Liberty University

School of Music

Somali Students in the American Elementary General Music Classroom

A Thesis Submitted to
the Faculty of the School of Music
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by

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Abstract

Education must be cognizant of the Somali culture's inclination to classify music as a morally charged entity. It must also be careful not to forget American cultural values that have defined the music classroom. The purpose of this research was to identify Somali cultural expressions that occur in the American elementary general music classroom and to identify underlying concepts that contribute to these cultural expressions. Additionally, the research sought to bring light to the relationship between the two, so that future music educators might be inspired to create assessments and activities that better suit the needs of all learners.

Keywords: music education, culture, Somali, Islam

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List of Abbreviations

MASD- Mechanicsburg Area School District

Chapter One: Introduction

The Mechanicsburg Area School District (MASD), situated in the heart of Central Pennsylvania, once exhibited a traditional European-descent demographic that was typical of the mid-Atlantic region. As is characteristic with much of the country, change in the demographic composition of the community has forced the schools to be responsive and adapt in order to provide best teaching practices. To the credit of MASD, they have done so in many ways that have yielded success. As the district continues to evolve, it would be beneficial to continue to explore new ways to meet the needs of the families the district works with.

The music department provides endless opportunities for educational adaptation. While the district has long cherished its music program in an enviable way and upholds a reputation for taking pride in its music instruction, it is undeniable that certain unique challenges present themselves with regard to the growing number of Somali-American students. The concerns at hand question the permissibility of music in the eyes of Somali students and families so as to design educational practices that reflect the needs of all students.

Background

The educational concerns of this research are not novel, yet they must be fully explored in the new context that is the Central Pennsylvania region. While it is widely known that Islam exhibits some discrepancies on the issue of the permissibility of music, the manifestation of these concerns can present differently in new environments. Research and data acquired in this effort shall accompany that which already exists as a result of other Somali immigrant communities encountering similar challenges, and will be beneficial to education as it continues to evolve.

Not long ago, MASD piloted a reconfiguring of its typically-structured Kindergarten-5th grade elementary schools. In 2017 the school board voted to reform the schools in a way that would bring all kindergarteners together in one facility called the Kindergarten Academy. After the initial kindergarten year, the student body would break up into four neighborhood schools. Broad Street, Northside, Shepherdstown, and Upper Allen Elementary Schools would house grades 1-3. All students would then be brought back together for grades 4 and 5 at the Elmwood Academy. This dynamic change took place in 2018. Renovations and construction began on the Kindergarten Academy in 2018, and by 2023 all buildings had undergone both physical construction and grade realignment.[1]

One of the elementary schools facilitates the education of a more unique and concentrated demographic than the others. That school is Upper Allen Elementary. At Upper Allen, there is currently a larger concentration of Somali immigrants, and Somali-American second generation children. This number is growing steadily. The Somali community is tight knit and more often than not live near one another. Due to this fact, they by and large attend Upper Allen.

The demographics at Upper Allen read as follows: 65.3% white, 24.8% black or African American, 3.7% Hispanic/Latino, 3.1% two or more races, 2.8% Asian or Asian/Pacific Islander, and .3% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. The *Enrollment by Diversity* chart is taken from *The US News and World Report.* [2] Interestingly, this demographic composition is not reflected in the district as a whole. MASD's numbers read differently. If we look at the district's comprehensive demographics, it is comprised of 74.4% white, 11.1% Black or African American, 6.8% Hispanic/Latino, 4.6% two or more races, 2.9% Asian or Asian Pacific Islander, .1% American Indian or Alaska Native, and .1% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. The *Student Diversity* chart below illustrates this composition.

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[1] Mechanicsburg Area School District, Mechanicsburg District Home. https://www.mbgsd.org/ (accessed 7/28/22).

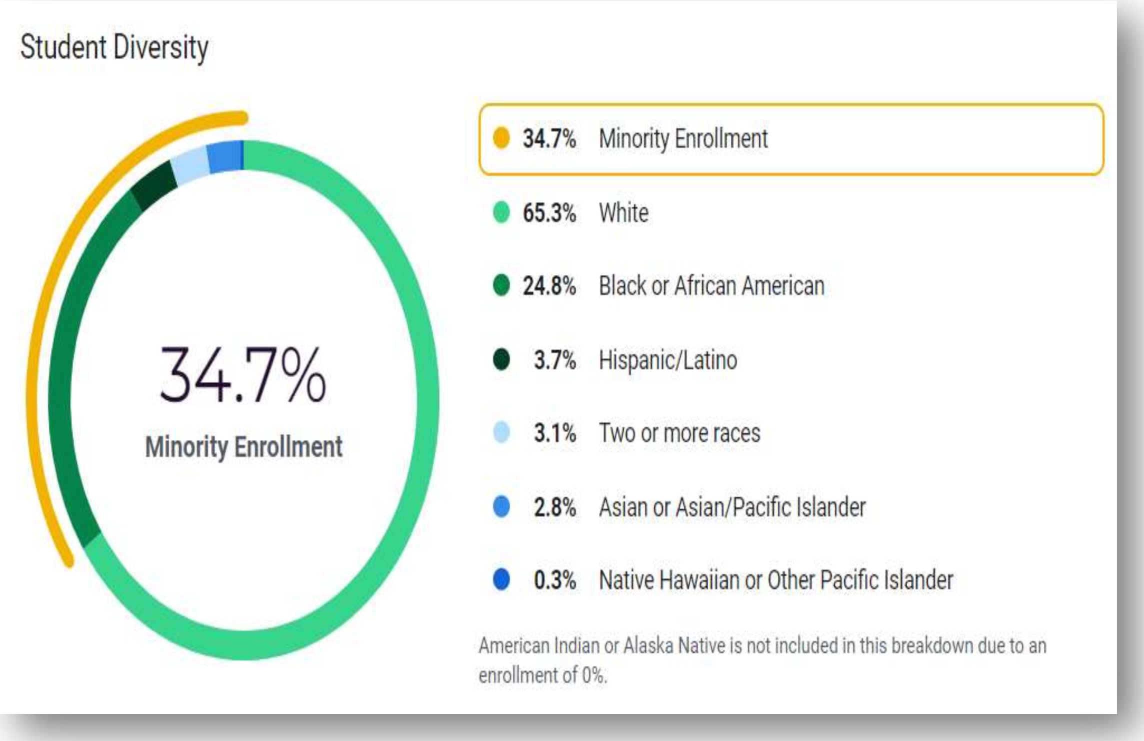

Figure 1.1: Student Diversity US News and World Report, 2023. https://www.usnews.com/education/k12/pennsylvania/upper-allen-elementary-school-280292

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[2] The US News and World Report; Education. https://www.usnews.com/education/k12/pennsylvania/upper-allen-elementary-school-280292#:~:text=The%20school's%20minority%20student%20enrollment,enrolls%2035%25%20economically%20disadvantaged%20students (accessed 7/25/22).

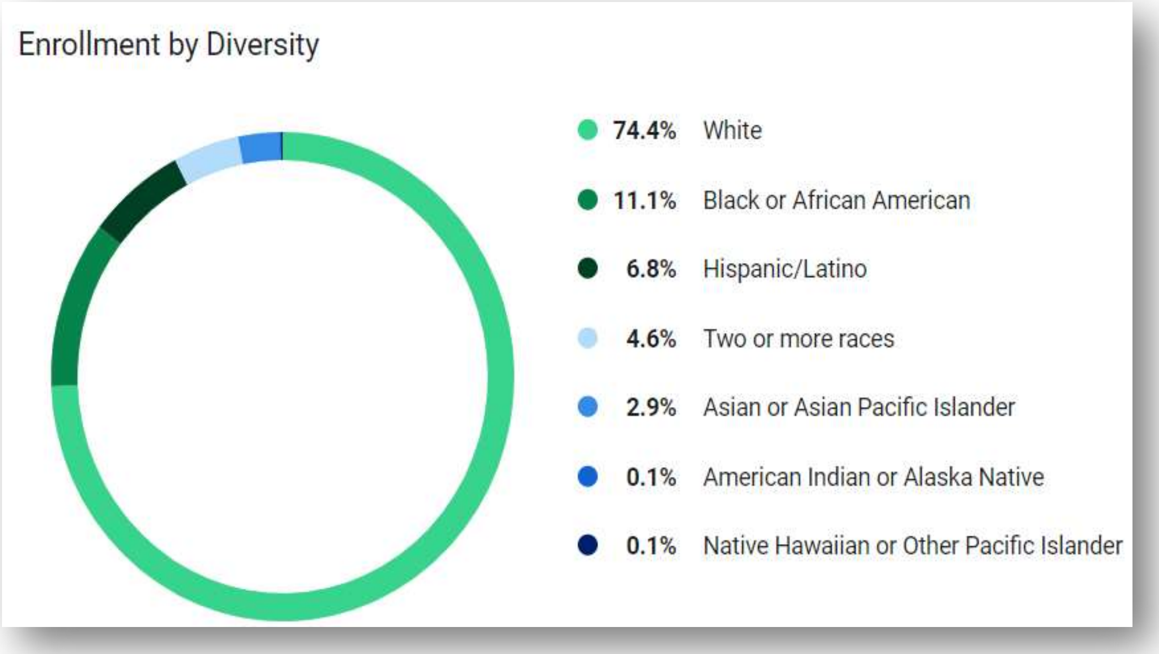

Figure 1.2: Enrollment by Diversity US News and World Report, 2023.
https://www.usnews.com/education/k12/pennsylvania/upper-allen-elementary-school-280292

It is difficult, however, to track the growth of the Somali demographic. This is in part because the census does not differentiate between black students based on culture. The other reason for this challenge is due to the restructuring of MASD. Comparing MASD (not Upper Allen) in 2006 and again in 2022 may show the most helpful data. The growth of the “Black or African American” demographic can be tracked at the district level. For example, in 2006, the black demographic made up 7% of the overall student body.[3] From 7% to the current 11.1% shows a gradual but steady progression.

Statement of Problem

The field of education is an ever-changing entity. While human nature has many commonalities that cross the cultural ecosystem, the space in the classroom presents an ever-changing student body. Each year new people with new backgrounds change the environment little by little. Education must continuously reinvent itself to meet the needs of those that comprise the student body. The needs of Mechanicsburg Area School District are truly a unique blend of identities. Nevertheless, there are minority groups within the larger student body that have cultural identities similar to other communities in the United States. Furthermore, they will continue to arise throughout the US in additional American public schools. One such minority group is that of the Somali culture. The problem of how best to educate Somali children in the American classroom must be assessed. Education must be cognizant of the Somali culture's tendency to view music as a thing that obtains moral power, yet must not fail to uphold American educational values.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this research is to investigate, document, and analyze the range and variability of Somali cultural expressions that present themselves in the elementary music classroom in Mechanicsburg Area School District. Additionally, this study will attempt to relate such cultural expressions to their conceptual counterparts. Information gleaned will contribute to the larger growing body of educational data that suggests success through knowledge and understanding of Somali identities as they surface in new contexts. The overarching qualitative nature of this research effort should be noted as detailing what *is* and *has been* in an effort to holistically understand what *could be* as it deals with the humanistic nature of individuals who are uniquely different but have similar evolving identities.

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[3] NY Times. US Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics. https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/projects/immigration/enrollment/pennsylvania/cumberland/mechanicsburg-area-sd (accessed 7/25/22).

Significance of Study

The importance of such findings can be beneficial to the students of Upper Allen Elementary and their parents. Understanding cultural expressions in the elementary general music classroom gen assist in the creation of best teaching and assessment practices. In the elementary years, the music curriculum is based on experience. Misconceptions due to differing cultural perspectives and definitions of commonly used terms (i.e. music) can yield uneasiness amongst those who would label themselves as outsiders. Additionally, the documentation of Somali folk music will not only fill out and diversify our MASD curriculum, but also assist in strengthening the role of the parent as a partner in education

The findings of this study can also be beneficial to the larger understanding of such encounters in education. Pennsylvania is not the first to stumble upon such challenges and it would not be the last. Diana Harris, Lois Ibsen Al Farqui, Kristen Izsak, George Farner, Ann E. Lucas, Hassan and Smith and others have written extensively on the topic from diverse viewpoints such as ethnomusicology, education, and psychology. Because of these diverse perspectives, we are then able to learn from one another and the payoff enhances the education of the student as well as future research.

Research Questions

Two research questions asked *What Somali student cultural expressions present themselves in the elementary general music classroom,* and *what influential concepts drive such expressions?* The first aimed to achieve collective educational strength through the compilation of observed cultural expressions in the elementary general music classroom. The second aimed to better understand what was driving those observed cultural expressions. This study hoped that by answering these research questions, music educators might be able to make informed teaching decisions that lead to more creative musical interactions and assessments.

Glossary of Terms

Agnatic Genealogy- relationship through male lineage.

Arab Words: Azfa- voice of the jinn (devil).

Asceticism- severe self-discipline; denial of indulgences.

Azzaf: instrumentalist.

Clan System- decent through common ancestor.

Cultural Expressions- behavioral manifestations of core cultural beliefs.

Concepts- "underlie the practice and performance of music, the production of music sound."[4]

Ghina- practice of music.

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[4] Merriam, 63.

Hadith- the sayings and commentary of Muhammad and his companions.

Halal- permissible in Islam.

Haram- forbidden in Islam.

Lahn- secular melody.

Mi’zaf: Harp-like instrument

Muuskio- the Somali word for music as of the 1940s.

Nashīd- an Islamic sacred genre that resembles a Western musical genre.

Quira’a - reading in Arabic.

Qurʾān- Islamic sacred book that guides Islam via the prophet Muhammad.

Qurʾānic Cantilation- the way in which the Qurʾān is recited.

Sama- listening to music.

Sufi Tradition- Islamic mysticism or asceticism.

Ta’bir- musical expression that functions in Islamic faith.

U dhashay- loyalty.

Summary

To continuously meet the needs of all students, Mechanicsburg Area School District must stay abreast of cultural concepts that affect the learning environment. Acculturation is a constant process that demands teaching practices not become stagnant. MASD music educators must continue moving forward in recognition of Somali concepts that influence the learning environment. Therefore, an investigation into the vast supply of possible Somali cultural expressions that might surface in the music classroom, as well as an analysis of those underlying concepts that act as a driving force is in demand. We must ask, *what cultural expressions exist, and what influential concepts, both Somali and non-Somali, drive these behaviors?* The Somali perception of music is likely charged with moral content. Cultural expressions witnessed in the classroom are likely influenced by factors such as acculturation, interpretation of Islamic texts, notions as to how one defines music and poetry, and social pressures from both Somali and American communities. The cultural expressions observed in the elementary general music classroom will only represent a myriad of driving forces and cannot on their own answer the research questions with any level of certainty. It is only after putting all information on the table that the full realm of possibilities can be analyzed, and music educators can prepare for any and all possible classroom encounters.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

The Somali American identity is dynamic and diverse, just as all identities are. A living, breathing entity, it gives tribute to its ancestors in Somalia and reaches forward alongside its new peers in the American classrooms, influenced by both. Music educators have seen cultural expressions in classroom activities that give testimony to both new and old cultural influences. Common understandings of the very subject matter at hand are not as common as one might think. Let us take a moment to better outline the Somali culture that feeds into the Somali American music class encounters.

Somalia and its Culture

Before discussing Somali immigrants, it would be wise to take a look at the geography, political climate, and cultural nature of the Somali homeland. Somalia, or the Horn of Africa, covers 637,657 km^2 and presents a population estimated at 15.89 million. Deserts, highlands, and mountains have demanded that its inhabitants establish an adaptable lifestyle. Traditionally, these people responded to these challenges by adopting a nomadic lifestyle, living off of livestock and agriculture. The official language is Somali; although the use of Arab, Italian and English can also be found. Adjacent countries have a much larger diversity of languages totaling 118 in East Africa. About 15% of the country is occupied by Bantu and non-Somalia ethnic groups.[5]

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[5] Peter Cooke, "East Africa: An Introduction," in *The Garland Handbook of African Music,* ed by Ruth M. Stone (NY: Garland publishing, 2000),

Somalia has endured much political turmoil in recent decades. Going back thirty years, we can observe the first major incentive for Somali immigration to the United States. "The Somali Democratic Republic collapsed in a revolution in 1991."[6] No replacement was established until 2012 when the current constitution was enacted. Here one finds "a parliamentarian system of government by establishing its structure with the president being the head of state and the prime minister as the head of government. It also establishes a bicameral legislature which consists of the Senate and the National Assembly of Somalia to create the Federal Parliament of Somalia."[7] In 1991, a civil war caused refugees to flee to Europe, the USA, and Canada.

Somalia is not only known as the *Horn of Africa,* but also called *A Nation of Poets,* and for good reason. The relationship between poetry and music exists somewhere on an artistic spectrum of expression. While poetry is not considered music, it is metric, has form, is accompanied by instrumental material, lyrics can be sung, and is even categorized by melodic genre. This may indicate a hierarchy descending from the textual content, which is not the case for music in the Western sense. More will be discussed regarding this topic in the section entitled "What Constitutes Music?"

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file:///C:/Users/acharland/Desktop/LU/Thesis%20Research/garland%20East%20Africa%20An%20Introcution.pdf (accessed 2/2/22).

[6] John William Johnson, "Somalia," in *Grove Music Online,* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press), file:///C:/Users/acharland/Desktop/LU/Thesis%20Research/Music%20and%20Poetry%20in%20Somalia.pdf (accessed 2/1/22).

[7] *Somalia: Government*, in *Global Edge: Your source for Global Business Knowledge.* https://globaledge.msu.edu/countries/somalia/government (accessed 1/20/22).

One cannot investigate the traditional culture of a place without asking about its music. *The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music* notes the use of sacred drums to summon divine intervention and trumpet ensembles were essential to the courts in East Africa. Even though there is much dispute over the permissibility of music in the Islamic faith, "Islamic prohibitions on musical practices, though important in some countries, have little effect in many parts of Africa."[8] It is possible that this is due to the philosophical school of belief practiced in Somalia. "In terms of the four schools of jurisprudence (fiqi), Somalis practiced the Shafi'i school. From the spiritual (Tasawuf) side, the Sufi tradition was dominant in Somalia for a long period of time."[9] The ruling on music, as directed by Imam Al-Nawawi in Minhaj at-Talibin reads, "Singing without musical accompaniment is makruh (disliked), as is listening to it. It is haram (unlawful) to use an instrument that is characteristic of those who consume intoxicants, such as the tunbur (an instrument resembling the mandolin), the 'ud (lute), the sanj (cymbal), the 'Iraqi mizmar (a type of flute), but not the yura'(flute)."[10] It seems that there is a leniency endorsed for those instruments that qualify as percussive in nature, and a dislike toward those associated with melodic content, associating them with negative social behaviors.

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[8] Peter Cooke, "East Africa: An Introduction." *The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music.* (accessed 2/2/22), 598 File:///C:Users/ acharland/Desktop/LU/Thesis%20Research/garland%20East%20Africa%20An%20Introcution.pdf

[9] Afayre Abdi Elmi, "Making Sense of Islam and Islamic Awakening in Somalia," in *Understanding the Somalia Conflagration: Identity, Political Islam and Peacebuilding,* (London, England: Pluto Press, 2010), 50.

[10] Shaykh Irshaad Sedick, "What is the Shafi'i Ruling on Listening to Music and Singing," *Seekers Guidance, the Global Islamic Academy.* https://seekersguidance.org/answers/shafii-fiqh/what-is-the-shafii-ruling-on-listening-to-music-and-singing/ (accessed 6/28/2023).

All of this is to say that the word music is not even a Somali word. “The Somali word for music, muusiko, is a loan-word from the English, Italian and French colonial languages, reflecting the primary use of music prior to the 1940s as accompaniment to the poetic performance.”[11] The understanding of music traditionally has something to do with its function and role in poetry.

Somali society is constructed of communities that are made up of Somali families united through agnatic genealogy, a lineage traced through the patrilineal line. *U dhashay,* means loyalty, and is expressed through agnatic genealogy in the clan system. Elders within the clan are those of authority and status and they are regarded with respect. Elders are specifically needed to assist with decision-making and mediation. Loyalty can change at the drop of a hat, however. This can be exemplified by the following proverb: “Me and my nation against the world. Me and my clan against my nation. Me and my family against the clan. Me and my brother against the family. Me against my brother.”[12]

In addition to a patriarchal lineage, nearly all of Somalia practices Islam. Islam ardently accompanies those who practice it in new contexts and it is realized in new environments. Within the practice of Islam, the permissibility of music is fervently debated. The consequences of such underlying religious concepts are reflected in the actions of Muslims. For instance, there are those who believe music to be innately *haram* (unlawful), and there are those that believe it to be

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[11] Johnson, 2.

[12] “Cultural Atlas: Somali Culture.” https://culturalatlas.sbs.com.au/somali-culture/somali-culture-core-concepts (accessed 1/20/22).

halal (permissible) so long as the content of the music does not lead to sinful behavior. Some believe they are only forbidden from singing any faith-based music other than that which is Islamic. Others see all music as haram, but discount Qurʾānic recitation as music at all.

Immigrant Culture

It might be wise to look to previously established Somali immigrant communities throughout the US. *World Population Review* organizes such information and claims that Minnesota has the largest Somali population in the US, followed by Ohio, Washington, Virginia, Georgia, and finally Maine.[13] Of course, other sizable populations exist elsewhere in the country, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Alaska, to name a few. When evaluating the experiences of these populations, we find certain topics that can be seen through the lens of that which distinguishes Somalis from the context in which they live, and that which integrates them.

When investigating the former, there is no greater defining Somali trait than that of religion. Nearly all of Somalia identifies as Muslim, and they carry this identifier with them to all new contexts. *The Somali Diaspora: A Journey Away,* contains a chapter that empathetically describes the immigrant Muslim's desire to maintain an "identity inside a cultural context."[14] This is an important perspective to acknowledge. The book goes on to list the five pillars of Islam that represent the Muslim identity. These include "a belief in Allah and Muhammad as his prophet, prayer, charity, fasting during Ramadan, and, finally, a responsibility to make the pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in one's life if one can afford the journey."[15] Being aware of these pillars can enlighten the classroom culture. Knowledge of when Ramadan is celebrated, and prayer times during the day, are a just a few possible underlying concepts that may or may not drive classroom cultural expressions.

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[13] "World Population Review." https://worldpopulationreview.com/state-rankings/somali-population-by-state (accessed 6/1/2023).

[14] Abdi Roble, and Doug Rutledge, *The Somali Diaspora in America* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minneapolis Press, 2008) in *The Somali Diaspora: A Journey Away*, file:///C:/Users/acharland/Desktop/LU/Thesis%20Research/The%20Somali%20Diaspora%20in%20America.pdf (accessed 2/7/22).

Interestingly, the book also notes those cultural components that integrate the Somali people in their new contexts. Three general Somali core cultural values include living a hospitable life, predisposition toward entrepreneurship, and community support. These are most certainly compatible with traditional Americans values. Three particular American values come to mind. Individualism and equality as two sides of the same coin, freedom, and opportunity are reflected in the Declaration of Independence. The document reads, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."[16]

Somalis + Minnesota, from the *Minnesota History,* also seeks to describe cultural values among Somali immigrants that distinguish and/or integrate. Through various interviews, participants reveal that culture expressed through folk song, and cooking passed from generation to generation were the life rafts that yielded success and brought comfort in a new land. While the specific cultural content might have set the Somali interviewees apart, the article claims they do not see themselves as very different from Americans. They are concerned with raising their families, value hard work, and desire to maintain a sense of freedom. One particular Somali immigrant shared the cultural values passed on to her from her mother such as cooking, and singing folk songs. These were the things that gave her comfort in a new land. Similar to Americans, Somali immigrants desire to raise a generation with better situations than their own.[17]

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[15] Roble, and Rutledge, 2.

[16] Thomas Jefferson, *Declaration of Independence*, retrieved from https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript (accessed on 6/5/2023).

In Lewiston, Maine, where the highest per capita concentration of Somalis exists in the country, a sudden growth took place at the turn of the century. In the article, *Intervention I: Neighbors,* Somali immigrants relocated here looking for a community that maintained "a low cost of living and crime rate, …a community which is tolerant of religious diversity, …good schools, generous welfare benefits, and as time passes, the presence of a substantial Somali community."[18] In this instance, the immigrants sought after many of the same living standards that any American would want. Unfortunately, real concerns arose out of this drastic demographic change. Tensions arose out of an unequal dispersal of social services. The article noted no evidence of xenophobia or racism, but rather a true concern over the long term health of the city while trying to accommodate the increased financial burden. These situations are worth noting and learning from as they will lend themselves toward additional reasons that Somali immigrants might distinguish themselves or feel set apart rather than integrate with society.

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[17] Hamse Warfa, Kofiro Ali, Abdulle Harbon, Ahmed Zuhur, Ahmed Osman, Ahmed Abdirahman, and Hassan Saida, "Somalis + Minnesota," *Minnesota History,* 66, no. 1 (Spring 2018): 20, file:///C:/Users/acharland/Desktop/LU/Thesis%20Research/Somalis%20and%20Minnesota.pdf (accessed 2/8/22).

[18] Andrea Voyer, "Intervention I: Neighbors," *CrossCurrents,* 67, no. 3 (September 2017): 537, https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26605831 (accessed 6/1/2023).

The hope for a better life is a common driving force for immigrants from all over the world. What makes the Somali culture unique is the degree to which identity is established via religion. Even so, second generation Muslims often "identify less strongly with their ethnic and religious group and engage less in ethno-cultural and religious practices."[19] This is not surprising, and might explain why so many families retreat to Africa after a relatively short time in the US. Often, parents wish for their children to spend more time studying the Qurʾān and be connected to Islamic practices not just at home but in society.

Is Music *Haram* or *Halal*

There is much discrepancy over the nature of music in Islam. Some believe it to be *haram* (unlawful), and others *halal* (lawful). Ahmed Shahab's, *What is Islam,* discusses the challenge that is conceptualizing Islam noting, "the sheer diversity of- that is, range of differences between- those societies, persons, ideas, and practices that identify themselves with *Islam.*"[20] There are three possible reasons for the degree to which individuals may identify with the moral charge that occupies music in Islam. The first concern is the sheer range and diversity of what constitutes music is vast. A second consideration is the interpretational differences of

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[19] Mieke Maliepaard, Marcel Lubbers & Merove Gijsberts, "Generational Differences in Ethnic and Religious Attachment and Their Interrelation: A Study Among Muslim Minorities in the Netherlands*," Ethnic and Racial Studies.* 33, no 3 (Oct 2009) 466, http://doi.org/10.1080/01419870903318169 (accessed 7/29/22).

[20] Ahmed Shahab, "Six Questions About Islam," in *What is Islam?: The Importance of Being Islamic*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvc77krt (accessed 1/20/22) p 6.

Islamic texts that lead to the moral character of music, the practice of music, and the act of listening to music. Finally, the generational deviations amongst families due to diaspora that lend themselves to dissipate or water down what were once clear cultural understandings of music. A thorough investigation is warranted and can yield an awareness of possible perspectives that arise in the classroom, but may also leave one dissatisfied with the vast realm of inconclusiveness. Such is appropriate for the field of education which is, after all, a limitless search for superior solutions to the education of an ever-changing student body.

What Constitutes Music

Three areas of consideration must be addressed when deliberating the concept of music in Somalia and to Somalis. Firstly, because the entirety of Somalia practices Islam, the religious beliefs and practices of Islam are influential factors. Second, traditional Somali culture addresses music (in the Western sense) as a functional aspect of the poetic art form. Finally, the borrowed linguistic term *muusiko* that was mentioned earlier indicates a lack of necessity for such a term based on traditional concepts of music.

Let us first dive into the relationship between faith and music. Author Amnon Shiloah addresses the many concepts that aid the Western eye in perceiving music a little differently. In his article *Music and Religion in Islam,* he illustrates the wary Muslim's take on the permissibility of music from the commencement of his commentary. He begins by defining two necessary terms that surround a western notion of music. *Sama* is defined as "listening or audition and by extension, the music listened to; it also includes dance as practiced mainly by many mystic confraternities," and *ghina* as "music, music making and performance, associated mainly with secular art music."[21] It is important to note that ghina, which takes on a more participatory sense, is often associated with what Shiloah calls *urbanized art music*. This genre might be more quickly deemed haram, possibly due to behavioral connotations. In making this association, a natural response is for one to consider those types of music that are oppositional to ghina (Qurʾānic cantillation and functional song) as halal (permissible). He then states the following, "In other words, they consider all these forms as *non-music* [Qurʾān cantillation, folk tunes, old Bedouin songs], contrasting with ghina- the sole genera to which the appellation music is applied."[22]

At this point, one might ask, *why might a song be deemed music while another non-music when they both contain the same properties?* The only possible differences appear to be function, or lyrical content. Henry George Farmer delves into this line of logic in his article entitled "The Religious Music of Islam." He writes of the textual associations that run historically deep. "In pagan Arabia the jinn and spirit world could be conjured by music, and even in Abbasid times such famous musicians as Ibrahim al-Mausili of Bagdad and Ziryab of Cordova claimed to derive some of their music from the jinn and even shaitan himself."[23] When the spiritual world is joined with music, the results have a strong connotation. Consider the word *azf*, meaning *voice of the jinn*. The word for a harp-like instrument is mi'zaf. It is understandable that one might feel uncomfortable about the idea of stringed instruments. Even on a more large scale, the Arabic word for an instrumentalist is *azzaf*.[24] It is difficult to deny the strong and dark linguistic associations with music, and by the dawn of Islam a predisposition toward musical disapproval had already been established.

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[21] Amnon Shiloah, "Music and Religion in Islam," *Acta Musicologica* 69, no. 2 (July-Dec 1997): 143.

[22] Shiloah, "Music and Religion in Islam," 143.

[23] George Henry Farmer, "The Religious Music of Islam," *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Grea t Britain and Ireland,* No. 1/2 (April 1952), https://www.jstor.org/stable/25222545 (accessed 2/8/22) 61.

Gradually, however, Islam began to adopt the view that music had power that could be used for good. Farmer uses the term *ta'bir* to mean musical expression that functions in the Islamic faith.[25] This *ta'bir* comes to fruition in the chanting of the Qurʾānic texts, the cantillation of the call to prayer, and other instances in the mosque. Farmer goes on, however, to address the near conspiracy of the issue. He states that "the word for *reading* in Arabic is *qira'a,* a label which served to lift this cantillation out of any suspicion that it was *singing* (*ghina*)." He continues explore the historical necessity of the faith to distinguish between religious and secular melody (*lahn*). This explains an inclination within the faith to label religious music as non-music.

Even though there is a strong disposition toward labeling music as having moral content, there are other cultural factors that lead Somalis to perceive music differently. As mentioned earlier, poetry is often accompanied by sound that qualifies as a Western notion of music. Interestingly, a relationship exists between the textual content of the poetry and the family of melodies that go with it. Scansion, or the act of scanning the poetry for natural linguistic rhythm, also bonds music and text. Here, the music is assigned strong meaning. The *Garland*

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[24] Farmer, 61.

[25] Farmer, "The Religious Music of Islam," 62.

Encyclopedia of Music weighs in on the idea of genres of poems stating, "The domestic classification of the forms of Somali oral performance rests on a combination of structures, only one of which relates to music. To differentiate one genre from another, four criteria- scansion, melody, topic, function- act in concert."[26] This complex classification of genres may deal with very musical concepts, but it is difficult to say for certain whether or not a Somali might think of poetry as music at all. The *Garland* goes on to share three classes of genres: classical poetry, work songs, and dance songs. Each of these is seen as a genre classified within the larger context of poetry, not music. So even though the genre of poetry is often given a title inclusive of the word song, it is not perceived as music. Therefore, the notion of function might have something to do with the classification of the art itself.[27]

Lastly, the lack of a word for music prior to the 1940s, indicates that there was no historic use of anything comparable to the Western concept of music. As one might imagine, there was no genre classification within the concept of music, however there was an extensive one within the concept of poetry. In fact, over 30 genres of poetry existed and they were associated with melodic groupings. The melodies within a grouping could be improvised upon to meet the needs of the poem.[28] So while the music functioned to serve the poem, it still obtained the qualities of what a Westerner would call music.

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[26] John William Johnson, *Music and Poetry in Somalia* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press: 1997), in *Grove Music Online* https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Creference_article%7C1000224684 (accessed 2/1/22).[double check this; I'm not sure Turabian requires the access date anymore.]

[27] Johnson, *Music and Poetry in Somalia.*

[28] Johnson, 2. [Ibid., 2]

Interpreting the Texts

Islam prioritizes two sources that feed its faith directives. The first, and most revered source, is that of the Qurʾān. It was given to the people of Islam through the prophet Muhammad. The second source, is a vast collection of news and reports on the Qurʾān. This collection is called hadith. These are the thoughts of Muhammad and his close companions as to the meanings of various passages from the Qurʾān. Some hadith are said to be more reliable than others. Neither the hadith nor the Qurʾān are thought to be conclusive as to the permissibility of music in the lives of Muslims.

A deeper look at the Qurʾān as a source of wisdom on the issue of culture is in call. The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music lays out a foundational understanding of the relationship between Qurʾān and music.

> For Muslims, the explanation of this power lies in the divine source and significance of the sound. The Qur'ān, the generating source of and ultimate authority within Islam…. represents in some sense the sound of a divine utterance, the sound of God. The Prophet transmitted the revelation to his followers orally, and it was not written down until after his death, at which point the oral text became the primary source for all subsequent written texts."[29]

This understanding deals with the essence of music, not its associations. Here, Islam is handling the innate moral status of music, rather than those behaviors that accompany it.

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[29] Virginia Danielson, Scott Marcus, and Dwight Reynolds, eds. *The Qur'ān Recited* (Abington: Routledge, 2001) in *Garland Encyclopedia of World Music Volume 6 - The Middle East*, https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Creference_article%7C1000228944 (accessed 1/20/22).

Music, however, is never directly mentioned anywhere in the Qurʾān. Just like many other religious texts, the Qurʾān is subject to individual interpretation. That being said, verse 6 of the book of Luqman is commonly quoted as the verse that causes interpretational discrepancies.

It reads,

> And of mankind is he who purchases idle talks (i.e. music, singing, etc.) to mislead (men) from the Path of Allah without knowledge, and takes it (the Path of Allah, the Verses of the Qurʾān) by way of mockery. For such there will be a humiliating torment (in the Hell-fire).[30]

While this textual guidance does not specifically denounce music, there are those that interpret *idle talks* in such a way.

Idle talks are mentioned again in the third verse in the book of Al-Muminūn Surah. This verse reads, "Prosperous are the believers, who in their prayers are humble, and from idle talk turn away".[31] The Oxford Languages Dictionary shares the following definitions for the word *idle*: "(of a person) avoiding work; lazy," "without purpose or effect; pointless," and "Addicted to doing no work; lazy, indolent, idle bellies, indolent sluggards or gluttons.[32] Clearly the word idle has some negative connotations.

Idle, however, is not the only concern that arises in the Qurʾān that is interpreted as against music. Another verse is often cited as alluding to the haram status of music and can be found in Surah 17:63-64. It reads: (Allah) "Go thy way; if any of them follow thee, verily Hell will be the recompense of you- an ample recompense. Lead to destruction those whom thou canst among them, with thy (seductive) voice."[33]

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[30] *Qurʾān* 31:06.

[31] *Qurʾān* 23:1-11.

[32] The Oxford Languages Dictionary Online, s.v. "Idle Talks," accessed November 8, 2023, https://www.oed.com/search/dictionary/?scope=Entries&q=idle

A final example can be found in Al-Isra: 64-65. Here, we find music is described as having sinful moral power that come from Satan.

> "Persuade whoever you can among them with your enchanting voice, win them over with your soldiers on horseback and on foot, share in their wealth and children and make promises; the promises of the Satan are only deceptions. But you will have no power and influence over my true servants, Your Lord will be their true Guardian".[34]

This verse pits the power of the voice, here interpreted as singing voice, against that of the Lords *true* servants.

The second source(s) of consideration is that of the hadith. These come secondary to the Qurʾān but attempt to better explain it. Hadith often associate music with various undesirable behaviors and portray it as having the potential to act as a vehicle for sinful behaviors. Yusuf al-Qaradawi, in his book *The Lawful and the Prohibited*, shares his opinion that song is not haram unless

> …the subject matter of songs is *against the teachings of Islam*, such as praising wine; the *manner* of singing is haram, such as *being accompanied by suggestive sexual movement*; it leads to *excessive involvement with entertainment*, such as wasting time that ought to be spent on religion; if it *arouses one's passions, leads him towards sin, excites the animal instincts, and dulls spirituality;* if it is done *in conjunction with haram activities – for example, at a drinking party*.[35]

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[33] Surah 17:63-64.

[34] The Qurʾān, Al-Isra: 64-65

[35] Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *Singing and Music in Islam,* (Oak Brook, IL: American Trust Publications, 1999), 299.

It is this association that promotes a tendency toward "attributing to musical activities the characteristics of non-musical activities."[36] Lois al Farqui writes about this in her article, *Music, Musicians and Muslim Law.* In defense of music-making she says, "Where the great thinkers of Islamic law have addressed themselves to the restriction and guidance of musical activities, they have never used the word haram without reference to association with (or qualification by) specific disapproved behavior."[37] It is quite telling that music has never been branded as haram. Yet there are confusing passages that seem to imply haram by association with other activities.

An example of such a hadith can be found in Volume 7 Book 69 Number 494v of the al-Bukhari collection. This particular collection is considered by many to be the most reliable. It reads as follows:

> From among my followers there will be some people who will consider illegal sexual intercourse, the wearing of silk, the drinking of alcoholic drinks and the use of musical instruments, as lawful. And there will be some people who will stay near the side of a mountain and in the evening their shepherd will come to them with their sheep and ask them for something, but they will say to him, 'Return to us tomorrow.' Allah will destroy them during the night and will let the mountain fall on them, and He will transform the rest of them into monkeys and pigs and they will remain so till the Day of Resurrection.[38]

Sahih Bukhari 2:15:70 also refers to singing in a less than desirable fashion. It draws a picture of war (the Day of Buath) on the day of the Id (festival) all while mentioning singing girls. It reads:

> Abu Bakr came to my house while two small Ansari girls were singing beside me the stories of the Ansar concerning the Day of Buath. And they were not singers. Abu Bakr said protesting, "Musical instruments of Satan in the house of Allah's Apostle!" It

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[36] Lois Isben al-Farqui, "Music Musicians and Muslim Law," *Asian Music* 17, no. 1 (Autumn-Winter 1985): 5 https://doi.org/10.2307/833739 (accessed 1/18/22).

[37] Farqui, "Music Musicians and Muslim Law," 5.

[38] Shahi al-Bukhari's Ahadith Collection.

> happened on the 'Id day and Allah's Apostle said, "O Abu Bakr! There is an 'Id for every nation and this is our 'Id.[39]

Also from Sahih Bukhari, verse 2.70:

> Allah's Messenger (saws) came to my house while two small girls were singing beside me the songs of Buath (a story about the war between the two tribes of the Ansar, the Khazraj and the Aus, before Islam). The Prophet (saws) lay down and turned his face to the other side. Then Abu Bakr came and spoke to me harshly saying, "Musical instruments of the Shaytaan near the Prophet (saws)?" Allah's Messenger (saws) turned his face towards him and said, "Leave them." When Abu Bakr became inattentive, I signaled to those girls to go out and they left.

One has to wonder if the Qurʾān and Sunnah ever encourage music. In Graeco-Arabic texts, the practice of *sama* (listening in a spiritual manner) began to develop. "Spiritual listening provided mechanisms to know the truth of Islam without direct knowledge of Arabic or the Qurʾān."[40] This was a sizable contributing factor to the spread of Islam beyond the Arabic world. Interestingly, and contrary to some conceptions on the matter, "the ability to perceive the divine directly via sound- be it the spoken word, metered chanting, or full musical expression- held a special place in conceptions of Islamic spiritual life before the rise of the twelve-maqam system (Arabic tuning system)."[41]

Although there are others condemning the practice of music-making, there are also those that support it. Imam Malik of Madinah writes, "He did not prohibit singing in general, but only singing that involves wickedness."[42] The indication here is not that the singing itself is wicked, but the activities surrounding it might be.

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[39] Sahih Bukhari 2:15:70

[40] Ann E. Lucas, "Music of a Thousand Years: A New History of Persian Musical Traditions," (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2019): 65, https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv1f884pp.11 (accessed 1/18/22).

[41] Lucas, 66.

Since the Qurʾān is considered to be divinely inspired, it is to be revered as the ultimate resource. Hadiths might shed light on subject matters and concerns but would never override the Qurʾān. In dealing with the vast diversity within the religion of Islam, we are faced with the following statement, "Islam' could perhaps fairly readily be understood if only it had not existed in such abundant actuality, at differing times and in differing areas, in the minds and hearts of differing persons, in the institutions and forms of differing societies, in the evolving of different stages."[43] With such application of faith in new and ever-changing contexts, Islam has been and will continue to be expressed in a multitude of ways.

By and large a specific answer is not to be found, but rather the encouragement of the activity will be consistently absent in Muslim circles. In any case, there is a sort of respect found in the fear of music-making, a respect for its power. Where other faiths may uphold the power of music to bring one closer to God, Islam upholds the power of music as a vehicle for spiritual distraction and downfall. Ann E. Lucas writes on the morality of music stating, "Islam as a whole was not morally adverse to music. It did, however, need to consider the implications of music's power in the universe. There were legitimate reasons to be wary of music's cosmic power, when considering the fallibility of humanity rather than the perfection of systemic musical structure." This systemic music structure, the early twelve-maqam system, was seen as having a perfection that was super-human and therefore to be dealt with carefully.

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[42] Lucas, 13.

[43] Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion*, (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1991), 145.

Diaspora

The dispersion of an ethnic group beyond their homeland is often the reason for some of America's greatest cultural gifts. The sharing of foods, music, and faith are what allows each generation a vehicle with witch to express an identity unique from that of the preceding one. Diaspora can also be cause for concern amongst people that come in contact with foreign customs and traditions. These concerns can either strengthen a population rift, or diminish divisions between groups. Because of these occurrences, expressing one's cultural identity in a new context actually looks different than that of the former context. This expression changes over time as acculturation, or the "process in which an individual or group adapts to a different cultural system,"[44] takes effect contextually. The Somali population in America has underwent some of these same challenges. Manifestations of a former cultural identity in a new context lead to the cultural expressions we see in the music classroom.

Acculturation can be approached from two different angles. On the one hand, we might assess the ways in which the group has effectively changed their surroundings to meet their needs. On the other hand, we might assess the ways in which the new context has changed the immigrant population. In reality, both happen to a degree. When considering the first angle, we note that in an act of survival, an innovative immigrant will creatively meet his needs by altering his surroundings. In the book, *Somalis in the Twin Cities and Columbus,* author Stephani

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[44] David Matsumoto, and Linda Juang, *Culture and Psychology,* (Belmont: Thomson Wadsworth: 2008).

Chambers gives indication to this alteration of one's context. "Religious diversification often goes hand in hand with the arrival of new immigrant groups. While Somalis found it difficult at first to practice their faith in an area that was not predominantly Islamic, they have opened businesses and organizations that align with their religious preferences."[45] Later, the article discusses how "Somalis run at least ten charter schools, and other charter schools operating in the Twin Cities incorporate Islamic-friendly themes."[46] This demonstrates a desire amongst Somalis to thrive in new contexts, and a desire to meet their children's needs. Since Minnesota is the birth place of charter schools, it is likely this means of education had something to do with a successful thriving immigrant community.

An additional example demonstrates that Somalis are able to create the structures that enhance and support their Muslim identities in new contexts. *Somali Migration to the US: Understanding Adaptation through Digital Stories* categorizes narrative stories into three groups-progressive, stable and regressive stories. Findings showed that those who embodied a positive outlook were able create their own success. This may have been due to past experiences. There was however a difference in response due to age of the participants. "The difference between emerging adults' stories, reflecting a struggle to find self-continuity across time and place, and the older adults' stories, indicating attempts to find meaning and optimally adapt to each of their current situations."[47] Put more simply, an abundance of life experiences has given some individuals a positive outlook.

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[45] Stephanie Chambers, *Twin Cities: Somalis in the North Star State*, (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2017), in *Somalis in the Twin Cities and Columbus,* file:///C:/Users/acharland/Desktop/LU/Thesis%20Research/The%20Twin%20Cities%20Somalis%20in%20the%20North%20Star%20State.pdf (accessed 2/17/22).

[46] Chambers, 82.

It is also true that the new contexts act on the contrary and work to alter Muslim identities. An article entitled *Generational Differences in Ethnic and Religious Attachment and their Interrelation,* compared first and second generation's degree of religious and ethnic identities. Findings suggested that second generation Muslims "identify less strongly with their ethnic and religious group and engage less in ethno-cultural and religious practices."[48]

The acculturation experiences of the Somali immigrant can be approached from yet a third angle- the Westerner's categorization of the immigrant. "The context of reception, which includes how an immigrant group is classified racially, shapes their experiences in the United States."[49] In the article, *The Impact of Intersecting Dimensions of Inequality and Identity on the Racial Status of Eastern African Immigrants,* investigates four ways in which the experience of a black immigrant from East Africa might vary dynamically from that of a Caribbean immigrant. Firstly, East African immigrants did not truly move to the United States of their own accord, but rather were motivated by fear of persecution and political violence in the homeland. Secondly, the homeland categorized its own East African peoples based on clan, and religious and ethnic groupings, rather than as a slave society. Thirdly, settlement communities chosen by East African immigrants were often cities and suburbs with little to no experience incorporating non-white immigrants with such differing cultural experiences. Lastly, East African immigrants practice Islam, not Christianity. These four differences may distinguish this particular group of immigrants in a way that leads to a different reception of immigrants of the same race.

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[47] Moin Syed, Jillian Fish, Jill Hicks, Ummul Kathawalla, and Erika Lee, "Somali Migration to the US: Understanding Adaptation through Digital Stories, Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psycology," (Aug 2020): 14, file:///C:/Users/acharland/Downloads/Syed,etal_SomaliStories_CDEMP_Accepted_082520.pdf (accessed on 7/29/22).

[48] Mieke Maliepaard, Marcel Lubbers & Mérove Gijsberts, "Generational Differences in Ethnic and Religious Attachment and Their Interrelation: A study among Muslim minorities in the Netherlands," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 33, no 3: 451-472, https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870903318169 (accessed 7/29/22).

[49] Katja M. Guenther, "The Impact of Intersecting Dimensions of Inequality and Identity on the Racial Status of Eastern African Immigrants," *Sociological Forum* 26, no. 1 (2011): 100, http://www.jstor.org/stable23027283 (accessed June 17, 2023).

With each generation being exposed to a greater level of cultural diversity as well as religious diversity, changes are bound to happen. In new contexts, both immigrants and natives grow from their new exposure to cultural differences. The question remains, how do music educators respond to these cultural exchanges?

Immigrant Communities, Acculturation, and Education

"The relationship between Islam and music is complex and susceptible to misunderstandings, misconceptions and confusion regarding how to address matters relating to Islamic beliefs in public school music classrooms."[50] Young children often have trouble expressing the wishes and concerns of their parents, in addition to the struggles that come with understanding something as abstract as one's faith. Expressing such beliefs can look like a refusal to participate at a specific time of year (namely Ramadan), or refusal to participate in a type of music (possibly Christmas). It could even look like nothing at all.

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[50] Kristin Izsak, "Music Education and Islam: Perspectives on Muslim Participation in Music Education in Ontario," *Canadian Music Educator* (Spring 2013): 38, file:///C:/Users/acharland/Desktop/LU/Thesis%20Research/Music%20Education%20and%20Islam.pdf (accessed 2/17/22).

We can look to, and learn from, various parts of the US where Somalis have relocated to see examples of acculturation in education. Minneapolis, MN and Columbus, OH are the two largest Somali immigrant and refugee communities in the US.[51] In a study conducted at a high school in Ohio, the researcher investigated the effects of the Somali community perceptions of music on participation in chorus. She found that an individual's decision to participate was a "balancing of many factors including personal interest, religious values, cultural community acceptance, and cultural community response."[52]

Diana Harris wrote "A Report on the Situation Regarding Teaching Muslims in an Inner-City School" in which she explored the "difficulties teaching music to Muslims in their classes."[53] In this report, she discusses the issue from various perspectives. She arrived four main conclusions. Firstly, there was a sense of embarrassment associated with musical participation within the Muslim community. Second, Muslim parents saw no value in encouraging musical participation since their children would not be permitted to continue on to a livelihood as a professional musician. Third, the act of making music clashed with that of reciting the Qurʾān "because it has a sound system of its own which doesn't mix with other types of music."[54]

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[51] Qorsho Hassan, and Ruth M. Smith, *Community In-between*. (Columbus, OH: Trillium, The Ohio State University Press 2017).

[52] Meredith E. Smith, "Somali American Music Participation in Secondary Public School Music Programs: Perceptions of Parents, Community Members, and a Cultural Liaison," *Dissertation Graduate School of the Ohio State University* (2021):127. file:///C:/Users/acharland/Desktop/LU/Thesis%20Research/Research%20Articles/Music%20Education%20and%20Islam/Final%20Dissertation%20Meredith%20E%20Smith%202021.pdf

[53] Diana Harris, "A Report on the Situation Regarding Teaching Music to Muslims in an inner-city school," *British Journal of Music Education*, 19, no. 1 (2002) doi:10.1017/S026505170200013X (accessed 2/17/22).

[54] Harris, 54.

Lastly, Harris concluded that there was ultimately a surprising number of "influential Muslims who would like to see music in schools and in their community" but also that were "experiencing difficult situations in their music classrooms," possibly due to concerns about what this looked like in the larger social Islamic space.

Kristen Izsak writes of her educational experiences in Ontario, and in doing so highlights a few clarifications for music educators. Firstly, she notes that a communicating a definition of music must be communicated between educators and those that practice Islam. Second, she explains the nature of Islam to broadly categorize both secular and religious music as one. Third, she explains the impossible nature of extracting clear directives from the Qurʾān as to whether or not music is permissible. Izsak broadly concludes that "it is impossible to extract an absolute Islamic stance on participation in music from the Qurʾān."[55]

Retention in secondary chorus motivated a recent research study through the University of Ohio. Meredith E. Smith desired to find out more about how a choral director might go about encouraging participation in her choirs while working with a sizable Somali population. She found that perception of the music program in public schools had something to do with an older student's desire to commit to chorus. "Participants consistently identified school music as Western, patriotic, possibly Christian based, and a place for expression. Perceptions of the public school system's music programs were more favorable from participants of a younger age that sought participation in school music programs as students themselves."[56]

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[55] Kristen Izsak, "Music Education and Islam: Perspectives on Muslim Participation in Music Education Ontario," *Canadian Music Educator* (Spring 2013), file:///C:/Users/acharland/Desktop/LU/Thesis%20Research/Music%20Education%20and%20Islam.pdf (accessed 2/17/22).

Summary

Islam is not conclusive with its directions on the permissibility of music. With all of the textual evidence demonstrating potential for interpretational divergences it is no wonder that different regions of the world experiencing Somali diaspora are experiencing different challenges in the music room. In addition, the geographic understanding of poetry and its relationship to what a Westerner would call music exists on a spectrum of artistic expression. It is no wonder there is a range of participation in the elementary classroom. As for the case in central Pennsylvania, it has, on the one hand, been fortunate that the current curriculum has not been disrupted, but on the other hand one must ask why? If music is so hotly debated in other regions of the world, why not in PA? Is it possible that the type of Somali families that are willing to raise Muslim children in a new context are also willing to be flexible in this way? Or is it possible that they simply wish to address the issue when their children are older? Or are the Kodaly-inspired activities truly halal in the eyes of these children and their parents? More investigation is needed on the issue. The above sources are not conclusive but demonstrate the realm of possibilities that might prepare the educator for a number of cultural expressions in the elementary general music class.

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[56] Meredith E. Smith, "Somali American Music Participation in Secondary Public School Music Programs: Perceptions of Parents, Community Members, and a Cultural Liaison," *Dissertation: The Ohio State University*, 2021.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Introduction

Research questions inquired as to *what Somali student cultural expressions present themselves in the elementary general music classroom* and *what influential concepts drive these expressions?* The key words *cultural expressions* can be defined as behavioral manifestations of core cultural beliefs. These cultural expressions have not been considered for their positive or negative attributes in the music class, but rather have been taken at face value. The other key word to consider is that of *concepts.* Concepts "underlie the practice and performance of music, the production of music sound."[57] The two cannot be divorced from one another. The relationship between a behavior and an underlying concept is of great value to the music educator.

Given the interest in the relationship between cultural expressions and underlying concepts, two tools of methodology were selected for research. The first was a collection of narratives submitted by educators from across the country who have worked with Somali populations. These were collectively used to identify the most common cultural expressions one might witness in a music class. The second tool was an anonymous survey sent out to the Somali population in Mechanicsburg Area School District. This survey offered a means of anonymous opportunistic communication. Here, Somali families were consulted as the experts in their culture. These two methodological approaches sought to access the perspectives of music educators for their knowledge of cultural expressions in the classroom, and Somali families for their knowledge of cultural values that drive such these expressions.

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[57] Merriam, 63.

Research Questions / Hypothesis

Two research questions were used to guide the process. Research question number one reads: *What Somali student cultural expressions present themselves in the elementary general music classroom?* Research question number two reads: *what influential concepts drive such expressions?* It can be hypothesized that no absolute reliability will be attained in this study. It is not expected that found correlations between cultural expressions and Somali cultural concepts will be relied upon as consistent in every child or in every situation. The vast number of variables relating to children, education, acculturation, personalities, and many others would never allow for such certainty. The documentation of possible correlations is, however, intended to guide educational decisions in a way that keeps abreast of cultural knowledge and tendencies.

Participants

For the first methodological portion of this study, public school elementary music educators in the US who worked with a minimum of one Somali student were sought after. For the second methodological portion of this study, Somali parents from the MASD community, and more specifically Upper Allen Elementary and Elmwood Academy, were asked to participate in a survey regarding their beliefs about music. Both methodologies were executed anonymously.

Procedures

Music educators were contacted via social media, personal connections, and emails beginning in the summer of 2023. An anonymous survey was created and shared with a brief description of the research. It was made clear that the goal was not to critique teaching, or student behavior, but rather find commonalities in what has been observed in the elementary general music classroom. This research could in turn lead to creative and well-informed teaching decisions. Thirteen educators chose to participate. Their responses to the survey can be found below in Chapter Four.

Somali students at Upper Allen and Elmwood took home surveys on the first and fourth days of the 2023-2024 school year respectively. The study was introduced with a letter in both Somali and English addressing the parents as the *Cultural Experts* and asking that they participate voluntarily if they felt so inclined. Fourteen participants took the time to fill out the surveys and even wrote helpful explanations to various questions.

Researcher Positionality

Research was conducted by the Upper Allen Elementary general music educator. Potential benefits were directly aimed at better understanding the needs of MASD and Upper Allen, however, contribute to the larger understanding of the challenges and successes that face music programs with similar cultural encounters. In this case, the researcher was the music teacher at Upper Allen Elementary School. The Somali families were exclusively from MASD, and therefore had a vested interest in communicating with the researcher.

Data Analysis

Data in each of the two methodologies was analyzed somewhat similarly in that a qualitative content analysis approach was utilized. The total number of music educators who noted observing specific and reoccurring cultural expressions were counted and represented in a graphic that can be found in Chapter Four. Here, a bar graph visually communicated three common findings. The Somali survey responses were depicted in pie graphs that visually demonstrated those responses that were more common and those that were less so. From these, data was summarized in terms of concrete findings and those that still begged for clarification.

Narrative Documentation Design

Information regarding cultural expressions in the elementary general music classroom was collected via narrative documentation. These narratives were submitted anonymously by music educators. Music educators were required to work with a minimum of one Somali student in the elementary general music classroom. It should be noted that the inclusion of such narratives did not focus on the teacher's response to the cultural expression, but rather the expression itself, and any relevant circumstantial information. The goal was to collect and document as many narratives as possible and to scrutinize them for similarities. The following open-ended questions prompted music educators to recall cultural expressions that have surfaced in the context of the music class.

Q1: Can you describe the overall demographic in your school?

Q2: What is your role at the school in which you are employed? How long have you been working there? How often do the children have music and for how long is each class?

Q3: Would you briefly describe your teaching philosophy/methodology? For example, do you adhere strictly to a Kodaly, Gordon, Suzuki, Feierabend, Orff-Schulwerk, Dalcroze approach, or do you dabble in multiple?

Q4: Can you think of a time when a Somali student reacted to an activity in a way that required a creative teaching response on your part? Can you tell me about it? Was the activity inclusive of song, dance, instruments, interactive with other students? (Some examples might include reluctance to sing during Islamic holidays, abstaining from participating in dance with the opposite gender, and many others.)

Q5: Were there other encounters that you think might be of relevant interest to the study? Were there any cultural expressions that were unexplainable, but possibly of interest?

Q6: Is there anything else you would like to share with me that you think might be of interest?

Somali Survey Design

The Somali survey aimed to better understand three concepts. First, it explored how Somali individuals define music. Second, it attempted to identify the differences between the way the Qurʾān is recited and music is sung. Third and final, it aimed to understand the differences between music and poetry. Through the following survey questions, this research was designed to better realize the impact Somali culture has the practice of music in new contexts. The survey questions are as follows:

1. How do you define music?
   Singing only.
   Wind instruments such as flute, oboe, bassoon, etc.
   String instruments such as violin, viola, cello, etc.
   Percussion instruments such as drums, shakers, xylophones, etc.
   All of the above.
   Other. Please explain.

2. My thoughts on the nature of music are…
   Music is innately evil
   Music is sometimes used for evil
   Music is always used for evil
   Other. Please explain.

3. Which of the following are acceptable
   Chanting Qurʾānic texts.
   Singing, so long as the topic is for good and moral purposes.
   Instrument playing that contains no lyrics.
   Ideally, singing with only the use of rhythm instruments.
   Other. Please explain.

4. Sama, or listening to music is:
   Acceptable, but participation is not.
   Not acceptable.
   Other. Please explain.

5. Ghina, or the practice of music is:
   Acceptable.
   Not acceptable.
   Other. Please explain.

6. The Qurʾān denounces music.
   Agree
   Disagree
   Other. Please explain.

7. Reliable hadith denounce music.
   Agree
   Disagree
   Other. Please explain.

8. Qurʾānic chanting is considered to be:
   Acceptable music.
   Not music.
   Other. Please explain.

9. Is poetry different from music?
   Yes
   No
   Other. Please explain.

10. If so, how is poetry different from music?
    It functions differently in society.
    It was never sung.
    Meaning is achieved only through words.
    Other. Please explain.

11. Do you feel that the age of your child dictates the permissibility of music?
    Age does not matter.
    Older children should not participate in music if possible.
    Other. Please explain.

If there is anything else you would like to share that this survey did not discuss, please feel free to do so below.

Summary

Narratives collected provided information regarding what Somali cultural expressions might be witnessed in the American elementary general music setting. Children might culturally express themselves in ways that do not always make sense to the outside observer. Better understanding the core cultural beliefs from the Somali survey has helped to attempt to explain where students' cultural expressions are originating. While nothing can be stated with full certainty, the narratives and survey results provide a more complete picture that can assist with teaching decisions.

Chapter Four: Results

Introduction

The music educator narratives were obtained in an effort to achieve collective knowledge through identification of common experiences amongst music educators who work with Somali children. This portion of the methodology intended to answer research question number one: *what Somali student cultural expressions present themselves in the elementary general music classroom?* The Somali surveys were obtained in order to assist the outside observer in better understanding what Somali core cultural understandings about the nature of music might be of relevance to the music educator. They intended to answer research question number two: *what influential concepts drive cultural expressions in the music classroom*? The research efforts were dual in nature. Answers to these research questions have helped to explain why we observe what we do in the music classroom.

Narrative Documentation Results

The following information organizes the results of the Narrative Documentation portion of the methodology. Six tables display the six questions and organize the responses of those participants who partook in the study. Each table consists of two columns. The column on the left lists the participant anonymously by number. The column on the right shares their response.

The first question that participants were asked was regarding demographics: *Can you describe the overall demographic in your school?* A summary of the written responses may be seen in table 1. Results established that music educators serve populations that differ both socioeconomically, and culturally. In addition, the ratios of Somali students to any other demographic was something that could not be compared between any two educational environments. To participate in the study, a music educator was required to work in the elementary setting with a minimum of only one Somali child. While this scenario is unlikely due to Somali preferences for strong community ties, it remains entirely possible that the ratio of Somali to non-Somali students in the music class could still vary greatly from classroom to classroom. These variables simply could not be controlled in a study such as this. They are, however, worth mentioning. Table 1 displays the responses to this question.

Table 1. Overall Demographic

Participant	**Response**
Participant One	Elementary, 65% white, 24.8% African American, 3.7% Hispanic or Latino, 3.1% two or more races, 2.8 Asian/API
Participant Two	Large Somali population, racially diverse
Participant Three	Middle class
Participant Four	56.5% white and 43.5% students of color
Participant Five	Diverse socio economic level and culture. Between 20-35% Somali
Participant Six	30% white, 30% black, 10% Native, and 30% Hispanic, Somali, Ethiopian, Hmong, or other immigrant population
Participant Seven	One third of school is Somali students, one fifth other ethnicities, remaining majority population is white.
Participant Eight	50-60% white, 15% African American, 5-10% Somali/Somali-American, 5-10% Latino, small number Native American students, small number of Asian American students. 30-40% of students eligible for free and reduced lunch.

Participant Nine	Mostly African American
Participant Ten	65% white, 35% mixture of other ethnicities
Participant Eleven	Roughly 35% Black, 35% White, 25% Asian, and 5% Hispanic/other
Participant Twelve	60%white, 40% other including: black, American Indian, Middle Eastern, Asian, African, Latino (30+ children are ESL)
Participant Thirteen	20% Somali, 5% African American, a majority of students are Caucasian, but we have a growing Nepalese and Indian populations.

In the second question participants were asked: *what is your role at the school in which you are employed? How long have you been working there? How often do the children have music and for how long is each class?* As you can see below, the answers were somewhat similar. Most of the participants taught kindergarten through fifth grade general music. A few of the participants had student teaching experiences that allowed them to work with Somali children. Two participants were administrators and one served as a coordinator. The diversity of perspectives made for a more holistic set of responses. Table 2 organizes participants' responses to these questions.

Table 2. Role of Participant

Participant One	I was a student teacher at the school for 8 weeks. The children have music twice every six day cycle. Each class is 40 minutes long.
Participant Two	Student taught in Spring 2022 for about 8 weeks. Students had music class 2 times per 6-day cycle for about 40 minutes.
Participant Three	Coordinator, 23 years.

Participant Four	Principal. Once a week for 45 minutes
Participant Five	I have served as the principal at my school for the past 5 years. Prior to that, I was the principal of another school in the same District.
Participant Six	prek-5 Music, Eight years, once every four days for 55 minutes
Participant Seven	I am the general music and chorus teacher. I have been working in the district for seven years and in that building for four years. Our students have general music once every six school days for 40 minutes, and have opt-in chorus about once every three school days for 40 minutes.
Participant Eight	I teach music at this school two days a week. I have been teaching there for about 15 years. The children have music for 50 minutes one time a week.
Participant Nine	Music K-8
Participant Ten	Music teacher, 4 years, twice per week for 30 minutes each time.
Participant Eleven	I am the 5th grade music teacher, I teach music to 419 5th graders. This is my 7th year with the district, 4th year in this building, and 1st year teaching only 5th grade (previously I taught 5th and 6th in this building, and have done K-8th throughout my time in the district). The children have music once a week for 80 minutes.
Participant Twelve	Music teacher k-5, 3 years, (teaching for 25), 30 minutes twice per week.
Participant Thirteen	This is my 10th year of teaching, 3rd state, and 4th school district. I teach K-3 general music and have been in my current role for 5 years now.

Question number three asked: *Would you briefly describe your teaching philosophy/methodology? For example, do you adhere strictly to a Kodaly, Gordon, Suzuki, Feierabend, Orff-Schulwerk, Dalcroze approach, or do you dabble in multiple?* The purpose of this question was to assist in understanding the music educator's teaching values. A teacher that spends a majority of class time doing certain types of activities is likely to see certain types of cultural expressions.

Nearly all participants stated that they dabbled in multiple philosophical approaches to music education. This is quite common among music educators. There were, however, a few who reported adhering solely to the Orff-Schulwerk method, and one individual who reported using only the Gordon method. None of these methods omits or solely adheres to sensitive subjects in regard to Somali participation in music class (i.e. singing), but rather emphasizes certain approaches to music education. For example, the Gordon approach is not executed without singing, but applies a specific method which utilizes rhythmic understanding that more closely aligns with the natural flow of speech. Similarly, the Orff-Schulwerk approach does not omit singing but greatly values movement, books, and the use of classroom xylophones. The relevance of this acknowledgement is worth considering in the larger context of educational values. If a teacher strongly valued the Orff method alone, it might mean more time is spent in kinesthetically exploring musical content rather than singing it. See table 3 for an overview of participants' philosophical approaches to music education.

Table 3. Teaching Philosophy

Participant	**Response**
Participant One	Gordon approach
Participant Two	I combined multiple methods.
Participant Three	Participant skipped this question

Participant Four	Participant skipped this question
Participant Five	Participant skipped this question
Participant Six	I received my Master's degree in Orff-Schulwerk, I am a Kodaly certified educator, and I am a Smithsonian Folkways certified educator. I believe creation and storytelling should be placed at the center of musical experiences and work to represent the students' experiences authentically.
Participant Seven	While I don't prescribe to a singular methodology for musical activities and learning in the classroom, my music literacy approach is strongly rooted in Feierabend's Conversational Solfege. I do include movement based activities (folk dances, etc.) and musical learning through Orff instruments, drums, ukuleles, and singing music with a variety of modalities and cultural backgrounds.
Participant Eight	I am an Orff teacher.
Participant Nine	I use Musicplay and a variety of other sources. I was not trained in any of the above methods but have taken a few workshops.
Participant Ten	Multiple: Orff, Kodaly, Gordon
Participant Eleven	I have and do use a combination of Kodaly and Feirabend. but with my current grade (5th), it is predominantly Kodaly
Participant Twelve	A combination of Orff-Schulwerk, Kodaly and Feierabend
Participant Thirteen	I dabble in Orff-Schulwerk, Feierabend, and the Gordon approaches. I received my Orff Level I certification in 2006. My current school district uses Gordon rhythmic literacy labels and Feierabend approach to vocal exploration and music literacy acquisition. I have gradually formed a mixed bag approach.

Question number four asked, *Can you think of a time when a Somali student reacted to an activity in a way that required a creative teaching response on your part? Can you tell me about it? Was the activity inclusive of song, dance, instruments, interactive with other* *students? (Some examples might include reluctance to sing during Islamic holidays, abstaining from participating in dance with the opposite gender, and many others.)*

Music educators reported that students sometimes objected to song, dance with the opposite gender, and music during certain times of the year including the Islamic holidays of Ramadan, Eid, and Laylatal Qadr. By contrast, one individual reported noticing no difference whatsoever in the Somali children he/she worked with. There are several reasons why this might have been the case. It could be that the cultural expressions went unnoticed. The particular Somali community might have been more liberal in their interpretation of Islamic texts. If there weren't many Somali children in that particular community, the pressure to conform to the preexisting classroom culture might have been great enough that the child did conform. The child may have made subtle adjustments to conceal his/her cultural expressions. A multitude of other possibilities may have existed. See table 4 for narratives detailing creative responses to cultural expressions in the music classroom.

Table 4. Creative Responses to Cultural Expressions

Participant	**Response**
Participant One	During Ramadan, a group of girls in one specific class did not sing for that period of time. It seemed like one of the girls were told to follow that restriction and she had her peers follow her lead. However, it seemed like the Somali students in other classes did not follow the same restrictions. Additionally, I noticed that some abstained from dancing with the opposite gender.
Participant Two	I have not seen a Somali student refrain from singing or dancing. In fact, they often seemed excited and eager to participate and interact with other students. They were very respectful toward the teacher and myself (as a student-teacher) and wanted to perform well.
Participant Three	Students reported they could not sing due to religion. Parents were contacted and alternate assignments were given to the student

Participant Four	The history of my campus was Somali students would opt out of music for religious reasons. These students would then be in the hallways working on extra math, reading or playing on their computers. This year I decided students shouldn't have to choose between the arts and religion. I hired a music teacher who specializes in drums and the PTA spent $5000 on new drums. We are not offering an opt-out program.
Participant Five	I have found that the religious beliefs of the Somali families can vary greatly. While some are highly conservative with their views, others are more liberal. Some of the more conservative views maintain that signing should only be done in the praise of God and that singing for other purposes is a sin. Families with more liberal views enjoy music and see music as an important part of their culture. They listen to Somali pop artists and western artists.
Participant Six	A student wanted to Dhaanto in class. We were able to find some videos of a Somali Dance Troupe and use it as a model. There were also videos and stories told by our Somali liaison that we were able to learn the cultural significance for this dance. Our fifth graders who were fasting for Ramadan helped me realize the importance of Laylatal Qadr and accommodate their needs during the last ten days. They were able to participate in art for those days and switch back into music with another section after Eid.
Participant Seven	I have had many students over the years (particularly in the older grades 3-5th) approach me and say they are "not allowed" to sing on certain days. Often Somali students in a class will approach me all together to say that. I have also had students (both boys and girls) say they are not allowed to dance with others - although that occurs more specifically when they are paired with a peer of the opposite gender. Our school district has a policy that a parent is allowed to opt-out of music classes for their children based on religious beliefs, but they have to fill out the paperwork through formal district channels. Often most families don't choose to do that until their students are in middle school and more encouraged to adhere to their family's religious practices more strictly. I have only ever had one student in the seven years I have been in this district whose family followed that paperwork to opt-out of music class instruction in 4th and 5th grade. If students' parents don't fill that out, I encourage the students to participate, and mention that their parents are allowed to follow those channels, but for now they are expected to participate in class (with appropriate accommodations of course - i.e. not holding hands in a folk dance, audiating [internalizing] certain texts and songs, but overall participating in class). That allows me to follow my school district's policies while also retaining the human lens on their identity development within their own religious beliefs and culture.
Participant Eight	On some occasions, Somali families with a conservative Muslim faith have asked that their children not participate in music. However, this has not

	happened often. A more typical reaction to an activity might be that a female student requesting to do a folk dance with a female partner to avoid touching hands with a boy or students avoiding dancing during Ramadan. These religious considerations are usually pretty easy to work around. Another thing that I ran into was students missing school to celebrate Eid. This was a bit tricky because we were getting ready for a concert. We made it work!
Participant Nine	Participant skipped this question.
Participant Ten	They chose not to sing or dance during Islamic holidays because of their religion, they also weren't supposed to listen to music sometimes during that time, so they would plug their ears
Participant Eleven	We have had intermittent problems with Somali students not wanting to participate in singing or movement/dance activities in general. This was not the case for all Somali students, but they are the demographic who I've received the most resistance from in that regard. Additionally, we have some students who will not participate during Islamic holidays (Ramadan, specifically) but it was tough to tell with some students if this was genuine or just an excuse to not participate. There have been several students who were consistent with their reluctance to participate during Ramadan as well as other behaviors exhibited during this holiday, like fasting or abstaining from other specific activities.
Participant Twelve	Last year I had a boy that refused to sing. He would do the other parts of music, (recorder hand drums, and classroom instruments) he told me he was not allowed to sing.
Participant Thirteen	I have had children opt out of singing during Ramadan. Interestingly last year, I had a group of girls lip sync the words but abstain from actual singing. Another commonly observed occurrence is related to gender and dancing. Girls and boys avoid touching sometimes during Ramadan, and sometimes altogether. It is interesting, however, that students do not necessarily ask for special accommodations. Instead, they seem to make the alterations themselves (i.e. not actually touching a partner's hands while dancing). If it isn't an issue for them I don't make an issue of it.

The fifth question asked: *Were there other encounters that you think might be of relevant interest to the study? Were there any cultural expressions that were unexplainable, but possibly of interest?* This question aimed to extract any unexplained observations that an educator might have noticed but not known what to attribute the encounter to. Sometimes what happens in the classroom is truly inexplicable to the outside observer but may be of relevance to the concepts of culture.

Question number five generated a definitive takeaway in that there is no one Somali, or Muslim, expression of faith, but rather tendencies and inclinations. It seems that, like all children, they are expressing a multitude of things such as their parent's core values, their own individual values, and even peer incentives. See table 5 for participants' responses to the question.

Table 5. Inexplicable Observations

Participant	**Response**
Participant One	Participant skipped this question
Participant Two	I recall two students in particular (both female) who constantly wanted to hug both the teacher and myself.
Participant Three	Participant skipped this question
Participant Four	How to engage the Somali families after they have been harmed by the system.
Participant Five	When I was at my former school I used to have meetings with Somali parent groups to learn more about their culture and beliefs. From these meetings I learned that no individual could represent all of the Somali families because experiences and beliefs sometimes varied greatly.
Participant Six	On multiple occasions, younger students have told me that they could not participate in music class because their parents told them not to. After speaking with siblings and grown-ups, I discovered that the younger students had flat out lied about the discussions with their families.
Participant Seven	I have had many students approach me as well very excited to share music with me that they sing and learn from their families or from their religion. They seem excited to try and teach me that and incorporate their own musical practices into their school practices. Outside of general music and the instance mentioned in the prior question, chorus is a whole other experience because it is an optional curriculum. I have recently had more interest (in the last couple years) from

	some Somali students to participate in the optional chorus ensemble in 4th and 5th grade. They get parent permission and join the rehearsals during the school day. However, multiple students have lasted in that program for only about a semester of instruction before parents tell them they "aren't allowed to continue". While this is rarely listed as the reason -- mainly just the reasoning of participation in the singing group is "against my religion" -- I have noticed the withdrawal request often comes once I begin to send home more detailed information about the concerts. Nothing else specific jumps to mind, however more generally it's been very interesting to see how widely families range in their views towards musical involvement as part of the required school curriculum versus something they can opt-out of for religious values. My experience has been the younger the student, the less issue there is overall with their participation in in-school music making.
Participant Eight	In general, I've noticed that my Somali born and Somali American students love any kind of world music, including songs from other cultures and countries and songs in other languages. Several Somali students got very excited when we learned a song in Chinese about the Lunar New Year. The song in Chinese caused several Somali-American students to share about their own culture, language and country of origin/parents' country of origin. And, of course, my Somali/Somali-American students love an elimination singing game in the Somali language that I learned from another music teacher. Other things I've notice that my Somali/Somali-American students especially seem to appreciate include the book, "Your Name is a Song" and any kind of discussion about culture, cultural differences, and/or languages.
Participant Nine	Participant skipped this question
Participant Ten	Participant skipped this question
Participant Eleven	Participant skipped this question
Participant Twelve	Mostly, it is one Somali family with 4 children in the school. The younger siblings have been more receptive and love singing and making music. The eldest boy was the reluctant singer.
Participant Thirteen	There was one year a little girl insisted that Jingle Bells from our winter sing-a-long was religious. I told her that it wasn’t religious but that she didn’t need to sing it.

The last question offered a final opportunity to share any additional relevant encounters or thoughts. It asked: *Is there anything else you would like to share with me that you think might be of interest?* If an educator had been holding back due to concerns of applicability this was the place to offer final thoughts. Not surprisingly, many participants opted out of question number six. If they had already shared stories in questions four and five, they were not required to continue unnecessarily. The following graph expresses the number of narratives that mentioned the following topics: gender roles, Song, and Islamic Holidays. See table 6 for any final comments.

Table 6. Other Final Thoughts

Participant	**Response**
Participant One	Participant skipped this question
Participant Two	Participant skipped this question
Participant Three	Participant skipped this question
Participant Four	Participant skipped this question
Participant Five	Participant skipped this question
Participant Six	There is a large East African population at the building I work at. Ethiopian, Oromo, Amharic, Bantu, Eritrean, and Kenyan students all have different experiences. The history of that area of the world can be so complicated to explore. Tribes that had enslaved other tribes as recently as the 1930's, only a few generations removed complicates the power dynamic between the students and lingering ill feelings.
Participant Seven	Most of my phrasings of what families are allowing children to do and the reasoning behind it written out above are messages relayed through their student. In many cases, I have asked for parent notes to be brought in, but overall the communication is occurring through the student themselves, as a

	translator and explainer for their parents and me. This has always left me with the question of whether or not families would initially agree to chorus at the start of the year if they fully understood the performance components, or whether that might be lost in translation. My next steps are to try and provide paperwork and alternative involvement options in Somali to better communicate and to hopefully allow for more participation from those students.
Participant Eight	Participant skipped this question.
Participant Nine	Participant skipped this question.
Participant Ten	Participant skipped this question.
Participant Eleven	Participant skipped this question.
Participant Twelve	Not that I can think of, thank you for conducting this research!
Participant Thirteen	Participant skipped this question.

Upon analyzing the data gathered from the music educator narratives, three key themes surfaced. Gender roles during folk dance activities, song throughout the school year, and participation in both dance and song expressly during Islamic holidays all surfaced as commonly observed cultural expressions.

The graph below displays the number of participants that mentioned particular reoccurring topics. The graph could have also been used to show the number of times the topics were mentioned, however, being that participants sometimes discussed overlapping topics (i.e. gender roles in dance that occurred during Ramadan) this was not the rout taken. The most commonly mentioned topic was that of song in the elementary music classroom, followed by Islamic holidays, and finally gender roles. See figure 2 below.

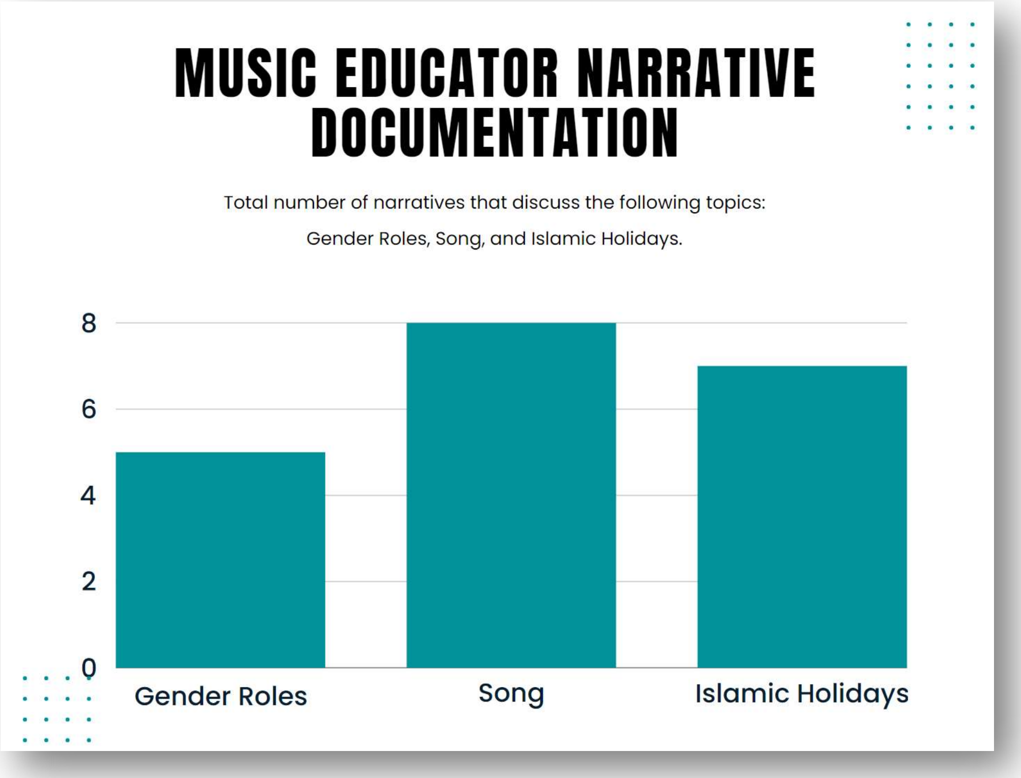

Figure 2: Music Educator Narrative Documentation

Somali Survey Results

The Somali survey helped to identify core cultural beliefs about music, its relationship to Qurʾānic Cantillation and poetry, and its perceived moral qualities. The significance of understanding what might be believed about music was important as it could try to explain what cultural expressions are being observed in the music classroom. Figures 3.1-3.11 represent Somali responses to several questions regarding these concepts. Through discussing the survey with members of the community, as well as individuals that were met in the research process, it became clear that hesitancy to participate might be a cause for concern. However, considering the fact that faith is central to Somali culture, it was with great optimism that the survey was distributed.

Question one asked: How do you define music? The answer leaves much to be desired in terms of clarity. Research presented earlier in this paper points to singing as the most morally unacceptable means of creating music. The responses to this particular question, however, are incredibly diverse and do not show a higher correlation between singing and morally prohibited beliefs as one might have imagined due to the music educator narratives. One possible reason is the perceived intent of the question. Upon reading the question, one might have assumed that the question pointed to "permissible music" rather than any music. If this were the case, a Somali individual approaching the survey might have been trying to see music in the American light and selecting the type of music they felt most comfortable with. On the other hand, if a Somali individual felt that later on in the survey, he/she was going to explain the evil nature of music, stringed instruments might have been selected for their song-like nature. This is however unlikely seeing as no one selected *singing* and very few selected *wind instruments*. *All of the above,* a Western approach to defining music, was a common answer, but no more so than *percussion instruments.* Figure 3.1 depicts responses to the question at hand. No participants offered any additional comments that would further define the answer.

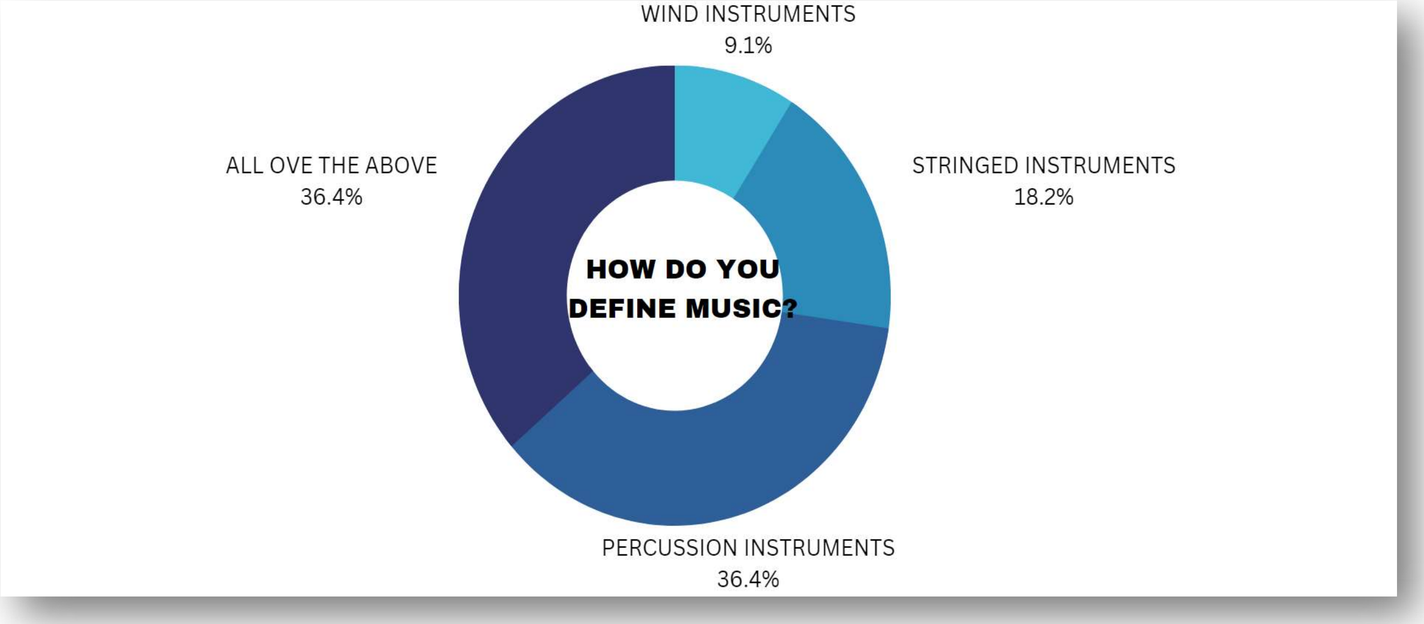

Figure 3.1: How do you define music?

Question two asked: What are your thoughts on the nature of music? Here again, an ever so slightly higher inclination toward *innately evil, and used for evil* is revealed. The difference between music being *innately evil, sometimes used for evil,* and *always used for evil* is subtle. A few participants clarified. One individual noted the difference between the way religion sees music and the way music functions in society. Another spoke of the power music has in comforting people when they should be turning to God. A final participant expressed his/her thoughts on the way music is used for evil, and that this should be the reason for avoidance. In the end it seemed that there was a collective understanding that music should be avoided. Figure 3.2 demonstrates the responses followed by the individual comments shared on the survey.

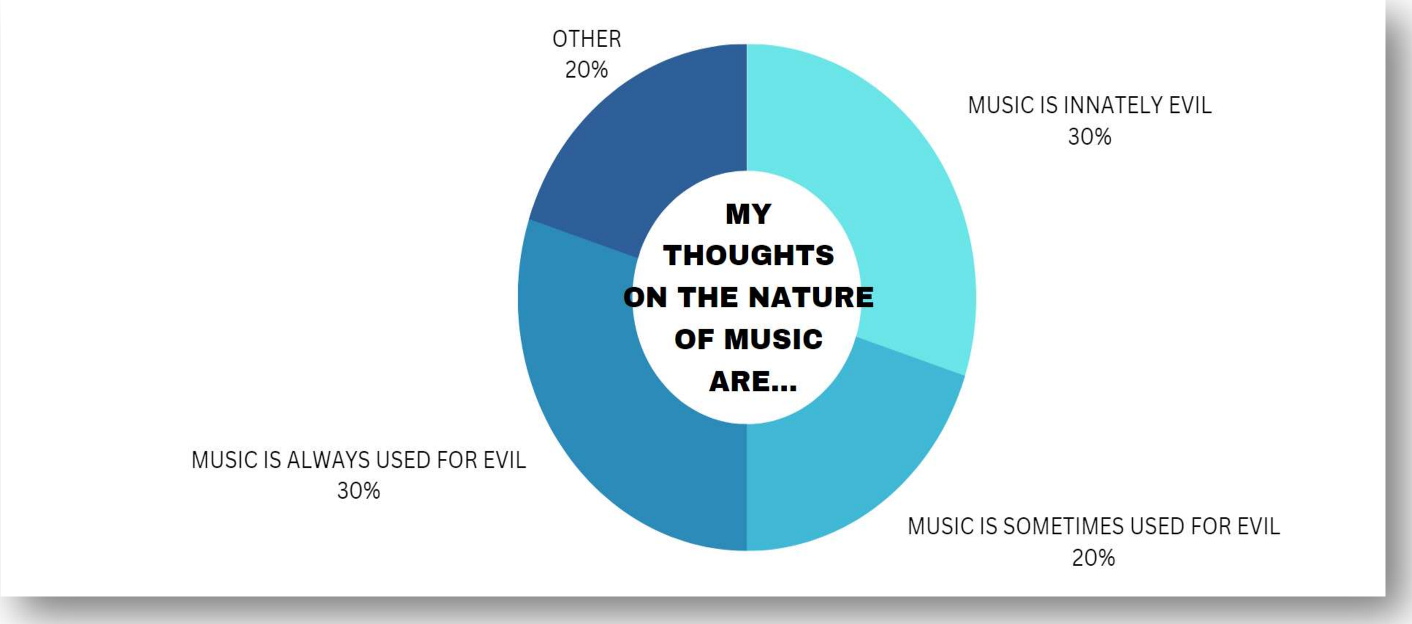

Figure 3.2: My thoughts on the nature of music are…

Comments:

- *Music comforts a lot of people which makes people to rely on it to express and feel their emotions when they should do that to God and rely on Him only. Today's music as in like rap can be very harmful and toxic.*
- *Not necessarily evil but more of music is like an "alcohol to the soul." Music is forbidden in Islam and we rely on it to comfort us when we should be relying on God!*
- *We know how important music is and the way it shapes the individual and the societies we live in. It is also used or could be a way of communication within and between people. Religiously it can be seen as evil because it is prohibited. Words alone could be acceptable depending on the message it carries words with music is what is seen as evil.*

Question three inquired: Which of the following is acceptable: Qurʾānic chanting, singing for good and moral purposes, instruments without lyrics, singing with percussion, and other. The answers varied, with a slight preference for Qurʾānic chanting. Data here was curious and one must wonder if the question was received differently than intended. It might be advantageous to look at question three alongside of question eight which asks *Is Qurʾānic chanting acceptable* *music, not music, or other*. Almost all participants felt that Qurʾānic chanting is simply not music.

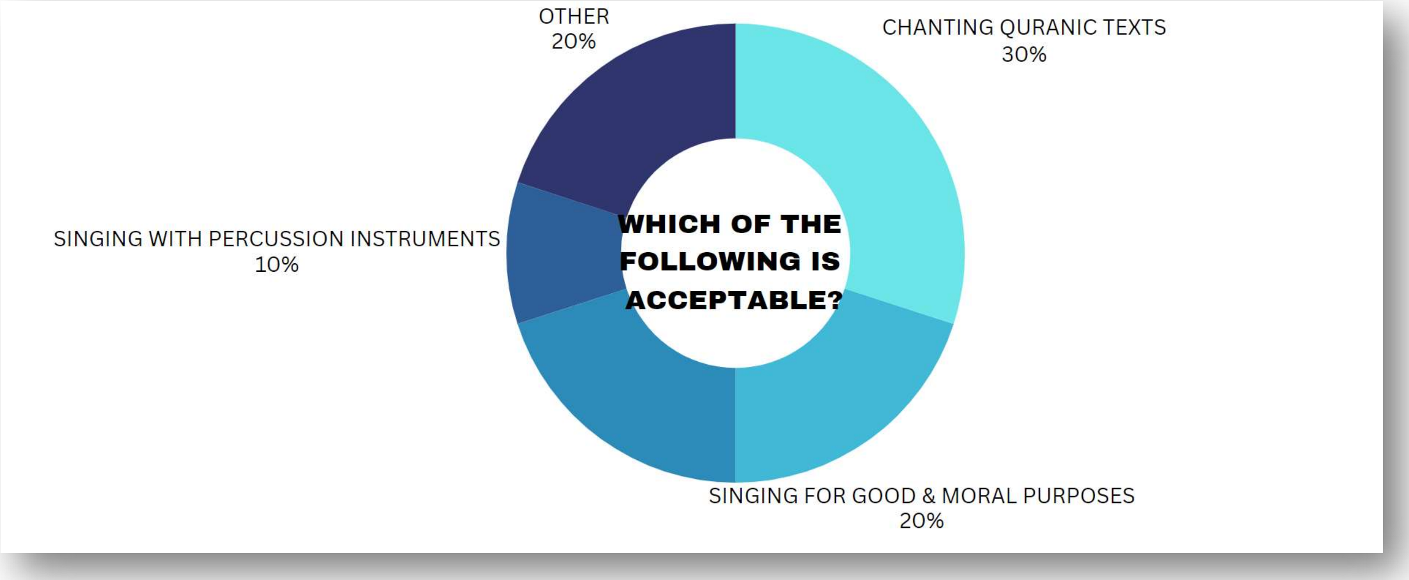

Figure 3.3: Which of the following is acceptable?

Comments:

- *There are many forms of music and it will always depend on the message it carries or puts across. It can be love, politics, and many more. "Will the message shape the person listening or will it cause the listener to involve in problems, crimes, bad acts, or behaviors. Words without music is always preferred than words with music religiously."*

Questions four and five sought to understand the concepts of *sama* (the act of listening to music) and *ghina* (the act of partaking in music-making). All participants felt as though *sama* and *ghina* were not permissible. There was very little discrepancy on this issue. From this research, one could surmise that while it is commonplace for Islamic culture to discourage musical practice, some individuals see the likelihood that music leads to undesirable behavior increasing as musical participation increases, while others see musical participation as a fine line that some are willing to walk and others not. In both perspectives, an individual might see music as a risk they are not disposed to take. Figures 3.4 and 3.5 are shown side by side and relevant comments just below.

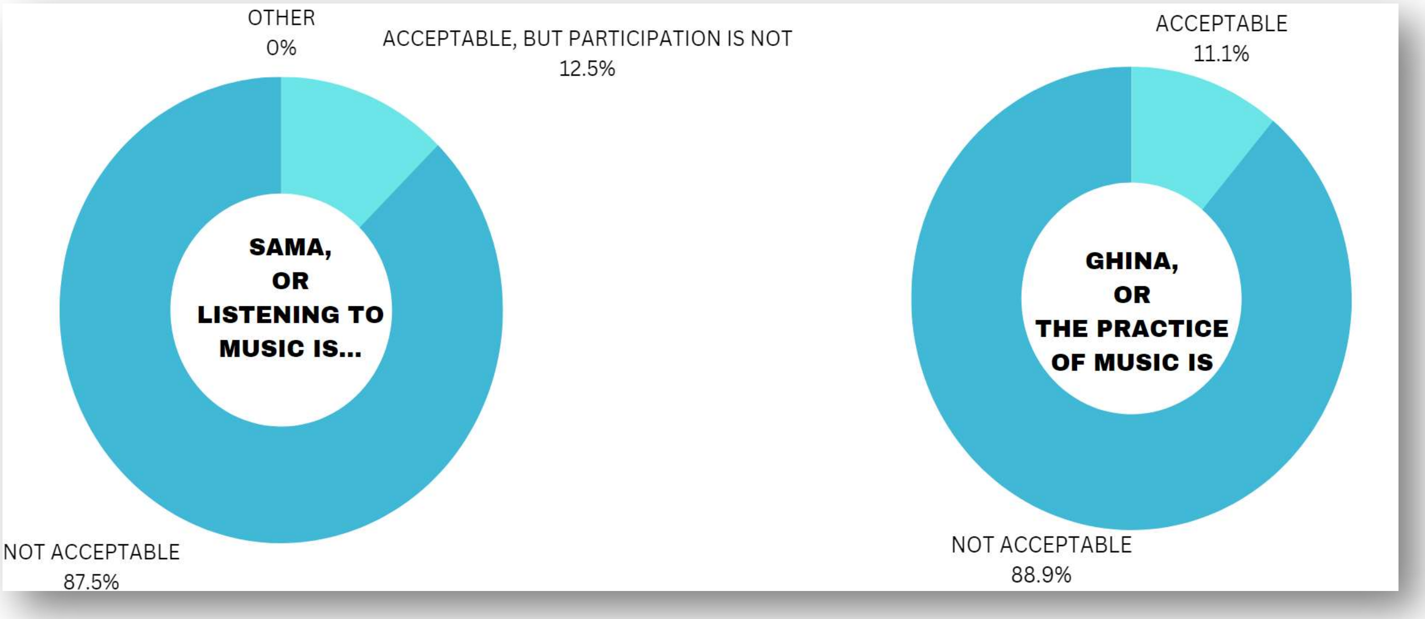

Figure 3.4: Sama, or listening to music is….
Figure 3.5: Ghina, or the practice of music is…

Comments:

- *Sama is religiously not acceptable. The soul loves music and may not stay away from it. Listening to moral and religious recitations in various melodies may be more permisable than listening to musical instruments.*
- *Ghina is not acceptable, but people still use and enjoy.*

Questions six and seven queried as to the perceived guidance of the Qurʾān and hadiths respectively. Nearly all participants expressed an understanding that the Qurʾān and hadiths unquestionably denounced music. One individual, however, took the position that the Qurʾān does not directly condemn music but that scholars interpret its message as such. This perspective is more reflective of some of the information reported in Chapter Two of this paper. Both Figures 3.6 and 3.7 can be viewed below with corresponding comments.

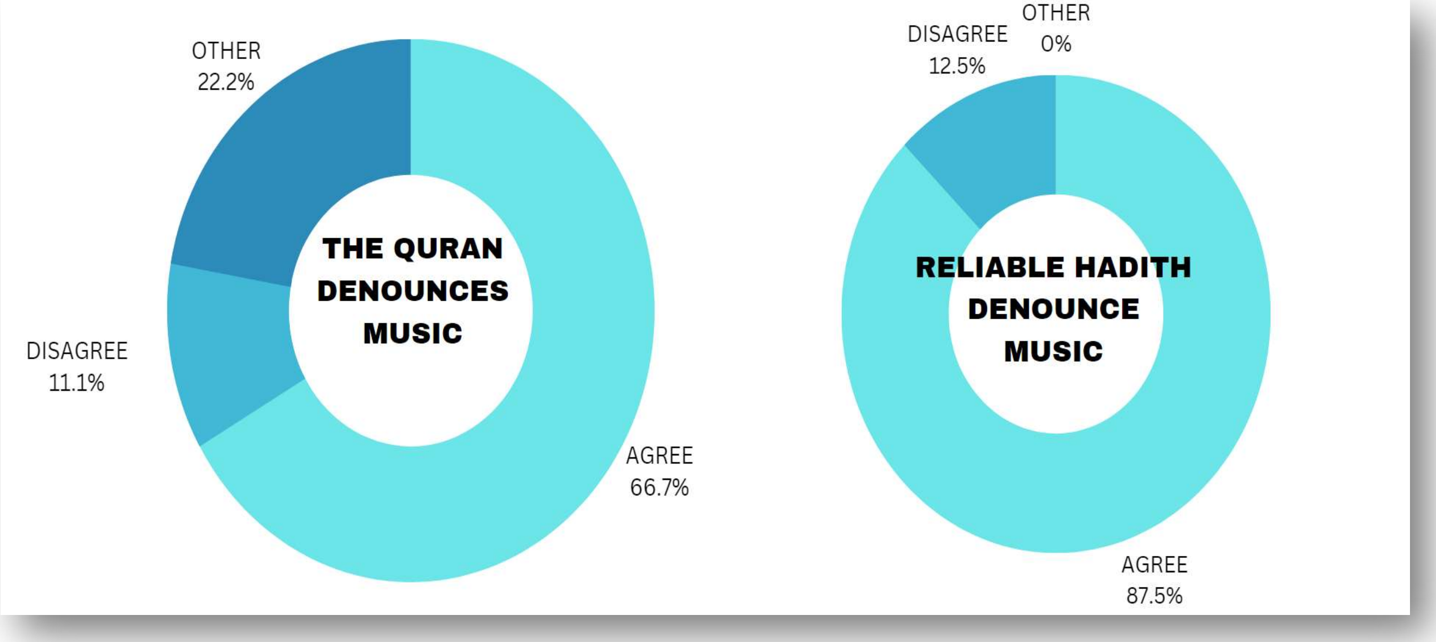

Figure 3.6: Does the Qur'an denounce music?
Figure 3.7: Do reliable hadith denounce music?
Comments:

- *The Qurʾān doesn't directly denounce music but scholars have interpreted it to mean music is bad.*

Question eight read, *Qurʾānic chanting is considered to be…* This led to a number of comments regarding the use of the term *chanting*. It seems that this wording should really read *reciting*. According to the Oxford Dictionary, reciting is defined as, "the action of repeating something aloud from memory,"[58] while chanting is "to say or shout repeatedly in a singsong tone."[59] While both terms involve vocalizing repetitiously, the latter definition involves tonal content and therefore appears to be more musical in nature, while the former resembles a form of speech. Describing reading of the Qurʾān as chanting rather than reciting seemed to evoke an undesirable response.

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[58] John Simpson; Edmund Weiner "Recitation." Oxford Languages Dictionary, Oxford University Press, 2019.

This question also brought to light an additional resource in the Islamic faith that this particular literature review had not encountered. Nasheed (as spelled by participants) are Islamic religious texts that are sung and sometimes classified as acceptable music. They are sometimes even classified as poetry. It is unclear what the relationship between nasheed and songs is.

Upon further research, nasheed were also found to be spelled as *nashīd.* Ines Weinrich, describes nashīd as an Islamic sacred genre that "shares the rhythmic and tonal structures and performance techniques of music, and much of the musical material builds on the Arab musical culture."[60] Prior to the 20th century, however, the root of nashīd, (n-sh-d) was more directly associated with "any activity of text articulation by a performer vis-à-vis a listener, most commonly poetry," and usually "included a raised voice, clear articulation, and possibly a slower tempo than normal speech."[61] All of this is to say that nashīd are usually viewed as either acceptable music, or not music. See figure 3.8 followed by the comments regarding the use of the phrase *Qurʾānic chanting,* and the topic of nashīd.

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[59] John Simpson; Edmund Weiner "Chanting." Oxford Languages Dictionary, Oxford University Press, 2019.

[60] Ines Weinrich. "'Nashid Between Islamic Chanting and Jihadi Hymns: Continues and Transformations," *Jihadi Audiovisuality and Its Entanglements: Meanings, Aesthetics, Appropriations*, edited by Christoph Günther and Simone Pfeifer, (Edinburgh University Press, 2020), 249–72. http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3366/j.ctv1hm8h96.16 (accessed Oct. 13, 2023).

[61] Weinrich, 251.

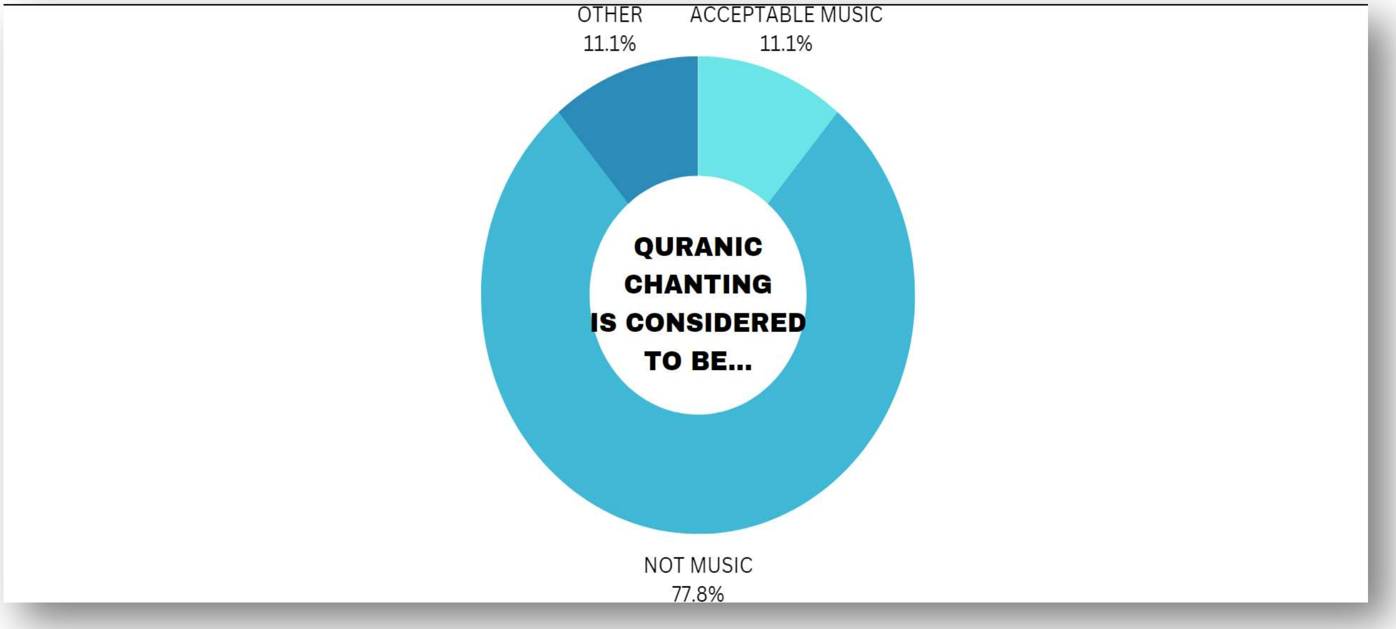

Figure 3.8: Quranic chanting is considered to be…

Comments:

- *It is reciting the words of God similar to the bible!*
- *Reading Qurʾān is not like singing. It's just like reading the bible. Also, there are things called nasheed which are religious songs that have no instruments which are permissible.*
- *I wouldn't say chanting but more of reciting.*

Questions nine and ten strayed from the previous questions as they did not deal so much with the concept of Islamic permissibility of music, but rather an understanding of and differentiation between music and poetry. Question nine, *is poetry different from music,* unanimously determined that poetry and music were understood to be different. Question ten, *how are poetry and music different,* yielded a variety of answers. Some stated that poetry achieved meaning through words. Others noted its differing function in society. A few felt that because poetry wasn’t sung, it wasn’t music. See Figures 3.9 and 3.10 as well as corresponding comments below.

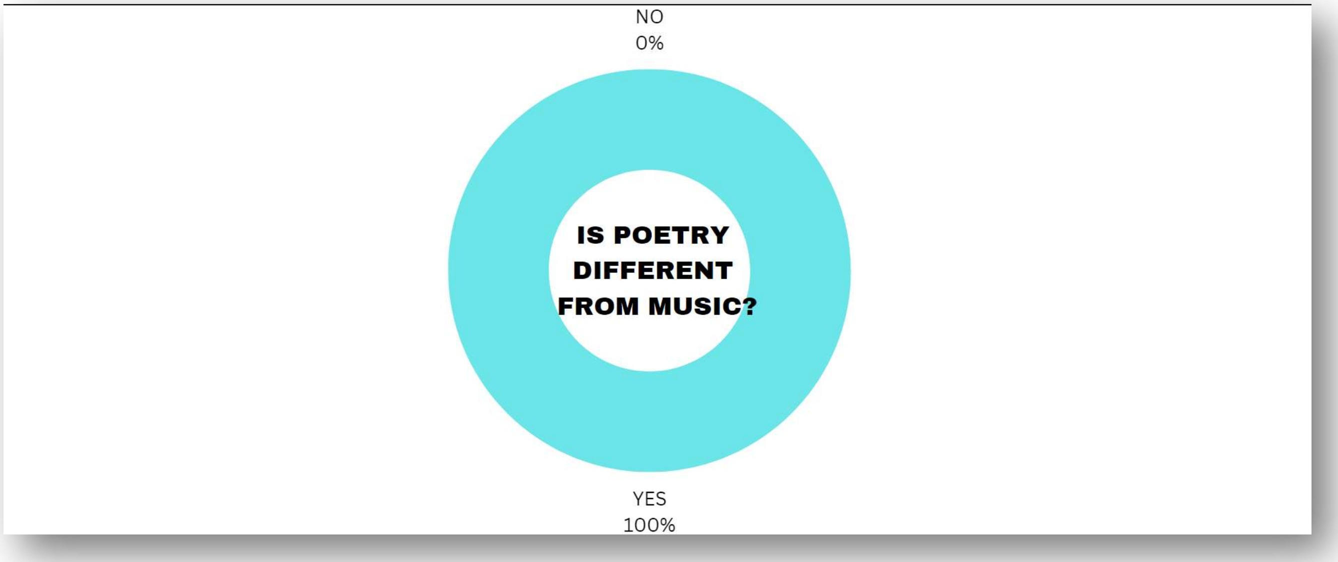

Figure 3.9: Is poetry different from music?

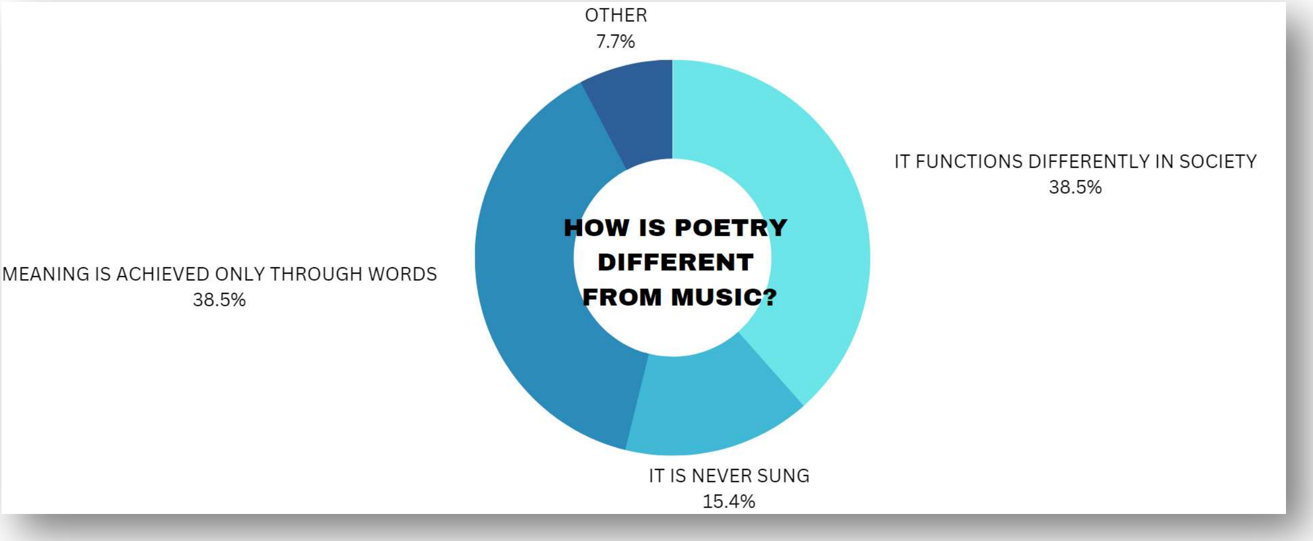

Figure 3.10: How is poetry different from music?

Comments:

- *In a hadith it says, "poetry is like speech: what is good is good, and what is bad is bad."*
- *Culturally, elders tend to sing poetry as it can be very relatable to them or they like it!*
- *Poetry is like acoustic and you are allowed to sing but it is the instruments that classify it as music which makes it forbidden. But also poetry is also its own style and you can express it however you want!*

Finally, question eleven asked: Do you feel that the age of your child dictates the permissibility of music? This questioning reflected the desire of the music educator to understand a parent's willingness to have his/her children in general music. The choice to include this question in the survey stems from a drop-off in Somali student retention in optional ensembles. Ensemble opportunities begin in fourth grade in MASD. A majority of participants felt that all children, no matter what their age, should not be participating in music. In MASD, all children take music class in kindergarten through grade five, but very few elect to take band, orchestra, or chorus in fourth and fifth grades. Three possible explanations can be found. First, it is possible that instrumental and choral ensembles obtain a greater moral weight than general music class does. Second, it is also possible that families are sacrificing their values in the younger grades, but when the choice is given, they decline the opportunity. Third, it may be that general music educators are well-equipped to vary instruction to the degree that Somali children do not need to compromise to partake in the general music class. Figure 3.11 demonstrates participant responses, followed by individual comments.

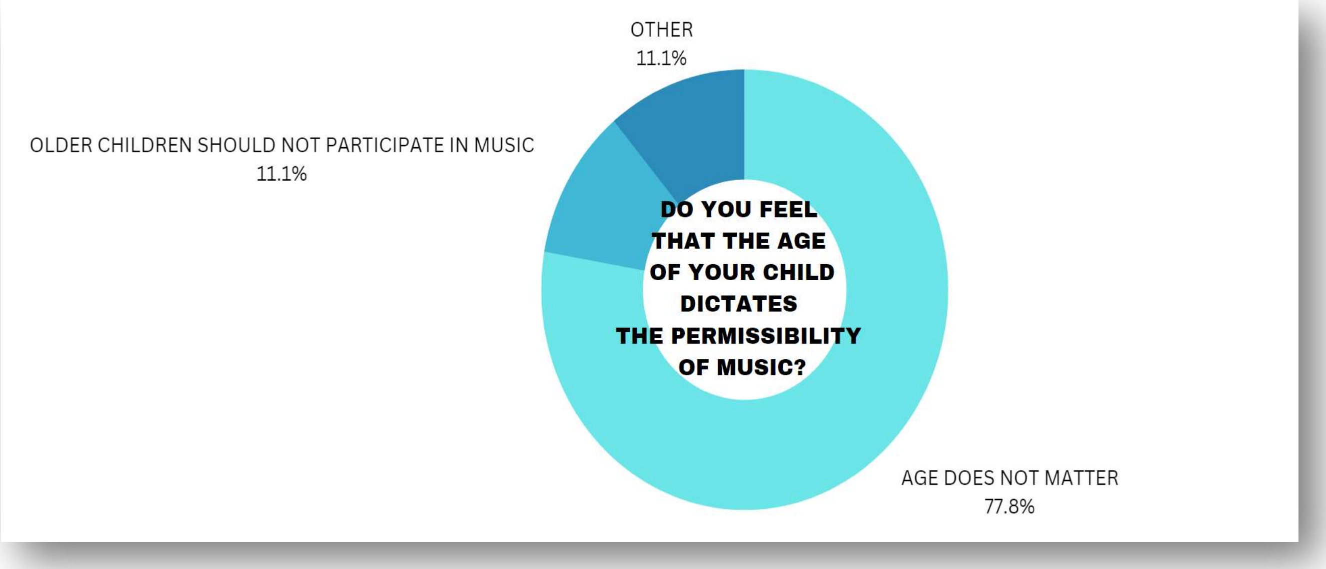

Figure 3.11: Do you feel that the age of your child dictates the permissibility of music?

Comments:

- *Music, musical instruments and singing are prohibited in Islam. This prohibition is supported with evidence from Qurʾān and Sunnah.*

Any Other Comments:

- *Hopefully I explained the best way I can. What makes music forbidden is the instruments. We, as Muslims, are allowed to listen to vocal only and something that is similar which is called nasheed.*
- *I would love to hear from your research regarding this topic.*

When all surveys were collected, some concepts became clearer while others prompted more questions. The following definitive clarifications about Somali beliefs were identified:

1. Ghina and sama are not permissible.
2. The Qurʾān and reliable hadith both denounce music.
3. Qurʾānic recitation is different from music.
4. Poetry is different from music.
5. Age of the child does not change the permissibility of music.

Two overarching areas that lack clarification have been identified after analyzing the data provided in the Somali surveys. The first can be summed up in the word relationships. For instance, a cluster of questions encircle the relationships between music and other genres. Firstly, the relationship between Qurʾānic recitation and singing has not fully been identified. Similarly, the relationship between music and poetry is somewhat unclear. The tonal content, rhythmic content, and functional natures of Qurʾānic recitation and poetry must be better understood in light of its perceived moral content.

A second area lacking clarification deals with the moral character of instrument families. Woodwinds, strings, percussion, and singing were referenced in survey question number one. A possible rewording of the question might yield more conclusive findings. Survey question number two is not unlike number one in that it deals with the nature of music in a moral sense. While responses to this question were not conclusive, they also did not differ immensely. Obtaining a better understanding of the differences between *innately evil*, *sometimes used for evil*, and *always used for evil* could be of great value to the educator. Regardless, it seems that most participants felt as though music obtained some negative qualities and tendencies.

The Somali surveys served as an insightful platform from which further questions have arisen. Chapter Six will suggest some areas for future research. The questions that the Somali surveys have highlighted as needing clarification have been used to propose these areas of research.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Intro

Research questions inquired as to *what Somali cultural expressions present themselves in the elementary general music classroom* and *what underlying cultural concepts might be the cause of such cultural expressions*. The Narrative documentation results highlighted three main themes that educators should be aware of. The Somali surveys pointed toward some perspectives regarding music in the Somali culture. Together, the data retrieved from both methodological efforts can aid the music educator in preparing for Somali students.

Narrative Documentation: The Process

The process of recruiting music educators who would share their teaching experiences was both imperative and challenging. Initial attempts at recruiting eligible music educators were somewhat dismal. Efforts to do so were focused on social media, email, and personal connections. There are several reasons why this challenge might have presented itself.

First, the study commenced in June of 2023. During this time, most music educators take a mental and physical break from the topic and practice of education. They travel, turn off their social media accounts, relax, spend time with family, or find ways to recharge. Other ways music educators spend their summers have to do with professional development. Sometimes they delve into conducting or participating in music educator workshops. Others tackle their own graduate studies. Responding to work emails, and social media simply are not on the tops of their to-do lists.

A second challenging reality was the narrow scope of eligible participants. Music educators may be easy to grab the attention of, but music educators who work with Somali children offer a different and specific challenge. Not only is the pool of eligible participants narrow, but those who are interested and willing to participate were much harder to come by. These educators by and large are located in the following cities: Portland OR, Minneapolis MN, Chicago IL, Lewiston ME, and Louisville KY. Posting on social media public school music educator pages in these cities seemed like a worthy effort, however, these platforms included all educators, not just music educators. By contrast, posting on music educators social media pages included all music educators, not just those that worked with Somali students. The latter of the two approaches yielded some, but not many participants.

A third and final challenge arose in the use of the word *behavior*. Early in the research process, the word *behavior* had been used instead of *cultural expression*. One early respondent voiced concerns over promoting participation in the study via her social media page due to the perceived negative charge in the word behavior. She wrote, “Behaviors make it sounds like you view Somali Students as behavior issues.” Another individual politely asked for clarification on the use of the word behavior before letting her guard down. The initial thought was that this response reflected a social media culture of flaunting one’s moral superiority, however, over time it became clear that this was likely reflective of the culture of education to regard the word *behavior* as *negative behavior*. Generally speaking, the word behavior in the context of the classroom implies a problematic action that must be dealt with, and so the choice to use the phrase *cultural expression* was made.

As trying as the first month of recruitment was, much was learned. Schedules, a narrow participatory pool, and wording were all noted as possibly influencing the amount of data gathered. At this point, a few changes had to take place. Firstly, the study would have to be patient to allow educators to enjoy their summers, and a reintroduction of the study had to be made in September when all were getting back into their routines and checking email regularly. Secondly, personal connections would need to be better utilized to access those who worked with Somali populations. Lastly, due to the perceived negative charge in the word behavior when used in the educational context, the decision to replace the word *behavior* with *Somali cultural expressions* was made.

Once data had been collected, analyzing it also proved to be anything but cut and dry. The three aforementioned themes of gender roles, song, and Islamic holidays presented in an overlapping fashion. For instance, any time a music educator was talking about an observation during an Islamic holiday, they were also talking about the concept of song or gender roles in dance. One topic simply could not be divorced from another. It was for this reason, that the decision was made to count the total number of participants that mentioned one of the three themes, rather than count the total number of times that theme was mentioned. Figure three, located in Chapter Four, depicts this effort.

The first topic, gender roles, was often observed in the context of folk dancing, a common activity in the elementary general music classroom. Specifically, the issue here is that of touch. Al-Nur 24:30-31 of the Qurʾān discusses the issue of gender modesty. Here instruction guides practicing Muslim men and women to “lower their glances” and “guard their private areas."[62] In many instances, this particular hadith is interpreted as offering guidance that discourages even a handshake between individuals of the opposite gender. In addition, another hadith reads, "For one of you to be stabbed in the head with an iron needle is better for him than that he should touch a woman who is not permissible for him."[63] The cultural manifestation of this verse could range from quite visible in the classroom, to virtually undetectable. Specific cultural expressions might find children abstaining from holding hands or participating in hand games, and avoiding or modifying folk dances in order to compromise between home and school cultures. Most teachers found it not to be a major issue. If it was a female student that wished not to dance with a male student, a female teacher would simply dance with that student. The other common solution was to simply pair like genders amongst students. In one narrative, the teacher witnessed her own students making creative adaptations in that they would allow them to perform the motions without actually touching the partner. This was a valuable finding as it could be a solution for children that avoid touch for immunological concerns, or social ones as well.

The second topic that arose multiple times was that of song. Music educators noted that the act of singing had a strong tie to the Islamic conscience. Eight participants reported that students were reluctant to sing. These eight did not attribute the reasoning to religious holidays and were therefore counted toward the song thematic category. Certain Islamic texts illustrate many associations between negative behaviors and song. Some of these negative behaviors include sexual promiscuity, drunkenness, and even war. Other texts depict issues of instrumental word construction that come from the word *azf* or *the voice of the gin. See* Chapter 2 for more information on word construction, Qurʾānic textual references, and hadith textual references.

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[62] Qurʾān, Al-Nur 24:30-31.

[63] Narrated by al-Tabaraani in al-Kabeer, 486. Shaykh al-Albaani said in Saheeh al-Jaami', 5045, that this hadeeth is saheeh.

The third repeating theme was calendrical in nature. During Islamic holidays such as Ramadan and Eid, certain cultural expressions (for example abstaining from singing, and folk dancing with those of opposite gender) were more prevalent in participants' narratives. Six of the thirteen narratives brought up the topic of Islamic holidays. It seemed evident from the submitted narratives that if an educator is going to observe a particular cultural expression in the music classroom, it is likely to take place during an Islamic holiday.

The most intriguing and truly valuable information gleaned from music educator participants stemmed from what they observed in their students. Creative adaptations were often produced by the Somali student and allowed them to remain in the class and participate in one way or another. These appeased both student and teacher. These creative adaptations included lip-syncing instead of singing during Islamic holidays, speaking instead of singing throughout the year, and miming hand motions without coming in contact with a partner instead of partnering with the opposite gender. This finding prompts one to wonder what other creative adaptations might exist.

When considering the theme of song, it is evident that this topic arose in the narrative methodology more than any other theme. This was a fascinating finding as the Somali surveys did not reveal any more concern over singing than the use of instruments. This Somali survey data will be dealt with in the subsequent sub-section of this chapter. It is quite possible that this stood out to participants as a frequent observation because elementary general music teachers spend more time in song than in any other music activity. The Literature Review in this paper, however, also suggests that song is more morally concerning than the use of instruments and so for this reason the discrepancy is unsettling.

Interestingly, no teacher voiced any occurrence of children opting out of instrument usage in music class for any reason. There are two possibilities for this. Firstly, it may be as simple as recognizing that elementary music educators by and large utilize singing above all other musical tools for expression. This is a student-centered decision, as well as a teacher-centered decision. Singing is arguably something that babies do before they even talk. They explore vocally without textual understanding. There is no need to stop singing as children grow. Educators build upon their students' tonal vocabulary, and delve into the understanding of that vocabulary. It is a very natural way to explore one's own musicality from a young age. Additionally, singing can be described as teacher-centered. The voice is the most easily accessible instrument and therefore allows more time for music-making and requires less preparation. Therefore, it is possible that a music educator is more likely to notice issues with singing than issues with instrument playing.

There are many factors that deter or encourage participation of the individual. This is truly not surprising, as any culture is comprised of individuals who adhere more or less to cultural norms. Some of these factors may include the ration of Somali children to non-Somali children, the family unit's level of stringency when considering the influential Islamic texts, the personality of the child, and the music educator's creation of an environment that encourages an array of differing cultural expressions.

Somali Survey: The Process

A few methods were used to encourage family involvement in the Somali surveys. Surveys were sent home with typical beginning of the school year paperwork, in attempts to have them completed alongside other forms and documents. In addition, surveys were created to be completely anonymous and voluntary. This was clearly communicated. A return envelope was provided so that the child could return the survey to school with any other forms. Finally, surveys were created both in English and Somali. These materials went home with a letter addressing Somali families as cultural experts.

As luck would have it, many of Upper Allen Elementary School's Somali families were redistributed to Broad Street, Shepherdstown, and Northside Elementary Schools, which are still within Mechanicsburg Area School District. This meant that Upper Allen's total Somali demographic was diminished since the commencement of the study. To reach more Somali families, the surveys were distributed to Elmwood Academy, seeing as all 4th and 5th graders in the district attend this school.

Surveys were distributed on the first day of school at Upper Allen Elementary, and on the fourth day of school at Elmwood Academy. Upper Allen is one of four buildings that house grades 1-3. Elmwood Academy houses all 4th and 5th grade students. The survey strived to better understand the perceived nature of music, the expression of this nature in the American general music classroom, and its relationship to both poetry and Qurʾānic recitations. Graphic images depicting participants' collective answers to the survey questions, as well as personal comments can be viewed in the aforementioned figures.

The surveys yielded data that was at times quite conclusive and at times left something to be desired. The conclusive data can be summed up in five main points. First, ghina and sama are not seen as permissible by those that identify as Somali. Second, the Qurʾān and reliable hadith both denounce music. Third, Qurʾānic cantillation is different from music. Fourth, poetry is different from music. Finally, age of the child does not change the permissibility of music.

Inconclusive data has yet to understand other aspects of the Somali concept of music. There are specifically six areas that demand further clarification. These include a better understanding of the relationship between music and other artistic genres, moral character of each genre, function of each genre, moral character of instrument families, other Somali communities in the US, other school districts that serve Somali communities in the US, and finally individual Somali cultural expressions.

Making Meaning

Understanding the data from each methodological effort as it is related to the other is no easy feat. The narratives shared express concern around the topics of song, gender roles, and religious holidays. The Somali surveys have uncovered some concrete findings that apply to all who participated. These findings include the following: both ghina and sama are be forbidden, the Qur'an and reliable hadith denounce music, poetry is different from music, Qur'anic Cantillation is not music, and age does not determine the permissibility of music.

The next step was to relate the data found in the music educator narratives to that which was unveiled in the Somali surveys. From the data shared, it seems that Somali students are most likely to express musical concerns, or modify participation during Islamic religious holidays, but that it could occur at any point during the academic year. This could take the form of cultural expressions such as using a speaking voice instead of singing, lip syncing the lyrics of a song, finding a new dance partner of the same gender, or miming the dance motions so as not to come into contact with a partner. These occurrences are likely a direct result of the Somali belief that the Qur'an and reliable hadith denounce the practice of and listening to music.

It should be noted that individual expression of religious beliefs varies from individual to individual. The degree to which these expressions are influenced is amplified out of the context of its origins. Variables such as peer pressure, inherent American musical values, and personalities make analysis of such data challenging to say the least. An awareness, however, of the relationships between cultural expressions, and cultural beliefs regarding music has aided in an understanding of the relationship between the two.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

Summary of Study

The purpose of collecting narratives from music educators was to investigate, document, and analyze the range and variability of Somali cultural expressions that present themselves in the elementary music class. The purpose of administering the Survey was to relate such cultural expressions to their conceptual counterparts. The value of this research to the field of education is considerable. It not only affects how Somali students are taught, but also the education of their peers. A variety of teaching methods and creative assessments are always more beneficial to all students. Considering how music educators vary instruction must be done in accordance with whom they are educating. Creative instruction leads to creative assessment, which in turn leads to new creative instruction and the cycle of growth continues.

When instruction and assessment do not recognize the somewhat invisible cultural needs of a child, growth does not occur in all learners. Due to the vast range of differing cultural expressions, it is impossible to treat this research as a constant that is predictable when applied to other similar educational contexts in the US. It can, however, act as a platform for communication and set music educators and students up for success.

Summary of Findings and Prior Research

The goal of this research was to identify cultural expressions and to highlight the possible driving forces behind them so as to advance educational goals in elementary music class. Research that paved the way toward this particular design suggested that there might be more diversity of response as to the permissibility of music. The types of cultural expressions, however, were very much on par with what was discussed in the literature report. It is likely that because research participants in this study all hailed from the same tight knit community, they collectively have more similar values than would have been noted from a wider geographic pool. Additionally, participants are all currently raising families and likely to have more traditional values. Many of the families are even related to one another.

In their narratives, educators communicated their experiences observing children abstaining from or modifying song and dance, whether during Islamic holidays or throughout the academic year. In the survey, Somali individuals shared their understandings of music. A majority of findings suggest that religious texts advise, whether directly or indirectly via interpretation of the individual, against practicing and listening to music at any age. Additionally, surveys showed that Qurʾānic recitation and poetry are different from music. From the two methods of data collection, the following can be stated with some amount of confidence:

1. A Somali student’s decision to avoid song and dance during Ramadan, Eid, and possibly other holidays may stem from Islamic traditions and beliefs about the moral character of music or the activities that music leads to.
2. A Somali student’s decision to avoid song and dance at any point in the calendrical year may stem from Islamic traditions and beliefs about the moral character of music or the activities that music leads to.
3. A Somali student’s decision to modify participation in creative ways may stem from a combination of Islamic beliefs and peer influence.

Limitations

There were three limitations that this study encountered. Firstly, there were only thirteen music educators who chose to share their personal narratives. A larger number of participants would have meant more cultural expressions either affirming or diversifying the findings of this study. Secondly, fourteen Somali families chose to participate in the survey. While this number is lower than ideal, it was actually quite remarkable considering the survey was only offered in MASD. It also meant that the significance of the findings was amplified in value to the school district. The researcher maintains a state of gratitude toward those who shared a piece of their culture with her.

One additional limitation was observed. Because the Somali survey was optional, it is impossible to say that those that participated represented the entire Somali community in Mechanicsburg, PA. It is entirely possible that those who chose to participate represented the most conservatively opinionated of the community. The reason for this suspicion is that the researcher has never observed severe defiance in the music classroom. This, as stated earlier, is quite possibly due to other reasons and it would be impossible to attribute the lack of objection to any one factor.

Recommendations for Future Study

Future research can enhance that which was provided in this study in six ways. A first area of future research involves investigating relationships between music and other Somali genres. This might seek to better grasp three specific relationships. From the Somali cultural perspective, what parameters exist that differentiate between Qurʾānic recitations and music, nashīd and music, and lastly poetry and music? These genres are all comprised of tonal and rhythmic content; however this is true to different degrees. These genres also function in very different ways, as well as require different behaviors from the participant. These qualities might provide starting points for research. Specific qualities of each genre must be outlined. For instance, the tonal content of music and Qur'anic recitation are not of equal status. While reciting the Qur'an, the voice does not resemble a speech mode, but not quite resemble what one would call singing either. How then does one measure the tonal content here? Another example would be the rhythmic and tonal content of poetry. Often poetry is read over instrumental accompaniment. Sometimes it is even sung.

A second area of future research exists in the permissibility of different families of instruments. Better understanding the moral status of song, woodwinds, brass, percussion, and a multitude of musical instruments within the larger umbrella could aid in better understanding what is acceptable in music class. In the survey, Somali families did not appear to feel that singing was any more harmful than the playing of instruments. Is this true? If so, why is it that more music educators are reporting that children avoid singing, and not also instrument playing? Is it possibly because music educators tend to spend more time conducting singing activities than instrumental ones? This discrepancy is of great interest.

A third area of future research would investigate the moral standing and permissibility of music that functions in certain ways. For instance, is it morally unadvisable to listen to and participate in making music when the genre is pop, while art songs are permissible? Research must ask *how does the genre function*? Does it function socially or individually? Does it obtain moral status in the same way music does? Is it possible that function alone drives moral directives? These findings could bring cultures together in the classroom if definitions of genres are identified.

A fourth area of future research involves the geographic location of other Somali communities throughout the US that may or may not feel the same about music. MASD has taken the approach that music is for all, and the Somali community has generally not expressed great concern over the matter. That being said, there are not many Somali children who participate in optional ensembles beginning in fourth grade. Other Somali communities may have adapted to their US communities in different ways. Sharing educational trials and tribulations is a powerful method for growth.

A fifth area of future research might investigate retention rates in optional music ensembles as compared to elementary general music classes. Is MASD unique in its struggles to retain fourth and fifth grade students in optional ensemble opportunities? If so, why? What do other school districts do that assists in this retention? On the flip side, are other districts seeing a huge issue associated with participation in the elementary general music setting? Are families opting out all together? Do children avoid participation in the music class? How do the districts handle these challenges and what can we all learn from one another?

Finally, future research involving the nature of individual expression should commence. The connection between the observable cultural expression, and the underlying concepts may seem simple, however, why then do some children only adhere to this directive during religious holidays and not throughout the year? Is it a compromise on the part of the parents? One could see how a child might either amplify or downplay his or her parents' wishes when seated alongside peers. Is it possibly the prescribed expression of faith to make musical sacrifices as the student grows up? Is their more pressure from the Somali community to stray from musical activity as the child grows up? Are some holidays more prescriptive in the avoidance of music than others? Is social pressure from American peers influencing their decisions? These questions beg to be addressed in future research. In reality it is probably some of many of these, but the questions still should be asked.

In summary, more investigation is needed in several areas. Future research ought to seek better comprehension of the relationships between music and other Islamic genres, as well as understand those moral qualities associated with each. Research should also aim to better understand the permissibility of differing instrument families, and the moral value assigned to each. Similar studies to this one should be conducted in other school districts that deal with similar challenges to acquire and document a range of possibilities in providing best teaching practices. Lastly, studying the individual's expression within the larger cultural expression might be helpful in acquiring a better understanding of what music is to the Somali population.

Implications for Practice

Music Educators should consider the following four recommendations based on this study. Firstly, plan tonal assessments where students are to sing alone during days that are not Islamic holidays. Music educators regularly like to prepare children to so sing alone, but practice with others. Given the reluctance of some Somali students to sing during Islamic holidays, prepare children for assessments during other times of the year. Follow through with the actual assessment during non-holiday times as well. The two key Islamic holidays are Eid al-Fitr, and Eid al-Adha. These usually occur in April and June respectively. Ramadan is also a holiday to be aware of and it occurs during the month that stretches from the middle of March to the middle of April.

Secondly, create varied tonal assessments. There are a multitude of methods that can gauge tonal comprehension that do not involve singing. This could take the form of using instruments if these are seen as permissible with the particular Somali population. Demonstrating comprehension with Curwen hand signs is another creative means of assessing tonal comprehension. These hand signs represent both relative pitch placement and even function within the western scale. They can easily be embedded into regular teaching. Children love using Curwen hand signs and most music educators already use them to a degree.

Third, vary the delivery of content in ways that are not limited to singing (i.e. song, dance, instruments, and kinesthetic representation of music). For example, if measuring tonal comprehension, consider assessing pitches sol, mi, and la on xylophones with bars removed, or even using isolated tone bells. Curwen hands can also be of great use when gauging relative comprehension. Be sure to give plenty of practice doing so as there are other skills needed to do so. Holding mallets and finding the visual placement of tone bells and xylophone bars can be an added challenge. All students, however, can derive beneficial outcomes from these sorts of activities.

Fourth, music educators should adopt a flexible mindset. If students are seeking to generate their own creative modifications due to religion, allow them to demonstrate knowledge in a multitude of ways. One music educator narrative shared creative solutions that students came up with themselves. Lip syncing, so as to stay a part of the class and musical experience showed innovation and a desire to be in music class. If it is a small sacrifice during an Islamic holiday it will allow the child to remain in music class. Modification of movements so that genders do not touch is a simple adaptation as well. It will allow students to reap the full benefits of understanding phrase structure and form that folk dancing is so well-equipped to help children comprehend. Using a speaking voice, so long as it does not cause all children to do so, is another creative adaptation that can allow Somali children to remain in class. When doing so with younger children who do not fully grasp the full realm of what the voice can do, a teacher might be cautious about this adaptation. Depending on the number of children speaking versus singing it may or may not be a wise choice. In the spirit of creative adaptations, be observant. Often children desire to remain in the class because it is fun and social. They may just be coming up with their own modifications, and may teach you in the process!

Lastly, if cultural expressions become distracting to the class, or cause others to avoid music class, speak with administration about further communication with families. This will allow educators to set appropriate expectations as to specifically what parts of music the student can and cannot participate in. Sometimes the answers are right in front of us if we only open to the door to communicating with the families.

Summary of Implications for practice:

- Plan tonal assessments for non-Islamic holiday times of the year.
- Vary assessments.
- Vary the delivery of content and instruction for all peers.
- Be flexible and learn from your students.
- Speak with an administrator about further communication with Somali families.

Summary

The goal of this research was to relate outward observable cultural expressions to their underlying cultural counterparts. Music educator narratives and Somali surveys collectively identified a tendency to abstain from or modify some music class activities due to Islamic faith directives. Some findings were inconclusive, such as the difference between music and other artistic genres, and they left much clarity to be desired. Other findings such as a general belief that music is haram can explain much of what is seen in the music classroom.

These findings are significant as they instill understanding that inspires creative teaching solutions. The goal must be to uphold core music values while meeting the needs of a culturally dynamic classroom. This collision of worlds brings new demands, but also fosters meaningful worldly learning. Defining simple words such as *music*, and *poetry* can inform individuals and promote successful interactions through disassembling barriers. These realizations can also guide educators who are encountering cultural expressions that mimic behaviors motivated by an array of differing intentions.

A famous Somali proverb reads, "If people support each other, they do not fall."[64] Education aims to give children the support they need to stand in a changing world. Daily failures must be seen as those opportunities that open the door to our successes. When educators observe students retreating from activities that their peers enjoy participating in, one must ask why? The observable behavior is only the tip of the iceberg. What can these children do if they cannot sing? Can they demonstrate knowledge kinesthetically, or on instruments? At the same time as making accommodations, educators must not lose sight of American core music values. Americans are a group of diverse cultures. Nowhere is this truer than in the elementary general music classroom. This means music educators must reach aim to reach their students in diverse ways, not by diminishing the methods in which we reach our students but by expanding upon them. In the end, all students will be better for it, gaining and lending support to one another.

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[64] "Research on Islam and Muslims in Africa" https://muslimsinafrica.wordpress.com/2013/06/26/somali-proverbs/ June 26, 2013

Appendix A: Somali Letter (English)

Dear Mechanicsburg Cultural Experts,

For those of you I have not already met, my name is Alice Charland and I teach music at Upper Allen. I have enjoyed getting to know your wonderful children over the past five years that I have worked in Mechanicsburg. In fact, I have enjoyed teaching them and learning from them so much, that I have decided to center my graduate work on a topic that would better inform me as their teacher.

As a graduate student at Liberty University, I am required to conduct thesis research. The name of my research study is SOMALI STUDENTS IN THE AMERICAN ELEMENTARY GENERAL MUSIC CLASSROOM. I chose this topic because I want to be as informed as possible when it comes to meeting the needs of my students. This is where you come in as the cultural informants and experts. I would be in a complete state of gratitude if you felt comfortable filling out an anonymous survey that would educate me as to some of your cultural values. What I learn from you will help me in meeting the needs of our students. In addition, what I learn can be shared with other music educators both in the district and in others that also work with Somali students in the US.

Again, this survey is anonymous and completely voluntary. **Should you choose to complete the survey, you may send it back in the provided envelope with the words Attn: Music** on the outside**.**

I would like to thank you in advance for you taking the time to read this and hopefully participate. Your role as cultural experts is an asset to our district. If nothing else, know that I am truly grateful to work with such wonderful people that you are raising. Thanks!

Sincerely,
Alice L Charland

Appendix B: Somali Letter (Somali)

Khabiirada Dhaqanka ee Mechanicsburg,

Kuwiinna aanan hore ula kulmin, magacaygu waa Alice Charland waxaanan muusig ka dhiga Dugsiga Sare ee Allen. Waxaan ku riyaaqay inaan barto carruurtaada quruxda badan shantii sano ee la soo dhaafay oo aan ka shaqeeyay Mechanicsburg. Runtii, aad ayaan ugu riyaaqay waxbaridda iyo barashada iyaga, taas oo keentay in aan go'aansaday in aan shaqadayda qalin-jabinta ku saleeyo mawduuc si fiican iigu wargelinaya macallinkooda.

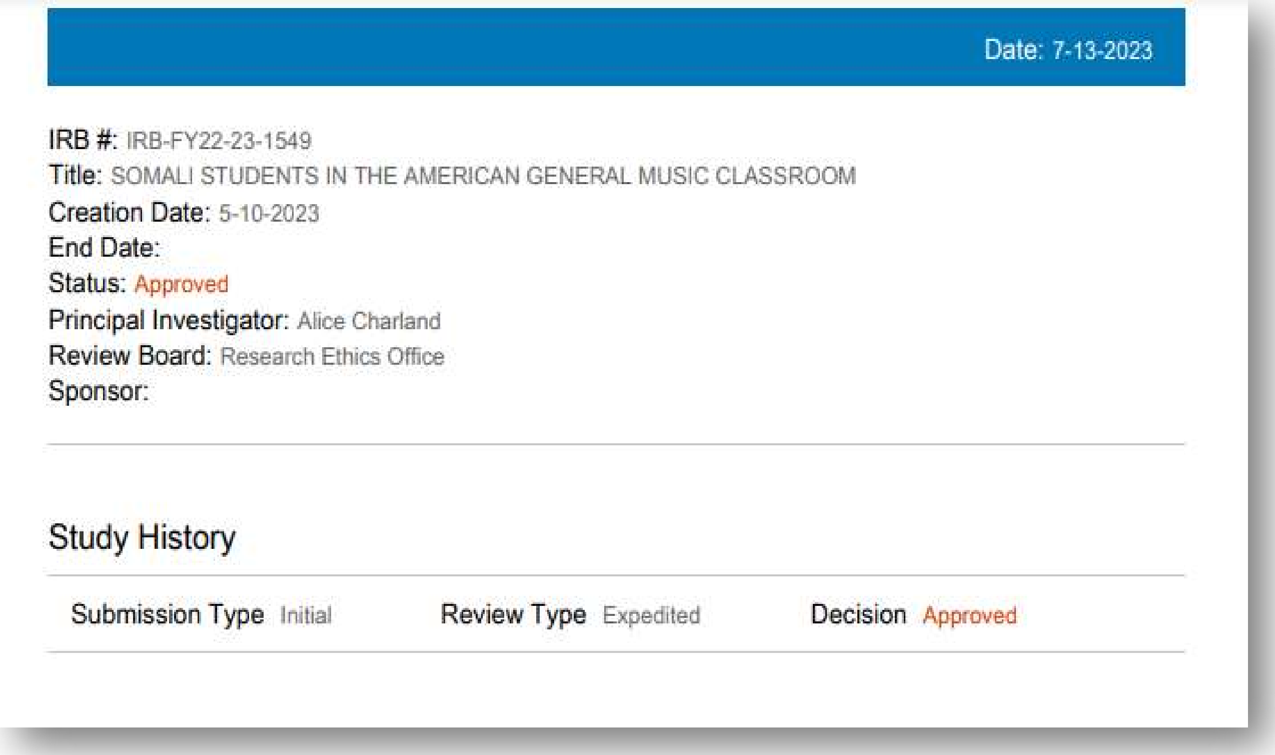
Ardayga ka qalin jabiyay Jaamacadda Liberty, waxaa la iiga baahan yahay inaan sameeyo cilmi baaris. Magaca daraasadayda cilmi-baadhistu waa ARDAYDA SOOMAALIYEED EE KU JIRTA FASALKA MUSICKA GUUD EE HOOSE EE AMERICA. Waxaan doortay mawduucan sababtoo ah waxaan rabaa in la ii sheego sida ugu macquulsan marka ay timaado daboolida baahiyaha ardayda. Tani waa meesha aad ka soo gasho khabiiro dhaqameed. Waxaan ahaan lahaa mid dhammaystiran oo mahadnaq ah haddii aad dareento inaad ku raaxaysato buuxinta sahan qarsoodi ah oo i bari doona qaar ka mid ah qiyamkaaga dhaqameed. Waxa aan kaa barto ayaa kaliya iga caawin doona inaan daboolo baahiyaha ardaydeena. Intaa waxaa dheer, waxa aan barto waxaa lala wadaagi karaa barayaasha fanka ee degmada iyo kuwa kale ee sidoo kale la shaqeeya ardayda Soomaaliyeed ee Mareykanka.

Mar labaad, sahankani waa qarsoodi oo gabi ahaanba waa ikhtiyaari. **Haddii aad doorato inaad dhammaystirto sahanka, waxaad dib ugu soo diri kartaa baqshadda lagu siiyay oo ay ku qoran yihiin ereyada Attn: Music dibadda.**

Waxaan jeclaan lahaa inaan horay kaaga mahadceliyo inaad waqtiga ku bixisay inaad akhrido kan oo aan rajeynayo inaad ka qaybgasho. Doorkaaga khabiiro dhaqameed ahaan waa hanti degmadeena. Haddaysan jirin wax kale, ogow inaan runtii aad ugu mahadcelinayo inaan la shaqeeyo dadka cajiibka ah ee aad kor u qaadayso. Mahadsanid!

Si daacad ah,
Alice L Charland

Appendix C: IRB Approval Letter



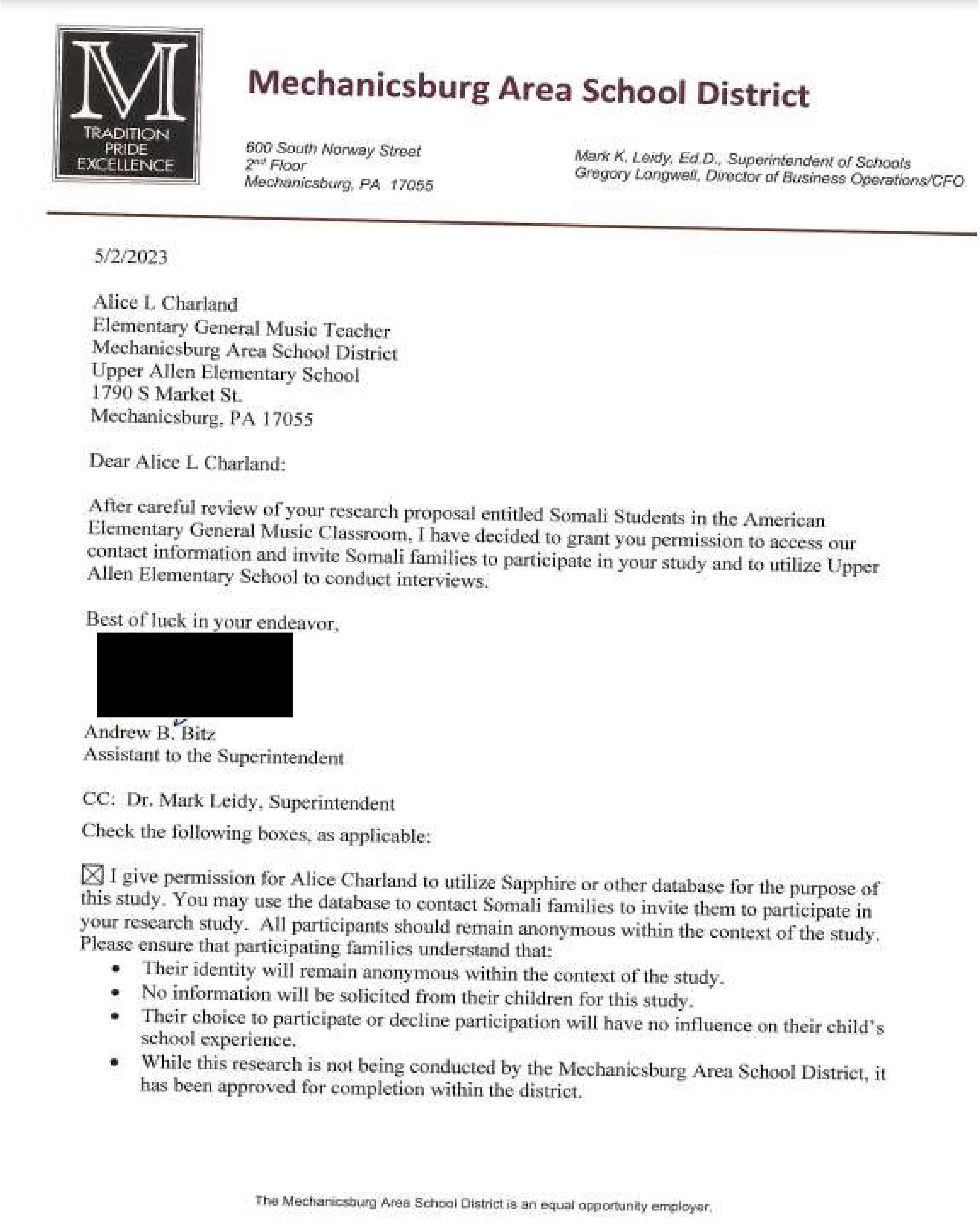
Date: 7-13-2023

IRB #: IRB-FY22-23-1549
Title: SOMALI STUDENTS IN THE AMERICAN GENERAL MUSIC CLASSROOM
Creation Date: 5-10-2023
End Date:
Status: Approved
Principal Investigator: Alice Charland
Review Board: Research Ethics Office
Sponsor:

Study History

Submission Type Initial
Review Type Expedited
Decision Approved

Appendix D: Permission from MASD



TRADITION
PRIDE
EXCELLENCE

Mechanicsburg Area School District

600 South Norway Street
2nd Floor
Mechanicsburg, PA 17055

Mark K. Leidy, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools
Gregory Longwell, Director of Business Operations/CFO

5/2/2023

Alice L Charland
Elementary General Music Teacher
Mechanicsburg Area School District
Upper Allen Elementary School
1790 S Market St.
Mechanicsburg, PA 17055

Dear Alice L Charland:

After careful review of your research proposal entitled Somali Students in the American Elementary General Music Classroom, I have decided to grant you permission to access our contact information and invite Somali families to participate in your study and to utilize Upper Allen Elementary School to conduct interviews.

Best of luck in your endeavor,

[redacted]

Andrew B. Bitz
Assistant to the Superintendent

CC: Dr. Mark Leidy, Superintendent

Check the following boxes, as applicable:

☒ I give permission for Alice Charland to utilize Sapphire or other database for the purpose of this study. You may use the database to contact Somali families to invite them to participate in your research study. All participants should remain anonymous within the context of the study. Please ensure that participating families understand that:

- Their identity will remain anonymous within the context of the study.
- No information will be solicited from their children for this study.
- Their choice to participate or decline participation will have no influence on their child's school experience.
- While this research is not being conducted by the Mechanicsburg Area School District, it has been approved for completion within the district.

The Mechanicsburg Area School District is an equal opportunity employer.

Appendix E: Summary Handout for Music Educators

Research was conducted to compile and note the range and variability of Somali cultural expressions observed in the elementary general music classroom, and to better understand those Somali core cultural beliefs about music that drive these expressions. Music teachers submitted narratives sharing what they observed, and Somali parents filled out surveys explaining their beliefs about music to achieve these two research goals.

- Music educators commonly shared the following three themes:
  1. Somali student concerns surrounding gender roles may arise during folk dance activities.
  2. Somali student concerns surrounding singing may occur.
  3. Somali student concerns regarding gender roles or song are likely to occur during Islamic holidays.

- The Somali survey yielded the following definitive understandings about music:
  1. Ghina and sama are not permissible.
  2. The Qurʾān and reliable hadith both denounce music.
  3. Qurʾānic recitation is different from music.
  4. Poetry is different from music.
  5. Age of the child does not change the permissibility of music.

The following three main points were derived from research efforts that investigated cultural expressions in the elementary general music classroom, and Somali beliefs about the nature of music. They may be used to guide teaching practices in settings where Somali students are involved.

1. A Somali student's decision to avoid song and dance during Ramadan, Eid, and possibly other holidays may stem from Islamic traditions and beliefs about the moral character of music or the activities that music leads to.
2. A Somali student's decision to avoid song and dance at any point in the calendrical year may stem from Islamic traditions and beliefs about the moral character of music or the activities that music leads to.
3. A Somali student's decision to modify participation in creative ways may stem from a combination of Islamic beliefs and peer influence.

Implications for practice:

1. Plan tonal assessments for non-Islamic holiday times of the year.
2. Vary assessments.
3. Vary the delivery of content and instruction for all peers.
4. Be flexible and learn from your students.
5. Speak with an administrator about further communication with Somali families.

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