

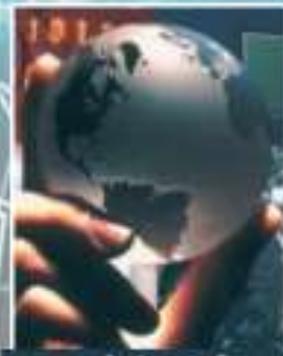


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**Music and Literature as Tools for Intergenerational Cultural Transmission****Polvonniyozova Mahliyo O'ktamjon qizi**

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Abstract. The transmission of culture across generations is a fundamental process through which societies preserve their values, beliefs, identities, and collective memories. Among the many mechanisms that enable this process, music and literature occupy a particularly significant position due to their emotional resonance, narrative power, and durability across time. This article examines music and literature as key tools of intergenerational cultural transmission, drawing on theories of cultural and communicative memory, orality and literacy, and cultural inheritance. Grounded in the works of Jan Assmann, Aleida Assmann, Walter J. Ong, Albert B. Lord, and contemporary interdisciplinary research on cultural transmission, the study explores how music and literature function as repositories of cultural memory and as active practices through which cultural knowledge is passed from one generation to the next. Through theoretical analysis and comparative discussion, the article demonstrates that music and literature not only preserve cultural content but also shape identity formation, social cohesion, and continuity in rapidly changing societies. The findings highlight the continued relevance of artistic forms as powerful tools for sustaining cultural heritage in both traditional and modern contexts.

Keywords: cultural transmission, cultural memory, music, literature, intergenerational communication, identity

Introduction. Culture does not exist independently of the people who inherit, practice, and reinterpret it. Each generation receives cultural knowledge from previous generations and, in turn, reshapes and transmits it to the next. This process of intergenerational cultural transmission ensures continuity while allowing adaptation to new historical and social conditions. In the contemporary world, characterized by globalization, digitalization, and rapid social change, questions concerning how culture is preserved and transmitted have become increasingly urgent.

Music and literature have long played a central role in this process. Folk songs, epics, myths, poems, novels, and sacred texts have historically functioned as vessels of cultural memory, encoding shared values, moral norms, historical experiences, and collective identities. Unlike purely informational forms of transmission, music and literature engage emotion, imagination, and aesthetics, making them particularly effective tools for cultural continuity.

This article aims to provide a comprehensive theoretical analysis of music and literature as tools for passing culture across generations. Drawing on established theories of cultural memory (Assmann, 2008, 2011; Assmann, 2012), orality and literacy (Ong, 2012), and oral tradition (Lord, 1960), as well as recent



interdisciplinary research on music as a cultural inheritance system (Rehfeldt et al., 2021; Lumaca & Baggio, 2018), the study examines the mechanisms through which these art forms facilitate cultural transmission. The article argues that music and literature operate both as cultural archives and as living practices that enable societies to negotiate identity, continuity, and change.

Theoretical Framework: Cultural Memory and Intergenerational Transmission. The concept of cultural memory provides a crucial theoretical foundation for understanding how culture is transmitted across generations. Jan Assmann (2008) distinguishes between communicative memory and cultural memory. Communicative memory refers to everyday, informal memory shared within living generations, typically spanning three to four generations. Cultural memory, by contrast, is institutionalized and preserved through symbolic forms such as texts, rituals, monuments, and works of art, allowing societies to maintain continuity over centuries.

Music and literature belong primarily to the domain of cultural memory. They function as symbolic media that store and transmit meaning beyond the lifespan of individuals. According to Assmann (2011), writing and artistic expression transform memory into a durable cultural archive, enabling societies to reflect on their past and construct shared narratives of identity. Literature, in particular, serves as a medium through which historical experiences, ethical values, and cultural norms are encoded and reinterpreted over time.

Aleida Assmann (2012) further expands this framework by emphasizing the role of cultural media and archives in shaping collective memory. She argues that cultural continuity depends not only on preservation but also on active engagement with cultural texts and practices. In this sense, music and literature are not static repositories but dynamic forms that require performance, reading, and interpretation. Each generation participates in cultural memory by reactivating and recontextualizing these forms.

Intergenerational cultural transmission also involves socialization processes through which younger generations learn cultural norms and meanings. Tam (2015) highlights that such transmission occurs through family, education, and community practices, often mediated by cultural artifacts such as stories, songs, and rituals. Music and literature thus function as bridges between personal experience and collective heritage, enabling individuals to internalize cultural values in emotionally meaningful ways.

Music as a Medium of Cultural Transmission. Music is one of the oldest and most universal forms of cultural expression. Across cultures, musical traditions have been used to mark rituals, celebrate communal events, transmit historical narratives, and reinforce social norms. From lullabies and folk songs to religious



chants and national anthems, music plays a vital role in shaping cultural identity and continuity.

Recent interdisciplinary research conceptualizes music as a cultural inheritance system. Rehfeldt et al. (2021) argue that musical behaviors are transmitted through social learning mechanisms similar to those observed in language and other cultural practices. Musical patterns, styles, and meanings are learned through imitation, participation, and repetition, allowing them to persist across generations. Lumaca and Baggio (2018) provide experimental and cognitive evidence for the cultural transmission of music. Their research demonstrates how musical structures can evolve over successive generations of learners, becoming more structured and culturally recognizable over time. This process highlights the adaptive nature of musical transmission, in which cultural continuity coexists with innovation.

Music's effectiveness as a tool for cultural transmission lies partly in its emotional power. Musical experiences often evoke strong affective responses, which enhance memory and facilitate learning. Songs associated with childhood, family, or community rituals often become deeply embedded in personal identity, reinforcing cultural belonging. Through repetition and shared performance, music creates a sense of collective participation that strengthens intergenerational bonds.

Moreover, music often functions in oral contexts, making it accessible even in societies with limited literacy. Folk songs and oral musical traditions enable the transmission of cultural knowledge without reliance on written texts, ensuring inclusivity and continuity. In this sense, music serves as both a mnemonic device and a social practice that sustains cultural memory.

Literature, Orality, and the Transmission of Culture

Literature has historically played a central role in preserving and transmitting cultural knowledge. From oral epics and myths to written novels and poetry, literary forms encode shared values, historical experiences, and moral frameworks. The transition from orality to literacy, however, significantly transformed the mechanisms of cultural transmission.

Walter J. Ong's (2012) theory of orality and literacy provides a key framework for understanding this transformation. Ong argues that oral cultures rely on formulaic expressions, repetition, and narrative structures to preserve knowledge, while literate cultures externalize memory through written texts. Despite these differences, both oral and written literature serve as tools for cultural continuity.

Albert B. Lord's (1960) study of oral epic traditions demonstrates how storytellers transmit complex narratives across generations without fixed texts. Through formulaic composition and performance, oral poets adapt stories to new contexts while preserving core cultural meanings. This process illustrates the dynamic nature of cultural transmission, in which stability and variation coexist.

Written literature extends the temporal reach of cultural memory. Texts can be preserved, copied, and studied across centuries, allowing societies to maintain



continuity with their past. Literary canons, sacred texts, and national literatures often serve as foundational elements of cultural identity. Through education and literary socialization, younger generations are introduced to shared narratives that shape their understanding of history, morality, and belonging.

At the same time, literature invites interpretation and reinterpretation. Each generation reads literary texts through the lens of its own historical and social context, thereby renewing their cultural significance. This dialogic relationship between text and reader ensures that literature remains a living component of cultural transmission rather than a static archive.

Comparative Discussion: Music and Literature as Cultural Technologies

Both music and literature function as cultural technologies that mediate intergenerational transmission, yet they do so in distinct but complementary ways. Music operates primarily through performance, embodiment, and emotion, while literature relies more heavily on narrative structure, symbolism, and textual preservation. Together, they form a multifaceted system of cultural memory.

Music's immediacy and emotional impact make it particularly effective in early socialization. Lullabies, children's songs, and communal music-making introduce cultural values at an early age, often before formal education begins. Literature, especially in written form, becomes more prominent in later stages of socialization, providing complex narratives and abstract reflection.

Both forms also contribute to identity formation. National anthems, folk songs, and literary classics often symbolize collective identity and historical continuity. Through engagement with these forms, individuals locate themselves within a broader cultural narrative. As Assmann (2012) suggests, cultural memory is not merely about the past but about constructing meaningful connections between past, present, and future.

In contemporary societies, digital media have transformed the modes of cultural transmission, but the core functions of music and literature remain intact. Digital platforms enable new forms of access, remixing, and dissemination, allowing younger generations to engage with cultural heritage in innovative ways. This adaptability underscores the resilience of music and literature as tools of cultural transmission.

Implications for Education and Cultural Sustainability

Understanding music and literature as tools of intergenerational cultural transmission has important implications for education and cultural policy. Educational systems play a crucial role in mediating access to cultural heritage through curricula, textbooks, and artistic education. Integrating music and literature into educational practices can enhance cultural awareness, empathy, and identity formation.

From a sustainability perspective, preserving cultural diversity requires active support for artistic traditions and literary heritage. In a globalized world, where dominant cultural forms often overshadow local traditions, music and literature provide avenues for maintaining cultural plurality. Encouraging intergenerational engagement with these forms can strengthen social cohesion and cultural resilience.



Furthermore, recognizing the dynamic nature of cultural transmission challenges static notions of heritage. Rather than viewing culture as something to be preserved unchanged, this perspective emphasizes creative continuity and adaptation. Music and literature exemplify this balance, as they allow societies to honor their past while responding to contemporary realities.

Conclusion. Music and literature play a fundamental role in passing culture across generations by serving as repositories of cultural memory and as active practices of meaning-making. Drawing on theories of cultural memory, orality and literacy, and cultural inheritance, this article has demonstrated how these art forms facilitate intergenerational transmission through emotional engagement, narrative structure, and social participation.

Music, with its affective power and performative nature, fosters communal bonds and early cultural socialization. Literature, through oral and written forms, preserves complex narratives and ethical frameworks that shape collective identity. Together, they constitute a powerful system of cultural transmission that ensures continuity while allowing transformation.

In an era of rapid change, the enduring relevance of music and literature underscores their importance for cultural sustainability. By engaging with these forms, societies not only remember their past but also imagine their future, ensuring that cultural heritage remains a living and evolving force across generations.

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