## Ohio University College of Education Department of Educational Studies Instructional Technology Program

## DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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## The African Publisher: The Cultural Politics Indigenous Publishing in Benin and Cote D'Ivoire

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In Benin and Cote d'Ivoire, textbooks are at the core of pedagogical practice. General publishing, as pedagogy and as a form of cultural (re) production, plays an increasing role in constructing social identities and expanding democratic spaces.

This study examines how indigenous publishes manage the work of giving a voice to cultures existing in environments characterized by conflicting interests mediated by the State. It aims at understanding the intersection of social structures and human agency in the process. To investigate publishers' cultural practices, I focused on their praxis and on their interaction with the wider cultural environment. I conducted in-depth interviews with editors/publishers and analyzed documents collected from their houses and public institutions. I also interviewed other actors—government officials, writers—identified through systematic snowballing approach, a procedure which provided a validity check on the data obtained from senior editors.

The study was theoretically informed by Giroux's concepts of border and critical pedagogy. Those theories are embedded in cultural studies, a field critically concerned with the interplay of culture, knowledge, and power.

In Benin, indigenous publishers, faced with government laxity and structural factors, have had a limited impact on education and culture. Self-censorship and their inability to organize as change agents have reinforced colonial exclusions and those created since independence. In Cote d'Ivoire, the State, strongly present in the industry, exerts a higher ideological control. Private publishers resent the domination of the market by NEI and CEDA, State companies recently privatized, and their French partners. Indigenous publishers are conscious of their cultural role. However, they need more professionalism, internal and regional cooperation, and a sharper understanding of their potential role of giving a voice to the voiceless majority—and their various identities—through the written word. The exclusive use of French in education and publishing complicates their task and partially explains how endogenous knowledge is neglected, and how the cultures of the disprivileged are marginalized.