

**Thesis Title: Song and Nation: A Study of the Secondary School Song Competition
Original Song Composition in Uganda**

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Abstract

Competition is a dynamic process by which various identities are performed, constructed, reconstructed, and deconstructed on stage, creating conditions in which tensions, solidarity, sensitivity, and harmony can be reflected. Drawing on both postcolonial and performance theories, particularly the ideas of nationalism, hybridity and liminality, I argue, in this study, that students in their performance of song, occupy trans-spatial and imaginative realms. Consequently; these students can interact with themselves and their community in contesting and reimagining their nation even across transnational networks. To sustain the argument, using a qualitative approach, data were collected through focus group discussions with the student performers; key informant interviews with the teachers and practitioners in competition song performances; observation of the performance events; and documentary review and analysis. Findings from this study revealed that children, in their performance of the original song composition, occupy ambivalent spaces allowing them to transition between adult and children's spaces. Additionally, these students can both consciously and unconsciously interrogate issues of national history, nationalism, and national and cultural identity. In doing this, they are able to construct and reimagine their future, one where they can ensure the continuity and survival of their communities and nation. This study has implications for why studying performance within the context of national experience, policy and the vision for the future is critical. Additionally, these findings contribute novel methods on how to study competition song performance as a collaborative, solution focused process aiming at discussing national issues and finding solutions to national problems. The intergenerational dialogue between children and adults, and their experiences in Uganda paves the way for a broader understanding of how children construct and (re)imagine their unique identity and aspirations through a contestation of their position as vulnerable citizens of the Ugandan nation.