POPULAR MUSIC, IDENTITY AND CULTURE IN CONTEMPORARY AFRICA: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ANGLOPHONE AND FRANCOPHONE PRODUCTIONS
(Nigeria, Cameroun, Cote d'Ivoire, Congo, Kenya, Ethiopie, )

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This study therefore aims to compare the contemporary popular music genres of Francophone and Anglophone Sub-Saharan Africa. Using case studies from Ethiopia, Kenya and Nigeria to compare with those from Cameroon, Congo, and Cote d'Ivoire, the study proposes to investigate the extent of Westernization and globalization (if any) on the popular music industries of Francophone and Anglophone states. This is significant because it will help identify the factors, be they linguistic, economic, historical, geographical, cultural, political or institutional, which make one society resilient and another more vulnerable to dominant foreign culture. As Okwori (2000) affirms, identity is ‘produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices’.

The moral issue as it relates to sexuality, indecency and pornographic themes and images will also be explored and compared to ascertain the veracity or otherwise of the claim that one region’s form and style is more vulgar than the other. Lessons learnt and insights gained from the research will be helpful in influencing cultural policies in Sub-Saharan African states and understanding and managing the dynamics of youth identity and culture as it relates to popular music, arts and cultural production on the continent. Identity is a process constantly under construction (Okwori 2000). Hence, the study intends to comparatively examine how popular music as a creative art has been and is being used by young persons in Anglophone and Francophone societies in the construction of identity in contemporary times. The continental similarities in the spread of vulgar forms of Western music will be documented to underscore the deepening impact of particular categories of Western music. Furthermore, the differences among various culture areas in terms of their adoption or resistance to external influences will equally be pursued in the study.

The expected output from the study is the publication of the research findings into a book or monograph series by CODESRIA. The document will constitute a valuable reference material in discussing and understanding the concept and trajectories of popular music, youth, identity and popular culture in Sub-Saharan Africa particularly as it concerns the Central, Eastern and Western regions of the continent. It is hoped that the output of the study will be useful to policy makers in developing effective strategies for managing the arts and cultural sector especially as it pertains to emerging and dynamic aspirations of youths and young persons in contemporary times.

Comparative research networks 2007
Members of the research network will definitely bring diverse perspectives into the research study since they come from various disciplinary and geo-cultural backgrounds. These will range from the artistic, historical, philosophical, political and socio-psychological analyses of the research problem and collected data. This will also be enriched by a wealth of regional and national specifics in the search for examples and points of contrast that would facilitate the interrogation of the problems.