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The *CODESRIA Bulletin*: A Content Analysis

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Abstract

The purpose of this essay is to provide a content analysis of the 316 articles in the *CODESRIA Bulletin*, from the first edition in 2003 to the 2015 edition (numbers 1 & 2). The essay was precipitated by the serendipitous finding that most of the authors writing on related topics for the journal, which is the leading publication of the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA), do not cite one another. It is therefore hoped that this essay will serve as a catalyst to foster such needed cross-fertilization and canonization among future writers, if these works are to prove profitable to the continent in particular and to global scholarship in general. Thus, the major question that guides this essay is the following: What do articles in the *CODESRIA Bulletin* look like? Probing this question is important because these works are vital for at least two reasons. First, they may show which themes on Africa are

important in one of the major scholarly journals focusing on the continent. Second, they can help a researcher in tracing the development of scholarship (interests, methods, and activities) on Africa. A qualitative and quantitative analysis of the contents of the articles can serve many useful purposes. At the most basic level, a simple tabulation can identify trends and changes in the works' contents. A focused analysis may reveal a discernible pattern. Beyond that, a content analysis can be helpful in pointing out temporal or spatial differences in subject matter.

Key Words: CONDESRIA, content analysis

Introduction

The Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA), "a pan-African institution was established by African researchers in 1973 out of a desire to build an autonomous scientific community that is capable of interpreting social realities in Africa and contributing to debates on global issues" (Sall, 2012). CODESRIA has emerged as a major symbol, i.e. "any object used by human beings to index meanings that are not inherent in, nor discernible from, the object itself" (Cobb and Elder, 1983, p. 28). In 2013, CODESRIA was given the Latin American and Caribbean Regional Integration Award by the Latin American Social Science Council in recognition of the work CODESRIA has been doing over the years in promoting regional integration through research and South-South cooperation (CODESRIA, 2013). Also, in 2014, the Think Tank and Civil Societies Program at the University of Pennsylvania in the United States, which ranked approximately 6,600 think tanks in 182 countries, designated CODESRIA as the fourth top think tank in Sub-Saharan Africa, 120th think tank in the world, 27th think tank in international development in the world, 38th think tank with the most significant impact on public policy in the world, 39th with the best trans-disciplinary research program at a think tank in the world, and 45th think tank with the best advocacy campaign in the world (McGann, 2015).

Furthermore, a Google Internet search with the name Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa on December 16, 2015 yielded about 19,300,000 results in 0.55 seconds. Compare CODESRIA's record with those of the other four among the five top think tanks in Africa: (1) Kenya Institute for International Affairs, established in 1997 and ranked first, with approximately 1,690,000 results in 0.72 seconds; (2) IMANI Centre for Policy and Education, launched in 2004 and ranked second, with around 178,000 results in 0.55 seconds; (3) South African Institute of International Affairs, founded in 1934 and ranked third, with roughly 15,100,000 results in 0.52 seconds; and (4) Botswana Institute for Development Policy Analysis, set up in 1995 and ranked fifth, with circa 804,000 results in 0.49 seconds. In essence,

the lengths of existence of these organizations do not seem to correlate with their Internet results.

Despite the abundant recognition and attention CODESRIA has been receiving, there has never been exchange of ideas among the contributors as many of the authors from 2003-2015 do not cite one another. This essay, it is hoped will serve as a catalyst to foster such needed cross-fertilization and canonization among future writers of articles in *CODESRIA Bulletin*, if these works are to prove profitable to the continent in particular and to global scholarship in general. Thus, the major question that guides this essay is the following: What do articles in the *CODESRIA Bulletin* look like? The purpose is to identify the recurring themes on Africa, enable a researcher trace the development of scholarship (interests, methods, and activities) on Africa. This paper also will conduct a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the contents of CODESRIA articles with the aim of identifying the trends and changes in the works' contents, temporal or spatial differences in subject matter. It is believed that a focused analysis may reveal a discernible pattern(s) that may be of benefit to future writers.

Content Analysis of the *CODESRIA Bulletin*

Methodology

Given the purpose of this essay stated in the preceding section, the methodology that guides the analysis of the articles in the *CODESRIA Bulletin* is Content Analysis. As Junior Hopwood and I point out in our book titled *A Comprehensive Introduction to Research Methods, Volume 1: Quantitative Methods* (2014:39), while there are many definitions on Content Analysis, Jarol B. Manheim and Richard C. Rich provide us with the following general and concise definition of the approach: i.e. "the systematic counting, assessing, and interpreting of the form and substance of communication" (Manheim & Rich, 1981, p. 155).

After reading the articles, the first step was a basic tabular analysis classifying them into categories based on (a) temporal—yearly, from 2003 to 2015; (b) levels of analysis—continental, regional, country, and individual; and (c) major themes. Following that, each article was reread for content.

Analysis

Table 1: Articles by Year

Year and Frequency Statistical Labels	N	%
2003	33	10
2006	13	4
2007	15	5

2008	51	16
2009	18	6
2010	33	10
2011	24	8
2012	41	13
2013	36	11
2014	37	12
2015	15	5
Total	316	100
Mean	28.73	
Standard Deviation	12.52	
Variance	156.62	
Range	38	
t-Statistic	7.613	
Significance	0.0001	

Source: Generated by Author

As shown in Table 1, a total of 316 articles were published in the 18 volumes of the *CODESRIA Bulletin* from 2003 to 2015. None was published in 2004 and 2005. The largest numbers of articles were published in 2003, 2008, from 2010 to 2013, and 2015; the smallest numbers were published in 2006, 2007 and 2015. The mean, standard deviation, variance, range and t-statistic reveal that the variation among the numbers of articles published by year is statistically significant at the 0.01 level.

I should also state that the articles in the 2003 volume are all in English; those in the 2006 volume are all French; those in the 2007 volume are all in Portuguese; those in the 2008 and 2009 volumes are in both English and French; and the rest of them from 2011 to 2015 are all in English. The greater frequency of English seems to mirror the language's global dominance in official communication. It further behooves me to mention here that the percentages in the tables that follow are rounded to the nearest tenth.

Table 2: Articles by Level of Analysis

Level and Frequency Statistical Labels	N	%
Continental	190	60
Individual	88	28
Country	30	9
Regional	8	3

Total	316	100
Mean	79.00	
Standard Deviation	81.33	
Variance	6614.67	
Range	182	
t-Statistic	1.943	
Significance	0.147	

Source: Generated by Author

Table 2 reveals four levels of analysis in the articles. The level with the largest number of articles is the continental, followed by those at the individual level at a distant second. The third are those at the country level and those at the regional level coming at a distant last position. Interestingly, however, while the mean, standard deviation, variance, range and t-statistic for the variation among the number of articles in terms of their levels of analysis seem large, the differences are, nonetheless, not statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 3: Articles by Regional Level of Analysis

Regional Level and Frequency

Statistical Labels	N	%
East Africa	2	25
Southern Africa	2	25
West Africa	2	25
Central Africa	1	12.5
North Africa	1	12.5
Total	8	100
Mean	1.60	
Standard Deviation	0.55	
Variance	0.80	
Range	1	
t-Statistic	6.532	
Significance	0.003	

Source: Generated by Author

From Table 3, it can be seen that of the eight articles with a regional level of analysis, East, Southern and West Africa were analyzed in two articles each; Central and Southern Africa were analyzed in one article each. While the differences among the numbers may seem small in terms of the mean, standard deviation, variance, range and t-statistics, they are, however, statistically significant at the 0.01 level.

Table 4: Articles by Country Level of Analysis

Country Level and Frequency

Statistical Labels	N	%
South Africa	7	25
Sudan with South Sudan	5	18
Zimbabwe	3	10
Kenya	2	7
Egypt	2	7
Mauritania	1	3
Sierra Leone	1	3
Cameroon	1	3
Côte d'Ivoire	1	3
Algeria	1	3
Uganda	1	3
Tunisia	1	3
Niger	1	3
Mali	1	3
Haiti	1	3
Egypt	1	3
Israel	1	3
Total	30	100
Mean	1.88	
Standard Deviation	1.75	
Variance	3.05	
Range	6	
t-Statistic	4.294	
Significance	0.001	

Source: Generated by Author

As can be gleaned from Table 4, of the 30 articles with a country level of analysis, South Africa and the Sudan with Southern Sudan received the relatively largest coverage. The rest of 14 countries studied had one or two coverage. Also, interesting

in the table is that despite the relatively smaller differences among the country coverage vis-à-vis the mean, standard deviation, variance, range and t-statistic, they are statistically significant at the 0.01 level.

Table 5: Articles about Individuals

Individuals and Frequency		
Statistical Labels	**N**	**%**
Archie Mafeje	37	44
Joseph Ki-Zerbo	15	18
Nelson Mandela	7	8
Ali Al'Amin Mazrui	6	7
Amilcar Cabral	3	3
Adebayo Olukoshi	2	2
René Devisch	2	2
Yoweri Museveni	2	2
Francis Nyamjoh	2	2
N'Dri Assie-Lumumba & Tukumbu Lumumba-Kasongo	2	2
Sanya Osha	1	1
Sam Moyo	1	1
Mahmoud Mamdani	1	1
Mali	1	1
Wamba dia Wamba	1	1
Cheikh Anta Diop	1	1
Bernard Makhosezwe Magubane	1	1
Hocine Khelfaoui	1	1
Mamokgheti Setati	1	1
Edward Snowden	1	1
Jacob Festus Ade Ajayi	1	1
Total	88	100
Mean	4.40	
Standard Deviation	8.37	
Variance	70.04	
Range	38	
t-Statistic	2.351	
Significance	0.030	

Source: Generated by Author

Table 5 shows that among the 88 articles about individuals and their works, a very large number of them are about Archie Mafeje. At distant second, third and fourth places are those about Joseph Ki-Zerbo, Nelson Mandela and Ali Al'amin Mazrui, respectively. The variation among the numbers of the articles in terms of the mean, standard deviation, variance, range and the t-statistic is statistically significant the 0.05 level.

Table 6: Articles by Themes

Themes and Frequency Statistical Labels	N	%
African Intellectuals	74	23
Economic Development	52	16
CODESRIA Organizational Matters	41	13
Higher Education & Research	39	12
Health	24	8
Leadership, Security & Governance	24	8
Anthropology & Anthropologists	15	5
Liberation Struggle, Nationalism & Activism	12	4
Democracy & Elections	10	3
Child & Youth	9	3
Racism	6	2
Gender	6	2
Academic Freedom	4	1
Total	316	100
Mean	24.31	
Standard Deviation	21.39	
Variance	457.56	
Range	70	
t-Statistic	4.097	
Significance	0.001	

Source: Generated by Author

As can be gleaned from Table 6, of the 316 articles that appeared in the *CODESRIA Bulletin*, the themes that received the largest coverage are African intellectuals; economic development; CODESRIA organizational matters; higher education and research; leadership, security and governance; and health issues. Also, receiving a good amount of coverage are anthropology and anthropologists; and liberation struggle, nationalism and activism. Trailing behind are those articles dealing with democracy

and elections, child and youth, race, gender, and academic freedom. The mean, standard deviation, variance, range and t-statistic point to the fact that the differences in thematic coverage are statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

On the surface, the abundance of themes seems to suggest that authors are not limited by disciplines and are indeed pursuing interdisciplinary research. This is misleading. In practically every instance, what is highlighted in a given article is the development dimension of the African continent.

Overall, most of the articles reviewed concede that the African continent is in a state of crisis. It is not obvious, however, what should be done; opinions differ widely. Among the articles, there is an even greater concern with situating the solution and method of analysis in the concrete experiences of African countries. Eurocentric bias in studies on Africa is frequently noted; however, prescriptive proposals are few. Frequently innovative proposals and ideas are introduced, but they remain undeveloped because of very little scholarly exchange. A consequence of this is that the ideas in most of the articles are not employed by other researchers as departure points for reconstructing paradigms to respond to the realities of the African continent.

Conclusions

The impetuses behind this essay were the unanticipated discovery that most of the authors writing on related topics for the *CODESRIA Bulletin* do not cite one another and the hope that it will encourage such needed cross-fertilization and canonization among future writers, if these works are to prove profitable to the continent in particular and to global scholarship in general. I sought to achieve the latter through the preceding analysis, which makes it possible to proffer at least two major conclusions.

First, while most of the articles have responded to the issue of development in Africa, on the whole, they are discipline bound and reflect the narrow range of philosophical choices available to the authors. There are several consequences of this. By relying exclusively on academic disciplines to delineate a *raison d'être* for their research, the authors avoided more sensitive issues that might place them in the position of advocates. Furthermore, it appears that change and growth in these articles have been guided more by changes in disciplines than by efforts to redirect or change the study of Africa.

Second, there exists a struggle to achieve some balance between emphasizing the rich historical legacies of African countries and the dismal, relatively bleak picture that characterizes them today. A pragmatic position would be to move away from the situation altogether and highlight Eurocentric fallacies.

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About the Author

Abdul Karim Bangura holds five PhDs in Political Science, Development Economics, Linguistics, Computer Science, and Mathematics. He is the author of 86 books and more than 600 scholarly articles. The winner of more than 50 prestigious scholarly and community service awards, among which are the Cecil B. Curry Book Award for his *African Mathematics: From Bones to Computers*, which has also been selected by the African American Success Foundation's Book Committee as one of the 21 most significant books ever written by African Americans in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM); the Diopian Institute for Scholarly Advancement's Miriam Ma'at Ka Re Award for his article titled "Domesticating Mathematics in the African Mother Tongue" published in the *Journal of Pan-African Studies*; the Special United States Congressional Award for "outstanding and invaluable service to the international community;" the International Center for Ethno-Religious Mediation's Award for his scholarly work on ethnic and religious conflict resolution and peacebuilding, and promotion of peace and conflict resolution in conflict areas; the Moscow Government Department of Multicultural Policy and Integrational Cooperation Award for the scientific and practical nature of his work on peaceful interethnic and interreligious relations; and The Ronald E. McNair Shirt for the stellar research methodologist who has mentored the largest number of research scholars across the academic disciplines published in professionally refereed journals and books and won the most best paper awards two years in a row—2015 and 2016. Bangura is fluent in about a dozen African and six European languages, and studying to increase his proficiency in Arabic, Hebrew, and Hieroglyphics. He is also a member of many scholarly organizations, has served as President and then United Nations Ambassador of the Association of Third World Studies, and is a Special Envoy of the African Union Peace and Security Council.