waste of time. Petrona told me that, although she started teaching all her daughters how to weave at age seven, one of her daughters just didn’t want to learn:

I told her that she had to help weave in order to keep food on our table, but she simply didn’t have the motivation to do it on her own. Because she didn’t feel it in her heart, she couldn’t concentrate as well as her sisters, she couldn’t sit still, and she made terrible weavings. I decided to stop teaching her then, because it is a waste of my time and thread to teach a child who doesn’t want to learn. Several years later, she came to me on her own and told me that she wanted to learn. I knew then that she was ready, and it was true. I simply sat her down with the tejido and she learned to weave beautifully almost on her own. (Petrona Cumez, Interview, Feb 28 2012)

Petrona’s story shows something which I found many times as I talked to both knowledgeable weavers: only those who want to, learn well. In my personal observations, motivation didn’t seem to be a problem in most cases. I noted children as young as three begging their mothers to weave. Many times, initial requests were denied until the mother decided that the girl was old enough and “truly has her heart in it” (Field Notes, Feb 2012). Two of the younger girls who tended to hang around the cooperative in the afternoons, after school, were deemed too young to weave (they were five and six years old) but were given other tasks in response to their enthusiasm. For instance, they were allowed to tie the tassels at the end of finished scarves, arrange weavings in the display case, and help choose colors for the weavings in process. Although the children could yet contribute to the actual production process, this allowed them to more fully integrate into the space and put their motivation to use.
Motivation remains important even for expert weavers, although not all have the luxury to respond to it. Two of the women I talked to wove purely out of pleasure. Interestingly, both of these women were fairly young and mentioned that, to them, it was a good way to relax. One young mother, Claudia, said that she liked to weave and listen to music when her baby went to sleep. She said that she was glad she knew how to weave because "how else would I pass the time?" (Claudia, Interview, Feb 28 2012). In contrast, an older woman named Martina said that, to her, weaving was just another form of work: "None of my children do anything. I go to work at the hotel all day, and then I come home and sit there and work some more, just to feed them. I do not want to, and sometimes I don’t make the most beautiful things, but I have to," (Martina, Interview, Feb 22 2012).

Even Petrona herself said that, even though she learned how to weave basic things at a very young age, she didn’t begin to make her most beautiful huilipes until her early twenties, when she started to really enjoy it. Before that, she said, it was merely a job, but during that time it became a joy. For her, that joy lasted for fifteen years. In the last couple of years, she has grown tired, and, as she is now financially able, has stopped weaving as much and started to spend more of her time helping to sell other women’s work in the surrounding towns. She said that she may start weaving more again in a few years, but until then it is no use to weave too much, as it will not turn out as well. (Petrona Cumez, Interview Feb 28 2012)

Because the desire to weave for most women (except for rare exceptions like Martina) comes largely out of intrinsic motivation, it is very common for women to continue weaving even after it isn’t necessary, economically. I talked to many young women who were in the process of studying to be “perrito contadores” (accountants), or who already had jobs as accountants or secretaries. For instance, Petronas eldest
daughter, Angelina, will graduate from accountant school in one year. However, she
told me that she would always keep weaving: “It’s just part of what my family does. It’s
something I have done with my sisters and mothers for as long as I can remember, so I
can’t imagine not wanting to do it anymore ” (Angelina, Interview, 24 Feb 2012). This
shows that the importance of personal motivation within this learning space means that
most women who do so see it as innately tied to who they are –it is more than a job, or a
way to pass time.

**Intent Observation and Contribution**

It is late afternoon in Santa Catarina, and I am sitting on the cement stairs
outside of the weaving cooperative with Petrona, her daughter Blanca, and her
granddaughter Petronita. We were waiting for the Cuaresma Procession to pass, and Blanca
and Petrona are busy tying the strands at the end of scarves. This involves separating
about ten string from the end of the scarf, whetting it with a little bit of spit, and
twisting it before tying it into a knot. Petrona and Blanca do this fairly absentmindedly,
but Petronita, who is three, watches them intently. After several minutes, she tells her
mother that she wants to help. Her mother hands her a scarf and keeps chatting. Over
the next hour or so, Petronita copies parts of her mother’s motions almost exactly. She
mimics everything from the way she smacks her lips after she wets the strands with her
spit, to the deft twisting of the completed weaving ties. When a tourist stops to chat with
us briefly, the toddler gives him a look so completely true to her mother’s solemn glare
that for a second I think she must already be twenty five. When he asks questions, she
nods along knowledgeably. Her mother and grandmother barely notice, but I can’t help
but be amazed at the details she is picking up. (Field Notes, Feb 29 2012)

This type of moment is the reason that, by the time most girls begin to learn how
to weave and sell, they already know most of the basic steps. They’ve spent a lifetime
of watching the women around them go through the motions every day. Throughout my
days at the weaving cooperative, I frequently saw children as young as three or four,
including boys and girls, even start their own “practice weavings”. These practice
weavings usually consist of two strings tied to a column or pole to simulate the way a
back strap loom works and looks, allowing the child to tie strings in a way that looks
fairly similar to real weaving but without producing any real results. This allowed them
to mimic the motions of their mothers and aunts without wasting any valuable material.

Although the girls I observed started to learn at a very early age, verbal cues
were used very judiciously. Until the girls officially started to learn, they got no
instruction at all, as far as I could tell. Every motion they made was based on the intent
observation of the older women. The girls who were starting to learn were physically
shown, rather than told. Even though the way girls learn is very loosely defined, the
women consistently told me that there was a clear order in which specific skills were
learned. First, girls learned how to weave the *tela*, which is the simple woven part of the
fabric, without any design. Next, they begin doing basic *dibujos*, or designs (Field
Notes, Feb 16 2012) (See figure number 1 for a complete outline). After they have
mastered these designs, they are usually ready to start more complicated designs.
Although the first couple of designs are shown one by one, a girl is expected to be able
to simply look at designs and copy them. Thus, as girls learn the first couple of designs,
they are expected to abstract what it is they need to know for more complicated patterns.

When I myself began to weave, Sylvia, a woman who weaves in the cooperative,
sat down with the weaving and told me to sit next to hear. She did a couple of lines and
then handed the *palos* over to me, telling me it was my turn. She expected me to pick up
on most things on my own, and when I asked her questions, she brushed them off,
telling to watch for myself (Field Notes, Feb 18 2012). According to past research, this
form of teaching encourages children to experience the activity directly, to be alert and take initiative in it instead of simply going through the motions (Rogoff 2009: 119). I would agree with this assessment of the situation. When the girls in this weaving community had learned how to weave, they did so almost without thinking. They were able to rearrange patterns to their liking and fix strings whenever necessary. This requires a level of understanding far beyond anything I ever heard an older woman vocalize, and far beyond any of them were able to describe to me when I asked.

Thus, learning through intent observation and contribution allows girls and women in this weaving community to fully understand what they are doing in a holistic and process oriented way. They are not only able to copy what others have done, but allow them to reapply their knowledge to create unique creations of their own.

Critical Integration: Individual, Familial, and Communal Identity Formation

For most women and girls I talked to, the motivation to learn initially, and the desire to continue, came from their desire to be part of the weaving community. For the most part, learning how to weave also requires entrance and assimilation into the weaving community. This means that learning is critically tied to not only personal identity, but familial and communal identity. For example, Petronita, Petrona’s three-year-old granddaughter, has spent almost all day in the weaving cooperative with her mother and the other women in the cooperative since the day she was born. Although she does not yet know how to weave, she is already more part of the weaving circle than I will ever be. This is because this every day social experience means more than the accumulation of tacit knowledge of a shared activity: it is a personal and emotional attachment to not only the activity, but to the social space within it takes place. Even though her mother permits her to play with the boys outside, Petronita prefers to stay next to her mother, playing with the palos (rounded sticks used for weaving).
This type of deep “bond of interest and commitment” (Rogoff 2011: 130) on the part of participants is common to most types of informal learning around the world. When I asked women about their earliest desire to learn how to weave, almost all of the women mentioned two things: 1) Their desire to know what the women around them knew 2) Their sense of economic responsibility towards their families (Field Notes, Feb 2012). Whereas students in formal educational settings are prompted to learn information with “various types of extrinsic motivation that have no inherent relation to what is being learned” (Rogoff 2012: 125), these women already saw this work as deeply tied to their personal and familial identity. Thus, learning is already defined within the context of cooperation and collaboration. The girls who were learning to weave took initiative and responsibility more freely than they would in other settings because her work was tied to a shared commitment and set of values.

Even the young boys who spent time in the weaving cooperative showed me that they saw themselves as a critical part of this space. Two of Petronas sons, Alex and Cristian, ages 9 and 12, were still young enough to live with their mother and to help out frequently in the store front. Every morning before school, and every night before going to bed, Alex put up and took down the boards which closed off the front of the store during the night. During the day, both boys hovered around the women as they worked, talking to them about their day and fetching things for them when necessary. The women engaged them in conversation cheerfully, giving them small tasks, like fetching some mangoes for a snack, or asking them to bring out the new thread (Field Notes, Feb 2012). They understood the way the weaving circle worked completely, fitting into its rhythm effortlessly. Like the girls who were learning how to weave, they were very perceptive to the work going on around them, and took initiative to respond to needs when necessary.
Alex and Cristian also went to Antigua with their mother every Saturday in order to sell the cooperatives weavings. Upon their return on Sunday, the previous day’s work became a large topic of conversation. Petrona frequently told other family members and friends who passed through about particularly notable sells the boys had made the day before, allowing each boy to bask in the joy of a job well done. During these moments, the boys were not simply bothersome kids, but vital parts of the cooperatives community. I would argue that experiencing this work in a communal setting helped the boys and girls in the cooperative push themselves further, emotionally, cognitively and socially, in order to do their tasks well. In addition, they had the flexibility to initiate learning in ways that made the comfortable, contributing to the group in their own unique way.

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This type of moment is the reason that, by the time most girls begin to learn how to weave and sell, they already know most of the basic steps. They’ve spent a lifetime of watching the women around them go through the motions every day. Throughout my days at the weaving cooperative, I frequently saw children as young as three or four, including boys and girls, even start their own “practice weavings”. These practice weavings usually consist of two strings tied to a column or pole to simulate the way a back strap loom works and looks, allowing the child to tie strings in a way that looks fairly similar to real weaving but without producing any real results. This allowed them to mimic the motions of their mothers and aunts without wasting any valuable material.

Although the girls I observed started to learn at a very early age, verbal cues were used very judiciously. Until the girls officially started to learn, they got no instruction at all, as far as I could tell. Every motion they made was based on the intent observation of the older women. The girls who were starting to learn were physically shown, rather than told. Even though the way girls learn is very loosely defined, the women consistently told me that there was a clear order in which specific skills were learned. First, girls learned how to weave the *tela*, which is the simple woven part of the fabric, without any design. Next, they begin doing basic *dibujos*, or designs (Field Notes, Feb 16 2012) (See figure number2 for a complete outline). After they have mastered these designs, they are usually ready to start more complicated designs. Although the first couple of designs are shown one by one, a girl is expected to be able to simply look at designs and copy them. Thus, as girls learn the first couple of designs, they are expected to abstract what it is they need to know for more complicated patterns.
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**Changing Identities: What it means to be a woman weaver**

Every woman who is part of a weaving circle also has a distinct identity imposed upon her externally. Literature on weaving emphasizes its role in identity formation and cultural transmission, both of which are critical parts of “informal learning”, and, arguably, any type of learning. Based on her study of indigenous identities women in Mexico, and Guatemala, various researchers have found that weaving, and the subsequent connection with the world outside of their immediate

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community, redraws the way women’s understand indigeneity, femininity, and locality (Nelson 2006: 51).

In Santa Catarina, weaving is an exclusively female activity. Even at an early age, weaving marks not only a person’s gender identity, but their physical place in the community: boys “go out”, while girls “stay in”. One older woman explained that girls and boys are pretty much allowed to do the same things until around the age of seven, when girls begin learning how to weave and the boys go out to the streets to play games, usually soccer. “That’s why I don’t know how to play soccer that well –I was learning how to weave with my mother” (Sonya, Interview, Feb 13 2012). For most of the day, the women in the weaving circle interact only with each other, their children, and other women who pass by.

In the past decades, the process of “going out” to sell weavings has also been a point of high tensions within this, and many other rural indigenous communities. When the women in Santa Catarina began to tell me about this, the term machismo began to come up very frequently. Machismo has been a growing topic of discussion in Latin America, but I felt it important to stick to the local definition of the term, which I understood as “men’s excessive masculinity and dominance over women” (Field Notes, Feb 29) (This is a compilation of several women’s interpretation of the term). According to the women I talked to, machismo mean that men felt they had the power to keep women in the home. In the past, one older woman told me, husbands beat their wives, and felt it was improper for women to go out and make friends of their own (Field Notes, March 3 2012). Even now, many women are not allowed to leave the town for fear that it will “make them impure” (Field Notes, March 3 2012). According the research I found on other weaving community, this is a theme common many towns (Nelson 2006; Little 2000). When women decide to leave the town to sell, they face
enormous social ostracism both from their husbands and other community members. Although it undermines norms of femininity and creates a lot of opposition, women increasingly leave the town for day trips. One woman named Blanca told me that this was partially out of economic necessity, but also because she believes it is becoming more and more socially acceptable to do so. She said, “Women know more about machismo now, and they know how to defend themselves. They know that they are not doing anything wrong,” (Blanca, Interview, March 3 2012). This shows how women have begun to reconstruct their sense of identity as a female, in large part due to the economic mobility which weaving provides them.

I would argue that this has become even stronger because of the social nature of weaving circles. They spaces for women to enact femininity communally, and, for mothers, to integrate their daughters into what they believe a woman should be, and, in turn what a man should be. For instance, a large topic of discussion during the last days of my stay was one particular instance regarding drunken men on my last Saturday night. Several of the women’s husbands had gone out that night to drink. At about eleven that night, three of the men came around to the weaving cooperative store front. One of the men ended up destroying several paintings which were for sale, while another hit his wife (Field Notes, March 2 2012). The women initially barred them from entering, but eventually let them in because, according to the woman whose husband hit her, “we were afraid they would go to jail, and I didn’t want that” (Sylvia, Interview, March 3 2012). The next day, however, the women held a meeting with the men’s families. A mother of one of the men who had been destructive the night before told him that he had to move out. Another told her son he had only one more chance before he, too, would be turned out. When I talked to them about this afterwards, the women said that this would not have been possible a few years earlier (Field Notes, March 3
2012). Only through their weaving cooperative were they able to sustain themselves independently, and thereby not rely on the men in their lives for income. I suspect, also, that the women’s close relationships with each other gave them the strength to make these decisions. The woman who told her son he could no longer live with her said that she would be very lonely without him, but that these women would be there to keep her company (Lydia, Interview, March 4 2012). Although I don’t want to read into this more than is possible, I take this as a sign that her identity is as strongly connected to these women as to her family. Communally, the women are able to stand up for what they believe they deserve better than any of them could alone, thus redefining what they believe it means to be a female in Santa Catarina. They are not only work colleagues, but provide a support base which she didn’t have before the cooperative existed.

**Conclusion**

Culture is a verb as well as a noun: it is grown, reconstructed, shared and learned on a daily basis. Petrona Cumezs weaving cooperative represents just one of millions of informal educational spaces within which culture is not only passed on, but recreated and reformed. My three weeks in the weaving circles of Santa Catarina impressed upon me that, although we can attribute learning to universal theories and pedagogical philosophies, it is truly the individual people, in localized places in time and space, who form the learning process and the results. Informal learning represents a powerful experiential process that is personally meaningful and culturally grounded. Although formal education is still very relevant, informal education plays a particularly important role in Santa Catarina Polopo, where the dominant culture of formal education often has little to do with local and historical culture. As a part of a global as well as local world, they, like all people, are intrinsically linked to outside forces, often outside of any one individuals control. However, within this weaving circle, women and children do more [Escribir texto]
than pass on and learn a unique skill set: they construct their own identity and way of life.

Works Cited


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