Teachers’ Perceptions of the Construction of National Identity through the Primary School Social Studies Program in Malawi

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Abstract:

This study looks at social studies teachers’ perceptions of Malawi’s national identity as it is promoted through Malawi’s primary school social studies education. The following research questions were posed: 1) What are teachers' perceptions of national identity in Malawi? 2) What are teachers' perceptions of Malawi's primary school social studies curriculum? and 3) What are teachers' perceptions of the practice of constructing national identity through primary school social studies curriculum in Malawi? The recent revision of Malawi’s social studies curriculum allows for a new analysis on the relationship between Western neocolonialism and its affect on the shaping of Malawian national identity, as exampled by Malawi’s social studies program. This study will therefore contribute to existing literature regarding the role of social studies education and the construction of national identity as well as the impact the West has on the maintenance of African national identity. Using semi-structured interviews with ten practicing primary school social studies teachers and one social studies curriculum specialist in the Domasi district, Southern Region of Malawi, I found that Malawi’s social studies curriculum is promoting Malawian national identity as perceived by the interviewees. However, the interviewees illuminated contextual factors that hinder the implementation of the new curriculum.
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Chapter 1: Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to determine teachers’ perceptions of Malawi’s national identity as promoted through primary school social studies education in Malawi. It is important to study teacher’s perceptions of the construction of African national identity as promoted through social studies education because it helps to further understand the relationship between social studies education and national identity, as well as illuminate social forces that affect national identity. I was able to conduct semi-structured, in-depth interviews with ten primary school social studies teachers and one curriculum specialist in the Domasi district, Southern Region of Malawi. I critically interpreted the data by looking for themes that arose out of the interviews.

For successful nation-states, national identity is imperative. National identities are subject to socio-cultural and historical contexts. One tentacle with which to shape national identity is education. Social studies education in particular is integral to the “way in which the ‘nation’ comes to understand itself” (Tormey 2006:316). Therefore, an exploration of social studies education can illuminate the socio-historical context of a nation and the forces shaping national identity.

The 1990’s was a period of major change in Malawi, a sub-Saharan African country. In 1994, a referendum was passed to make Malawi a multiparty state, a democracy. In addition, Malawi’s social studies curriculum was Africanized “developed from and centered on African peoples’ experiences, thought, and environments” (Merryfield and Tlou 1994:260). The purpose for the Africanization of Malawi’s social studies curriculum content, according to Tlou and Merryfield (1994:260), was to create “knowledge and attitudes that build nationalism, African
identity, and appreciation of African history, cultures, and environments.” The proposed research seeks to understand teachers’ perceptions of the social studies curriculum and its role in promoting Malawian national identity through the recently revised curricula. It will particularly focus on any contentions that might exist between social studies teachers’ conceptions of their own national identity and the one being promoted through the social studies curriculum, as well as the influence of contextual factors on both national identity and social studies curriculum, as perceived by the social studies teachers in Malawi.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

National identity is imperative to nation building. Education is an important tool which can be used to shape national identity. However, both education and national identity are dependent upon historical, social, political, and economic contextual factors. The following will be a discussion of the formation of African national identities as they are understood today and the impact the West has had on shaping those identities, particularly looking at this process as it is in Malawi. I will first discuss Indigenous African Knowledge and Western Education, and then discuss the formation of African nation-states and Colonialism; the War for Liberation and National Consciousness; Political Independence and Neo-colonialism; African educational reform, particularly social studies; the relationship between social studies education and nation building; a brief history of Malawi and social studies education.

2.1 Indigenous African Knowledge and Western Education

Western education, as it was employed in Africa, differed vastly from traditional African educational systems. They [African Indigenous Knowledge and Western formal education] are distinguishable in that Western scientific knowledge proposes the universe can be dominated and
controlled, while Indigenous African knowledge argues for peaceful, holistic coexistence with nature (Mkosi 2005). While Indigenous African Knowledge frames a circular world view developing concrete understandings of natural and social environments in which there exists “no separation of education and productive activity,” Western education systems are separated into formal (i.e. schooling) and informal education (Rodney 1982; Abdi 2005). Western formal education is further divided into specific disciplines or subjects, what Clark (2006) refers to as the division of academic labor.

As I propose to explore Malawian national identity and education’s role therein, it is pertinent that I discuss the educational frameworks of both Indigenous African knowledge and Western education¹. While it is possible to distinguish between these two frameworks, it is impressed that they are not a strict dichotomy (Dei and Asgharadeh 2005). My research question is related to education as it is today in Malawi, a sub-Saharan country. Due to Africanization, which I will discuss later, it is appropriate to discuss both European and African perspectives.

African traditional systems of education are distinguished by complex constructions of learning associated with achievement and expectations, a system which was in place long before European imposition (Abdi and Cleghorn 2005; Diop 1990; Jackson 1970; van Sertima 1991). Indigenous knowledge is a holistic education that has accumulated over generations within an exceptional space or territory, allowing a community to develop concrete understanding of natural and social environments, framing a circular worldview (Dei and Asgharadeh 2005; Mkosi 2005; Rodney 1982; see also Agrawal 1995). Ultimately Indigenous knowledge

¹ Note that I use the words Western and European intermittently. Those countries identified as the West have all been Europeanized. For example, the United States is fundamental to a definition of the “West,” historically it is a tentacle of Europe. I acknowledge that the broad use of the terms African and European can be problematic, yet it is appropriate for a discussion of educational frameworks (Shizha, 2005).
articulates education serves the purpose of imparting key “values, norms, and social mores” which, together, comprise the community’s cultural focal point, for the purpose of creating “social responsibility” within the community (Dei and Asgharadeh 2005).

European theoretical frameworks of education are closely associated with society’s economic context of capitalism, with the exception of critical and feminist theories that are deemed exceedingly political (Abdi and Cleghorn 2005; Bray, Clarke and Stevens 1986). European educational frameworks are grouped by those who propose education as functional, critical, and a tool for change (Durkheim 1956; Friere 1970). As it has already been stated, European education has been categorized as formal, informal, and non-formal. I am going to particularly look at the European educational concept of schooling, which Brint (2006:1) defines as the “more organized form of education that takes place in schools,” while he depreciates other ways of learning as occurring “willy-nilly throughout life” (own emphasis added).

The functionalist perspective reasons education’s purpose is to create a person’s occupational fit into society. European societies, and as a result the European academy as a whole, are highly stratified with both divided labor and academic labor (Durkheim 1956; Bray, Clarke and Stevens 1986). European education is instructed by the economy, providing individuals with a system of norms, values, and skills that permit the economic and occupational structure to maintain equilibrium, or close to it (Bray, Clarke and Stevens 1986; Durkheim 1956; Abdi 2005). According to the functionalist framework, the system of schooling socializes individuals based on the whole of society’s economic requirements, and then dispenses them into society; ultimately, society’s economic and occupational structures dictate education in schools (Abdi and Cleghorn 2005). For functionalists the purpose of education is to bolster laborers for
the economic structure, which in theory offers equal opportunities for all to achieve upward social mobility (Abdi and Cleghorn 2005).

Other European educational theorists disagree, instead becoming critical of education’s role in perpetuating inequalities. Within the capitalist economic structure is the dominate group also referred to as the Bourgeois, who exploit average folk, the Proletariat. Collins argued schooling is a tool to transmit the dominant class’s status culture, or lifestyle (Abdi and Cleghorn 2005). Cultural selection is prevalent in schooling, implying a “struggle between status culture groups and how status culture is learned in school” (Abdi and Cleghorn 2005:15).

Bourdieu and Passeron extrapolated on Collins’s idea of status culture arguing that cultural reproduction reinforces society’s social and economic inequalities (Abdi and Cleghorn 2005). Education is a means to transmit the dominate culture and ideology; thus transforming “cultural capital into academic capital” (Abdi and Cleghorn 2005:16). This process is legitimized on the basis of meritocracy principles, in which the elided are rewarded based on individual characteristics by the dominant group using “the skills of domination” (Abdi and Cleghorn 2005:17).

Education is also a tool for interpretation. This perspective analyzes structural variables, their interaction, and how this combination affects a person’s view of life and their actions therein (Abdi and Cleghorn 2005). After analyzing societal, institutional, interpersonal, and intra-physic elements as well as the works of Marx and Weber, Persells noted the interdependence of structures of domination and their associated ideologies (Abdi and Cleghorn 2005). Schooling, institutionalized education, reflects “the structural needs of society” to maintain “existing structures of dominance” (Abdi and Cleghorn 2005:17). Due to the system of
schooling and society’s differential expectations, teacher’s perceptions of minority and lower class students “serve to limit [their] educational attainment” (Abdi and Cleghorn 2005:17).

Lastly, critical theories of European education argue education is not a result of the economic structure but is rather derived from the political structure of society. Critical theorists derive their framework from Friere’s critique of education within colonial political projects. Friere (1970) contends colonial education creates a culture of silence that elides colonized people’s histories so that the colonial project could progress. However, Friere (1970) maintains that for as much as education can be used to elide it can also be used to liberate. Rather than banking knowledge where the students reiterate what teacher the teacher puts forth, Friere (1970) argues education must include both critical thought and dialogue.

2.2 Colonialism and the Formation of African Nations

In the area defined as Africa, there existed numerous states and dynastic kingdoms that possessed basic elements of statehood recognized by most scholars, including but not limited to, organized monarchies, centralized authorities, democratic principles and popular sovereignty (Ohaegbulam 1977; Mazrui and Tidy 1984). Interactions between African states and kingdoms and European nations began in the fourteenth century, as evidenced by numerous treaties between them (Ohaegbulam 1977).

However, the imposition of European imperialism, in the form of colonialism, battered the “territorial integrity and political independence” of African states and kingdoms (Ohaegbulam 1977; Rodney 1982). The European nation’s who forged political territories in Africa created multi-national, or multi-ethnic, territories that did not have a collective and political homogeneity (Ohaegbulam 1977). Ultimately, however, it was colonialism through its
artificial borders and decisive colonial rule that united the multi-nations into the geo-political African nations as they exist today (Ohaegbulam 1977; Rotberg 1967; Sithole 1968).

Colonialism was a chronological stage of imperialism in which capitalism and dehumanization were employed for the domination and exploitation of a peoples for the colonizers economic gain and, as Van Sertima (1991) states, was one of the greatest disasters of all time second only to the Flood of religious references (Nkruhmah 1962). The colonial project extensively elided traditional African educational and cultural structures, along with “indigenously based and comprehensive programs of development” (Abdi 2005:33; Rodney 1982; Nyerere 1968). The subjugation of Africa was enacted through numerous phalanxes of the colonial project including but not limited to racialized psychological internalization and social and cultural ingestion (Boahen 1987; Gladwin and Saidin 1980; Friere 1970). The racialized psychological impact of internalization, as described by Gladwin, “bent the minds and will of brown people to make them servants of their own exploitation”, educating them to “have an inferiority complex, to tremble, to kneel, [and to] despair” (Gladwin and Saidin 1980:1; Cesaire 2004:343). Aime Cesaire (2004:342), in his work *Between Colonizer and Colonized*, described how colonization prepared “the indigenous man into an instrument of production” equating colonization with “thingification.”

The European colonial project utilized both informal, for example terror, and formal education, for example schooling, as tools to inflict Africa’s subjugation. Formal Western education was a phalanx of the colonial project exploited by European colonizers to alienate and manipulate the people whom they colonized (Zahar 1974). Ali Abdi argues the requests by the “dominant white race” to bring education to colonized people was an example of the colonizers
“twisted logic of colonizer-colonized relationships” in which Africans were infantilized and whites were “humanely” coming “to the rescue of disenfranchised indigenous populations” (Abdi 2005:33; see Pells 1970 [1930]). From an imperialist, and therefore colonial perspective, economic exploitation and social development went hand in hand; so much so that education was seen not only as a way to “train ‘natives’ to serve colonial regimes” but also a tool for enlightenment (Sharkey 2003:3).

Enlightenment, for the colonizers, really translated to representing reality through imperial tentacularity and lexicon. Most Western education in Africa, especially before the mid-19th century, was funded and conducted by missionaries whose purpose was “religious conversion” (Mafela and Mgadla 2000:2). Colonial governments did not generally fund colonial education, except for extremely limited grant-in-aid programs, however they did rigidly control the curriculum (Mafela and Mgadla 2000). The school curricula particularly inflicted and promoted colonial socio-racial, economic, and gender expectations that were used as a “system of control” (Mafela and Mgadla 2000:3; Rust 1991).

The colonial educational process sought to alienate Africans from their own reality, history, language, culture, traditions, and economic opportunities (Mafela and Mgadla 2000; Zahar 1974; wa Thion’o 1986; Shizha 2005; Altbach and Kelly 1984; Friere 1970; Fanon 1963). Consequently, the colonial curricula promoted “the colonial power’s” history, culture, and values (Tlou and Kabwila 2000:217). Colonial powers purposefully sought to teach African history incorrectly, with “crude falsifications” hoping it would make the colonized lack identity with a “limited sense of their past” (Diop 1974:xiv; Shizha 2005:71; Friere 1970; Altbach and
Kelly 1984; X 1999). In speaking of this process Fanon (1963:211) stated in *The Wretched of the Earth*,

“colonialism is not satisfied with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native’s brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures, and destroys it. This work of devaluing pre-colonial history has taken on a dialectical significance today.”

Historical violence has been perpetrated by Europeans against many parts of the world including Africa. As Nandy (1995) notes in his article *History’s Forgotten Doubles*, the linear conception of history as it is afforded today is a Western concept that is not shared across societies. For instance, Nandy (1995:44) argues non-Western “theories of the past” afford no distinction between the present, past, and future. European sociologists Marx and Engels who theorized historical dialectics contended Africa and other regions of the world were ahistorical or without history. Interestingly, and with a spin, Nandy (1995:44) is in somewhat of an agreement, arguing that those people considered ahistorical *do* reside outside of history, but only because they have alternative “theories of the past.”

The undervaluing of African history in colonial education was overt in all colonies. However despite this similarity, colonial education was not conducted uniformly across African colonies but rather each European colonial power shaped colonial education to fit the specific needs of their colony. For example, the French implemented a curriculum of assimilation, while the British imposed a curriculum that explicitly otherized Africans (Zahar 1974:44). Although colonial education varied depending upon the European colonial power the overarching results for Africans subjected to colonial education were the same. Aime Cesaire (2004:342) argues colonial education, or the “parody” thereof, was used for “the hasty manufacture of a few

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2 It is important to note that formal schooling was not supplied for the masses of the colonized people, rather only a select few were afforded formal western education.
thousand subordinate functionaries, ‘boys’, artisans, office clerks, and interpreters’ necessary for smooth operation” of the colonial project. Kallaway (1984:173) illustrated how Bantu education in apartheid South Africa subjected the colonized

“to a school system which drew him away from his community and misled him by showing him the green pastures of European society in which he was not allowed to graze.”

Kofi Busia (1973:125), the Prime Minister of Ghana between 1969 and 1972, described his alienating experience as a result of Western formal education,

“At the end of my first year at the secondary school I went home to Wenchi for the Christmas vacation. I had not been home for four years, and on that visit, I became painfully aware of my isolation. I understood our community far less than boys of my own age who had never been to school. I felt I did not belong to it as much as they did. It was a traumatic experience.”

As a result, Western educated Africans were the most alienated from their own history, language, culture, and traditions (Rodney 1982:275).

2.3 The War for Liberation and African National Identity

Colonialism engaged Africans in a constant war for liberation. The war for liberation required the mobilization of the masses, a movement often defined as African Nationalism. African nationalism has been defined in various ways; politically as a “feeling seeking relentlessly to eliminate eurocracy [European rule] by supplanting it with afrocracy [African rule]” (Sithole 1968:99) or more holistically as a “claim for equality of status and of rights, for personal dignity, self-respect, full participation in the things of the material world as well as things of the spirit” (Sithole 1968:99). Ultimately, the “key ideas are political, economic, cultural, religious, and racial” (Ohaegbulam 1977).
In his book *Wretched of the Earth*, Frantz Fanon (1963) speaks of violence and national consciousness as two phenomena relevant to the struggle for true decolonization. He argues for true decolonization to occur war must be waged against all facets of colonial violence including but not limited to ideological, cultural, and economic. Additionally, Fanon (1963) states that it was colonialism and the struggle for liberation that created national consciousnesses and collective histories within European forged geo-political African nations. National consciousness grew out of awareness that their respective cultures were being systematically destroyed through the colonial project (Fanon 1963). The very survival of their cultures and themselves, “lie[d] in their cohesion, in the true understanding of their interests, and in knowing who their enemies are” (Fanon 1963:191; Englund 2004). Ultimately, the war for liberation shaped collective history, national consciousness, and national destiny.

National consciousness, or further national identity, is imperative for successful nation building (Englund 2004:1; Taylor 1994). As Diop (1974) illustrated, the collective personality of a people consists of the collective psyche, linguistic, and history. Wa Thiong’o particularly illustrates “language as culture is the collective memory bank of a people’s experience in history” imperative for the structure of “identity and value for a nation or a people” (Kanneh 1998:36). The war for liberation, as explained by Fanon, created national consciousness and therefore after political independence African nations were challenged with solidifying national identities for the purpose of successfully building their nations (Ohaegbulam 1977; Mazrui and Tidy 1984; Fanon 1963).

**2.4 Political Independence and Neo-colonialism**
The 1960’s brought political independence but not true decolonization, meaning Western nations maintain influence in African national affairs (Fanon 1963; Nkrumah 1965; Englund 2004; Smith 1973). Today African nations, in shaping national identities, have to reconcile the weight of Western influence and their own identities. Kanneh (1998) illuminates Western influence on African nations is dominating, not reciprocal especially in regards to language and culture. For instance, wa Thiong’o argued the linguistic identity of Africa was subject to violence when African literature written in European languages is identified as African, rather it should be identified as “Afro-European literature” (Kanneh 1998:37). Ultimately, Kanneh (1998:37) argues, in agreement with wa Thiong’o, that the politics of identity in Africa must confront the West and maintain “tension of [the] boundaries [that] create Africa’s otherness.” Without otherness African nations would not be able to refuse “Western incursion,” and therefore risk losing their identity or recognition thereof (Kanneh 1998:37).

Western incursions continue to encroach on African nations from many fronts including economically, politically, and socially. As early as 1965 Nkrumah illustrated how “former” colonial powers continued to economically elide African nations through many means including the monopolization of natural resources, company ownership and low-wages. For example, Malawi is the second largest African exporter of tea. However, 93% of Malawi’s exported tea and 85% of Malawian land used to produce tea is owned by eleven companies (Eldring 2003). Of the eleven companies, only one is owned by a company of non-European descent (Eldring 2003). This illustrates the monopolization of resources, as well as the monopolization of ownership. Vakhrushev (1973:138) specifically identified some economic methods of neo-colonialism as
“new ways of exporting capital, more refined trading practices, various ‘aid’ and ‘development’ programmes, the granting of formal independence to colonies ... more subtle forms of intervention in internal affairs, and finally attempts to use internal and regional organizations in the interests of that same colonial policy.”

The majority of African nations face severe poverty, low standards of living, and increased health problems as a result of Western economic oppression.

Politically, the West infiltrated African nations by enacting violence, physical and economic, for the purpose of serving their own best interests (Gleijeses 2002). Western countries turned blind eyes to human rights violations and atrocities committed in African nations because it was those very governments that served the West’s economic interests.

More recently, however, Western democracy and human rights have been instituted in Africa nations, albeit deficiently (Englund 2004). Englund (2006) illustrates how Western non-governmental organizations (NGO) have negatively affected the institution of democracy and human rights in African nations. The impact human rights discourse has had on African socio-cultural traditions and values is immense. Ribohn (2002) found that human rights discourse in Malawi has been defined according to Western connotations as in opposition to local socio-cultural values. However, Ribohn (2002:177) argues human rights will never gain the needed grassroots support so long as “culture” is defined as “violating human rights.” Rather, Malawians have to attempt to define human rights and the process “through which people achieve and maintain dignity and respect” (Ribohn 2002:177).

African social and cultural realities are not incompatible with democracy and human rights, however through mistranslations and elitism Englund (2004:51) argues Western NGO’s have “hijacked” the idea of human rights making for the “virtual disappearance of alternative
translations and coinages.” Specifically, Englund refers to the mistranslation process in Malawi. A NGO sponsored out of Germany mistranslated human rights in Chichewa as “freedoms.” In the process of civic education the NGO only hired Malawians who spoke fluent English, the colonizer’s language, in turn creating elitism and misunderstandings of human rights and democracy (Englund 2006). Kayambazinthu and Moyo (2002) illustrate how the ideas of “freedoms” dominate Malawi’s democratic constitution and have resulted in a lack of limitations for expressions of hate speech and intolerance. Ultimately, Kayambazinthu and Moyo (2002) argue hate speech is being used by politicians to misdirect attention from serious contextual factors affecting Malawi to “issues that sometimes do not exist,” effectually perpetuating genuine and forged problems.

2.5 Historical and Contemporary African Educational Reform, particularly Social Studies Education

Newly politically independent African nations were challenged with the tasks of uniting their perspective countries and decolonizing the minds of their citizens, while promoting national development. African nations were also left with a colonial education system that was used to oppress by enforcing a culture of silence, in which their citizens were alienated from their own psyches, languages, and histories (Friere 1970; Fanon 1963; X 1999; Kincaid 1988). Although used to elide, education can be used to violently and critically deconstruct oppressed persons’ perspectives of their own socio-historical situation as it has been forced by the oppressors, ultimately allowing for liberation (Giroux 2001). Friere (1970:75) argues that as a tool for liberation, education must engage students to think critically about their socio-historical situation while at the same time, allowing for the quest of “mutual humanization.”
African nations understood both the liberating power of education and its role in nation-building and therefore quickly worked to revise their educational systems; albeit differently. Across nations two main educational reforms were conducted including universalizing education and revising curriculums to reflect African social life, culture, and history (Shizha 2005; Merryfield and Tlou 1995). Particular concern over inherited educational systems prompted eleven African nations including Botswana, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia to meet with “representatives from the U.S. Education Development Center (EDC) and the English Centre for Curriculum Renewal and Educational Development Overseas (CREDO)” to discuss ways of improving “curriculum and instruction” (Merryfield 1988). As a result, in 1968 these same countries formed the African Social Studies Programme (ASSP) for the purpose of creating an Africanized social studies program which includes both the curriculum and implementation process.

The African Social Studies program defined social studies as the integration of history, geography, and civics (Merryfield 1988). According to the ASSP, social studies education is pertinent to nation building because it contributes to the areas of

"national integration," "problems of rapid economic development," and "the promotion of self-confidence and initiative based on an understanding of one's own worth and of the essential dignity of man" (Report on…1968:9).

In order to achieve these goals, as well as promote nation building, the ASSP emphasizes “the study of the local and immediate before the foreign and remote” (Merryfield 1988).

Africanization functions to make “schools and curricula culturally” centered and therefore “responsive to the needs and aspirations of the African people” (Shizha 2005:74; Abdi 2002:21). As Shizha (2005:74) acknowledges, the indigenization process does not wholly reject
Western education, rather both forms of education are used to “supplement each other.” For example, both indigenous and Western languages, and their mode of “representing reality”, have been incorporated into African curricula due to the perceived beneficial factors for African society (Shizha 2005).

The Africanization process also includes pedagogy. Critical dialogue is necessary for the youth to become “social, historical, and cultural agents that create knowledge…relevant and sustainable to African needs” (Shizha 2005:76). A critical dialogue requires moving away from a teacher-centered pedagogy, which includes banking knowledge, to a student-centered dialogue which “empowers students and frees them from alienating school experiences,” and as hooks noted doing so is “a revolutionary gesture” (Friere 1970; Shizha, 2005:77; hooks 1989:12). As a whole, the Africanization of the school system allows for “critical teaching approaches and alternative ways of explaining learning material”, which as “a process…is multi-perspectival” and allows for the centering of African education (Shizha 2005:77).

2.6 The Relationship between Social Studies education and National Identity

Within the field of sociology of education, there exists an array of literature regarding the process of nation building and national identity formation. Braye, Clarke and Stephens (1986), in their work Education and Society in Africa, argue that education can promote nation building through two frameworks of integration: horizontal and vertical. Horizontal integration is achieved through four avenues: language, quotas, national service schemes in which national identification is strongly emphasized, and reduction of regional imbalances (Bray, Clarke and Stephens 1986). Vertical integration exists through the extension of literacy and equality of employment opportunities (Bray, Clarke and Stephen 1986). However, it must be noted that
while the aforementioned avenues promote integration, they can also promote divisions. For example, most African nations have opted to use the language of former European colonial powers due to its global capabilities. Although this foreign language allows for international collective communication, it diminishes the role of indigenous languages and further divides peoples by those who know the foreign language and those who do not (Bray, Clarke and Stephens 1986).

Particular debates focus on the social studies subjects and the process of national identity formation (Tlou and Kabwila 2000; Goh and Saravanam 2006). Social studies education, as a school subject, originated in the United States, and was later adopted by many nations, for the purpose of helping students to understand social, political, and economic life as it exists in their own country (Adeyinka 2000). Merryfield and Tlou (1995:260) defined social studies as “the study of history, the nation and its peoples, other countries and their cultures, the relationship of people to their environments, social change, politics, economics, and many other topics that provide young people with the background information that contributes to their construction of their own identity and a world view.”

Citizenship education, as a part of social studies, is intended to educate children on the “knowledge essential for good citizenship, the skills required and the attitude and values needed for them to function adequately” in their local communities, nations and the broader world community (Adeyinka 2000:14-15). In learning how to become a good citizen of the nation of their birth, students also learn the geography and history of their nation. History is particularly one “way in which the ‘nation’ comes to understand itself” (Tormey 1995:316; Diop 1974). Although speaking of social studies and national identity in Singapore, Goh and Gopinathan (2005:214) argue social studies curriculums are “designed to instill a sense of national identity.”
2.7 The History of Malawi and Social Studies education therein

In the fifteenth through the eighteenth centuries the geographical area known as Malawi was settled by the Maravi Kingdom, of which the Chewa’s and the Nyanja’s are descended (Pachai 1973). After the Maravi Kingdom had been established, other Bantu groups such as the Tumbuka, Tonga, Yao, Lomwe, and Ngoni sojourned there for a number of various reasons Pachai 1973). After an Anglo-Portuguese war, in which white peoples used black peoples as pawns in a game as noted by Kololo chiefs Masea and Katunga, the Maravi Kingdom was dismantled and Britain officially colonized the area in 1891 (Pachai 1973:80).

The British made Malawi (Nyasaland) into a protectorate, as opposed to a colony, which resulted in Malawi being the most severely neglected “possession” of the British (Merryfield 1988). From the onset education in Malawi was conducted exclusively by Christian missionaries whose education purposefully alienated Africans in order “to civilize and Christianize” by glorifying Britain and devaluing Africans (Merryfield 1986). The demonizing missionary education, suppressed desires for change, and other “social injustices of the time…led to rebellion” (Merryfield 1986:444).

John Chilembwe, for instance, was educated in missionary schools and in the United States. Upon returning he established his own schools in Nyasaland, but he quickly became very critical of Western education and foreigners treatment of Africans. Most of the people who attended his school either “worked for or lived as tenants on the Bruce estates” where the “white settlers were infamous for their cruelty to Africans” (Merryfield 1986:444&445). As a part of the war for liberation, John Chilembwe “led an uprising in 1915 which targeted the Bruce Estates” and he was subsequently killed (Merryfield 1986: 445).
As a reaction to Chilembwe’s protest, whites in Nyasaland became very critical of missionary education and encouraged the colonial government to intervene (Merryfield 1986:447). As a result all schools organized and led by Africans were closed making it so that only white missionary education was permitted to continue (Merryfield 1986). A couple of years later, in 1924, the Phelps-Stokes Commission report on Nyasaland colonial education expressed the neglect of education and called for the development of a Department of Education and a national education policy (Merryfield 1986).

In 1926, the Department of Education was established and the following year a national educational policy was introduced (Merryfield 1986). However, even after 1926, education in Malawi was severely neglected, the only exception being the rigid control of the curriculum (Merryfield 1986). In accordance with colonial education’s project of alienation and dehumanization, primary school history and geography curriculums in Malawi represented Britain’s history and reality through the representational lexicon of empire. For instance the history curriculum included topics such as Standard three: “The British Empire in Africa and Egypt”, Standard four: “the British Empire”, Standard five: “Europe, the Americas, and Asia”, and Standard six “The World” (i.e. “the great war and the league of nations”), all of which were taught in English (Merryfield 1986:450-451).

In 1964, Malawi won its struggle for political independence. The new government, led by Dr. Kamuzu Banda, inherited the formal western educational system which had been put in place during colonialism. Dr. Banda, dictator of Malawi until 1993, maintained ties with and admiration for the British and thus kept most of the British educational structures Malawi inherited.
The first priority of Malawi’s new government was to universalize education because it had been neglected for so long. So much so that Tlou and Merryfield (1995:266) noted that at the time of independence, “less than nine percent of [Nyasaland’s] peoples had any primary education [and] only fifty [people from Nyasaland] …had a college education. The second priority was the revision of the content of education. Malawi’s government sought to engage with other African nations as to the path of educational revisions. So in 1968 Malawi was one of seven countries to attend the Mombasa Social Studies Conference to discuss the integration and Africanization of history, geography, and civics into a social studies curriculum that was culturally relevant for its citizens (Merryfield 1988; Tlou and Kabwila 2000). Although this was the case, the social studies curriculum even into the 1980’s and 1990’s was still separated into three distinct subjects.

In 1985 Merryfield (1989), in her article *The Role of Social Studies in African Development: The Significance of Contextual Factors*, examined the relationship between social studies education in Malawi, Kenya, and Nigeria with regards to national development. Merryfield (1989) found that Malawi’s social studies program was the least centered in and on national development. In opposition to the ASSP’s purposes, the social studies subjects were still separated and “not well articulated for their relationship to national development” (Merryfield 1989:25). For the most part, this was a result of the value Dr. Banda put on “classical Western (British) education” by “retaining much of the structure and content of British education” (Merryfield and Tlou 1995:267; Merryfield 1989:25). For example, the history curriculum was still composed of eighty percent European history including expansion, the colonial era, ancient and medieval history, and only fifteen percent of Malawian history,
independence to the present\(^1\) (Merryfield and Tlou 1995:264). The Malawian history incorporated in the curriculum consisted of John Chilembwe “and Dr. Hastings Banda for his role in the independence movement and his role in developing Malawi as a nation state,” as well as the Malawi Congress Party’s political ideology of national goals known as the four cornerstones which were unity, loyalty, obedience, and discipline (Tlou and Merryfield 1995:267; Mhango 2008; Mtewa 1986; Tlou and Kabwila 2000). Merryfield (1989:40) also cited a variety of “contextual factors” affecting Malawi’s social studies program including “British [political] influence through expatriates and Malawian leadership, elitist education, poverty, and a presidential stance against progressive (student-centered) education.”

Malawi’s social studies curriculum was revised however in 1987 and 1991. The purpose for the revision was to reduce, albeit slightly, European content and push national issues to the forefront, including but not limited to “behaviors of good citizens… the study of the nation’s peoples…and our [Malawian] government (Merryfield and Tlou 1995:267). The syllabus also placed a greater importance on “the environment and conservation of landforms, climate, etc” (Tlou and Kabwila 2000:219).

However, in 1994 Malawi experienced a riveting political change when a multi-party referendum was passed transforming Malawi’s governance into a Western democracy. The drastic change of government in Malawi resulted in a much needed social studies curriculum revision. The curriculum was democratized to reflect upon the political change to include “the meaning of democracy and how to be effective participants in a [democratic] society” (Tlou and

\(^1\) This is problematic in itself in that it suggests that the area of Malawi was ahistorical before European colonialism.
Kabwila 2000:219). In addition, the curriculum was Africanized for the purpose of promoting Malawian national identity and nation building (Tlou and Kabwila 2000:229).

The rationale for the curriculum revision was such that it was of no use for Malawian youth to only learn about European ideas, places, and histories (Tlou and Kabwila 2000:224). It is understood that strengthening national development can only occur if the “people have positive values towards their government, their natural resources and social services, their society, and themselves” and thus the rationale behind the curriculum content change (Tlou and Kabwila 2000:229). In order for the youth to know themselves the curriculum must start with what they know, and therefore the curriculum content was transformed to be in accordance with the learning theory known as expanding horizons; meaning the curriculum is centered in the youth’s reality and then spirals outward in “terms of scope and sequence” (Tlou and Kabwila 2000: 223). See Table one.

Table 1: Contents Summarised in Scope and Themes (Tlou & Kabwila 2000, 223)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1988 (Merryfield)</th>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>2000 (Tlou and Kabwila)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>G</strong>-The school, its features, vegetation, transport.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td><strong>Self and Family</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H</strong>-Folklore and traditional songs.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>G</strong>-Introduction to mapwork</td>
<td>2</td>
<td><strong>Our School and Neighborhood</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H</strong>-Traditional dances and customs, famous people</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>G</strong>-Satisfaction of man’s primary needs</td>
<td>3</td>
<td><strong>Our Village/Township</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H</strong>-Our forefathers and how they lived</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>G</strong>-the natural environment in the local area, district and region</td>
<td>4</td>
<td><strong>Traditional Authority</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H</strong>-the people’s of Malawi</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>G</strong>-Geography of Malawi</td>
<td>5</td>
<td><strong>Our District</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H</strong>-History of Malawi to 1907</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C</strong>-Activities of local people</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>G</strong>-Africa and neighboring countries</td>
<td>6</td>
<td><strong>Our Country</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H</strong>-History of Malawi 1900-1964</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C</strong>-Local government and elections</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>G</strong>-The world in outline (main forests, hot deserts, monsoon lands, etc.)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td><strong>Southern Africa</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H</strong>-River civilization. Birth of Europe and savanna empires</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C</strong>-Road safety and central government</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>G</strong>-world climate, vegetation, products, communication, etc.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td><strong>Africa and the World</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H</strong>-Africa from European contacts to present</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C</strong>-Road safety and everyday economics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To center the revision process many workshops, conferences, etc. were conducted including a Consultative Stakeholders workshop in 1996 that included a “cross-section of Malawi” who gathered to discuss “socio-cultural issues and concerns of the country” which were to be reflected in the curriculum (Tlou and Kabwila 2000:221).

Therefore in order to promote Malawian identity, and thus nation building, the youth needed to become “geographically and culturally competent,” therefore aspects of Malawian culture were incorporated into the curriculum including but not limited to

“language, food, traditional songs, dances, mode of dress, good manners and values, respect of elders and authority, local customs and traditions, beliefs, and superstitions that may promote or retard the development of human virtues” (Tlou and Kabwila 2000:229).

In Malawi, standards one through four are known as General Life Skills and standards five through eight are known as Social Studies. The Ministry of Education’s Primary School Teaching Syllabus: Social Studies Standards 5-8 states the national goals of social studies education in Malawi can be categorized as follows:

“citizenship skills; ethnical and socio-cultural skills; economic development and environmental management skills; occupational and entrepreneurship skills; practical skills; creativity and resourcefulness skills; scientific and technological development skills; and contemporary issues and coping skills.”

The articulated rationale for the new social studies curriculum, as stated in the Primary School Teaching Syllabus: Social Studies Standards 5-8, includes:

“address[ing] the socio-economic and political challenges that the nation is facing….includ[ing] the misinterpretation of democracy and human rights, decline in respect for law, social and moral decay, [and] the HIV/AIDS pandemic.”
Therefore the revision seeks to confront and reconcile contextual factors that are affecting Malawian society and nation, in agreement with the ASSP in that the curriculum seeks to reconcile contextual factors without loosing the concept of Malawian national identity.

Lastly, the social studies program change also included a revision of the implementation process. Tlou and Kabwila (2000:228) noted there was “a deliberate effort to change” the pedagogy from chalk and talk to participatory methods. Participatory learning is meant to encourage critical thinking, problem solving and decision-making which positively enables the youth to make the best decisions “when faced with important issues” (Tlou and Kabwila 2000:229).

Chapter 3: Questions

From the literature, it is understood that the formation of African nation-states, as we know them today, was a result of colonialism. With political independence, although not true decolonization, African nations were challenged with the task of decolonizing the minds of their citizens as well as promoting a national identity for the purpose of nation building. Thus, African nations revised their education systems to include social studies education for the purpose of promoting national identity through culturally and historically relevant curricula.

However African nations, even after political independence, have continued to confront and reconcile Western influences through the instrument of neo-colonialism. Western influences on social, economic, and political processes in African nation-states are confronted and reconciled so the boundaries of tension Kennah (1998:37) described can continue to promote Africa’s identity. This process of confrontation and reconciliation to promote African national
identity can be examined through social studies education. I was particularly interested in looking at this process in Malawi’s social studies education. As noted by Merryfield and Tlou (1995), Malawi’s social studies curriculum was culturally and historically irrelevant with no clear purpose for nation building. However, in the late 1980’s and 1990’s Malawi’s social studies curriculum was culturally and historically revised to be centered in the lives of Malawian youth for the purpose of promoting national identity. The purpose of this research was to determine teachers' perceptions of the promotion of national identity as it is promoted through the revised primary school social studies curriculum in Malawi. To get the best understanding of this process, the following research questions were posed: 1) What were teachers' perceptions of national identity in Malawi? 2) What were teachers' perceptions of Malawi's primary school social studies curriculum? 3) What were teachers' perceptions of the practice of constructing national identity through primary school social studies curriculum in Malawi?

Chapter 4: Methods

In order to allow for a discussion of the construction of national identity in practice and the contentions arising thereof, the study conducted was qualitative, with semi-structured interviews as the source of data. English is a second language in Malawi; therefore, semi-structured interviews were a good way to collect data because they allowed for more detailed explanations. Also, in a culture based on oral tradition, people are more likely to share at length their perceptions and understandings through oral language than written language.

The interviewee pool consisted of ten practicing primary school social studies teachers and one curriculum developer. My sample was limited to teachers in three schools in the Domasi District, Southern Region of Malawi. The Domasi district is one of the most populous
and the three schools represent the range of schools in Malawi: a village school, a government school, and a demonstration school associated with a teacher's college. Accordingly my sample’s limitations lied in scope, researcher presence, and English-based interviews. The scope of the analysis was only applicable to the Domasi District, Southern Region of Malawi. In terms of researcher presence, I am a white-privileged Western female meaning the socio-historical connotation of my presence in Malawi must be acknowledged. Lastly, I used the colonizer’s language of English as the mode of communication for these interviews; ultimately the language barrier affected the interviews.

This sample was chosen for a couple of reasons. First, I wanted to explore teachers’ views on the role social studies played in the construction of national identity in their classrooms. Therefore my sample included practicing social studies teachers. Second, I chose to explore social studies role in the construction of national identity in Malawi because the relatively new curriculum being implemented in Malawi’s school has been both Africanized and democratized. Additionally, these schools have an on-going collaboration with Virginia Tech through the Malawi Study Abroad program in the Center for International Education. It is from this collaboration that I was able to compose my sample.

There were no more than minimal risks involved. Participants’ names and personal information was not publicized. I used pseudonyms in the thesis. The process was of utmost confidentiality.

This study was introduced to subjects on an individual basis. I sought permission from the primary school principal to ask social studies teachers if they would like to participate in my research. After there was an expressed willingness to participate, I gave each participant a copy
of the informed consent form. However, because English is a second language for most of the participants, I orally explained the informed consent sheet. When it was inherent that informed consent is understood, an interview was organized. Informed consent was maintained throughout the interview. If any participant felt that he/she no longer wishes to participate, he/she may cease the interview at any time. I made audio recordings of the interviews, along with hand written notes. Dependent upon the length of the participants’ responses, the sessions lasted between one to two and a half hours. The following questions were posed during the interviews:

To create context:

Tell me about your teaching certifications and training?
How long have you been teaching?
How long have you been teaching social studies in particular?
What grade[s] do you currently teach?

Research objective: to determine teachers’ perceptions of national identity.

How would you describe Malawi’s national identity?
How would you describe elements of Malawi’s national identity?
How would you describe the evolution of Malawi’s national identity?

Research objective: to determine teachers’ perceptions of Malawi’s primary school social studies curriculum.

What are your opinions about the current social studies curriculum?
How would you describe Malawi’s current social studies curriculum?
What do you think about Malawi’s primary school social studies curriculum?

Research objective: to determine teachers’ perceptions of the practice of constructing national identity through primary school social studies curriculum in Malawi.
To what extent do you think the primary school social studies curriculum objective of “promot[ing] national unity, patriotism and a spirit of leadership and loyalty to the nation” has been realized?

To what extent do you think the primary school social studies curriculum objective of “develop[ing] in the learner an appreciation of one’s culture and a respect for other peoples’ cultures” has been realized?

How would you describe the construction of national identity in your students through the social studies curriculum? What activities are partaken in your class to realize the aforementioned goals?

How would you describe any challenges that are encountered during the teaching and learning of social studies?

Additionally, every person who agreed to participate was given the same compensation, a bag filled with various school supplies.

After transcribing all eleven interviews, I coded general themes regarding 1) elements of Malawi’s national identity as perceived by social studies teacher’s, 2) elements of Malawi’s national identity as promoted by the social studies curriculum, and 3) teachers’ perceptions of the construction of national identity in their social studies classrooms. A critical analysis of these themes was pertinent to the discussion of teacher’s perceptions of social studies curriculum and national identity, particularly as it is in Malawi. Utilizing a Frierean (1970) framework the curriculum in Malawi today is seeking to liberate through relevant curricula, critical pedagogy, and nation building, while at the same time confronting and reconciling Western influences to ultimately promote Malawian national identity.

Chapter 5: Analysis

In the summer of 2007 I interviewed ten social studies teachers and one curriculum specialist. The purpose of my interviews was to answer the subsequent research questions: 1)
What are teachers' perceptions of Malawian national identity? 2) What are teachers' perceptions of Malawi's primary school social studies curriculum? and 3) What are teachers' perceptions of the practice of constructing national identity through the implementation of the primary school social studies curriculum in Malawi? The following is my analysis of the interviews which consists of themes relating to the three research questions posed.

First, from my interviews I learned Malawian national identity is primarily composed of language, citizenship, and socio-cultural traditions and values. Every person, eleven out of eleven, with whom I spoke, described language as being significant to Malawian national identity. In Malawi there are many ethnic groups, or often referred to as tribes, that have their own languages; for example the Nyanja speak Chinyanja and the Yao speak Chiyao. However the national language is Chichewa, the language of the Chewa. In the words of Mercy4,

“National identity is the language of my tribe which I speak…Lomwe. Yes even one can speak Tumbuka, they are still a Malawian…They come together because there is a national language which is Chichewa…You can speak Yao, you can speak Lomwe, and you can speak Tonga, Tumbuka. There are so many languages, but the national language is Chichewa.”

Each tribal language is accepted to be Malawian. However, as Mikson acknowledged,

“My parents do not know how to speak Lomwe; it is dying little by little because Chichewa is taking place. Most people are speaking Chichewa because it is what we learn at schools, so we sometimes forget our tribal languages.”

As Paul noted Chichewa is the language used to communicate in primary schools in “standards one up to standard four.” However in the social studies primary school standards five through eight, English is used as the mode of communication.

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4 This is a pseudonym, as well as all other names of interviewees.
English, as perceived by the teachers, is not considered part of Malawi’s national identity. Only two people with whom I interviewed mentioned English as a national language. Milliam explained that the only reason Malawians

“are still using [English]” is because “We were taken by Britain…under the British Protectorate and…they came here with many activities like schools, churches [and] in those institutions they were using English.”

Therefore, Milliam explained, English is associated with education. For example, “when someone doesn’t go to schools they cannot speak English perfectly or never” and so the majority “prefer to speak Chichewa because of their education.”

Another important aspect of Malawian national identity is citizenship, as illustrated by seven of the eleven teachers with whom I spoke. Malawian citizenship consists of two aspects, being born in and an active participant of Malawi. First, as Charles explained, “the person being born within the country is a Malawian, regardless of tribes.” Second, Malawian citizenship requires active participation. Laston explained, a Malawian “must be of use to the country. [As] a useful citizen, there are several duties to perform in order to get to the Malawian will of living.” Milliam added that some of these duties include “respecting everything in the country…following the rules…formed by the government,” respecting the “chiefs [and] participating in many things” including but not limited to “meetings in the village.”

Lastly, eleven out of eleven teachers identified socio-cultural traditions and values as central to Malawian national identity. The importance of socio-cultural traditions and values is exemplified by Milliam who stated “You can identify a Malawian because of culture…the national identity is culture.” The broad, yet similar socio-cultural traditions and values are best explained by Laston who stated:
“National identity, for that matter [in] Malawi…one has got to be loyal to the cultures of Malawi. We have got many cultures since we are from many tribes; we still come together in certain aspects; traditional dances, initiations ceremonies, of course language, not only that we have marriage status and death rights. All such come together with who we are. Of many tribes, but in most cases since we are all Malawians, we run in the same path.”

Malawian culture is therefore both general and ethnically specific. As told by Paul, “there are some practices which are general, but there are some practiced by the Yao’s that are not the same which are practiced by the Ngonde, so it depends.” The more general Malawian socio-cultural traditions and values, as identified by the teachers, are respect, dressing, coming of age/ initiation ceremonies, marriages and traditional dances.

Every teacher described the socio-cultural custom of respect, for both each other and elders, as center to Malawian culture. Emmanuel explained respect plays a role in the way “we treat each other as equal people. We are like one family.” The overarching thread is that respect, silhouettes “the way Malawians behave, the way they do things together, in the spirit of cooperation,” that ultimately “shows this one is a Malawian,” as elucidated by Ruth and Faith.

In the same vein the teachers also discussed the significance of “respect to elders.” Paul illuminated,

“now someone is a Malawian, there are some types of respect, there are ways to show respect to one another. In general we say even thought they are Tonga, Yao, or Lomwe there are some ways of showing respect to elders, this concept and this idea, which the youth are told during their initiation ceremonies, respect for elders.”

Mikson described, as many teachers also did, “our girls are taught to kneel down before elders, so if a girl doesn’t kneel down before elders we can say it is not a good child of Malawi…[and] boys squatting before elders.” Laston affirmed “when you give respect to elders, you love your country,” illustrating the significance of generational respect.
Another important Malawian tradition is dressing, as noted by eight of eleven teachers. Charles made clear “a Malawian means a person is well dressed by the culture of Malawian tribes.” Victor echoed “it is our culture…as a Malawian we should dress well.” Emmanuel explained what is exactly expected of Malawian dress:

“In the case of dressing, men put on a pair of trousers and a shirt…and we expect women to put on special length dress or skirt, and do not forget a chonga. What we need to women is to put on long dress or skirt which overlaps the knees; but if it doesn’t reach that we take it to be is not a Malawian.”

A chonga, as mentioned by Emmanuel, is a special garment worn by women. There are a variety of different garments according to particular Malawian ethnic cultures including, but not limited to, “chibiya, maseche, chillundu, nyakula, [and] mpango” (MIE Std. 2 2003:20).

Marriage practices are another socio-cultural element instrumental to Malawian identity, as identified by nine interviewees. Malawi has “two distinct traditions concerning…marriage practices”; they are matrilineal and patrilineal lineages (MIE Std. 7 1996). It is through marriage practices that inheritance, chieftainship, residence, and authority are realized. Paul portrayed, “matrilineal pattern of relationships, whereby chieftainship goes through you mother. [If] you as a man wants to practice chimkama, means you as a man wants to marry, you go to the home of the wife….you build a house there and you stay there. Once there is separation the wife is responsible to take care of the children…..whenever there is what we call chieftainship it goes through the mother. So it is the brother to your mother, that is your uncle, is responsible to look after you. Whenever you want to marry you communicate to your uncle. That one is responsible to settle any disputes in your family.”

Whereas “the patrilineal relationship…is whereby chieftainship goes through the father…so it is my father who is responsible to look after me, not my uncle. If I go there to marry I have to pay maybe cattle or money. That is what we call labola, so we have to pay that. Then once we pay the money or the cattle you are allowed to take the wife home. Once there is
分离的儿童属于男子，而不是妻子。[如果]男子去世，而妇女在家，是我的亲戚负责照看妻子。如果有人想娶她，那个人必须和我的亲戚说话，这样他们才能允许这个人娶她。那个人必须偿还我所支付的，但是儿童，儿童将留在那里，而妻子将离开。”

七名受访者中的十一名受访者认为传统舞蹈是社会文化的传统，是马拉维特征身份的组成部分。米森解释道，“即使是我们的舞蹈也是马拉维文化的重要组成部分。我们有不同的舞蹈，根据部落，根据那种部落的文化。他们有他们自己的舞蹈。他们都马拉维人；是的，即使是切帕舞蹈，来自洛莫韦人。”

最后，六名受访者中的十一名社会研究教师讨论了成人礼或成年典礼作为他们文化的重要组成部分。埃内斯特举例说明，“马拉维文化中的儿童到达了一定年龄，他们已经长大，他们会去坐在这个地方接受成人礼…[然而]并非所有部落（族群）。”

维克多指出，“成人礼意味着男孩和女孩将会养成良好的习惯和良好的行为。他们将尊重他人。”清楚地说明了成人礼或成年典礼的重要性。

总的来说，与我交谈的社会研究教师确定了马拉维的国家身份包括语言、公民身份和社会文化传统和价值观，包括尊重、穿着、成人礼或成年典礼、婚姻和传统舞蹈。

接下来，我努力识别教师们对马拉维小学社会研究课程与马拉维国家身份的联系的看法。在分析采访后，我发现所有的教师都发现社会研究课程在推广马拉维国家身份方面。维克多描述说，
“new curriculum we are using and teaching the students, you find that our young ones are able to now understand…what their nation is all about.”

The teachers identified specific aspects the curriculum is promoting including culture, citizenship participation, patriotism, leadership skills, loyalty to the nation, national unity and respect.

Together all the teachers, eleven out of eleven, voiced the curriculum is promoting Malawian culture. Paul illustrated,

“Our curriculum is doing a lot…we are talking about…the traditions, beliefs…[and] customs. So if the pupils are told that according to our traditions, it is to do this thing. The pupils are taught to appreciate it…They should be able to accept these things because according to their culture it is respect.”

A review of the curriculum reveals how the curriculum specifically addresses Malawian culture as the teachers described. For example, the standard seven syllabus specifically addresses Malawian marriage practices in unit’s four and five (MIE 1996:16-23). Within these units the curriculum specifically addresses the origins of, cultural activities including inheritance, marriage, succession, and coming of age, as well as similarities and differences between these two groups (MIE 1996:16-23). The correlation between the social studies curriculum and Malawian culture was further emphasized by Laston when he stated “social studies…goes together with initiations.”

Although the teachers identified the curriculum as promoting Malawian culture, a review of the curriculum reveals the ways in which the curriculum is reconciling Western influence to still promote Malawian national identity. For example we see in unit four of the standard seven has attempted to confront and reconcile the HIV/AIDS pandemic, such that the curriculum illustrates
“some cultural activities and practices [that] have negative effects. For example, during thinbwidza, girls are provided with a fisi, who is a male sex partner, to confirm their coming of age. This may lead to transmission of sexually-transmitted infections including HIV.”

Nine out of eleven teachers agreed citizenship participation is also represented in the social studies curriculum. Paul noted,

“[In] the social studies curriculum itself…there is what we call the duties of a citizen…he must know the duties as a citizen, what he is supposed to perform in this country.”

Some illustrated duties of a citizen include, but are not limited to, conservation of resources and helping the community without pay including but not limited to “cleaning the road [and] making bus shelters” (Charles). “Social studies is participating,” Milliam stated, because the social studies classroom exposes the pupils to the various ways in which they can participate in their own communities and country.

Nine teachers emphasized the curriculum is promoting patriotism. Milliam illustrated how this curriculum teaches the students to be proud,

“You can not love something if you don’t know it very well. But when we are teaching them, they know were did they come from and we can live. In that way they enjoy being Malawian. They feel it is good to be a Malawian, so it makes them proud of their country.”

In addition, eight teachers agreed the curriculum was promoting a spirit of leadership skills, particularly that of respect. Paul explained,

“Within social studies [there is a section] who is a leader?...to live in a group they are to represent the group of people…It is necessary for us to respect them. They are a part of us…Once you are elected as a leader it means the fellow people have trusted you and looked into you…[Leaders] have to do something for those people who have elected them.”
The promotion of respect within the curriculum was detailed by eight teachers. Ruth illustrated, “I have seen changes in the children…for example when we are teaching about culture, they appreciate other people’s culture…they are able to appreciate what other people do.”

Loyalty to the nation was also described as being promoted in the curriculum. Loyalty was viewed as including conservation of resources, listening to what the president says, and, as Mercy described, “respect others, dress well, use proper language, and help each other out.”

In summary all the social studies teachers believe the social studies curriculum is promoting Malawian national identity. Mikson affirmed, “We are proud to be Malawians, because [the curriculum] helps us to know who we are, what we have, how we can use our resources, things like that.” However, the teacher’s voiced a number of contextual factors affecting the process of implementing the social studies curriculum. In an orchestrated order, they include a lack of resources, influences from Western countries and affects thereof including but not limited to NGO’s and the misunderstanding of democracy, and a lack of training.

Every person with whom I interviewed, eleven out of eleven, acknowledged a lack of resources as being a key challenge to implementing the social studies curriculum. As Mikson explained, teachers

“don’t have many resources which can help us teach well in this subject…so sometimes some teachers just explain and go…so resources are needed to come to the schools so that teachers of social studies can teach well. Because sometimes it is difficult just to explain where Asia is when the map is not there, it is not good….so the lazy teachers can ignore the subject, so it is a problem to the students because they cannot learn, because the teacher finds it hard to produce the map.”

The lack of resources not only pertains to “teaching and learning materials”, as explained by Agness, but also a “lack of buildings in primary schools.” As Enia described,
“you find teachers teaching outside or under a tree disturbed with cars or other barriers or maybe during the winter season you find pupils shivering. The pupil cannot be attentive to the lesson.”

Ultimately the combination of a lack of teachers and a lack of resources leads to classroom overcrowding. Faith explained,

“what about classrooms? What about the teacher pupil ratio? That is another problem. For social studies to be effective you are looking at a teacher that should be able to interact with the learners for them to gain experience in areas that will be applicable when they go home.”

Agness put overcrowding into further context,

“we teach many people, it is large classes against one teacher; 120 against one teacher….there are many students in the classroom and sometimes the teacher fails to perform his or her duty because you can’t manage teaching 120 [pupils].”

Although the teachers believe the curriculum is promoting national identity, nine out of eleven teachers stated they believe Malawian culture, and in consequence Malawian identity, is fading because of Western influence. Laston illustrates, Malawian culture is “being taken away be floods now a days. By floods I mean they have been washed away…most of these cultures.” The floods are nondiscriminatory affecting economics, politics, and culture.

Politically, “after [being] influenced by other countries, we adopted the multi-party system,” Victor explained. The impact, as described by Laston, was such that when the

“democratic government came we are trying to lose our cultures because it is a question of letting anyone do what she or he wants to do. People don’t understand it. Democracy doesn’t mean losing someone’s culture, but people understand it in that way.”

Paul liken the misunderstanding of democracy to the misuse of a ponga knife,

“People take things in the wrong way. Now as a new thing, now something ah’s come in people see someone has brought in a ponga knife. Some people use that ponga knife to cut the trees. But some people use that knife to attack people in the villages. Some people use that ponga knife to kill people. So the main use of that thing was not to kill
people but to cut the trees, so once the things are used in the wrong way, someone may say this is not a good thing. This one has killed his fellow friend just because of that thing. But the main purpose of that thing was to cut the trees. So it is the same.”

For example, Milliam expressed the “coming…of democracy” encourages Malawians to “copy from other people, from other countries…ladies wearing trousers…It is not our culture.” Charles declared with democracy came the “freedom of dressing.” Emmanuel, however, noted “copying from the British, in the dressing, culture, or what so ever” began back when “Malawi was under the British colony.” Paul furthers, however, since democracy

“these freedoms have had to push some of the cultural beliefs and behaviors that were there before. Some were pushed were bad, but some of them pushed were good. So Malawi’s national identity is fading.”

Another challenge is “we don’t have qualified teachers” Agness emphasized and six other teachers agreed. By qualified, Laston explained, one means that

“the teachers in Malawi are not conversant with the curriculum. That is to say they cannot interpret it well because….when [the curriculum creators’] pass the curriculum to the people, the implementers, they are only given two hours of training. Two hours?! What can that do?!”

Ruth reverberated her distain of the current curriculum,

“we are not oriented on how to teach this new curriculum. They just bring about the books; we don’t go for orientation on how we can teach these topics. We need to be oriented.”

Due to lack of training Mikson explained that “sometimes the teacher can bring the wrong information to the students according to how he has understood the material.” Faith exampled, the teacher might not be able “of giving full information to the learners because a lack of training and information make it “difficult for him or her.” As a result, Victor noted “when it comes to social studies there are very few who can comfortably teach social studies.”
Western influence also comes in the forms of NGO’s, as described by five teachers. Faith affirmed,

“NGO’s have come up with different assumptions or ideas. For example, in democracy you find that another NGO comes in with human rights and democracy. They want to clarify to people, but it is not understood by that particular group. As a result Malawi’s going to take that one it means they can easily change their identity.”

As Charles described “the government, NGO’s, [and] state headquarters want to teach the opposite of” certain traditions “so that people are aware of the bad behaviors” which can cause them to get AIDS. Some traditions associated with HIV/AIDS and therefore deemed unacceptable include “using one razor blade” during circumcision, “polygamy”, “exchanging wives” or “inheriting someone’s wife or any brother’s wife if someone else has died”. Victor noted NGO’s help is often appreciated because when “the NGO’s…come in Malawi. They come with support in the way of maybe food and even clothes for victims.”

Charles explained how NGO’s are affecting culturally acceptable discipline practices in Malawian classrooms,

“when NGO’s and governmental organizations are telling the students…their human rights to do anytime in a class situation and you come in and say no you should not do this when I’m in… it’s like we are trying to fire against the leadership….When your students do wrong, you have to whip them….But this time they say no, you cannot whip them, you cannot even punish them….They say you should not do this, but at first when you are punishing the students you are reforming his or her life.”

Another example of spoilage by Western “floods” was described at length by Faith,

“Malawians normally live in extended families, whereby if both parents are gone we know that somebody, somewhere can take care of all these children, but that is not the case right now in Malawi. That is why we find families that are headed by children alone….Had it been we were able to follow what Malawians are supposed to do, it would mean that we wouldn’t have these orphanages….But because of the mentality which has just come in, as a result we find that instead of having extended families we now have
these nuclear families and so on. And once the parents have gone it means the children have nowhere to go because they don’t recognize these other relations. So nuclear families, they came in through the Western cultures.”

Faith gave another example of Western influence, particularly as it applies to the classroom,

“Even when the teacher is Malawian, teaching Malawian learning sometimes you will find that the culture which the teacher is going to adopt will be a different one. For example, we are used to kneel down when we are talking to elders that is culturally competent. You kneel down or you look down as you are talking to that elder person. But now there is a contradiction. When the child goes to school and listens to this teacher, the teacher says can you stand up and look at me. So you can see now the difference. It means this child now will be in a dilemma. At home they are taught to kneel down and look down when talking to an elder, now the teacher says stand up and look at me. It means even in class, though it is not in the curriculum, the teachers are still copying from the Western way. So all these agenda are coming through from different places.”

In conclusion, upon critical analysis of my interviews I was able to identify major themes regarding my three research questions. First, teachers' perceive Malawian national identity to consist of language, citizenship, and socio-cultural traditions including respect, dressing, coming of age, marriages and traditional dances. Further, all the teachers acknowledge Malawi's primary school social studies curriculum is promoting Malawian national identity. Lastly, the teachers identified a lack of resources, influences from Western countries socially, politically, and culturally, and a lack of training as challenges to implementing the social studies curriculum. Overall, the teacher’s illuminated both the social studies curriculum and implementation are at the consequence of various social forces which are converging and diverging in the social studies classroom.

**Chapter 6: Discussion**
The geo-political African nations as we know them today are a direct result of Western influence through colonialism. It was colonialism, with its forged borders and decisive rule that made Africans engage in the war for liberation that, as noted by Fanon (1963), eventually united the multi-national, multi-ethnic peoples and created a national consciousness and destiny. The war for liberation continues today as African nations continue to face Western neo-colonialism on many fronts including but not limited to, culturally, politically, socially, and economically.

One aspect of the war for liberation is the struggle to maintain African identity and more specifically African national identity. As described by Kanneh (1998) wa’Thiongo, in his book *Decolonizing the Mind*, illustrated an enduring struggle to maintain “Africa’s otherness” by preserving a rigid boundary between Western and African identity. It is this preservation that affords agency to African nations and peoples to confront and reconcile Western incursions⁵, or Western “floods” as Laston described, while still maintaining their own identities.

The social process of confronting and reconciling “floods” from the West can be illustrated through social studies education. Social studies education seeks to develop socio-historically, politically, and culturally competent youth for the purpose of constructing national identity for nation building. Constructing national identity means social studies education must enable youth with the skills to critically confront and reconcile various contextual factors affecting their society and nation without losing consciousness of their own national identity.

The social studies education program however is also affected by the same contextual factors that affect the society and nation. There are many levels of the social studies program that are affected by various contextual factors including but not limited to curriculum

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⁵ I use the terms Western incursions, Western floods, and neo-colonialism intermittently, as neocolonialism is ultimately Western incursion in everything including but not limited to social, cultural, political, and economic.
development, teacher training, and implementation of the curriculum. After speaking with social studies teacher’s in Malawi I have been able to explore the West’s impact on national identity in Africa and the process with which African nations are engaging to maintain a boundary between African and Western identity.

Malawi is a sub-Saharan African nation that continues to face immense Western incursion in the form of neo-colonialism. Prior to a 1994 multi-party referendum, Malawi’s social studies program was Eurocentric in terms of both curriculum and implementation. Merryfield (1988) found the social studies program was not centered in the nation nor did it serve the purpose of nation building. Merryfield (1988) argued the reason for this disconnect with the ASSP’s purpose for social studies was a direct result of immense Western influences on many fronts including but not limited to Malawian leadership, expatriates, and poverty.

However, in the 1990’s Malawi’s social studies program was drastically revised. The curriculum was centered in Malawian society and nation for the purpose of constructing national identity in the youth to promote nation building. The centering process meant the social studies curriculum had to confront and reconcile the various Western influences impacting Malawian society and nation including but not limited to economic, social, political, and cultural.

The purpose of this research was to explore teacher’s perceptions of the revised curriculum and its ability to promote Malawian national identity. The social studies teachers expressed that they believe as a whole Malawi’s national identity is “fading” as a result of Western influences. Paul, speaking particularly of Malawian culture, noted Western influence has pushed “some of the cultural beliefs and behaviors that were here before. Some [that] were pushed were bad, but some…were good. So Malawi’s national identity is fading.”
However, collectively the teachers perceived the social studies curriculum to be promoting Malawian national identity, particularly aspects of Malawian culture, history, and citizenship. This means the social studies teachers identify that the curriculum has appropriately defined the border between Western and Malawian national identity. The border between these two identities however is neither static nor even. Rather it is fluid, as exampled by the amalgamation of traditions and values on both sides, and it is unbalanced, for the West exerts more pressure on African identity than vice versa.

An investigation of Malawi’s social studies curriculum revealed examples of acceptance and rejection of Western incursions. With one of the highest prevalence rates in the world, 14% of Malawi’s adult population aged 15-41 is infected with HIV/AIDS (UUNAIDS)6. As a result, Charles described “the government, NGO’s, and state headquarters want to teach the opposite of” certain traditions and values “so that people are aware of the bad behaviors” which can cause them to get AIDS. Here the Malawian social studies program has chosen to incorporate Western science and cultural beliefs, to the determent of Malawian socio-cultural traditions, because these incursions are understood as a way to combat the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Malawi.

At the same time, however, the curriculum is also trying to “refuse…Western incursion” and promote socio-cultural traditions and values that are integral to Malawian national identity (Kanneh 1998). For example, Faith illuminated “Malawians normally live in extended families” but that the idea of nuclear families has been imported by the West. As a result of nuclear families, poverty, and the HIV/AIDS pandemic orphanages have become widespread in Malawi. Faith argues however that were Malawians able to do what they “are supposed to do” there

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6 UNAIDS, Report on Global AIDS Epidemic
would be no need for orphanages because Malawian youth would recognize the relations of their extended families. To promote Malawian familial institutions, the standard eight curriculum, in “Unit 23: The Family as a Social Institution,” describes that “nuclear types of families are most common in Western countries…” but that “the [extended] family is a very important social institution in most African traditions, including the Malawian culture, because life [in Malawi] is based on collective support” (MIE Std. 8 2003:83).

The curriculum also seeks to reconcile the institution of Western democracy and the idea of human rights. As mentioned, Western democracy and human rights has been greatly mistranslated as “freedoms” in Chichewa, Malawi’s national language, and as a result has caused widespread misunderstanding of both concepts (Englund, 2006). The misunderstanding of democracy was explicitly recognized by eight of the eleven social studies teachers with whom I spoke. The curriculum attempts to reconcile this misunderstanding in the standard eight social studies curriculum in which Unit 24 is titled “Human Rights.” The curriculum explains

“limitations to rights and freedoms… [in that] if every person [were] allowed to do whatever he/she liked, there would [be] chaos in the society. The government limits the individual’s freedom so that there should be protection of the rights and freedoms of its citizens.”

In all the teachers perceive the curriculum to be successful in its confrontation and reconciliation with Western floods because it still promotes Malawian national identity. However, the teachers revealed their implementation of the social studies curriculum, and therefore national identity construction, is being largely affected by Western floods. In general, the teachers expressed their own challenges in confronting and reconciling Western “floods” in the classroom, expressing that they too are social actors who have to contend with contextual factors that shape their own society and nation. Specifically, they identified a lack of resources,
a lack of training, and Western influence, particularly Western democracy and non-governmental organizations, as challenges to implementing the curriculum. Although the teachers identified a lack of resources and training as separate from Western influence, I argue that they too are a direct result of Western floods.

As Mikson noted “Malawi is rich in [natural] resources…but the people of Malawi are poor.” Malawi faces extreme poverty, so much so that 65.3% of the population lives below the national poverty line making Malawi one the poorest nations in the world. Malawian poverty today is a direct result of neocolonialism. For example, the rich lands of Malawi that produce tea, making Malawi the second largest exporter of tea in Africa, are monopolized by Western companies. As a result of economic neo-colonialism Malawi faces extreme poverty that affects many aspects of Malawian society and nation including the social studies program. The teachers identified the social studies program is affected by over-crowded classrooms and a lack of teaching and learning resources including but not limited to books, maps, paper, pencils, and school buildings.

Furthermore, the teachers’ identified a lack of training for the new curriculum. First, the revised social studies curriculum, as an integration of civics, geography, and history as it is in Malawi today, is a Western educational concept. The teachers voiced they have not been trained to be “conversant with the curriculum” and as a result they feel the implementation of the curriculum is hindered. This is very problematic in that if the teachers have not been trained in how to effectively teach the curriculum then the construction of Malawian national identity as promoted by the curriculum is compromised.
Aside from the aforementioned challenges, which can be attributed to neo-colonialism, the teachers specifically voiced distress over the impact the West, particularly Western democracy and non-governmental organizations, is having on Malawian society and nation. The teachers who implement the social studies curriculum in Malawi are social actors who are also affected by contextual factors and, therefore, their roles as implementers of the curriculum cannot be vacuumed from the socio-historical context of Malawi. The social studies teachers identified the misunderstanding of Western democracy and human rights as major problems impacting Malawian national identity. Englund (2004) illustrated a non-governmental organization sponsored out of Germany mistranslated democracy and human rights as “freedoms” in Chichewa, Malawi’s national language. The mistranslation has led to a misunderstanding of democracy that, as the teachers noted, is resulting in a “fading” of Malawian culture. According to Laston, the mistranslation has meant that since the

“democratic government came we are trying to lose our cultures because it is a question of letting anyone do what she or he wants to do. People don’t understand it. Democracy doesn’t mean losing someone’s culture, but people understand it in that way.”

The mistranslation of democracy and human rights has affected Malawian national identity, particularly with regards to culture. For instance, Charles declared with democracy came the “freedom of dressing” that allowed for women to wear trousers, a form of dressing not culturally accepted to be Malawian.

As social actors the teachers are affected by the mistranslation of democracy and human rights. The curriculum currently being implemented however seeks to rectify the misunderstanding that pervades Malawian society and nation. However, as already mentioned, the teachers acknowledged they have not been trained in the new curriculum. This means the
teachers have to confront and reconcile their own understandings, or misunderstandings, of democracy and human rights with what is promoted in the curriculum. This process can ultimately affect the implementation of the curriculum, again revealing the importance of making the social studies teachers “conversant with the curriculum.”

Furthermore, the teachers identified how non-governmental organizations, and their economic power, are affecting Malawi. Particularly, Faith explained “NGO’s…come up with different assumptions or ideas” however they are “not understood by [the] particular group” and as a result Malawians take it to mean “they can easily change their identity.” Charles specifically identified how NGO’s have affected socio-culturally acceptable classroom discipline practices by telling teachers that they are no longer able to punish, or according to Charles, reform the pupils. The Western incursion into socio-culturally acceptable discipline practices however has attempted to be reconciled as exampled by one school where I observed the rules indicating pupils were to be punished after school time.

As Faith noted, however, “Western agendas are coming through different places,” particularly in the mannerisms of implementing the social studies curriculum. Faith particularly described how some Malawian teachers tell their pupils to “stand up and look at me,” while Malawian culture indicates that youth are “supposed to kneel and look down when talking to elders.” The contradiction youth face from what they are taught in school and what they are taught at home, in terms of culturally acceptable manners, can very much hinder the construction of Malawian national identity within the social studies program.

It is within my discussion of Western incursion that I will explicate the limitations of my study. First and foremost, I acknowledge that as a white-privileged, English-speaking Western-
female my very presence likely affected the interview process. My presence, particularly the color of my skin and the language with which I speak, is a representation of empire: an element of the Western incursion the teacher’s identified as instigating a “fading” of Malawian national identity. My use of English, Malawi’s colonizer’s language, meant the people with whom I spoke were using a second-language. As a result, the interview process was limited in that there was a high possibility of misunderstanding and mistranslation; therefore I encourage future research in Malawi to be conducted in Chichewa, Malawi’s national language, just as Englund did (Englund 2006).

Another limitation is the scope of my research. I interviewed social studies teachers from three schools in the Domasi District, Southern Region of Malawi. Therefore, it is important to recognize that this research is only applicable to social studies teachers in the Domasi district, Southern region of Malawi.

As a whole, my research reveals that the social studies program in Malawi is a space where Malawians have agency in attempting to confront and reconcile Western neocolonialism for the explicit purpose of maintaining a boundary between Malawian national identity and that of the West. According to the teachers, Malawian national identity is being adequately constructed by the social studies curriculum. This, however, reveals that the boundary between African national identity and Western influence is fluid. As illustrated by this research, Malawi’s social studies curriculum has incorporated some Western influences in an attempt to make them a part of Malawian national identity for what is perceived to be beneficial to Malawian society and nation. The denouncing of some Malawian socio-cultural traditions and
values because Western science has shown they can promote the spread of HIV/AIDS is one example of such incorporation.

In education, teachers play an important role in that their implementation of knowledge to the youth is constrained to their socio-cultural and historical contexts. In Malawi the teachers revealed that their agency in constructing national identity within social studies classrooms is complicated. They are confronting and reconciling Western influences within their own communities and nation. It is their process of confrontation and reconciliation that helps in part to influence the teacher’s perspectives of Malawian national identity. Their perspectives reveal the shifting, or flooding, of the fluid identity boundary that helps to define “Africa’s otherness” and Malawian national identity (Kanneh 1998).

As social actors, social studies teachers have to process national identity formation through their own confrontation and reconciliation of Western incursion, while also implementing a curriculum that has sought to address the very socio-cultural and historical influences they are contending with. In Malawi, the implementation of the social studies program is drastically affected by Western neocolonialism through forms of economic, cultural, and linguistic oppression, the institutionalization of Western democracy and the torrent of non-governmental organizations. I conclude from this research that in order for Malawian national identity to be actively promoted through the social studies program, both the curricula and implementation of it need to be centered in Malawian society and nation. This research revealed that while the curriculum is centered the implementation process is not. Therefore, future research should look into the implementation process of social studies curriculum in Malawi and in what ways the process can reflect Malawian national identity. The process of centering the
implementation process, I believe, should involve teacher training as well as a dialogue between social studies teachers and community elders for the purpose of seeking Malawian centered teaching strategies and resources.

This research relates to a larger discussion of Western influences and the impact they have on African national identities. Today African nations have to contend with Western incursions, or neocolonialism, from many fronts including but not limited to cultural, linguistic, economic, and political. As a result, African nations have to clearly demarcate the distinction between their national identity and Western identity. The distinction process is complicated as the boundary between African and Western identities is fluid. Furthermore, the pressures on each side of the identity boundary are not even; more pressure is exerted on African nations by the West than vice versa. Ultimately, Western influence is heavily impacting the maintenance of African national identities. As exampled by this research, education, particularly social studies education is the space that affords African nations agency in shaping and promoting their national identities, albeit the space of agency is also affected by Western influences.
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