

Armed Robbery In Nigeria - A Qualitative Study Of Young Male Robbers.

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Abstract

This is a Nigerian study, which initially aimed to examine armed robbery culture and the youth subculture. With the employment of subcultural theory, the study became intellectually unviable in explaining the primary data. A replacement was made by seeking recourse to anomie-strain theory and control theory to explain the data. Presently, the main aim of this study is to examine the involvement of youths in armed robbery. Specifically, the study will look at armed robbery from the point of view of offenders and the factors responsible for their crime.

Armed robbery is a type of robbery aided by weapon(s) to threaten, force and deprive a person or persons of the right to private, public or corporate belongings. Since the end of the Nigeria civil war (1967–1970), the offence has become a problem in the country, occurring almost on a daily basis in the urban areas more than the rural. Armed robbery can take place in residential homes, commercial places, motorways and any other place the offenders may deem necessary to operate. The current criminal climate has made it possible for armed robbers to engage in interstate criminal operations as well.

Methodologically, the research is qualitative, involving semi-structured face-to-face oral interviews (open-ended) with 20 armed robbers in prison custody in Nigeria. There is also an unstructured interview with 4 members of the criminal justice system in Nigeria. The analytical framework employed is interpretive phenomenology, to capture the holistic worldview of the offender sample. Secondary data comes from both the Nigeria Police Force and the Nigeria Prison Service records.

Findings are presented under four systematic themes: family circumstances, economic motivations, life course engagement, and situational dynamics in carrying out a robbery. Data reveal the four most significant factors in the hierarchy of response (bad friends, money, poverty and corruption) that may account for the involvement of youths in armed robbery.

Since the group of “bad friends” is the main catalyst responsible for the involvement of youths in armed robbery, the thesis concludes that this sample of respondents be regarded as a network of criminals who were strained by the unjust social structure in their native Nigeria. Besides, there is need for a Nigerian criminological theoretical framework that offers an in-depth explanation of crime in the Nigerian society.

Declaration

No portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

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Dedication

To Nigerian youths in prison custody, either awaiting trial and/or convicted of armed robbery.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This “intellectual journey” has an underlying history. The author came to this task while working in the Criminal Justice System of Nigeria (CJS), namely, the Nigeria Prison Service, between 1999 and 2003. Those five years were full of experiences and problem-solving scenarios from prison inmates who had either been detained or convicted. The police who arrested and sent them to prison labelled the majority of them “armed robbers”, pending the court hearings, which did not come up as and when due. With the daily influx of armed robbery suspects in prison, the author thought it wise to study this subject area to understand the probable factors responsible for the youthful involvement in “armed robbery”, and to suggest crime prevention and/or reduction strategies, which may help the government and criminologists in criminal justice policy-making.

The current study was originally intended to be a comparative study of armed robbery in Nigeria and Britain (or more precisely England). Comparative criminology dates back to the time of Emile Durkheim (Newman & Howard, 2001). It involves an evaluative study of any type of crime as it affects more than one culture, or one nation-state, or region. The value of comparative criminology is that it identifies an interesting subject area for study as well as an important method of carrying out the research (Zimring & Johnson, 2005).

Armed robbery is an important subject that has been studied widely by criminologists across the world. Research began to develop in the second half of the twentieth century. De Baun (1950); McClintock & Gibson (1961); Normandeau (1968a, 1968b, 1968c, 1969a, 1969b), and Einstadter (1969) for example, pioneered the study of armed robbery in both the US and the UK. Since then many studies have featured samples from national, cultural, cross-cultural or cross-national populations (see for example Rotimi, 1984; Nkpa, 1976; Marenin, 1987; Ekpenyong, 1989; Otu, 2003; Desroches, 1995, 2002; O'Donnell & Morrison, 1994; Matthews, 1996; Matthews et al, 2001; Matthews, 2002; Gill, 2000, 2001; Wright et al, 2006; Wright & Decker, 1987; Macdonald, 1975; Gabor et al, 1987; Wright & Decker, 1997; Cook, 1987; Conklin, 1972; Nugent et al, 1989; Smith & Louis, 2010; Borycki, 2003; Borycki et al, 2005).

Armed robbery being talked about in this study involves banks, shops, petrol stations, domestic houses and highways or motorways. It involves different levels of force and an array of different weapons (Matthews, 2002) such as guns and knives. Matthews (2002) has also suggested that in some armed robberies enacted in the UK, weapons were not used at all. This is not the case in Nigeria, because those who get involved use weapon(s) to threaten, force and deprive a person or persons of the right to private, public or corporate belongings (Nwalozie, 2007). Based on the different notions of the umbrella term “armed robbery” in Nigeria and the UK, it has become too general a concept to use as a starting point of analysis (Matthews, 2002). Although armed robbery is a serious offence committed by youths, our interest is not so much in the terminology “armed robbery” but we are much more concerned with understanding what motivates them to do it. However, for the sake of clarity and writing conventions used herein, the terms robbery and/or armed robbery will refer to the same subject matter, “armed robbery”. If for any reason a different type of robbery is mentioned, it will be clearly stated.

The initial intention to do a comparative research of armed robbery in Nigeria and Britain was for obvious reasons: To date, neither Nigerian nor British scholars have carried out any comparative study of armed robbery between both countries. The absence of cross-national or cross-cultural research on armed robbery in the two states has created a gap in the literature. There is a colonial legacy that makes this interesting, the British leaving a legal system in the post colonial period and how suited or unsuited such a system is to contemporary Nigeria in the comparative study of crime and criminal justice. It seems also that Nigerian criminologists are not so inclined to comparative studies due to financial constraints and access to research data, while British criminologists seem to be more inclined to comparing crime and criminal justice among the developed countries in Europe and America where financial resources and access to research data may not be so problematic.

So, doing a comparative study of armed robbery in Nigeria and Britain would probably have been the first of its kind; it would also have generated new knowledge in criminological science. Particularly, we would have come to know in more details

the similarities and differences surrounding the nature and patterns of armed robbery in the two countries. Presumably any comparative research in criminology must highlight the similarities and dissimilarities of a particular crime in the countries being studied. Our first concern would have been to establish whether armed robbery was a problem in both countries (see Clinard & Abbot, 1973). The research would have considered two different groups of youths from two different cultural backgrounds. The study would have enabled us to know the current, recent, and previous robbery trends in both countries. This would have involved comparing crime rates from police data and interviews with participants. Moreover, we would have come to know if the motivations to robbery are either similar or different or both. Motivation to crime is arguably the most assumed, causal variable in the origin of criminal behaviour. Indeed no offence can be committed without the offender being motivated by some factor(s) (Jacobs & Richards, 1999: 149).

Outside the comparative realm, it would probably be difficult to properly determine which underlying factors could be criminogenic (Neapolitan, 2003) in both countries. It was therefore essential to ascertain if similar social processes would be responsible for crime in a technologically advanced country [Britain] and a developing country [Nigeria] (Clinard & Abbott, 1973: 1). Our task would have been to test if certain criminological theories applicable to Britain could also be applicable to Nigeria. If the results turned out to be similar, they would strengthen our confidence in universal findings and theories. If on the contrary differences emerged, the challenge would be to explain the differences, perhaps by reference to features of national contexts (Farrington, 1999). However, it is the goal of any comparative criminology to develop concepts and generalisations at a level that distinguishes universals that apply to every society and unique characteristics that can be found in one or few places (Bendix, 1963). Finally, we would have explored the preventive and/or reductive measures put in place by the Criminal Justice Systems of both countries and suggested ways forward.

With that in mind, the author set about researching relevant literature on comparative criminology; and even wrote a chapter on that area. His interest was more in robbery trajectories in both Nigeria and Britain in relation to their political economies. However, the researcher tried to explore a few other countries such as the United

States of America, Australia and Canada to make the comparison robust. The literature review was undertaken earlier with the hope that access would be granted the researcher to conduct his research in both Nigeria and Britain.

Within eight months, access was granted the researcher to interview prisoners in Nigeria; but unfortunately, access was denied him in England after twelve months of making four separate applications to four prisons in that country. This experience calls to mind that while prison establishments across the world deal with those who have gone contrary to the criminal law of a particular country, the demands of the different jurisdictions regarding security and research materials acceptable to prison regimes are quite different too. For example, the researcher has come to know that while a laptop, memory stick and tape recorder may be allowed for academic research in a Nigerian prison, they may not be approved for such in an English prison.

Considering all these daunting experiences and obvious setbacks, and with the full support of his supervisors, the researcher decided to conduct a “single study” by focusing on Nigeria where he was granted access to interview young armed robbers in Kirikiri Maximum Security Prison in Lagos. The next challenge was to restructure the thesis by discarding the written chapters on comparative criminology and the political economy of Britain. This experience has revealed that while a researcher may set out to do a particular research of his choice, he may end up doing what he never wanted to do.

Nevertheless, in the context of the current thesis, it is important to stress that occasions may warrant comparative literature, survey data and official crime statistics from some parts of the world, especially Africa being employed to make the study more robust. Comparing recorded crime between different jurisdictions can create complications (Barclay & Tavares, 2000). It has been argued on the other hand, that official statistics contain many problems and errors that seriously constrain their use for comparative study (Lynch 1993; Mayhew & Van Dijk, 1997).

In trying to conduct this study, the researcher reflected on the theoretical framework that would be suitable for the explanation of criminal behaviour, particularly armed robbery in Nigeria. The theory that captured the researcher’s imagination and interest more than any other was subcultural theory, from which the title of the thesis was formulated. At the beginning of the interviews, respondents seemed to be young men

robbing people, however, the researcher thought the study had some kind of resonance around subcultural form.

One of the assumptions about “subculture” is the lower, subordinate, or deviant status of social groups labelled as such. These labelled groupings are distinguished by their class, ethnicity, language, poor and working class situations (Cutler, 2006); age or generation (Maira, 1999). These cultural and socio-structural variables make subcultures relatively homogeneous (Epstein, 2002).

Since the 1990s, the term subculture has been used in a much broader perspective to explain any group of people who adjust to norms of behaviour, values, beliefs, consumption patterns, and lifestyle choices that are distinct from those of the dominant mainstream culture (Cutler, 2006). According to Gelder (2005: 1):

Subcultures are groups of people that are in some way represented as non-normative and/or marginal through their particular interests and practices, through what they are, what they do, and where they do it. They may represent themselves in this way; since subcultures are usually aware of their differences, bemoaning them, relishing them, exploiting them, and so on. But they will also be represented like this by others, who in response can bring an entire apparatus of social classification and regulation to bear upon them.

Gelder’s definition takes into account the groups themselves on the one hand; and mainstream society on the other. The groups feel marginalized because of their life situation, hence they decide to exhibit negative behaviour. Gelder also reveals how the entire society views these groups, and especially the way they categorize and isolate them as “subcultures”. Yet subcultures share elements of the main culture, while at the same time distinct from it (Brake, 1987: 6).

In the generic sense, the term subculture could be applied to any group of individuals whose behaviour differs from the rest of society. For example, we hear about occupational subculture (Trice, 1993); religious subculture (Gay & Ellison, 1993); consumer subculture (Schouten & McAlexander, 1995); drug subculture (Cutler, 2006; Cohen & Sas, 1994), immigrant subculture (Brake, 1987); internet or cybercrime subculture (Adeniran, 2008; Kahn & Kellner, 2006), and so on. This wider description of subculture has come to the attention of some scholars (Weinzierl & Muggleton,

2006; Cutler, 2006) who query its utility, hence their call for a reconceptualisation or replacement of the term. It is argued that this new conceptualisation captures the changing sensibilities and practices of subcultural forms (Weinzierl & Muggleton, 2006) in relation to youth groups.

Youth groups are now being referred to as “channels or subchannels”; “temporary substream networks”; “neo-tribes” and “clubculture” (see Weinzierl & Muggleton, 2006). While this reconceptualisation project does not receive the outright approval of scholars like Hodgkinson (2002), it is apparent that some of these confusions can be clarified if we recognise that different concepts are often used to abstract varied aspects of social reality, and that they can be used interchangeably with subculture to refer to a variety of youth cultural formations (see Weinzierl & Muggleton, 2006). Therefore, a reconceptualised idea of subculture must have “relative distinctiveness”, provide a sense of “identity”, a level of “commitment”, and the relative “autonomy” to operate (see Hall & Jefferson, 2006; Hodgkinson, 2002).

For more than half a century, subcultural theory has increasingly influenced the study of youth crime (Young, 2010). In doing so, it has developed two waves on the two sides of the Atlantic - a liberal or structural-functionalist American current of the 1950s and 1960s; and a Marxist British version of the late 1970s (see Young, 2010; Newburn, 2007; Blackman, 2005). The former started at the Chicago School, while the latter originated from the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, University of Birmingham (CCCS).

The Chicago School first used the concept “subculture” in their explanation of delinquency (see for example Cohen, 1955; Miller, 1958; Cloward & Ohlin, 1960). Cohen (1955) went as far as developing Merton’s anomic propositions in his seminal work, *Delinquent Boys*. He argued that a large group of male adolescents had developed a culture, with its norms, values, and expectations contrary to the dominant culture. This subculture emerged when youths from lower socio-economic status families struggled to achieve success. When compared to youths from middle class society, those from the lower class had disadvantaged academic backgrounds. Their inability to achieve success brought about their involvement in a subculture where they could find success and status enhancement. So, this subculture refused middle

class values such as academic achievement, courtesy and delayed gratification (see also Nihart et al, 2005). Cohen concludes that this delinquent subculture is “non-utilitarian”, “malicious” and “negativistic” (Cohen, 1955: 25) because it is used by status-frustrated youths as a hit-back mechanism (Macdonald, 2001: 33). Therefore, from the point of view of the youths themselves, their conduct is to be considered as meaningful (see Clubb, 2001).

Miller (1958) further developed the work of Cohen by identifying what he refers to as “focal concerns” of the lower class culture. He uses “focal concerns” in preference to “value”; and they include: trouble, toughness, smartness, excitement, fate and autonomy. Apparently, the “focal concerns” are a reflection of working class traditions rather than working class frustrations (see also Macdonald, 2001: 34). For Miller, middle-class norms and values are not subculturally relevant. What is relevant, he argues, is that members of the subculture conform to the distinctive value system of their own working class culture (see also Macdonald, 2001: 33). This implies that people’s circumstances in life may push them to adopt certain measures or patterns of behaviour, which may be beneficial or not. Miller put this question: why is the commission of crimes a customary feature of gangs? His answer is: street youths are motivated to commit crime by the desire to achieve ends, status, or conditions which are valued, and to avoid those that are disvalued within their most meaningful cultural milieu, through those culturally available avenues which appear as the most feasible means of achieving those ends (Miller, 1958: 17).

Cloward and Ohlin (1960) improved on the groundwork established by both Cohen and Miller, namely the kind of environment that gave rise to delinquent youths (see also Nihart et al, 2005). As Cloward and Ohlin (1960: 86) maintain, adolescents who form delinquent subcultures, have internalized an emphasis upon conformist goals. Drawing on Merton’s (1938) anomie-strain theory and Shaw and Mckay’s (1942) social disorganisation theory, Cloward and Ohlin argued that lower class boys were faced with inadequacies of lawful avenues of access to these goals and unable to revise their ambitions downward, they experienced severe disappointments, hence their involvement in higher levels of delinquency than middle and upper class youths (see also Nihart et al, 2005). Thus, unfavourable and disappointing expectation in life

could determine delinquent behaviour as a viable option. Cloward and Ohlin outlined three typologies of deviant subculture namely: criminal, conflict, and retreatist.

Like the Chicago School, the early Birmingham School focused on the link between the “deviant” sensibilities of youth “gangs” and the localities from which such gangs emerged (Bennett, 1999). Ecological studies of various parts of post-war Britain¹ found poverty as the main cause of delinquency, especially when combined with the absence of the father figure. In the 1950s, the absent or working mother came in for criticism. Child-rearing practices were compared, and working class life was seen as divided into “the rough” and “the respectable”. Delinquency was found to have local traditions and values in underprivileged areas of Liverpool and London (see Brake, 1987: 59).

With the publication of the CCCS research, British studies of youth culture experienced two fundamental changes. Firstly, emphasis shifted from the study of youth gangs to style-based youth cultures, such as Teddy boys, Mods, Rockers and Skinheads, which from the 1950s onwards rapidly became an essential feature of everyday British social life. Secondly, in keeping with the central hypothesis of the CCCS, as noted above, the “local” focus of earlier youth studies was given up completely in favour of a subcultural model of explanation (Bennett, 1999). The initial Chicago School’s premise that subcultures are critical to an understanding of deviance as normal behaviour in the face of particular social circumstances was reworked by the Birmingham School in their most influential work, *Resistance Through Rituals* (1976), in order to account for the style-centred youth cultures of post-war Britain. According to the CCCS, the deviant behaviour of such youth “subcultures” had to be understood as the collective reaction of youths themselves, or rather working-class youths, to structural changes taking place in British post-war society (Bennett, 1999).

In his assessment of the two subcultural waves mentioned above, Cohen (1980: vi) said: “Both work with the same “problematic” ... growing up in a class society; both identify the same vulnerable group: the urban male working-class late adolescent;

¹Thanks to scholars like Mays (1954); Morris (1957); Kerr (1958) for conducting such studies.

both see delinquency as a collective solution to a structurally imposed problem”. This “problematic” is probably different from the Nigerian situation because of the tribal divide of the youth population, but we shall see that some unemployed working class Nigerian youths still face collective problems that need redress such as bad friends, lack of money, poverty, corruption, and so on.

Again, and as we shall see later, the youth respondents for this study are from different tribes in the country (see table 18), even though the group element in their criminal behaviour is not in doubt. However, as the fieldwork progressed, it became apparent that it was not a subcultural form. Even so, the author thought that subcultural theory and its forms might still work; but disappointingly, the cultural identities (such as common language, code of dressing, and music) shared by popular subcultural groups like Teddy boys, Punks, Hip hops, were not found among the youths chosen for this Nigerian study. Arguably, the sample of respondents (armed robbers) were doing something very different from what could be termed a subculture. So, as the data was analyzed, it became obvious that the subculture paradigm would not work.

Nevertheless, subcultural theorists have always insisted that they are better placed to explain criminal behaviour (Blackman, 2005), hence no study of youth delinquency can easily be undertaken without recourse to many of their insights (Newburn, 2007). This is because subcultural theorists tend to consider the general nature of delinquency with an emphasis on youth gangs and groups instead of the individual deviant (Newburn, 2007). Thus, they place the group in the context of the entire society (see Young, 2010). According to Cohen (1955: 178), delinquency is not about something individualistic, but refers to “gangs of boys doing things together, their actions deriving their meaning and flavour from the fact of togetherness and governed by a set of common understanding, common sentiments and common loyalties” (cited in Gelder, 2005: 21). To be involved in group delinquency also implies that the individual takes delight and relief in the protective and sympathetic comfort of the group as he shares his experience of facing common tasks with them (Walsh, 1986).

Contemporary criminologists have invoked the principles of subcultural theorisation in their various studies of youthful offending, including armed robbery. For example,

Jacobs and Wright (1999) interviewed 86 active armed robbers in St Louis Missouri (USA), on the impact of “street culture” on an offender’s decision to engage in armed robbery. They conclude that “street culture subsumes a number of powerful conduct norms, including but not limited to the hedonistic pursuit of sensory stimulation, disdain for conventional living, lack of future orientation, and persistent eschewal of responsibility” (Jacobs & Wright, 1999: 165). This implies that those associated with street lifestyles are averse to the conventional norms of mainstream society. It is this aversion to the norms of mainstream society that makes them become a deviant subculture. However, not all subcultures are deviant or criminal-oriented (but see Cohen & Sas, 1994).

In what follows, the subcultural approach is not immune from criticisms. To begin with, the notion of subculture has never really been adequately defined. Even when definitions are attempted, they are generically driven and without any connection with youth delinquency, which the concept purports to be addressing. As Bennett (1999: 599) stresses, “the problems of using ‘subculture’ is that it has sometimes been applied inexactly, becoming little more than a convenient ‘catch-all’ term for any aspect of social life in which young people, style and music intersect”. It is little wonder that “subculture” has been used as an *ad hoc* concept whenever a writer wished to emphasize the normative aspects of behaviour contrary to some general standard. The result has been a blurring of the meaning of the term, confusion with other terms, and a failure frequently to distinguish between two levels of social causation (see Yinger, 1960: 625-6 cited in Jenks, 2005: 7). Moreover, one would question the random use of the term “subculture” to apply to those who live oppositional to the mainstream society as those who have no positive ideals to pursue, thus making them all the more isolated from the larger society. On this view, their marginalization is simply intensified by their designation as a “subculture” (Jenks, 2005: 130).

Subcultural theory fails to make a clear-cut distinction between “subcultures” and “gangs”. Every so often, it tries to merge the two together in the name of studying deviant criminal groups. For example, Walsh (1986: 19) makes this merger by arguing that the concept of “gang” and “subculture” are conventionally used to explain the cultural enclave in which the apprenticeship process occurs, stressing

group support, both physical and in the sense of shared guilt or blame after events. In doing so, he begs the question about the authenticity of the so-called “subcultures”. It is important to stress that both concepts are different. Gangs are informally-structured “near groups” made up of a closely connected core with a looser network of peripheral members; whereas subcultures are the cluster of actions, values, style, imagery and lifestyles which through media reportage, extend beyond a neighbourhood to form a complex relationship with other larger cultures to form a symbolic pseudo-community (Brake, 1987). This distinction is important if we are to avoid the misrepresentation of subculture as almost anything any person may think of. Otherwise, looking at the formal and substantive elements of “subculture”, if the term were to be introduced for the first time now, it would be dismissed as inadequate (Clark 1974 cited in Brake, 1987).

The subcultural approach is notoriously “overly deterministic” in its emphasis on the “peer group” or “gangs” or rather “group criminality”; but it is silent about the place of “personal choice” and “free will” in criminal behaviour (Clubb, 2001). Being in a subculture or gang makes delinquent activity more likely by actively promoting it, nevertheless, this does not make deviant behaviour obligatory. The individual is naturally free to choose whether to commit a crime or not, and to do so for personal reasons rather than as a group requirement (Clubb, 2001; Williams, 1997). Crime causation is a matter for the individual to deal with without much concern for the group (Clubb, 2001). This has also been a favourable argument for Merton’s anomie theory. However, according to Sutherland and Cressey’s differential association theory (1978), the values which encourage peers to commit crime are learnt alongside the techniques to commit crime. When peers behave contrary to the group, they break away from the group’s solidarity. Group solidarity is a formidable and pivotal force as far as the subculture is concerned. Arguably, most youth crimes would not be committed in a group if people did not want to exhibit their popularity and status among their members. Therefore being overly deterministic is a subcultural “complacency” to perpetuate criminal behaviour among youths.

The claim of subcultural theorists to be better placed in the study of youth delinquency is overexaggerated. While they have a role in explaining group delinquency, they are deficient in the understanding of individual criminality. Group

criminality presupposes individual criminality, which likely starts at home before it degenerates into peer delinquency in the form of a subculture.

The issue of a group's homogeneity makes subcultural formation utterly "selective" and pro-western. Arguably, it is unnecessary to look for a homogeneous youth criminal population in order to group them into a subcultural form. Youths of different age brackets and backgrounds can still come together to form a subculture in order to address what they perceive as youth problems in the polity.

Moreover, subcultural theory has consistently been attacked for having only one vulnerable group of people in mind, that is urban male working class late adolescents (see for example Macdonald, 2001). This position of criminologists from both sides of the Atlantic has overdominated subcultural studies with a stereotype of the youthful offender. An all-important question is: why has a particular group of individuals remained the focus of subcultural theorists as those that can be associated with delinquency? Subcultural theorists should make a leap and extend their studies to various groups of youths in post-modern society in order to understand the dynamics of youth delinquency. Criminologists from Africa must now rise to the challenge of creating their own school of subcultural studies instead of depending on the sort of "benchmark" set by both the Chicago and Birmingham Schools as the measure for subcultural studies.

Scholars (Redhead, 1990; Melechi, 1993; Miles, 1995; Malbond, 1998; Muggleton, 1997; Bennett, 2000) have argued that subcultures were created by subcultural theorists, not *vice versa*. That is to say, subcultural theorists determine what subcultures should represent. For instance, American theorists would answer the question about the delinquent by referring to the "delinquent subculture" involving coded honours based on "Rep" and the mobilisation of violence (Young, 2010). British theorists would talk about the Teds, Punks, Mods, and so on, by clearly defining their styles, thereby ignoring the lack of clarity of the actors involved (Young, 2010). In this sense, subcultural theory may be accused of being overdominated by Western criminologists, especially American and British scholars, to an extent that any study of youth subcultures elsewhere must be influenced by studies from either or both countries. The danger is that subcultural theorists from both sides

of the Atlantic end up glamorising delinquents by “popularising” them as Rep, Mods, Teds, Hip hops etc, with the end result that the criminal behaviours of youth subcultures are downplayed.

Subcultures are male-dominated so much so that an emphasis on “maleness” is seen as a panacea for an identity that has been weakened by structural features (Brake, 1987). Perhaps the invisibility of girls’ subculture is because the very term “subculture” has acquired such consistently masculine overtones (McRobbie and Garber, 2005). In this connection, men are regarded as more criminally-minded than women. It has been argued that the “absence of girls from the whole of literature in this area is quite striking and demands explanation” (McRobbie & Garber, 1976: 209), and very little seems to have been written about the involvement of girls in group delinquency (McRobbie and Garber, 2005); but whenever they are acknowledged in the literature, the focus has been on their sexual attractiveness. If subcultural theorists neglect the holistic study of female group delinquency, then a crucial element of research that can explore the gender divide in offending is lacking.

Subcultural theory has been accused of over-prediction with regard to delinquency. For example, among the poorest working class communities, crime is not ever-present in all individuals (see Newburn, 2007). Critics also maintain that subcultural theory is unnecessarily over-rational in an attempt to grant human actors a sense of making their history in a determinate world. Consequent to that is an unreflective bouncing off the conditions that beset such people (Young, 2010) hence the freedom to drift (Matza, 1964) into crime. For instance, the robber continues to rob, the alcoholic continues to drink and get drunk (see Young, 2010). In doing so, a culture of crime is developed and animated.

Subcultural theorisation tends to split up a whole society when it talks about “deviants”, thus suggesting that there are also non-deviants. This makes the deviants to claim a moral high ground for their actions, while at the same time finding faults with the mainstream society. Arguably, for the deviant, the mainstream is seen as deviant; while for the mainstream, the subculture is the deviant. In the words of Jenks (2005: 129) “the idea of subculture can be employed to valorise the underdog,

radicalize the dispossessed, give voice to the inarticulate but equally to marginalize and contain the deviant or non-mainstream”.

However, if by subculture we are referring to the well-known theory of the 1950s and 1970s, then it might not be feasible to employ it in the explanation of the “youth subculture” who enact armed robberies in Nigeria. As noted before, this is largely due to the absence in this study of cultural identities associated with subcultures, such as dress code, music, common language, and so on. Although these cultural identities may be crucial to any subcultural formation, they seem to have been overemphasized by the theory, thereby overshadowing the study of criminal behaviour of youth subcultures. In addition, the characteristics of the offender sample in the present study in terms of age, state of origin, tribe, and geo-political zone do not fit with the homogeneous nature of subculture, even though the respondents are involved in group criminality, which subcultural theorists claim to be better positioned to explain (see once again Blackman, 2005).

Even if subculture remains the best way to explain more unconventional aspects of youth culture, it does not seem to offer much help for an understanding of the wide range of youth groups in the post-modern world (Cutler, 2006; Muggleton & Weinzierl, 2006). This may be because of the way subculture is somewhat “benchmarked” to refer to certain group of people alone. In that weakness, subcultural theory has probably now, “run its course” (Jenks 2005: 145), become “superfluous” and “no longer relevant” (Chaney 2004: 36) and fails to provide “a useful description of young people’s social world or their experiences” (Karvonen et al, 2001: 393) in relation to the crime of armed robbery in Nigeria.

It is important to reiterate that youth involvement in criminality there arises from the injustices of the Nigerian state: when youths come together as “bad friends” to carry out armed robbery, they are motivated by a desire to get money due to the poverty and endemic corruption in the country. These are their major kinds of indicators that explain what they do. One can see their reasons as either appropriate or not. To say that they are fighting against the state appears to be a romanticisation of crime, given that it would be open to them to do so by peaceful protest or demonstration.

Since subcultural theory could not bear on this study as its theoretical framework, and there is no Nigerian criminological theoretical framework to help us, the available option was to employ anomie-strain theory and a measure of control theory because the data (see chapter 5) theoretically and significantly point towards anomie and control.

Anomie occurs when society emphasizes achievement or culturally prescribed goals without addressing the approved norms that regulate the means to achieve those goals (Zembroski, 2011: 246). Originally, Merton identified anomie as a feature of American society in general and experienced by those in the lower socio-demographic classes because their access to legitimate opportunities are more often than not blocked (see Akers & Sellers, 2008). Nigerian social structure is unequal and unjust (Arhedo et al, 2011), and such inequality can result in anomie. The rich-poor divide obviously pressures people, especially youths from poorer backgrounds, to get involved in crimes such as armed robbery, as a way out of poverty. Whereas social systems hold the same goals for all people, they do not give the same people the equal means to achieve them. When that happens, standards of right and wrong are no longer applicable, and it is necessary to determine “which of the available procedures is most efficient in netting the culturally approved value?” (Merton, 1968: 189). The state of anomie results in “a literal demoralization, i.e., a de-institutionalization of the means” (Merton, 1968: 190; see also Zembroski, 2011: 245). For example, corruption in the higher echelons of Nigerian society appears to result in the fracturing of moral standards, and this causes problems in justifying the observance of the rule of law. This is because social structures exert enormous pressures on people to deviate (Merton, 1968). Therefore, anomie-strain theory seems to be the closest theory that can offer an explanation of criminal behaviour found among Nigerian youths in this study.

Moreover, the choice of anomie-strain theory to explain criminal behaviour in an anomic society like Nigeria is for the reason that it has a more fluid flexible fit into the Nigerian context, and explains criminal behaviour mainly from an economic position. Anomic crimes like armed robbery (Messner & Rosenfeld, 2001b) seem to flourish in Nigeria because some segments of the youth population are disenfranchised, disaffected and fairly alienated by the society and government such

that legitimate opportunities to achieve the desired cultural goals are far removed from them. The youth respondents for this study is a typical example, hence the employment of anomie-strain theory to explain their criminal behaviour. They see themselves as bad friends, who are looking for money, and blaming the government for the poverty and deep-rooted corruption in the country. Of course, considering these criminogenic factors, it cannot be gainsaid that a state of normlessness and social disorganisation prevail in Nigeria. Society's attitudes toward corruption, cheating on one's income tax, embezzling, fraud, and interfering with the right to privacy help set the stage for acts that may be considered criminal. In Nigeria, there is a tendency to exalt the rich without bothering about the source of the wealth (Odumosu, 1999: 72). When a group of people, or society or community become more disorganized or anomic, there is the tendency that higher rate of crime and deviance could be found among them (Akers & Sellers, 2008).

Another reason for using anomie-strain theory in this study is because it provides an insight into the crime problem in Nigeria, which is arguably connected to the unbridled quest for money. According to Alemika and Chukwuma (2001: 20), Nigerian society lays more emphasis on being “successful” in the sense of acquisition of wealth, engagement in ostentatious lifestyle and conspicuous consumption (possess expensive cars, large and expensive buildings, make huge donations at public fund-raising, etc), to be highly educated and to wield political power. Those who fail to meet these aspirations and goals prescribed by society experience tremendous pressure or strain. The main emphasis of Merton’s anomie-strain theory is “monetary success”, which is one criminogenic aspect of the content of the American Dream. As far as monetary success is an inherently open-ended and elusive, the adequacy of the legitimate means for achieving this particular cultural goal is suspect. Irrespective of the amount of money someone is able to make by staying within legal boundaries, illegal means will always offer further advantages in pursuit of the ultimate goal (Rosenfeld & Messner, 2000). It is obvious that those who may have no access to legitimate opportunities are most likely to suffer the greatest strain (Merton, 1968).

Social control theory deals with social bonds in relation to delinquency, and it helps to explain some probable factors that led the respondents to get involved in armed robbery, and complements anomie-strain theory. Hirschi (2002, [1969]) argues that when there is a strong social bond with conventional others and institutions, crime is likely not to be committed. Logically, youths who have nothing to loose socially, morally, or instrumentally are likely to become law breakers, as compared to those with strong social bonds to conventional others, institutions and belief systems (Jensen, 2000: 140). The rule of law in Nigeria is very fragile, and people are sceptical of societal laws and norms. It appears that some are able to break the law with impunity, and this may explain why corruption is endemic and a way of life.

Current theoretical criminological perspectives do not adequately take account of the Nigerian experience of crime and criminality. Therefore, there is need for the development of a Nigerian criminological framework. It is hoped that this research makes a contribution to that body of knowledge. A Nigerian criminology will take into full account an understanding of the management of crime and criminal justice in the country. It will aim at linking crime with certain issues such as: tribal differences that have formed part of the people's lifestyle; rural-urban migration of people, especially youths in search for jobs; the use of "juju" power and belief in "God"; high levels of inequality and corruption among the powerful elite in Nigeria in relation to the lower class people. By identifying these issues, what comes next is the beginning of a debate on the development of a Nigerian criminological perspective.

Having said that, the main aim of this thesis is to study the factors responsible for the involvement of youths in armed robbery. In doing so, we will look closely at armed robbery from the perspective of offenders. The importance of studying youths and armed robbery in the Nigerian context lies in their increasing involvement in the crime, which has become a disturbing phenomenon right across the country (Federal Republic of Nigeria [FRN], 2001). Moreover, the criminal activities of Nigerian youths "are to a considerable extent products of our depressed economy, political repression and instability under military rule, and the systematic abandonment of the positive aspects of our cherished cultural values and traditions" (FRN, 2001: 17).

“Youth” is a socially constructed part of the lifespan positioned between childhood and adulthood. This definition stresses an understanding of youth having social, cultural and biological components (Hill, 2008: 167). Although “youth” is a concept that does not exist in comparable form in all societies, it remains an embodied social construct associated with young people, who “are often constructed in dominant discourses as simultaneously and paradoxically at risk, and a risk to society” (Holt, 2009: 283). At the same time, youth is considered as a key indicator of the state of a country itself. In other words, there is a generally held assumption that young people hold a key to the future of a country, hence the treatment and management of “youth” is expected to provide a means of solving the country’s problems (Griffin, 2001).

The way in which a nation defines its youth is relative to the objective conditions and realities that exist therein (FRN, 2001). Following the World Health Organisation’s (WHO) specification, youths are between 15 and 24 years of age, nevertheless, in most countries of sub-Saharan Africa, national policy extends the youth age to 30, 35 and in rare cases to age 40 (Blum, 2007). In Nigeria for example, youth refers to “persons of ages 18 to 35, who are citizens of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. This category represents the most active, the most volatile, and yet the most vulnerable segment of the population socio-economically, emotionally, and in other respects” (FRN, 2001: 5).

Nigeria’s population is largely made up of young people. Evidence shows that six out of every ten Nigerians are under 25 years of age. In 1991, the overall population of those between the ages of 15 and 34 was about 30 million; equivalent to one in every three Nigerians; and of these, 14 million (47 per cent) were males while 16 million (53 per cent) were females (FRN, 2001). Scholars (Adeniran, 2008; Adalemo, 1999) have argued that Nigerian youths are known for their idealistic, adventurous, resourceful, inquisitive and proactive characteristics. When challenged by proper motivation, they are prepared to contribute to the development of their country (Adeniran, 2008; Mabogunje, 1998). However, the failure of leadership at all levels in the polity to support positive values for the youths has often translated into social incongruence (Adeniran, 2008), which may have contributed to their formation of criminal groups.

Although armed robbery is not a new crime in Nigeria, the audacity and openness with which it is announced and successfully enacted is (Marenin, 1987; Igbo, 2001). With the end of the Nigerian civil war (1967-1970), the offence began to occur very frequently in the urban areas more than the rural (Ekpenyong, 1989). In recent times, scholars (see for example Torimiro & Kolawole, 2005; Idemudia, 2005) have commented that the rate at which incidents of armed robbery are reported in the print media is frightening. According to a more recent editorial in the *Punch* Newspaper,² no state in the federation is safe from armed robbery attacks, and it is estimated that the country loses 100 of its citizens to armed robbers each month (Editorial Board, 2009). The perpetrators are predominantly male youths (Nwalozie, 2007) who use sophisticated guns and other sophisticated accessories that smooth the progress of their operation, such as gas cylinders, welding tools, hammers, powerful beam lights and explosives for blowing up bank safes (Sani, 2006; see also Otu, 2003).

As documented by Marenin (1987: 278), armed robbers in Nigeria drive the latest cars, spend their gains on fancy clothes and women, and have close ties with corrupt police officers. Evidence has shown that the complicity of some police officers, military officers and local businessmen has facilitated armed robbery operations in the country (Nkpa, 1976; see also Aluyor, 2005). The current criminal climate has also made it possible for armed robbers to operate occasionally at inter-state level (see Ihonde, 2006). Yet, it is suspicious that there may be more to armed robbery than appears at first glance (Marenin, 1987: 278).

The first objective will be to have a better understanding of the situational dynamics in armed robbery. Secondly, the study will encourage positive action to reduce and/or prevent armed robbery occurrence in future. It involves utilising the responses made by both the offenders and members of the criminal justice system. Finally, the study will develop a better understanding of the debates surrounding armed robbery as a basis for further theorizing. This will feature a discussion of the principal results from the study and some recommendations as to the way forward for Nigeria.

²It was published on 09/06/2009.

The methodological assumptions on which the present research is based are detailed in chapter 4. Previous studies have extracted data on robbers from official records and files and interviewed robbery convicts in custody (Mouzos & Carcach, 2001; Matthews, 2002; Wright et al, 2006). This study will follow a similar procedure. It will employ a qualitative research method involving a semi-structured face-to-face oral interview (open ended) with twenty armed robbers in prison custody in Nigeria. It is also based on unstructured interviews with four members of the criminal justice system in that country.

1.1. Research questions

Our central or main research question is: what are the factors responsible for the involvement of youths in armed robbery? To answer this question, we have to consider the theoretical perspectives involved in this study (see chapter 3), which have helped in posing two other theory-based research questions. These research questions will guide the study. The questions run *inter alia*:

- Does weak institutional control encourage the involvement of youths in armed robbery?
- Does a lack of legitimate opportunities encourage youths to get involved in armed robbery?

The first question was proposed on the basis of social control theory which argues that people may not get involved in crime when they are attached to family, committed to the wider society, involved in conventional activities, and have belief in the rule of law (see Hirschi, 2002, [1969]). That is to say, when socialisation works well, people are drawn into closer contact with conventional society (Hirschi, 2002, [1969]; Meier, 1982). However, when these social bonds are weak, then crime is likely to be committed. As we shall see in chapter 5, some of the respondents blamed polygamy, death of parents, and broken home as factors that led them into armed robbery. These youths seem to be bereft of the bond of affection that would have kept them attached to their parents, hence the option to commit crime. These social bonds may be regarded as social constraints (Zhang, 2001).

Futhermore, if we agree with Hirschi and Rudisill (1976: 21) that “crime is automatically explained by explaining the behaviour of the law-abiding”, then the question we are trying to understand is what makes these Nigerian youths to break the law. In looking at social control, it is arguable that there is a breakdown on the law in Nigerian society. As chapter 5 will reveal, the respondents mentioned corruption as one of their motivations for robbery. Previous research suggests that corruption is one measure of the lack of effective political institutionalization (Huntington, 2009: 255).

The second question was raised on the basis of anomie-strain theory. In considering the social structure and anomie, Merton (1968a) contends that deviance evolves from the culture and structure of society. Inasmuch as members of society are placed in different class structures, there may not be equal opportunity to achieve shared values, hence deviance is generated and there is anomie or normlessness. Some of the youths who take to armed robbery in Nigeria see it as a short cut to becoming wealthy.

Besides these two theory-based questions, and to make the study more robust, and clearer, three specific interview questions have been proposed to the respondents namely:

- Do you think that your family situation was responsible for your getting involved in armed robbery?
- Do you think that economic circumstances were responsible for your getting involved in armed robbery?
- Do you think that engagement with criminal peers was responsible for your getting involved in armed robbery?

To address the objectives of this study as mentioned above, two more interview questions have been crafted:

- Can you tell me how armed robbers got what they wanted from their victims?
- Do you think armed robbery is something an offender can stop doing?

These specific interview questions have been operationalised to structure the fieldwork. The process of operationalisation is crucial to an effective research project. This involves a set of operations, behaviours that can be measured, addressed and

manipulated (Cohen et al, 2007). In answering all these research questions, it is expected that respondents may have recourse to the broad cultural and socio-economic factors in the native country Nigeria. The responses will allow reflection on the three theoretical models that are more concrete namely: weak bond, economic, and peer association as incitements to youths to become armed robbers.

First, the weak bond model will concentrate on issues such as polygamy, death of parents, and broken home. Second, the economic model will consider factors like lack of jobs, money, poverty, and better life. Third, the peer association model will examine the street life of “bad friends”, their use of drugs/alcohol, and involvement in gambling. It is important to state that both the weak bond and the economic models will discuss the issue of corruption.

Furthermore, the question of threat, force, and weapon use will help explain the severity of the crime and how and where robbers get their guns. Finally, the question of reduction and/or prevention strategies will be raised. They will be responses given by the offender sample and the members of the criminal justice system.

1.2. The nature of armed robbery

Before the Nigerian Civil War, robbery was legally defined as “stealing with violence” (Igbo, 2001: 182). Pursuant to the Criminal Code of 1958, two types of robbery existed in Nigeria namely: “ordinary robbery” and “aggravated robbery”. The former refers to the actual use or threat of violence to rob, while the latter involves the use of dangerous weapons to rob leading to physical injuries to victims (Igbo, 2001). Immediately after the war, and consequent upon the dramatic rise in armed robbery offences across the country, the then Federal Military Government abrogated the section of the Criminal Code dealing with “aggravated robbery” and replaced it with the Armed Robbery and Firearms (Special Provisions) Decree 1970 no 47,³ as a general deterrent measure (Igbo, 2001). This Decree is the basis for the fluid definition regarding armed robbery in Nigeria today. It addresses the offender, the objects used before, during, or after the offence, the accomplices, the injury inflicted

³ This Decree is cited in the Criminal Code Act (CCA) 1990 Sections 402-403.

on the victim, the intent to commit the offence, the conspiracy to rob, and the requisite punishment.

According to the Decree, armed robbery occurs: if an offender is armed with any firearms, or any offensive weapon, or any obnoxious or chemical materials, or is in company with any person so armed; or at or immediately before or immediately after the time of robbery, and if the said offender wounds any person, the offender shall upon conviction be sentenced to death (CCA, 1990, S. 402, 2 a-b). Secondly, if any offender who commits the offence of robbery is armed with any firearms or any offensive weapon or is in company with any other person so armed; or at or immediately before or immediately after the time of the offence, the said offender wounds or uses any other personal violence to any person, the offender shall upon conviction be sentenced to imprisonment for life with or without weeping (CCA, 1990, S. 403, 2a-b).

Thirdly, if any person is found in any public place in possession of any firearms whether real or imitation and in circumstances reasonably indicating that the possession of the firearms is with intent to the immediate or eventual commission by that person or any other person of any offence under Section 402 (CCA, 1990, S.403, 3). Fourthly, any person who conspires with any person to commit the offence whether or not he is present when the offence is committed or attempted to be committed shall be deemed guilty of the offence as a principal offender and shall be punished accordingly (CCA, 1990, S. 403a).

Indeed, the underlying principle in Nigeria is that armed robbery must involve the use of firearms⁴ or any offensive weapons⁵ at the disposal of the motivated offender, that is, any person who aids, counsels, abets, procures or conspires with any person to

⁴The Robbery and Firearms (Special Provisions) Act 1984 Section 13 (1) defines “firearms” to include any canon, gun, rifle, carbine, machine gun, cap-gun, flint-lock gun, revolver, pistol or other firearm whether whole or in detached pieces.

⁵Ibid. “Offensive weapon” is any article made or adapted for use for causing injury or intended by the person having it for such use by him and it includes an air gun, air pistol, bow and arrow, spear, cutlass, machete, dagger, cudgel, or any piece of wood, metal glass or stone capable of being used as an offensive weapon.

commit the offence.⁶ As Ekpenyong (1989) argues, the fluidity of the definition has meant that many property offenders stand accused of armed robbery in circumstances that ought to have been considered as theft, burglary or ordinary robbery. What amounts to a reasonable intent to commit an armed robbery is in fact largely dependent on police interpretation, and this creates an opportunity for police manipulation to their own advantage (Ekpenyong, 1989). Unfortunately, the label of “armed robbers” has very often been used to justify the undue imprisonment of innocent Nigerians who have come to the attention of the police for reasons ranging from their refusal to give bribes to escape punishment for some minor offences (Alston, 2005) to being used as a pretext for the administration of “jungle justice”.⁷ This development has at times made it difficult to decipher who the real criminals are.

It may be relevant to consider the British definition of robbery, because of the central role Britain played in establishing the Nigerian legal system during the colonial years. As the British Theft Act 1968 prescribes, “a person is guilty of robbery if he or she steals and immediately before or at any time so doing, and in order to do, uses force,⁸ or puts or seeks to put any person in fear of being then and there subjected to force” (see Smith, 1997: 87). This definition makes no direct reference to armed robbery or the use of any weapon to rob but emphasises the use of “force” to rob or in order to rob. It is more than four decades since the definition was enacted, but it has stood the test of time, and remained the current legal definition used in Britain to refer to armed robbery, street robbery, and any other form of robbery. It has also influenced many definitions of robbery across the world, including Nigeria. Apparently, whenever reference is made to robbery of business or commercial property in Britain, it invariably points to armed robbery (see for example Gill, 2000; Matthews, 1996, 2002).

In Nigeria, armed robbery appears to have a different conceptualisation. It is a spatio-temporal crime (Adeboyejo & Abodunri, 2007) that can be enacted at home, in a

⁶See S. 3a introduced by S. 2 of the Robbery and Firearms (Special Provisions) (Amendment) Decree No. 48 of 1971.

⁷This refers to the public dispensing justice apart from the normal process of law. In most cases, it involves extra-judicial killing through neck-tying.

⁸Smith interprets this force to imply any exercise of physical strength against another person (p.88).

commercial setting, in the work environment, on the motorway (highway) (see for example Ekpenyong, 1989; Ginifer & Ismail, 2005; Onuminya & Ohwoghiagbese, 2005) or wherever the offenders may choose to operate. Once a weapon is involved, the tendency is for the criminal justice system, particularly the police, generally to interpret everything as armed robbery without proper categorisation into residential robbery, commercial robbery, car robbery, street robbery and so on. Undoubtedly, this development continues to create ambiguities in official statistics and sentencing procedures in the country.

Armed robbery bridges the conventional divide between violent crime and property crime (Wright & Decker, 1997; Matthews, 2002). For instance, the British Crime Survey calls it property crime while the Annual Criminal Statistics of Britain refers to it as a form of violent crime (Matthews, 2002). In essence, robbery is both a property crime as well as a crime of violence (Carroll & Jackson, 1983; Cook, 1987). Perhaps the most serious harm caused by robbery is that it violates two strongly held values, which are: the right to personal safety and the right to property (Conklin, 1972). At times robbery leads to the sudden death of either the victims or offenders. If death occurs, it is a different offence, usually murder or manslaughter. When violence and theft are combined, robbery becomes the most serious of the common offences of dishonesty (Gilyeat, 1993: 13).

Armed robbery inspires fear (Macdonald, 1975; Cook, 1987). This fear is predicated on the use of force against the victim and the theft of his property (Conklin, 1972). Another pertinent reason for fear of robbery is that it is an offence usually committed by a stranger⁹ who attacks a victim or victims violently and unexpectedly (Conklin, 1972; Cook, 1987; Felson et al, 2000). This fear keeps people off the streets, makes them avoid strangers, and leads them to lock their doors (Conklin, 1972: 4). In opening the interaction, the perpetrators will employ at least one of three procedures to intimidate their victims: first, a command for compliance supported by a threat of force; second, the utilization of prodding force; third, the exercise of incapacitating force (Desroches, 2002; Luckenbill, 1980).

⁹The word “stranger” as used here connotes someone who may or may not have known the victim but who appears unknown to him during the operation.

Despite the common view that robbery is a crime perpetrated by strangers (Desroches, 2002), it is also an acquaintance crime (Felson et al, 2000). More than four decades ago, Normandeau (1968b) revealed that 85 per cent of all robberies in the US were enacted against strangers. However, a recent study shows that in more than one-third of robberies committed in the US, the criminal must have known the victim previously (Felson et al, 2000). Whether or not a stranger or an acquaintance commits robbery, it at times tends to generate moral panic in the cultural milieu.¹⁰

In what follows, we shall give an overview of the thesis.

1.3. Overview of thesis

This thesis contains seven chapters in total. Chapter 2 discusses in detail the problem of armed robbery in Nigeria. It starts by establishing the background to the study. The next subsection will attempt to situate armed robbery in the political history and socio-economic conditions of Nigeria. Finally, the chapter will demonstrate a comparative analysis of crime and criminal justice by considering the broader literature in the area. In specific terms, we will be comparing Nigeria with a few countries on certain criminal justice issues such as victim surveys and official statistics among others.

Chapter 3 explores the existing studies and the theoretical framework. This includes a review of literature based on previous theoretical and empirical explanations of armed robbery. It will employ two theories of crime (control and anomie-strain theories) as a basis for explaining youth involvement in armed robbery.

Chapter 4 explains the research method. The research design is qualitative. Furthermore, there will be a discussion of the following subheadings: interpretive paradigm, fieldwork location and localisation, access, sampling, ethics, data collection and analysis, research limitations and a proof of method reliability and validity.

¹⁰The creation of moral panic over crime was brought about by a coalition of political, law enforcement and media interests that accounts for the growth of the crime industry” (Chambliss, 1994a: 192). The media have always used that strategy “wittingly or unwittingly to reproduce the definitions of the powerful” (Eldridge, 1997: 65). That is, they may either criticise, or support politicians and the criminal justice system or even add their own to make the crime story more dramatic.

Chapter 5 examines the key research findings. This will involve issues arising from the fieldwork and the way they are analysed to give meaning to the study. First, we will discuss the socio-cultural demographics of the sample of armed robbers. Then, the rest of the results will appear in four parts namely: the family circumstances of offenders, the economic motivations for getting involved in armed robberies, the life course engagement of offenders, and the situational dynamics in carrying out a robbery operation.

Chapter 6 suggests how to respond to armed robbery based on the research findings. For the sake of clarity, it will appear in two subsections. The first will capture the responses given by the sample of prisoners interviewed. The second will reflect the views of the four members of the criminal justice system interviewed.

Finally, chapter 7 will initiate new theorising by discussing the outcome of this research, which features a discussion of the principal results. In short, this is the conclusion chapter.

Chapter 2: The problem of armed robbery in Nigeria

This chapter deals with the problem of armed robbery in Nigeria. It begins by giving a background to the study. The chapter will investigate the political history and socio-economic conditions of Nigeria in order to understand the activities of Nigerian leaders which seem to have been marred by corruption and economic mismanagement (see Ekpenyong, 1989), thus reproducing a culture of rule and law breaking among some youths. Finally, the chapter makes a comparative analysis of crime and criminal justice by first considering the broader literature in the area. Specifically, however, we will compare Nigeria with some countries by looking at victim surveys and official statistics among other issues.

2.1. Background to the study

Armed robbery is a problem in Nigeria (Marenin & Reisig, 1995; Alston, 2005; Idemudia, 2005; Ogunseye, 2007). However, up until the 1960s, it was quite safe for people to travel from one part of the country to another (Ogbobine, 1982). Before 1967, armed robbery was not a common phenomenon in Nigeria and did not attract public attention like pickpocketing, burglary, and stealing (Ogbobine, 1982). This is because incidents of armed robbery were isolated and less violent and so did not generate a serious social problem (Igbo, 2001). Bearing in mind the unreliability of police crime data in Nigeria, we may note that in 1965 and 1966 there were 1,446 and 2,370 recorded incidents of “robbery and extortion” respectively (Igbo, 2001). It is still unclear how many cases of robbery and extortion are included in these figures. The figures dropped sharply to 733 in 1968 and 619 in 1969, as a result of the exclusion of the “breakaway Biafran territory” and the enlistment of many youths into the military as war combatants (Igbo, 2001).

In 1960, the Nigerian public was agog with the news of an outrageous armed robbery involving the sum of £60,000 belonging to the then Bank of West Africa Ltd, (now First Bank of Nigeria Ltd), which was stolen between Ologbo and Sapele in the former Bendel State (Ogbobine, 1982). At that time, Nigeria was under British colonial rule and the currency had great value and high purchasing power. People were parsimonious in the use of money; there was little of the extravagance that is evident in recent times.

The Nigeria civil war that started in May 1967 was a turning point in the country's history. Many families were wrecked following the loss of lives and properties, while survivors had little or nothing to live on. The situation created many opportunities for people to be involved in criminality. The abrupt end of the civil war in January 1970 led to the reunification of the whole country (Igbo, 2001). It also marked the start of another phase for the many families affected by war. There was hunger and poverty; many soldiers trained in the use of firearms were demobilized from the army; and others deserted the military only to get involved in robbery and violence (Rotimi, 1984; Ekpenyong, 1989). From then on, the media started reporting many cases of armed robbery. The incidents started on the highways, ("highway robbery") but gradually spread to the local communities and private homes as "armed robberies"; robbers used sophisticated weapons to kill, maim, and rob their victims (Nkpa, 1976; Ilegbune, 1998; Elechi, 2003; Nwalozie, 2007). Evidence shows that in a three-year period 1970, 1971, and 1972, the police recorded 1,994, 1,483, and 1,083 respective incidents of armed robbery across the country (Igbo, 2001). These figures are higher than the previous years, which is partly due to the separation of extortion from robbery immediately after the war (Igbo, 2001).

Recent events have shown that Nigerian society is insecure and vulnerable to crime. In urban areas, the situation is perceived to have become worse, and in addition, the "contagion" has diffused to the rural areas too (Idemudia, 2005). It is also obvious that Nigeria's crime problem has implications for its position in the economic global market. A recent survey carried out by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) reveals that "Nigeria is rated as the riskiest country for business in the world" (2005: 101). The survey points chiefly to armed robbery among other crimes. Elsewhere in South Africa, for example, the high level of crime is attributable to a "deeply entrenched culture of violence produced by decades of repressive racial policing, violent crime and social conflict" (Kynoch, 2005: 494–50 cited in Fourchard, 2008: 18). However, since 1970, when the civil war ended, armed robbery is probably the only crime that has caused so much trepidation, apprehension, insecurity, public anger, shame and concern to successive governments in Nigeria (Igbo, 2001: 176). Furthermore, it has been described as the most glamorous and fastest growing crime affecting much of the country (Adisa, 1994; Alston, 2005).

During his independence anniversary broadcast to the nation on 1 October 1986, the then President, General Ibrahim Babangida admitted, “the high incidence of armed robbery is equal to anarchy” (Ekpenyong, 1989: 24).¹¹ His statement was motivated by the widespread menace of a robbery kingpin Lawrence Anini (A.K.A. “THE LAW”) and other armed robbers across the country whose actions his (Babangida’s) administration could not easily control. By then, the robbery situation was probably a calculated attempt to question the legitimacy of the military government (Marenin, 1987) who had usurped power through a coup d’état. The Anini saga became the major news headline in the media for several months. He was said to have acquired the extraordinary power of physical disappearance whenever the police made an arrest attempt. Throughout the country, there prevailed increasing speculation that Anini was a ghost and not a human being. In December 1986, luck finally ran out for Anini and he was arrested and executed together with some of his colleagues and accomplices. Their death did not bring an end to the high incidence of armed robbery in Nigeria, however, as other robbers have continued to operate even more intensively. As we shall see in section 2.3, the prevalence of armed robbery will demonstrate that more armed robberies have been enacted in Nigeria since after 1987-1996, when Anini and his group were in operation.

Granted that Nigerians live in an insecure country, it has practically become a norm for hired killers to murder people [the most vulnerable victims are politicians and those in high government offices] and go scot-free (Oparah, 2007; Okeke, 2007). At times, it is incredibly difficult to decipher whether criminals specifically went to kill someone or to carry out a robbery operation or both. As the tables in section 2.3 will illustrate, the rate of armed robbery during Obasanjo’s tenure, 1999-2007 is far higher than under previous regimes.

Armed robbery has also led to the sudden death of a good number of innocent citizens, security agents, and robbers themselves. People, families, and companies have lost lives and/or valuable belongings to “men of the underworld” (see Rotimi, 1984). Unfortunately, it seems that insecurity of lives and properties is among the major reasons that have led to the emigration of many Nigerians to Europe and

¹¹This news was aired by the Nigeria Television Authority (NTA) on 1 October 1986.

America. Above all, it has discouraged foreign investors from coming to Nigeria, thus affecting the economic growth of the nation. As Ogunseye (2007: 1) puts it: “the high rate of robbery had disturbed the presidency and the security operatives who had expressed apprehension over the courage exhibited by men of the underworld.”

Armed robbery in Nigeria is more of an “organised business”, in the sense that a local indigene otherwise known as “amala” is behind the group (Ekpenyong, 1989; Orakwe, 1987). He goes about looking for the unemployed and frustrated youngsters to commission into the criminal gang. This same “amala” is the principal sponsor who provides cars for the operation, local protection and firearms, and the modality for selling the spoils (Ekpenyong, 1989; Orakwe, 1987). Interestingly, this “amala” is strongly connected with both the police and the judiciary, and is able to plead the cause of his loyal members or even incriminate the disloyal ones whenever they are apprehended (Ekpenyong, 1989). Organised armed robbery can be enacted in homes and businesses despite the presence of securely built walls and security guards. While victims are assaulted, houses are shorn of their material contents, which may later be removed by vans to the black market where they will be resold (Marenin & Reisig, 1995). Armed robbery in Nigeria has become a sign, a pointer to the overall evils of society and personal fears and uneasiness about people’s social standing and fortune. The wealthy must hide behind barred windows and instruct their drivers to change their routes (Marenin & Reisig, 1995: 503-504). Indeed, the country is riddled with armed robbery.

2.2. Nigeria’s political history and socio-economic conditions

Since 1 October 1960 when Nigeria became independent, she has been a “victim” of military dictatorship and bad governance (see Idemudia, 2005). All through the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s the military governments in Nigeria who were coming and going through successive coup d’états had no expertise for good governance, since they were only trained to defend the country against external aggression. Their eyes were instead on the oil profits that facilitated corruption on a large scale (Ekpenyong, 1989). They dragged the economy from boom to doom, and since then Nigeria has never recovered from economic recession.

Comparatively, we consider Angola,¹² a small country in sub-Saharan Africa, second to Nigeria in oil production and the fourth world producer of diamond. Between 1975 and 2000, the wealth of Angola was squandered in a violent political economy that benefited the politico-military leaders and their accomplices. This led to a high concentration of wealth among the elite, and the economic ruin of the entire country (Billion, 2001). These events in Nigeria and Angola seem to suggest that criminal activities are causally linked with the nature of a country's political economy (Marenin & Reisig, 1995; Odekunle, 1978). Since 2005, the Angolan economy has been the third largest in Africa in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) terms, but is highly dependent on oil, which accounts for 60 per cent of GDP, 80 per cent of government revenue and 94 per cent of export value. In 2009, Angola was the largest crude oil producer in sub-Saharan Africa, surpassing Nigeria (UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 2010). Their current economic and political progress may be attributed to the end of conflict in that country and a rapidly growing democracy; however the global economic downturn has stalled the growth of their economy to an extent.

In Nigeria, the Udorji award of 1973 was a federal government relief package for civil servants. It created surplus money, which encouraged Nigerians to develop a huge appetite for imported goods and an equal degree of contempt for locally made goods. Some of the people who did not benefit from the award took to armed robbery as their occupation (Obijiofor, n.d: 2, see also Ilegbune, 1998). This is evidenced by the fact that armed robbery incidents rose dramatically from 1973 when the Udorji bonanza started, to a frightening level in 1977 (Ilegbune, 1998). The Udorji award has been

¹²Angola has a protracted history of internal conflict and extreme violence rooted in ethnic conflict that started with the ruthless suppression and exploitation by Portugal. Leading up to independence, there were three separate liberation movements, each with different ethnic-regional support. Violent conflict among these groups continued after independence in 1975 and on into the early 1990s, with a semblance of peace since 1994. External interference by Cuba and South Africa exacerbated ethnic tensions and promoted more and better-equipped armed violence. Fighting peaked in the late 1980s but continues into the present. Even after the ceasefire of 1991, violent abuse of human rights including many extrajudicial killings by government military, internal security, and rebel forces continued. Political, military, and criminal violence became virtually indistinguishable. The long-running insurgency totally disrupted the economy. Angola remains one of the poorest countries in the world, with massive unemployment and many people in extreme poverty. There are thousands of displaced people and orphaned children, many of whom are homeless and live on the streets (Neapolitan, 1999: 266).

described as the most uninformed economic decision made by a military government in Nigeria (Obijiofor, n.d: 2). It could be argued that the individual benefits which accrued from that award undermined the national economy at the time. Nigeria's economic problems, though infinitesimal, started to creep in after the Udorji award.

In 1986, General Ibrahim Babangida introduced the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) as a better economic alternative for Nigeria. SAP created inflation, which totally devalued the national currency: the "Naira". Other things that emerged during Babangida's regime were widespread robbery, corruption, poverty, youth unemployment, growing inequality, and illegal migration (Enahoro, 1993). The state of the Nigerian economy was at its worst under Babangida (Enahoro, 1993). There is little doubt that "advanced fee fraud" popularly called "419"¹³ became very rampant in Nigeria at the time. Some foreign merchants were defrauded of millions in foreign currencies during international business dealings with some Nigerians. Consequently, many illiterates and school dropouts became rich very quickly. The "get rich quick" ideology is fundamental to the emergence of juvenile and young adult delinquents who are thieves, bandits and the so called "area boys", who extort money from pedestrians and motorists by violence or intimidation (Idemudia, 2005). That situation intensified the crime problem and presented a bad image of the country to the outside world. As Akinola puts it: "the culmination of corruption and robbery during the Babangida era was the case of the nation's windfall from oil during the Gulf crisis, a windfall estimated at about \$12 billion, which is yet to be accounted for" (Akinola, 2002: 2).

As the leading oil producer in sub-Saharan Africa, (2.3 million barrels of oil per day), Nigeria has a huge but largely unfulfilled economic potential (Home Office, 2005), having resources such as solid minerals, palm produce, cash crops, the maritime industry, the railway system, and others, yet all eyes have been on this single product "oil". The oil sector accounts for about 80 per cent of government revenues and over 90 per cent of foreign exchange earnings (Adedeji, 2003). Between 1970 and 1990,

¹³Advance fee fraud is one of the ways of stealing people's money in Nigeria and beyond. This name came after Article 419 of the Nigerian Criminal Code. Usually, genuine documents are presented by the business partner (fraudster) so that once the financier brings his money for the proposed project introduced to him, the fraudsters embezzle it. The system has become a household name in Nigeria.

Nigeria earned more than US \$200 billion from oil exports, but these were not invested in the welfare of the people due to mismanagement and corruption (Adenikinju, 1998). The vast majority of the citizens had difficulties in getting access to resources, while the poverty and employment situation worsened the fierce competition for opportunities and available resources (Adenikinju, 1998). Evidence shows that the 1980s was the onset of Nigeria's economic crisis - the price of oil plummeted, export earnings dropped sharply, the manufacturing industry saw a reduction in capacity utilisation, and inflation increased tremendously (Jega, 2000).

The World Bank estimated Nigeria's Gross National Product (GNP) per head to be \$320 in 2001, compared to \$300 in 1998. The GDP fell 3.8 per cent in 1997, 1.8 per cent in 1998, and 1.7 per cent in 1999 (Buren, 2001). The UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) Country Profile on Nigeria, dated December 2004, reveals that Nigeria's GDP is US\$35.1 billion (Home Office, 2005). During the early and later part of last decade, CIA: The World Factbook, (2003-2008) has documented Nigeria's GDP real growth rate. In 2003 the annual growth rate was 3.00 per cent. It rose to 7.10 per cent in 2004 (about 2.4 times higher than the previous year). In 2005, the growth rate came down to 6.20 per cent (about 0.13 times less than the previous year), but rose up to 6.90 per cent in 2006 (about 0.1 times higher than the previous year). The rate dropped in 2007 to 5.30 per cent (about 0.30 times less than the previous year), but went up again to 6.30 per cent in 2008 (about 0.16 times higher than the previous year). The data suggest there is some progress made despite the instability of the nation's economy. However, there was no significant growth rate between 2004 and 2008 despite the observed significant change between 2003 and 2004. The observed change between 2003 and 2004 implies about 240 per cent change in the growth rate. As Kohli (2004) suggests, political instability, inconsistent policies, and the pilfering of public funds have led to poor industrial growth. Apparently, the situation has encouraged some Nigerian youths to turn to crimes such as armed robbery as a way of giving it back to society.

It should be acknowledged that the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) is trying its best to fight economic and financial related crimes in Nigeria, but it has its own flaws. It is under attack as a selective commission created to police only those who are critical of some policies of the presidency. If care is not taken, this

weakness might lead to an ominous collapse of the EFCC in future. The only way to achieve the objects of its establishment is for it to be totally independent of government. By 2004, the EFCC had recovered revenue worth 20 billion Naira for the Nigerian Government and increased the national revenue by 20 per cent (Ribadu, 2004: 5). The amount has contributed immensely to the growth of the GDP at the time as evidenced above.

Apart from that, thievery appears to have been legitimised in Nigeria without any moral restraint (Ekpenyong, 1989). Those who have no means of embezzling or misappropriating public funds resort to other methods of acquiring money such as armed robbery. Knowingly and unknowingly, the elites have set up a standard for the young people to emulate (Ekpenyong, 1989). While these elite belong to the upper class of the affluent few, having gained access to a share of gainful opportunities and the money necessary to establish themselves as bourgeoisies (Othman, 1984: 442), their surrounding neighbourhoods are very poor and suffer from endemic youth unemployment. Thus, the behaviour of the elite becomes somewhat exploitative and self-centred. Apparently, elite rule is easily identifiable with official corruption (Ekpenyong, 1989).

Corruption is one of the main political and socio-economic factors undermining Nigeria's development (Onakuse, 2004), and arguably at the root of specific criminal activities in the country. Ordinarily, corruption in Nigeria involves a gamut of illicit activities: government bribery and graft, election rigging, fraud, diabolical abuse of occult powers, medical quackery, examination malpractice, and deception (Smith, 2006). However, there is more to that because there are numerous improprieties which people get involved in. Corruption has resulted in a certain type of politics that encourages infrastructural underdevelopment and the disintegration of living standards in Nigeria (see Okafor, 2005; see also Aluko, 2002; Olaleye-Oruene, 2007). Corruption increases crime, mars investment, brings growth to a standstill, washes out the national budget, and undermines the people's belief in freedom (Uzoh, 2007). Furthermore, the trend of events in Nigeria suggests that corruption has made it difficult for the country to provide for its citizens the basic necessities of life, namely:

basic healthcare, qualitative free education, free business start, social benefits, youth employment, drinking water, good roads¹⁴ and reliable electricity.¹⁵

The Obasanjo civilian administration, 1999-2007 was said to have spent \$16 billion to solve the perennial electricity problem in the country, but it seems that money was paid into the hands of “34 ghost companies” according to the House of Representatives Investigative Panel (HORIP). Since the HORIP’s sitting, nothing else has happened as no one has been prosecuted for fraud or summoned to refund any public funds. Regrettably, “the attitude of Nigerians as it affects corruption is inimical to the well being of the country’s economy as it diverts scarce resources from basic human needs and destroys confidence in the integrity of our institutions” (Uzoh, 2007: 100). While corruption is arguably a catalyst to national development, it has minimally recorded numbers (see tables in section 2.3) as against other crimes.

On the continent, corruption is the major crime that stymies Africa’s development (UN, 2005). It has permeated governments and their agencies. In a ten year Corruption Perception Index Survey, Transparency International (2001-2010) found Nigeria to be one of the most corrupt countries in the world. Between 2001 and 2010, Nigeria’s lowest score was 1 per cent, and her highest score was 2.7 per cent. In that same survey, Ghana had a lowest score of 3.3 per cent, and a highest score of 4.1 per cent. South Africa’s lowest score was 4.4 per cent, and a highest score of 5.1 per cent. The data is normally measured between 0 and 10 per cent. A country is “clean” when it scores 10 per cent; that is to say, the higher the percentage the less corrupt a country becomes.

A recent report by the World Bank reveals that some African leaders have stashed away in foreign banks billions of US Dollars belonging to their countries (see Uzoh, 2007). This probably explains why most African leaders monopolise the office of “president” or “head of state” for decades without any intention to relinquish power to more competent successors. The situation undermines change for the better even

¹⁴Most Nigerian roads are dilapidated and have become death traps to commuters and possible hotspots for armed robbery attacks.

¹⁵Despite the fact that electricity in the country has been privatised due to poor performance, the problem is yet unsolved. Since 1972, what used to be National Electric Power Authority (NEPA) was established by the then Federal Military Government. It was the only source of power in the country until October 2006 when NEPA was replaced with the Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN).

when it is most needed to move the individual countries and regions and the entire continent forward.

Africa's corruption has also affected the police. In a 2003 survey carried out by Transparency International in five African countries (Cameroon, Nigeria, Kenya, Ghana and South Africa) the police were rated highest in corruption. In Kenya, for example, those who responded to the survey said 78 per cent of their transactions with the police resulted in a request for bribes, and in Nigeria 70 per cent of those polled said the police in the country were corrupt. This stems from the fact that police officers earn poor wages, combined with their wide discretion and the limitations of the criminal justice system's checks and balances (see UN, 2005: 14).

Africa's corruption could partly be blamed on her colonial masters, for their lack of transparency and accountability to the people they came to colonise. The colonised people saw their colonialists as oppressive and alien to them (Uzoh, 2007). As Olaleye-Oruene (2007: 233) suggests, corruption was transplanted into the Nigerian ethos following the outcome of the Berlin Conference of 1884-85, in which the European powers engaged in the "balkanisation" of Africa, with Britain gaining the majority share of the territories including Northern and Southern Nigeria which unified in 1914 as one Nigeria. Thereafter, the British transplanted their laws and systems, educational and socio-political as well as economic, into Nigeria.

Corruption in Africa, and particularly in Nigeria might have some link with the poverty situation of the people (Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), 2002).¹⁶ The first measurement of poverty in Nigeria was in 1980, when 27.2 per cent of the population, or 18 million people, were classified as poor. This rate accelerated to 66 per cent in a 1996 survey and the total number of poor people nearly turned out four times as much, to 67 million. Estimates put the poverty rate today at close to 70 per cent, or 90 million people (USAID/Nigeria Mission, 2004-2009; John et al, 2007). As a result, the annual income per head in Nigeria is among the lowest in the world at \$314, and two-thirds of the population live on less than a dollar per day (Home Office, 2005; Nigerian National Planning Commission [NNPC], 2004). With the high

¹⁶"IRIN" is a United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

cost of living prevalent in the country, many poor families cannot afford three square meals a day.

The poverty situation in Nigeria is one of the reasons that has led to the rural-urban migration (RUM), and obviously it is a major factor for urban crime (USAID, 2002). Poverty becomes common when jobs become scarce and families do not earn enough for basic maintenance (Oluwasola, 2007). In many developing cities, the pace of economic development and industrialisation is not rapid enough to provide employment to the many migrants who come from rural areas and other places. These desperate migrants are more ready to turn to crime to make ends meet. Thus armed robbery and other criminal activities have made the cities unsafe and taxing (Oluwasola, 2007). The high rate of armed robbery in the cities may be related to the fact that many unemployed people are domiciled in the urban areas as job seekers.

The 2006 unemployment estimate shows that 5.8 per cent of the population are unemployed in Nigeria. This estimate is only a part of the labour force that is jobless. Overall, 44.99 million people constitute the labour force (CIA: The World Factbook, 2007).¹⁷ Data from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) reveal that in 2004 unemployment in Nigeria was 17 per cent. However, it fell by 10 per cent in 2006. Yet it is arguable that unemployment is still on the high side especially among youths between 15-30 years of age (IMF, 2007). The obvious discrepancy involving data from both the CIA and IMF suggests that as independent organisations, they may have different sources of data collection, and different methods of computation. However, what is certain is that unemployment is on the increase in Nigeria (see Nigeria/USAID, 2004-2009; Dung-Gwom & Rikko, 2009).

It is crucial, though, to stress that large-scale unemployment among Nigerian youths is encouraging the development of youth crime (see Okogie, 2003). These youths,

¹⁷It is important to explain what the labour force in Nigeria (as mentioned above) stands for. According to Obadan and Odusola (n.d), the labour force precludes people below the age of 15 years and those above 55 years who are actively involved in economic activities. These categories of people are not usually included in the labour statistical surveys. Moreover, there are unpaid housewives (who are eager to take up paid jobs), and unpaid family workers who are not normally recorded as unemployed. All these factors contribute to underestimate the unemployment rates in Nigeria.

having been denied a legitimate means of livelihood, group up in a culture that encourages criminality (Chigunta, 2002; Okogie, 2003; Charles & Ikoh, 2004; Echebiri, 2005). These idle and unemployed youths have been labelled locally as “agboro”.¹⁸ It appears that they fall within the group of those normally recruited for armed robbery operations because of their street lifestyle.

Our claim for the seriousness of armed robbery in Nigeria can be supported by further evidence.

2.3. Crime and criminal justice in a comparative perspective

This section will compare crime and criminal justice by looking at the broader literature in the area. Scholars (see for example Zhang et al, 2007; Robertson, 2006) agree that doing comparative criminological research is not new. Since the late 1960s and the early 1970s, criminologists have conducted comparative studies of crime and criminal justice, and especially there has been a growing increase in cross-national studies in recent years (Bennett, 2004). This exponential rise in international comparison of crime and criminal justice has been provoked by negative and positive reasons. Negatively, there is a growing trend in transnational crimes such as terrorism, people trafficking and drug trafficking. Positive reasons include the great access granted to comparative criminologists in certain parts of the world (Robertson, 2006); and indeed access to Internet source materials such as crime victimisation surveys and official crime statistics. In specific terms, however, there will be a comparison between Nigeria and some countries by looking at victim surveys and official statistics among other issues.

The victim surveys method is beneficial in many ways. First, it enables individual countries to see how they are faring in comparison with others in relation to crime levels. Second, it provides a rough picture of the extent to which survey-measured crime in different countries matches the picture from figures of offences recorded by the police. Third, it provides some basis for explaining major differences in crime experience in terms, for instance, of socio-demographic variables. Fourth, it allows some examination of the types of people, most at risk of victimization for different

¹⁸This is a local jargon referring to touts who have the tendency to become criminals.

types of crime, and whether these vary across the jurisdictions in the survey. Fifth, it provides information on responses to crime in different countries, such as opinions about the police, appropriate sentences, fear of crime, and the use of various crime prevention measures (see Naude & Prinsloo, 2006: 18; Van Dijk et al, 1990: 1).

However, survey data are considered less reliable for crimes such as domestic violence against women where definitions are more restricted to specific cultures (Naude & Prinsloo, 2006: 18). In spite of the fact that the legal definitions of conventional crimes differ across countries, the meaning of basic concepts like street robbery, burglary or rape seem to be understood by the public in roughly the same way everywhere. Even though it cannot be accepted that all countries share the same norms for all crimes, victim surveys are still more reliable instruments for comparative crime statistics than official statistics (Naude & Prinsloo, 2006: 18).

We will attempt to use official crime statistics here to illustrate crime trends in Nigeria over the years. This is necessary in order to experience in more details the inherent problems associated with official data. Moreover, using official crime statistics from Nigeria will provide a comparative opportunity with official statistics from a few selected African states. In doing so, we can know what seems to be their different crime rates and trajectories as recorded by their respective national police. Using official crime data here will also help to explain the various ways of categorising different forms of crime in each country.

Official criminal statistics whether on the international or national level must be interpreted with caution because there can never be any “true” total figure for crimes (Maguire, 2002; Alvazzi Del Frate, n.d; see also Hebenton et al, 2010). This is because some crimes are not reported at all. Furthermore, those that are reported may have been either under-recorded or over-recorded by the police (see Alemika & Chukwuma, 2005). Nevertheless, official crime data remains the primary method for the analysis of crime in Nigeria (Oloruntimehin, 1991), as in any other country (see Hebenton et al, 2010). This is because official statistics have a wide geographical spread, use specific legal definitions of crime and they have an existing infrastructure for gathering and collating crime statistics on an ongoing basis (daily, weekly,

monthly, and annually), although the capacity to report and record crime may differ by region and from country to country (Naude & Prinsloo, 2006: 17).

Recent cross-national studies in crime and justice were carried out, which *inter alia* featured robbery in eight Western countries: England/Wales, United States of America, Australia, Canada, Netherlands, Scotland, Sweden and Switzerland (see US Department of Justice, 2004). The findings were based on correlation. It was concluded that while the survey and recorded robbery rates were highly correlated in England/Wales (.94 per cent) and the US (.81 per cent), they did not in Australia (0.27), Canada (-0.81), Netherlands (-0.34), Scotland (-0.01), Sweden (not represented), and Switzerland (0.2) (see US Department of Justice, 2004). Unfortunately, the studies did not cover any developing country; had they done so, it might have made comparison more significant by analysing the differences and similarities and of course, created some generalisations. This lends credence to the opinion that a common procedure for approaching the explanation of crime in developing countries is to compare crime patterns and trends found there to those in developed countries (Arthur & Marenin, 1995).

Most cross-national studies on crime have centred on homicide rather than on armed robbery (see for instance Krahn et al, 1986; Messner, 1989; Neapolitan 1998, 2003; Van Wilsem, 2004). This is because homicide is clearly defined, whereas definitions for other areas of crime are more problematic (Van Wilsem, 2004; UNODC, 2005).¹⁹ A World Health Organisation's (WHO) report on regional homicide rates across the world reveals that Africa is highest with 22 per cent per 100,000 of the population, compared to the Americas with 19 per cent, Europe with 8 per cent, Eastern Mediterranean with 7 per cent, South East Asia with 6 per cent, and Western Pacific with 3 per cent (see UNODC, 2005: 54). While other regions showed much lower rates, there were a large number of countries that did not report in Africa, hence the basis for this finding is thin (UNODC, 2005: 54).

¹⁹It is true that Marshall and Block (2004) do by contrast consider the definition of homicide to be problematic. They point at certain considerable international variations on homicide, whereby crimes such as infanticide, abortion, assisted suicide, and mercy killing, may be included or excluded from the domestic legal definition. Generally, these acts are homicidal but the circumstances of how each is committed create a difference in the legal interpretation.

In recent times, highest homicide rates among African countries was found in Swaziland²⁰ with 89 per cent per 100,000 of the population, thus exceeding the world's ranking of homicides, and even topped Colombia²¹ which ranked first across the world in the year 2000 with 63 per cent per 100,000 of the inhabitants. In 2003/2004, South Africa had the second highest homicide rate in Africa with 44 per cent per 100,000 of the population (see UNODC, 2005: 55). It is likely that the relevant authorities in Africa do not capture all the violent deaths that occur in some countries. For example, drawing on UNODC's crime survey for various years, Nigeria's extremely low-recorded murder rate of 1.5 per cent per 100,000 of the inhabitants seems unlikely to be an accurate reflection of the *status quo* given the well-publicised religious and political violence in that country (see UNODC, 2005). It could be that many developing countries report crime and murder rates much lower than the actual number. These countries have inadequate mechanisms for collecting and archiving data, are often not concerned with accurate data collection, and have many offences that are not reported to the police as they are handled informally (Neapolitan, 1999).

Nevertheless, Van Wilsem (2004) argues that national data for homicide are considered a reliable instrument for cross-national studies of crime. Outside the realm of homicide, cross-national comparison between recorded crimes in different countries could be misleading because of differences between the respective legal and administrative systems, and between reporting propensities in the population or statistical data regime (Entorf & Spengler, 2002).

Data for international crime comparison are normally collected from agencies such as International Criminal Police Organisation (INTERPOL), United Nations Crime

²⁰The rise in violent crime in Swaziland is attributed to chronic unemployment, overcrowding, illegal immigration, and street children who lost their parents to HIV/AIDS (see IRIN, 2004; Tengbeh, 2006).

²¹Colombia is an economically advanced Latin American country. It has had a long history of civilian and democratic rule. On the other hand, it has also had a long history of guerrilla conflict, political violence, and terrorism, which have been exacerbated in the last few decades by drug trafficking and cartels. The military, police, guerrillas, drug lords, and vigilantes all participate in political and extrajudicial killings. Street people—including children, beggars, petty thieves, and homosexuals—are frequently killed in attempts at "social cleansing." Colombia is an extremely status conscious nation, with substantial racial and ethnic diversity wherein color is an important source of economic and social status. African Colombians and indigenous peoples suffer from economic discrimination, political violence, hazing, and humiliation (Neapolitan, 1999: 265).

Surveys (UNCS), and International Crime Victimization Survey (ICVS) (Neapolitan, 2003). The major difficulty facing such data collection seems to be that not all countries submit their official crime data to those agencies. Even those that are submitted may not be enough to represent a country's population. The reason for that might be the fear of being labelled "crime-prone countries". Another reason is probably to avoid being accused by the International Community of human rights abuses in the case of certain crimes that the state may have committed or assisted in committing.

Recently, Interpol adopted a Resolution recommending the discontinuation of the production of international crime statistics. In addition, it was suggested that National Crime Bureaus (NCB) of member states be exempted from sending crime data to Interpol's General Secretariat with a view to their yearly compilation and publication. This decision was made based on the irremediable operational and or financial difficulties encountered by the General Secretariat in the compilation, publication and use of international crime statistics.²² This decision has far-reaching consequences in relation to comparative criminological research and international crime policy co-operation.

Originally, it was due to the problem of official crime data collection (as we shall see later) that the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) developed the ICVS for the purpose of providing solid and standardized data on crime and victimisation for use in cross national comparison (UNICRI, 2003; Neapolitan, 2003).²³ As of now, it seems to be the most comprehensive mechanism developed to monitor volume crimes, perception of crime and attitudes towards the criminal justice system in a comparative and international perspective. Arguably, the ICVS data is reliable, in that, it is solely generated from the public, and by that token, it is not influenced by political and ideological agendas of individual countries (Van Dijk et al, 2007).

²²75th Interpol General Assembly was held at Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 19-22 September 2006 where Resolution No AG-2006-Res-19 was adopted and Resolutions AGN/16/RES/11, AGN/17/RES/13, AGN/18/RES/9, AGN/45/RES/6 and AGN/63/RES/20 were abrogated.

²³UNICRI means United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute.

The ICVS is meant for the standardization of data and the same questions are asked in each country. Descriptions of crimes are used instead of labels such as “robbery”.²⁴ For instance, the ICVS’s screener question for robbery goes like this: Over the past five years has anyone stolen something from you by using force or threatening you, or did somebody try to steal something from you by using force or threatening force? (Home Office/ICVS Classification, n.d). A “yes” response calls for follow-up questions from the ICVS. For example, how often the incident took place in a particular year (“last year”). It also asks for the last incident, when and where it happened, the number of offenders, whether he/they were known by name or sight to the victim. In addition, it asks whether he/they used any (and of so which) weapons, whether something was stolen, whether the incident was reported to the police and the seriousness according to the victim (“very/fairly/not very serious”) (Home Office/ICVS Classification, n.d).

In this way, the ICVS tries to avoid national variations in reporting, defining or recording of crimes. This is consequent upon the way different countries define and classify crimes, in the manner crimes are reported by citizens, in the manner crimes are handled by the police and in the manner crime data are aggregated and submitted to the INTERPOL and UNCS (Neapolitan, 2003). By circumventing national variations, the ICVS attempts to surmount one of the major obstacles that may arise in a comparative research.

Since its inception in 1989, the ICVS has had eight sweeps of data collection. In total, the surveys have been conducted in around 30 industrialized countries, and in 50 cities in developing countries, and countries in transition (Van Dijk, 2006). It can be argued that the ICVS has to date interviewed over 300,000 citizens – a system that has resulted in a body of victim survey data across many countries of the world, unmatched by any other criminological data set (Van Dijk, 2006; Van Dijk et al, 2007).

On average, the industrialized countries of the world are more heavily represented than the other countries because surveys are conducted in the selected cities and

²⁴The ICVS defines robbery as theft from the person by use of force, thus involving direct contact between victim and offender (“contact” crime) (Van Dijk, 2006: 4).

nationally too, and this could lead to a suspicion that ICVS is an institution established solely for the developed world. This raises serious doubt as to the possibility of comparing crime between developed countries and the less developed countries. For example, only thirteen (Botswana, Egypt, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe) of Africa's fifty-four countries have participated in the ICVS for not more than four times (see Naude & Prinsloo, 2006).²⁵

Unfortunately these surveys have received little attention in Africa for obvious reasons. First, financial predicament is one of the major factors militating against the socio-economic development of African countries. Most states are challenged to provide for the most basic needs of their citizens, such as housing, water, education, and health. Second, the lack of a research culture and research capacity in many of these countries, owing to the financial constraints under which most universities and research institutes in Africa labour, poses another impediment. Third, political instability in the region and a poor understanding of the goal and objectives of the ICVS, coinciding with political suspiciousness, made surveys of this kind even more difficult. Many government representatives are hesitant to provide data that is perceived to be used at the disadvantage of a specific country/department and/or supposedly might reflect negatively on them (see Naude & Prinsloo, 2006: 14).

It is of the essence that international crime victimisation surveys be carried out regularly in all parts of the world in order to ascertain the level of victimisation rates in individual countries and compare them with others. In the ICVS's world ranking of the highest victimisation rates between 1996 and 2000, the selected fifteen countries with the highest prevalence rates for conventional crime are mainly from Latin America or sub-Saharan Africa, with the exception of Mongolia, Cambodia and Estonia (Van Dijk, 2006). This is illustrated in the table below.

²⁵Only Egypt, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, and South Africa have participated up to four times.

Table 1: Fifteen countries with highest victimisation rates between 1996 -2000

Countries	Percentage
Columbia	50.7
Brazil	48.1
Zimbabwe	47.5
Costa Rica	45.5
Swaziland	44.6
Mongolia	41.8
Cambodia	41.5
Estonia	41.2
Bolivia	40.1
Mozambique	38
Tanzania	37.6
Uganda	37.3
Namibia	36.4
South Africa	36.4
Paraguay	36.3

Source: ICVS, (2006).

Some possible reasons for the highest victimisation rates involving Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa might be the poverty situation of those regions; the internal conflicts that have occurred in most of the countries; and their inept and corrupt leaderships.

Surprisingly, as table 2 below illustrates, Argentina, Nigeria and India are the three developing countries together with the industrialized countries such as France, UK, US, Germany and Canada that are among the fifteen selected countries with the medium highest victimisation rates (Van Dijk, 2006).

Tablee 2: Fifteen countries with medium highest victimisation rates between 1996-2000

Countries	Percentage
France	34.5
UK	34.4
Argentina	33.7
Spain	33.1
Nigeria	32.2
Australia	32.1
Poland	31.7
Italy	31.4
US	30.7
India	30.5
Sweden	30.4
Netherlands	30.3
Germany	29.3
Canada	26.9
Russia	26.3

Source: ICVS (2006).

On the global stage, the above data gives Nigeria some credibility for being among the medium highest in terms of victimisation rates of conventional crimes. The percentage of victimisation rates in Nigeria might be dependent on the way the survey was conducted and the responses received at the time.

Furthermore, consecutive ICVS conducted in more than 75 cities from the early 1990s to 2005 revealed that both Latin America and Africa experienced the highest rates of robbery and assault: 13 per cent of all robberies and 9 per cent of assaults and threats in the world are committed with guns in Africa. In 2006, the highest victimization rates linked with armed robbery in Africa were reported in Nairobi (37 per cent), in specific Mozambican cities (27 per cent) and the Republic of Congo (21 per cent) (Muggah & Alvazzi del Frate, 2007). Again, possible factors for the highest victimisation rates in these three states might be poverty, official corruption and internal conflicts.

Moreover, in surveyed African cities (see table 3), guns are more likely to be used in property crimes than in violent assault. For instance, armed robbery was reportedly committed in two-thirds of all reported cases in Africa; the offenders are usually youthful males operating in groups of three or more and unknown to their victims (Muggah & Alvazzi del Frate, 2007). The table below illustrates an ICVS survey administered on 1,000 to 1,500 respondents in selected African states.

Table 3: Percentage of robberies committed with firearms in selected African countries

Countries	Robberies percentage
Botswana	7.3
Guinea	NA
Burkina Faso	NA
Lesotho	4.8
Mozambique	4.4
Namibia	7.3
Nigeria	27.3
South Africa	58.5
Swaziland	72
Tanzania	NA
Uganda	9.9
Zambia	5.9
Zimbabwe	6.1

Source: ICVS surveys administered in the capital cities of the respective countries (van Kesteren, 2003 cited in Muggah & Alvazzi del Frate, 2007).

From the table above, the use of guns during robberies is highest in Swaziland, followed by South Africa and then Nigeria. Drawing from the above data, it is probably the case that guns are more readily available in these three countries than in others such that criminals use them to facilitate armed robbery operations. Cook (1981) argues that the availability of guns in a city will add to the proportion of non-commercial robberies enacted with guns. Further, it will increase the proportion of robberies enacted in commercial and other well-secured targets. Perhaps the availability of guns is an indication that gun laws are not properly enforced in these states. Finally, the table above suggests that there are serious levels of criminal violence in Africa (see UNODC, 2005).

The tables, as we shall see below, exemplify official crime statistics as recorded by the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) in different periods between 1980 and 2006. We should note that while data for some periods and for other crimes were not available to be collected directly from the police, they were culled from the website of cleen.org.²⁶

²⁶A non-governmental organisation that uses and publishes police data in Nigeria.

Table 4: Armed robbery cases in Nigeria 1980-1993

Year	Recorded robberies	Percentage difference
1980	2381	
1981	1643	-30.9
1982	1311	-20.2
1983	1498	14.3
1984	1381	-7.8
1985	1194	-13.5
1986	1308	9.5
1987	1241	-5.1
1988	1338	7.8
1989	1316	-1.6
1990	1937	29.7
1991	1056	-45.5
1992	1568	32.7
1993	1975	0.01

Source: Cleen.org.

From the above statistics, the total number of cases of armed robbery recorded by the police was high in 1980 with 2,381. By then, the second democratic regime headed by President Shehu Shagari was some months old and unsettled. In 1981, the trend dropped significantly to 30.9 per cent. From 1982 through 1989 the trend fluctuated, (for example, it dropped in 1982 by 20.2 per cent from the previous year, but went up by 14.3 per cent in 1983. In 1984, it shrank by 7.8 per cent and plummeted again by 13.5 per cent in 1985. Against the previous year, 1986 saw a slight increase of 9.5 per cent. In 1987, the trend dropped by 5.1 per cent. It increased by 7.8 per cent in 1988 and decreased by 1.6 per cent in 1989). Moreover, between 1990 and 1993, the trend shows both a sharp rise of approximately 30.5 per cent and a sharp drop of no less than 45 per cent from one year to another.

In sum, the general picture of the above trend suggests that at times, armed robbery rises monotonically and drops sharply. We do not know whether, in the years when robbery went up, it was simply that more cases were reported to the police and/or recorded by them than in the years when the rate declined. It could also be that at times figures are manipulated to satisfy political and/or institutional interests (as when reported increase or decrease may be to the advantage of the incumbent government or the police force) (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2005).

A scrutiny of the data available to both the police and cleen.org, between 1994 and 2006 (see table 5) reveal some discrepancies between them in regard to recorded rates of armed robbery.

Table 5: Discrepancies in regard to recorded robbery cases in Nigeria 1994-2006

Year	Cleen.org	Police	Differences
1994	2044	2014	30
1995	2109	1751	358
1996	2419	2014	405
1997	2181	1751	430
1998	2286	2479	-193
1999	2291	1898	393
2000	1877	1674	203
2001	2809	2231	578
2002	3889	2123	1766
2003	3497	2315	1182
2004	3184	2756	428
2005	2275	2949	-674
2006	2863	2852	11

Sources: Cleen.org/ Nigeria Police Headquarters Abuja.

Data from cleen.org reveal a greater increase in rates between 1994 and 2003 than data from the police, that is, the original source. While it is difficult to explain the observed discrepancies between the two agencies, they might have arisen from simple human error or classification error, which may be accounted for by the ways data was collected, collated and computed. It is obvious that gathering, collating, analysing, and disseminating official crime statistics is a difficult process of mediated communications (Sheptycki, 2009: 316).

The trend in table 5 above has demonstrated the fluctuating rates of robbery. According to cleen.org's source, robbery went up between 2001 and 2002, and then dropped steadily until 2005. According to the police source, there was a steep but gradual rise in robbery offences from 2003 to 2005. Inasmuch as it is difficult to conclude which data is more reliable, it is important for the reader to understand that these discrepancies were discovered in an attempt to unravel the complexities associated with official crime statistics, which as earlier noted must be treated with caution.

Official crime statistics and the activities of the criminal justice system are, however, inevitably linked to politics, and governments are under constant pressure to reduce

their crime rates and to make sound policy decisions (Naude & Prinsloo, 2006: 18). This is because “the validity of the data and the impression that it makes are often of great importance to governments at the national and international level” (Arlacci 2000: 4 cited in Naude & Prinsloo, 2006: 17). It is therefore not surprising that official crime statistics are often criticized for not adequately reflecting the general picture of crime in any given population (Hebenton et al, 2010; Naude & Prinsloo, 2006; Jupp, 1993) but merely the objectives of government agents that record crime statistics (Naude & Prinsloo, 2006: 17). Essentially, official crime data are institutionally constructed and their truths remain a social accomplishment (Sheptycki, 2009: 316).

Between 1994 and 29 May 1999, the Military juntas were still in charge of the country's affairs, and the economy was still in a lamentable situation following uncontrolled looting of public funds and diplomatic sanctions against the country by the international community. Between 1999 and 2006, the nascent democracy headed by President Obasanjo was in power, and as stated earlier, robbery cases recorded by the police were far higher than in previous regimes. In 2006, for example, N2 billion was stolen from commercial banks in Nigeria (Adesina, 2007). While the more brazen robberies tend to occur in filling stations and banks, robbers also pick residential areas as favourite targets (Elechi, 2003). In their UK study of victimisation of petrol stations, Chakraborti et al (2002) argued that these are more prone to crimes such as robbery and burglary. These scholars also conclude that crime is more likely to be committed in the urban than the rural areas. It is also the situation in Ghana that crime rates are lower in the countryside, when compared to the cities (see Appiahene-Gyamfi, 2002). Of course armed robbery in Nigeria can occur in the countryside, though it is far less frequent there too than in urban areas (Rotimi, 1984). When robberies occur in rural areas, robbers seem to prefer to target churches and family homes where they hope to grab instant cash and other valuables.

The seriousness of armed robbery as a social problem in Nigeria is not just a matter of its overall annual rate, but even more importantly of the actual violence and fatalities involved (Igbo, 2001). This is illustrated in table 6 below.

Table 6: Armed robbery fatalities in Nigeria 1994-2006

Year	Robbers killed by police	Police killed by robbers	Civilians killed by robbers	Total
1994	125	46	54	225
1995	441	114	269	824
1996	420	721	387	1528
1997	394	88	217	699
1998	331	40	185	556
1999	411	101	317	829
2000	595	147	196	938
2001	454	86	279	819
2002	317	87	371	775
2003	545	114	335	994
2004	562	111	472	1145
2005	252	129	273	654
2006	329	119	233	681

Source: Nigeria Police Headquarters Abuja.

The above table shows the number of armed robbers, police officers and civilians killed during armed robberies between 1994 and 2006 as recorded by the police. In 1994, the police killed over one hundred robbers, while robbers killed less than one hundred police officers and civilians respectively. In 1995, while the police killed more than 400 robbers, the robbers killed nearly 270 civilians and more than 100 police officers. It is noticeable that the number of robbers killed each year turned out in their hundreds, thus indicating the seriousness of the crime (see table 6 above). The years 2000, 2003 and 2004 have the highest rates of armed robbers killed by the police (see table 6 above). Moreover, in the above table, 1996 has the highest rate of police officers killed by robbers, which tends to suggest that the police offensive against robbers in certain parts of the country may well have resulted in a vendetta.

Considering the official robbery record from Nigeria, one is tempted to agree with Ekpenyong (1989) that the contents of the records are more of an index of police activity than a true picture of the problem. Record-keeping of crime data has been a Herculean task for the Nigeria Police Force. Efforts are being made to improve the situation, yet the police record only 30 per cent of overall robbery and burglary offences. The fact remains that many crimes go either undetected or unreported. An obvious disadvantage of police crime statistics is that they include only those offences reported to the police (Bernasco, 2008; Bricknell, 2008). Moreover, Nigeria's official crime data seem to be grossly understated due to the unpoliced nature of most parts of the country (see Smaldone, 1991). Similarly, in Ghana, Appiahene-Gyamfi (2002) argues that the inability to extend policing to remoter places has intensified the

problem of collecting official data. Many African states, especially in rural areas, do not have adequate communication and computer facilities at some police stations or the computers are not properly maintained, resulting in frequent equipment failure, while illiteracy of police officers is also a problem that can affect the capacity to accurately gather and collate crime statistics. In South Africa, the National Commissioner of Police reports that about 30,000 police officers are functionally illiterate, thus making it difficult for them to handle the most basic of police tasks (Naude & Prinsloo, 2006: 16-17). In sum, weak policing of crime data in developing countries makes the collection of official data a conundrum.

Again, the data above (see table 6) reveal many fatalities in Nigeria arising from regular gun battles between the police and armed robbers. The police and military may carry weapons²⁷ while on duty; there are approximately 1.2 million illegal weapons scattered across the country, most of which have been trafficked from Benin Republic, Niger, Chad and Cameroon (John et al, 2007). Presumably, robbers use some of these illegally possessed weapons during their operations. It might seem that the best way for the Nigeria Police Force to combat armed robbery is to go after the offenders with loaded guns. With the launch of “Operation Fire for Fire” by former Inspector General of Police (IG) Tofa Balogun in March 2002, the police were mandated to shoot on sight any suspected armed robber. In the first 100 days, this mandate led to the death of 23 police officers, 225 robbery suspects, and 41 innocent civilians (Amnesty International, 2002).

Regarding the volume of crime recorded by the Nigeria police, the tables below suggest that armed robbery is far too small compared to some other property crimes and crimes against persons. Although we are not sure of the reasons behind that, but it might well be that victims are not keen on reporting armed robbery incidents to the police for fear of reprisal by some of the perpetrators still at large. The victims might also think that if they report robbery incidents to the police, and the offenders are arrested and later released, they (victims) might still be vulnerable to further attacks. It might as well be that the police choose not to record all incidents of armed robbery.

²⁷Weapons in this sense refer to Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW).

General crime statistics in the country from 1980 to 1986 (see table 7 below) reveal that for offences against property, theft/stealing rank first with a total of 460,884, followed by other (miscellaneous) offences with 147,604 and then house-breaking with 60,172.

Table 7: Summary of crime statistics in Nigeria from 1980-1986 (Offences against property)

Offences	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	Total
Armed robbery	2381	1648	1311	1498	1381	1194	1308	10721
Demanding with menace	-	-	-	-	93	131	-	224
Theft/stealing	61945	48912	63067	35806	78343	90506	82305	460884
Burglary	3235	3431	4948	5341	5615	6726	8163	37459
House breaking	5036	7431	7873	8588	8657	11175	11412	60172
Store breaking	3756	5394	2543	783	8675	5791	5973	32915
False pretences/cheating/fraud	5728	3659	4627	7240	8970	10817	11981	53022
Forgery	1481	1510	1169	1602	996	1476	1422	9656
Receiving stolen property	539	461	616	721	1816	1584	1272	7009
Unlawful possession	6690	7862	6039	9802	12236	15374	1442	59445
Arson	1788	1362	633	2741	1153	1387	1159	10223
Forgery of currency note	70	102	-	318	417	1584	-	2491
Coining offence	11	33	14	12	7	197	78	352
Gambling	118	1006	1130	961	759	825	881	5680
Breach of public peace	9607	8824	1030	10265	9029	9338	9131	57224
Perjury	54	33	682	483	39	21		1312
Bribery/corruption	656	431	513	483	932	804	538	4357
Escape from custody	1787	1209	1679	1588	1567	1229	1326	10385
Others	6181	5579	13738	8198	8554	96634	8720	147604

Source: Cleen.org.

With regard to offences against persons, (see table 8 below) assault came first with 327, 208, seconded by other (miscellaneous) offences with 212,173 and then grievous bodily harm with 99,623.

Table 8: Summary of crime statistics in Nigeria from 1980-1986 (offences against persons)

Offences	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	Total
Murder	1633	1520	1786	1857	1548	1427	1539	11310
Attempted murder	183	184	-	223	193	186	181	1150
Manslaughter	79	46	218	174	123	87	94	821
Suicide	261	183	481	223	197	223	192	1760
Attempted suicide	-	-	-	-	142	207	155	504
Grievous bodily harm/wounding	10571	11559	15507	15758	13439	16824	15965	99623
Assault	37203	39402	55153	52204	49413	43824	50009	327208
Rape/indecent assault	2361	2079	2805	17755	2647	2438	2763	32848
Kidnapping	-	-	-	-	265	388	281	934
Slave dealing	15	6	21	25	19	67	27	180
Child stealing	390	252	360	197	199	209	125	1732
Unnatural offence	170	356	398	425	328	529	812	3018
Other offences	3019	8759	1253	18678	17741	114557	48166	212173

Source: Cleen.org.

Considering offences against property from 1987 to 1993 (see table 9 below), theft/stealing came first with a recorded number of 610,910; followed by false pretences/cheating/fraud with 91,120; and unlawful possession with 84,510.

Table 9: Summary of crime statistics in Nigeria from 1987-1993 (Offences against property)

Offences	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	Total
Armed robbery	1241	1338	1316	1937	1056	1568	1975	10431
Demanding with menace	95	669	70	136	175	148	286	1579
Theft/stealing	79216	95952	99463	86003	65663	78731	105882	610910
Burglary	5537	9634	10192	9178	7879	10036	8895	61351
House breaking	10665	12074	1064	11658	10173	12262	11265	69161
Store breaking	6272	6551	7219	6111	5318	6526	7399	45396
False pretences/cheating/fraud	12367	12378	14278	12885	11936	13421	13855	91120
Forgery	1280	122	1027	1237	1320	1235	906	7127
Receiving stolen property	984	1200	1440	1344	1277	1712	1692	9649
Unlawful possession	13808	16089	14103	12371	9790	9520	8829	84510
Arson	1189	1413	1523	1298	1156	1529	1661	9769
Forgery of currency note	-	-	159	67	96	75	118	515
Coining offence	120	48	19	29	8	6	28	258
Gambling	813	639	637	315	374	279	467	3524
Breach of public peace	9785	10961	10557	9613	9256	9218	9961	69351
Perjury	18	13	65	7	10	11	73	197
Bribery/corruption	424	329	268	297	314	136	139	1907
Escape from custody	1274	1445	1317	963	808	843	748	7398
Others	-	-	5345	5001	5061	4617	8965	28989

Source: Cleen.org.

Regarding offences against persons, (see table 10 below) assault ranks first with 367,845. Other offences come second with 115,070, followed by grievous bodily harm/wounding in the third position with 110,740.

Table 10: Summary of crime statistics in Nigeria from 1987-1993 (offences against persons)

Offences	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	Total
Murder	1657	1688	1586	1587	1502	1452	1684	11156
Attempted murder	208	195	157	157	174	228	304	1423
Manslaughter	65	51	69	69	53	48	44	399
Suicide	133	700	176	126	164	156	182	1637
Attempted suicide	138	106	98	102	111	135	87	777
Grievous bodily harm/wounding	15445	15388	15851	16429	14775	16491	16361	110740
Assault	49472	60775	51757	49291	51312	53320	51918	367845
Rape/indecent assault	2248	2368	2032	2181	2227	2261	2307	15624
Kidnapping	330	387	361	374	354	400	371	2577
Slave dealing	41	41	33	56	28	13	42	254
Child stealing	157	240	95	204	174	230	97	1197
Unnatural offence	806	697	1610	778	314	311	289	4805
Other offences	-	-	25037	25004	23228	21715	20086	115070

Source: Cleen.org.

Between 1994 and 2003, (see table 11 below) theft/stealing came first as crimes against property with 505,074. The second position went to other (miscellaneous) crimes with 117,617 and the third went to false pretences/cheating/fraud with 110,913.

Table 11: Summary of crime statistics in Nigeria from 1994-2003 (Offences against property)

Offences	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	Total
Armed robbery	2044	2109	2419	2181	2286	2291	1877	2809	3889	3497	25402
Demanding with menace	777	243	88	128	112	63	133	112	88	80	1824
Theft/stealing	69341	70542	71338	58095	54506	42974	29127	40796	35231	33124	505074
Burglary	7858	7690	6390	7706	5548	4928	3768	5523	2683	2769	54863
House breaking	10532	10568	9237	8562	7847	5979	3636	6059	5448	4706	72574
Store breaking	6137	5646	4235	4729	4036	3643	2446	3089	2973	2790	39724
False pretences/cheating/fraud	13546	13524	13057	11950	12037	9996	7927	10234	9134	9508	110913
Forgery	712	682	753	1245	718	483	489	573	528	576	6759
Receiving stolen property	2053	1790	1809	1826	1595	1469	887	1226	1312	1289	15256
Unlawful possession	7965	7754	6885	6236	5247	4533	2983	4159	4086	4142	53990
Arson	1615	1240	1002	1190	1131	1225	761	892	1440	1499	11995
Forgery of currency note	63	113	80	38	70	36	124	101	70	74	769
Coining offence	100	8	10	14	14	7	4	32	6	16	211
Gambling	1308	319	250	203	158	264	189	263	228	148	3330
Breach of public peace	8052	7926	7097	7100	7519	6765	5395	7532	7324	7298	72008
Perjury	61	22	153	97	20	12	16	455	17	50	903
Bribery/corruption	224	390	579	100	138	75	48	57	43	36	1690
Escape from custody	672	629	712	543	484	552	294	312	229	272	4699
Others	14426	16698	15120	13315	13554	11432	9210	1275	11535	11052	117617

Source: Cleen.org.

For offences against persons during the same period (see table 12 below), assault came first with 377,568; the second was other (miscellaneous) offences with 162,052; and finally, the third position went to grievous bodily harm/wounding with 156,328.

Table 12: Summary of crime statistics in Nigeria from 1994-2003 (Offences against persons)

Offences	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	Total
Murder	1629	1585	1561	1730	1670	1645	1255	2120	2117	2136	17448
Attempted murder	259	321	307	250	248	220	76	253	267	233	2434
Manslaughter	20	25	21	18	27	14	101	14	13	6	259
Suicide	200	229	238	272	313	323	146	241	152	191	2305
Attempted suicide	291	120	77	58	43	30	41	27	29	38	754
Grievous bodily harm/wounding	17167	16300	17605	14720	14362	15931	9756	15241	17580	17666	156328
Assault	46924	46543	52747	42815	40764	33881	17909	37531	29329	29125	377568
Rape/indecent assault	2364	2364	2198	2585	2249	2241	1529	2284	2084	2253	22151
Kidnapping	461	415	373	377	282	342	243	349	337	410	3589
Slave dealing	33	16	7	17	11	21	11	45	17	18	196
Child stealing	131	175	146	303	107	147	101	116	55	39	1320
Unnatural offence	685	462	419	435	516	456	376	434	277	306	4366
Other offences	20114	18227	16922	17355	17009	13467	12097	17349	14475	15037	162052

Source: Cleen.org.

Overall then, and as stated before, Nigeria's crime picture shows that many recorded crimes (from both offences against property and offences against persons) are higher in volume than armed robbery. Again, we do not know whether the decrease in volume of recorded armed robberies in the tables above are due to underreporting by the public or underrecording by the police. Yet, we should always remember that official statistics is problematic. As we have also noted, theft/stealing have mostly maintained the first position among property crimes in respect of recorded volume, while assault has mostly been at the forefront of crime against persons. As the socio-cultural demographics of the offender sample for this research will reveal, (see chapter 5) robbers might have committed crimes such as stealing and assault before getting involved in armed robbery. However, these offences may not necessarily be a *conditio sine qua non* because armed robbery may be the initial crime to be committed by an offender.

It is useful to compare crime rates and categorisations in Nigeria with those of other African countries namely: South Africa and Ghana. These two countries were chosen based on availability of official crime data (see for example Arthur, 1991). However, doing comparative criminology among African States may create a distorted and misleading picture of crime on the continent since the definitions, classifications, and societal responses to the crime problem vary greatly and are highly culture specific (Arthur, 1991: 500; see also Marenin 1993; Arthur & Marenin, 1995). In Nigeria, crime is officially divided into two categories: crime against property and crime against persons (see tables above). In Ghana, there is a slight difference. Recorded crime is divided into three categories: crime against property²⁸, crime against persons²⁹ and crime against the public³⁰ (see Appiahene-Gyamfi, 2002). Unfortunately, the specific crimes that make up the recorded volumes in the three categories of crime in Ghana are not clearly explained by the available data (see table 13 below).

²⁸Property offences include fraud, forgery, theft, robbery, burglary, unlawful damage, and dishonestly receiving (see Appiahene-Gyamfi, 2003).

²⁹Offences against persons include murder, assault, including common assault and battery, assault without actual battery (see Appiahene-Gyamfi, 2003).

³⁰Public order offences, include currency offences, treason, misprision of treason, sedition, mutiny and abetment of mutiny, rioting, piracy, publication of false rumour, drunkenness, evasion of military service, breach of public peace and creating nuisance, narcotic, prostitution and soliciting, and food safety offences (see Appiahene-Gyamfi, 2003).

Table 13: The distribution of the broad categories of offences in Ghana 1980-1996

Year	Person	Property	Public
1980	58212	57226	7488
1981	55122	55843	8344
1982	57991	59672	10112
1983	60142	56704	12876
1984	60333	54916	14782
1985	58676	55706	10330
1986	58830	57020	11239
1987	59774	57186	12341
1988	59077	58292	16124
1989	56299	54353	13032
1990	62680	50473	10985
1991	68238	55209	14768
1992	67661	53215	10150
1993	76103	56983	15992
1994	77344	60218	14875
1995	83621	67897	13298
1996	90863	94669	15569
Total	1110966	1005582	212305

Source: Criminal Data Services Bureau of the Ghana Police Service (culled from Appiahene-Gyamfi, 2002).

According to Appiahene-Gyamfi (1999: 410-11), crime statistics and criminal justice information in Ghana are not kept in any organized, systematic, or uniform way. In terms of acquisition and preservation of crime data and information, Ghana is perhaps no different from most developing countries. None of Ghana's criminal justice agencies have reliable and comprehensive crime statistics. It appears that no individual or agency, private or government, is interested in criminal justice data and information for research and policy planning. Furthermore, the lack of qualified personnel and inadequate resources hamper efforts to collect and store crime data. Consequently, criminal justice statistics and information are produced and kept by the various criminal justice agencies, even though in rough-and-tumble manner. The offences processed by native courts and arbitrators, a large volume of which could be classified as summary under the Criminal Code, are neither recorded nor reported to any official agency. Nevertheless, it is difficult, if not impossible, to assess the volume of crime and invoke multiple information sources in criminological research (Brantingham and Brantingham, 1984: 90-2). Therefore as noted earlier, official crime data give more of an insight into official definitions of crime, crime recording and policing practice than into actual levels of unlawful activity (see Carrabine et al, 2009: 39; Naude & Prinsloo, 2006: 17; Mayhew and Van Dijk (1997: 1).

In table 14 below, the different criminal offences in Ghana are recorded together, but crimes against the public are hardly included on the list. These problems tend to obscure the value of official data in criminal analysis. This corroborates the opinion of Appiahene-Gyamfi (2002) that the nature of official statistics collected by the police means that they provide very little reliable information for researchers.

Table 14: Criminal offences in Ghana for the period 2000-2005

Criminal offence	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	Total
Murder	414	448	401	436	452	383	2534
Attempted murder	42	44	55	58	69	56	324
Manslaughter	18	20	8	20	104	4	174
Threatening	18655	19580	22537	21496	22915	18868	124051
Causing harm	2543	2674	2838	3020	2002	2480	15557
Assault	82564	91246	90179	90551	90560	74445	519545
Robbery	396	796	950	690	720	1284	4836
Stealing	46970	63850	60310	57377	57160	51336	337003
Fraud	12113	12229	13701	14657	14049	10833	77582
Unlawful entry	240	401	396	375	786	914	3112
Causing damage	12085	10013	10065	10237	10601	7220	60221
Dishonesty receiving	102	11	13	49	18	34	227
Abortion	256	165	177	189	253	213	1253
Rape	1261	1018	1210	952	631	470	5542
Defilement	76	1061	1630	2001	1884	1606	8258
Possessing dangerous drug	32	79	61	146	48	8	374
Possessing Indian hemp	514	545	505	395	387	396	2742
Abduction	523	815	725	750	823	664	4300
Extortion	4	2	0	16	17	0	39
Forgery	288	175	227	152	273	142	1257
Falsification of accounts	1	1	1	7	1	4	15
Smuggling	81	185	93	57	10	2	428
Possessing cocaine	10	49	28	11	45	82	225
Possessing heroine	0	1	0	7	26	47	81
Counterfeiting	32	37	46	99	85	16	315
Issuing false cheque	61	32	43	328	234	102	800
Child stealing	15	14	34	48	69	444	624
Illegal gold mining	25	10	70	11	1	0	117
Other offences	25323	20672	22112	22533	20136	18230	129006

Source: Criminal Data Services Bureau/CID Headquarters, Accra; (culled from "Ghana in Figures" by the Statistical Service of Ghana).

In South Africa, the difference is clear. Crime is recorded into seven categories namely: contact crime (crime against persons); contact related crime; property related crime; crime heavily dependent on police action for detection; other serious crime; subcategories forming part of aggravated robbery; and other crime categories (see table 15 below).

Table 15: Crime Statistics for South Africa from April to March 2003/2004 to 2009/2010

Offences	2003- 2004	2004- 2005	2005- 2006	2006- 2007	2007- 2008	2008- 2009	2009- 2010	Total
CONTACT CRIME (CRIMES AGAINST PERSONS)								
Murder	19824	18793	18545	19202	18487	18148	16834	129833
Total sex crimes	66079	69117	66076	65201	63818	70514	68332	469137
Attempted murder	30076	24516	20553	20142	18795	18298	17401	149781
Assault with intent to inflict grievous bodily harm	260082	249369	226942	218030	210104	203777	205293	1573597
Common assault	280942	267857	227553	210057	198049	192838	197284	1574580
Common robbery	95551	90825	74723	71156	64985	59232	57537	514009
Robbery with aggravating circumstances	133658	126789	119726	126558	118312	121392	113755	860190
CONTACT RELATED CRIME								
Arson	8806	8184	7622	7858	7396	6846	6701	53413
Malicious damage to property	158247	150785	144265	143336	136968	134261	132134	999996
PROPERTY RELATED CRIME								
Burglary at non-residential premises	64629	56048	54367	58438	62995	70009	71773	438259
Burglary at residential premises	299290	276164	262535	249665	237853	246616	256577	1828700
Theft of motor vehicle and motorcycle	88147	83857	85964	86298	80226	75968	71776	572236
Theft out of or from motor vehicle	171982	148512	139090	124029	111661	109548	120862	925684
Stock-theft	41273	32675	28742	28828	28778	30043	32380	222719
CRIME HEAVILY DEPENDENT ON POLICE ACTION FOR DETECTION								
Illegal possession of firearms/ammunition	16839	15497	13453	14354	13476	14045	14542	102206
Drug related crime	62689	84001	95690	104689	109134	117172	134840	708215
Driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs	24886	29927	33116	38261	48405	56165	62939	293699
OTHER SERIOUS CRIME								
All theft not mentioned elsewhere	606460	536281	432629	415163	395296	394124	367442	3147395
Commercial crime	55869	53931	54214	61690	65286	77474	84842	453306
Shoplifting	71888	66525	64491	65489	66992	80773	88634	504792
SUBCATEGORIES FORMING PART OF AGGRAVATED ROBBERY ABOVE								
Carjacking	13793	12434	12825	13599	14201	14915	13902	95669
Truck hijacking	901	930	829	892	1245	1437	1412	7646
Robbery at residential premises	9351	9391	10173	12761	14481	18438	18786	93381
Robbery at non-residential premises	3677	3320	4387	6689	9862	13920	14534	56389
OTHER CRIME CATEGORIES								
Culpable homicide	11096	11995	12415	12871	13184	12571	12272	86404
Public violence	979	974	1044	1023	895	1500	1323	7738
Crimen injuria	59908	55929	44512	36747	33064	30355	32356	292871
Neglect and ill-treatment of children	6504	5568	4828	4258	4106	4034	4014	33312
Kidnapping	3004	2618	2320	2345	2323	2535	2889	18034

Source: Crime Information Management: South African Police.

The tables above suggest that crime rates differ enormously across countries (see Soares, 2004). When we compare Nigeria's official crime data with that of Ghana and South Africa (see tables above), it is noticeable that South Africa far outnumbers Nigeria and Ghana in terms of recorded rates per crime. Interestingly, "robbery with aggravated circumstances" is categorised in South Africa under crime against persons. In Nigeria, the corresponding crime "armed robbery" is recorded under offences against property. It is the same in Ghana (see Appiahene-Gyamfi, 2002, 2003), but the Ghanaian Criminal Code makes no distinction between and among armed, unarmed

commercial, residential, and street robberies. Offenders are charged with either robbery with or without violence. The nature of a robbery is determined from police records (Appiahene-Gyamfi, 1999: 414). Crucially, there is a high incidence of “robbery with aggravating circumstances” in South Africa compared to armed robbery in Nigeria and Ghana (see tables above for recorded crime in each country), which has lower recorded volumes respectively. It should be remembered that in the case of Nigeria, assault came first by recorded volume as offence against persons. Similarly, assault also has the highest recorded volume in South Africa under the name “common assault”, followed by “assault with intent to inflict grievous bodily harm”. It also represented the crime most commonly recorded by the police in Ghana over a seventeen-year period (see Appiahene-Gyamfi, 2002). Interestingly, assault appears to be the highest and most common crime people normally commit in developing countries (Appiahene-Gyamfi, 2002).

An important determinant for recorded crime is the extent of underreporting, which probably varies drastically but is difficult to estimate (Marenin 1993, Arthur & Marenin, 1995: 211). Crime data in developing countries are sparse, often quite unreliable and always (as they are for developed countries as well) inaccurate. Most researchers admit the problems with official data but then forge ahead and use them anyway (Arthur & Marenin, 1995: 194), because official crime statistics play an essential role in criminological research (Carrabine et al, 2009: 39). In spite of the inherent problems associated with official statistics, and the criticisms levelled against them, they are still invoked in this study because they are readily available (see also Appiahene-Gyamfi, 1999).

These three countries being compared here share certain similarities and differences. They are all members of the Commonwealth of Nations and inherited their legal systems from the English common law (see Ebbe, 1993, 1993; Scharf & Cochrane, 1993). However, Nigeria has a tripartite judicial system, which includes: the common law tradition based on English law, the Islamic law in the North, and the Customary law in the South (Ebbe, 1993). Generally, the Federal Constitution serves the whole country, yet each of the 36 States has its own laws.

Although South Africa inherited her legal system from the English common law, it has also the Roman-Dutch law heritage (Scharf & Cochrane, 1993). The criminal justice systems of Ghana and South Africa are centralized nationally, and the respective governments have control over the police, courts, judges, and the prisons. In Nigeria, the police and prisons are centralised too, and the Federal Government has control over the police, the prisons, the federal courts and the Supreme Court, but with the exception of the state courts. This is because there are separate federal and state courts and one Supreme Court. The state government controls the courts in each state (Ebbe, 1993).

The three countries have an adversarial system of justice whereby the offender is presumed innocent until he/she is proved guilty (see Ebbe, 1993, 1993; Scharf & Cochrane, 1993). However, due to the tripartite judicial system in Nigeria, the Islamic (Muslim) courts and Customary courts apply an inquisitorial approach in their criminal procedures (Ebbe, 1993) whereby the offender is presumed guilty before trial.

The age of criminal responsibility varies among these three countries. In Nigeria, any person at the age of 17 and above is considered an adult. Persons 12 to 16 years old are treated as juveniles while 7 to 11 years old are considered as children. The offences of both children and juveniles are handled at the juvenile courts. Juvenile courts are generally *ad hoc* and informally administered. They are presided over by the county magistrate, a layman and/or a laywoman (Ebbe, 1993). In South Africa, a child below the age of 7 years is presumed to lack criminal responsibility. A child between the ages of 7 and 14 is also presumed to lack criminal responsibility; however, the onus is on the state to rebut this presumption beyond reasonable doubt (Scharf & Cochrane, 1993: 4). In Ghana, the age of criminal responsibility is 18 years (Ebbe, 1993).

As we shall see in chapter 6, the death penalty remains punishment for capital offences like armed robbery in Nigeria. Ghana also imposes the death sentence for similar offences (see Appiahene-Gyamfi, 1999). Since 1995, South Africa has abolished the death sentence as punishment for capital offences. In his judgement in the 1995 *Makwanyane case* (which declared the death penalty unconstitutional), Mr

Justice Arthur Chaskalson maintains that there is no convincing evidence that the death penalty is a deterrent to serious crime:

We would be deluding ourselves if we were to believe that the execution of the few people sentenced to death during this period [1990–95], and of a comparatively few other people each year from now onwards will provide the solution to the unacceptably high rate of crime ... The greatest deterrent to crime is the likelihood that offenders will be apprehended, convicted and punished. It is that which is presently lacking in our criminal justice system; and it is at this level and through addressing the causes of crime that the state must seek to combat lawlessness (see Schonteich, 2002).

Since Nigeria and Ghana impose the death penalty for offences like armed robbery, South Africa uses long-term imprisonment to punish serious offenders. That is why 160,000 inmates are locked-up in South African jails (UN, 2010; see also Osinbanjo, 2009) compared to 13,000 in Ghana (Amnesty International, 2011) and around 40,000 in Nigeria (see Orakwe, 2008). South Africa with about one-third of Nigeria's population has almost 5 times as many convicts as Nigeria has (Osinbanjo, 2009). Generally, the prison conditions in Africa are deplorable and not fit for purpose. As we shall see in chapter 6, prison overcrowding has become a household name in the criminal justice systems of some African countries. Therefore, the differences in criminal responsibility and procedure found in each country illustrate the uniqueness of each state in determining what works for her criminal justice system in criminal liability, culpability and prosecution.

Economically, these three countries are among the major economies in Africa, and indeed the pillars of African development; however, the governance and the political trajectories of these nations seem to have contributed to shaping their crime rates. It has been said before that since independence, Nigeria has had a protracted period of military dictatorship and bad governance (see 2.2). Ghana has equally had similar experiences between the 1960s and 1980s. Arguably, Jerry Rawlings' administration not only brought sanity and accountability among Ghanaians, but he also restored democracy to the country. For South Africa, it is a well-known fact that the country has had many decades of the oppressive and repressive regime, which created a chasm between white and black South Africans.

As stated in the first chapter, Nigeria is the riskiest place for business in the world. It received the worst risk evaluation by scoring the 59th of 59 due to the crime problem. South Africa received the most favourable risk evaluation by ranking 29th of 59 (UNODC, 2005). In an individual country crime and criminal justice evaluation, South Africa and Nigeria were among the sub-Saharan African countries considered, but Ghana was not. The outcome of that evaluation states that:

Nigeria is an insecure environment for commercial operations. Security risk arises on three levels. The first comes from rising violent crime, [from] simple armed robbery [to] carjacking and violent attacks... Second, companies can be subjected to direct attack or blackmail... facilities can be vandalised and staff kidnapped. Third, incidences of inter-communal violence have risen... Nigeria's ill-equipped police force...has been ineffective in stemming the crime wave (see UNODC, 2005: 79).

In South Africa:

Violent crime is a major problem, and remains a serious concern for business... Many in the police are inexperienced, poorly trained, and corrupt: the institution itself cannot be relied upon to enforce the law adequately and to protect the public...High levels of crime are one of the main obstacles to economic growth (see UNODC, 2005: 79).

Empirical evidence of worldwide governance indicators (WGI) namely: political stability; government stability; regulatory quality; rule of law; and control of corruption; were tested in these three countries between 1996 and 2009 (see Kaufmann et al, 2010 at appendix 1 for details).³¹ The survey generally demonstrates that Nigeria not only has the poorest governance scores, but also those scores are negative. Ghana has mixed positive and negative governance scores in all the variables tested. Finally, South Africa has full positive governance scores in four out of the six variables (see Kaufmann et al, 2010 at appendix 1 for details). In spite of that, crime rates seem to be higher in South Africa, followed by Nigeria, and lastly

³¹The worldwide governance indicators (WGI) as can be seen in the appendix aggregate views on the quality of governance provided by a large number of enterprise, citizen and expert survey respondents in industrial and developing countries. These data are gathered from a number of survey institutes, think tanks, non-governmental organisations, and international organisations. The WGI do not reflect the official views of the World Bank, its executive Directors, or the countries they represent. The WGI are not used by the World Bank to allocate resources (see Kaufmann et al, 2010 at appendix).

Ghana (see tables above). It is important to note that total crime rates of any country will be based on the crimes that country chooses to report (see Naude & Prinsloo, 2006). Drawing on that premise, and as earlier stated, total crime rates of a country may not account for the volume crimes committed in a country because underreported and hidden crimes are not included. According to Carrabine et al (2009: 34), “recorded crime statistics are not products of a neutral fact-collecting process. The recording process is governed by guidelines”. It is a common practice that police statistics reflect the crime categories and the legal system of the state in which they are produced. This makes it difficult to compare police-recorded crime statistics across countries (Naude & Prinsloo, 2006; Alvazzi del Frate (1998: 7). In addition, many criminologists aver that comparisons of crime levels across countries are particularly problematic because of: different legal and criminal justice systems’ rates at which crimes are reported to the police and recorded by them; differences in the point at which crime is measured; differences in the manner in which multiple offences are recorded; and differences in the list of offences that are included in the overall figures and changes in the quality of data (Naude & Prinsloo, 2006: 17; Barclay and Tavares, 2000: 2; Van Dijk & Shaw 2002: 12).

However, these three African countries are arguably struggling in their developmental stages, but South Africa appears to be better positioned than Nigeria and Ghana. While Nigeria has a population advantage, with over 140 million people,³² which gives it a commanding presence in Africa and world affairs (USAID/Nigeria Mission, 2004-2009);³³ South Africa and Ghana seem to be democratically and economically more stable than Nigeria, as the WGI survey suggests (see Kaufmann et al, 2010 at appendix 1 for details); yet South Africa’s overall crime rate is arguably one of the highest in the world (Demombynes & Ozler, 2002, 2005). Crime trends in South Africa are products of the political transition in the 1990s; and are associated with the effects of apartheid and political violence; the breakdown in the criminal justice system; and more recently, the growth in organised crime (Louw, 1997: 137). Research has shown that inequality is one of the main reasons behind the high crime rates in post-apartheid South Africa (Demombynes & Ozler, 2002, 2005). The

³²The figure was based on the 2006 National Census, which showed an exponential growth rate of 3.2 per cent.

³³“USAID” refers to United States Aid.

establishment of apartheid-era policies such as the Bantu Education Act 1953 disempowered Black South African society (Breetzke, 2010: 448) and “left most black youths and youths of colour socially and economically marginalised” (Bezuidenhout, 2003: 4 cited in Breetzke, 2010: 448). Black youths were not only marginalised by these policies but were perennially vulnerable to crime and violence within their isolated communities (Breetzke, 2010: 448).

Comparing crime rates and criminal justice practices among different African countries opens a window of opportunity to not only learn but also appreciate what is obtainable elsewhere. This corroborates the opinion of Nelken (2002) that comparative criminology creates a means of learning what is obtainable among different criminal justice systems, which can be shaped by a variety of goals of explanation, understanding and reform.

2.4. Summary

This chapter considered the problem of armed robbery in Nigeria. It started by giving a background to the study, which suggests that armed robbery has been part of the country’s history. The political history and socio-economic conditions were discussed which featured issues of governance and the economy, corruption, poverty, and youth unemployment in relation to robbery. It was argued that endemic corruption and mismanagement of public funds have influenced the way of life of the political leaders and led to bad governance.

We compared crime and criminal justice systems by considering the broader literature in the area. In specific terms, we compared the criminal justice system of Nigeria with that of South Africa and Ghana. While official crime statistics seem to be very problematic, yet evidence based on official crime statistics was used to support the claim for the seriousness of armed robbery and crime in general. By comparing the different criminal justice systems in some African states, we have come to know what is practicable in each jurisdiction, especially the different ways of recording and categorising official crime statistics.

Chapter 3: Existing studies and theories

This chapter explores the existing studies and theories on armed robbery. To begin with, the chapter examines the causes and motivations that typically lie behind the commission of crimes. It will further discuss the place of opportunity in criminal commission. We will also review studies and theories that focus their attention on decision-making prior to a robbery, on the planning, on the targeting and on the actual enactment of the crime.

The chapter will explain the reasons behind gun use in robbery and the correlation between weapon use and robbery. It will also investigate how armed robbers get their guns for robbery, how they disguise themselves and look at the duration of robbery operation. There will be a discussion on the issues of gender identity, age, and the typologies of robbers in order to ascertain the profile of robbery offenders. Finally, we will consider theoretical perspectives that will help us to assess the degree of youth involvement in armed robbery.

3.1. Previous theoretical and empirical explanations of armed robbery

3.1.1. Causes and motivations

“Causes” and “motivations” of crime are two different things with different meanings. At times, the two words have been used interchangeably or synonymously (see for example Hirschi, 2002 [1969]; Hirschi & Gottfredson, 2008).³⁴ However, the former actually refers to the reasons or the basis for criminal action, while the latter deals with the incentives or drives for crime to be committed. The causes of crime are among the major issues that criminology studies, which distinguishes it from other academic disciplines (Jacobs & Wright, 1999: 150).

There is no single cause of crime, instead there is a concatenation of causes, which often overlap and interlock (Macdonald 1975; Brantingham & Brantingham, 1984). A large and growing body of literature has investigated the causes of crime as revolving

³⁴See Hirschi’s seminal work *Causes of Delinquency* originally published in 1969 but reprinted with a new introduction in 2002.

around cultural and socio-economic variables (see for example Bonger, 1916; Merton, 1938; Shaw & McKay, 1942; Sutherland, 1947; Cohen, 1955; Miller, 1958; Becker, 1963; Cloward & Ohlin, 1960; Hirschi, 1969; Quinney, 1970; Chambliss & Seidman, 1971; Akers, 1985; Cornish & Clark, 1986; Felson, 1987; Sampson & Laub, 1992). Concerning the causes of robbery, Conklin (1972) suggests a list of variables such as poverty, relative deprivation, increased drug use, increased desire for easy money, unemployment, inflation, and absolute deprivation.

The drives that motivate people to commit crime may be diverse and difficult to prove, but some criminologists tend to differentiate between “instrumental” and “expressive” motives (Miethe & Drass, 1999). Instrumental motives reflect some future goal or end, including money, revenge, status enhancement, control, and domination. Expressive motives are aligned with spontaneous and impulsive acts performed out of rage or anger and with little thought as to consequences (Miethe & Drass, 1999).

Specifically, Gabor et al (1987) identify two motives for armed robbery, namely: principal and secondary. Principal motives include monetary gain and the ease with which it may be obtained. Secondary motives are made up of the pursuit of thrills and the craving for new experiences, feelings of power generated by the possession of guns in the hands of robbers, and the challenge through which adolescents can prove themselves to their peers. In sum, Gabor and his colleagues try to highlight that robbery is motivated by the inordinate desire to acquire money and lavish it in pleasurable activities and showing offs. Therefore, an armed robber may have either a principal motive or a secondary motive or both to commit the offence. When the two motives are geared towards the commission of a particular robbery, it is likely that one will take precedence over the other.

However, to understand offenders’ motivations to rob, it is crucial to appreciate the contexts for robbery that are familiar to them (Katz, 1991: 286). Many scholars (see McClintock et al, 1968; Conklin, 1972; Rotimi, 1984; Feeney, 1986; Ekpenyong, 1989; Tunnell, 1992; Anderson, 1994; Wright & Decker, 1997; Desroches, 1997; Jacobs & Wright, 1999; Gill, 2000; Alison et al, 2000; Matthews, 2002; Fitzgerald et

al, 2003) have confirmed that an unbridled quest for money is one of the primary motives for robbery. This alludes to the fact that *radix malorum est cupiditas*.³⁵

Since “motivation” is an essential ingredient for robbery to be committed, Wright et al (2006) stress the need to consider it with caution, for three reasons. First, questions about intention and rationality might result in responses that manifest intentionality and rationality. Second, the need for cash seems one of the simplest ways of explaining to an interviewer the complexity surrounding any robbery event. Finally, the mere reason that a robbery was committed for the sake of money tells little about the motivation. The view of Wright et al in this case suggests something which transcends money and which makes robbery attractive; it points to what money can buy, notably ostentatious living and a hedonistic lifestyle.

Money is useless if it is not channelled towards some mode of consumption or usage. The need for cash to enjoy good times and partying has also been identified as one of the reasons for committing a robbery. The availability of fast cash makes it easier for robbers to finance their gambling habits, drug addiction, heavy drinking behaviours and illicit sexual acts (see Katz, 1988; Wright & Decker, 1997; Jacobs & Wright, 1999; Wright et al, 2006). It is precisely the connections among the different forms of illicit action, the possible ways to construct a transcendental lifestyle around action, which sustain the motivation to get involved in armed robberies (Katz, 1988).

Apparently the current consumer culture in society, which Hall et al (2008) refer to as “metaculture” has absorbed youths involved in criminal activity. These scholars further argue that the number of people who live in this sort of culture is on the “astronomic rise each passing day”; lacking the political and symbolic resources to resist its compulsions and myths, they subscribe to its more deleterious tendencies. Money is spent lavishly so that a person can be regarded and respected by peers.

Money being a major motive for robbery is both a push and pull factor and a means to an end. When faced with desperate need for cash, offenders are likely to resort to armed robbery, knowing that no other activity, legal or illegal, provides a quick and

³⁵The love of money is the root of all evil.

easy way out of pressing financial problems (Wright & Decker, 1997). In Nigeria, money is taken as the measure of all things, and above all, the phrase that “the end justifies the means” becomes a generally accepted norm. “It did not matter anymore how money was acquired whether through armed robbery, bribery, forgery, or any other criminal means” (Rotimi, 1984: 128). The emphasis on money has overtly discouraged many young people from acquiring a basic education. It has also destroyed the belief that honest hard work is more rewarding. The correlation between robbery and cash reflects a commitment to a criminal lifestyle where the pursuit of illicit action generates an ongoing need for “fast cash” that realistically can only be satisfied through more crime (Wright et al, 2006). Thus robbery is being understood as a way people with usually limited means obtain what the “commercial culture” persuades everyone to get (Katz, 1988: 165).

Psychological and emotional factors can motivate criminals to get involved in robbery. This implies doing robbery just for the interest of doing it, for “the fun” of it all (Miller, 2005). Thus, robbery may be committed for pleasure or rather for buzz and excitement (Wright et al, 2006; Katz, 1988). One of the elements of excitement is to overpower the victim and obtain dominance over the whole situation. In some cases, excitement might result in fighting, which some robbers claim as their reason for getting involved in robbery (Wright et al, 2006). Robbery can then be viewed as a cultural pursuit in which the costs and rewards take second place to the emotional immediacy of the offence and its benefits for the offender’s lifestyle (Wright et al, 2006).

Robbery can be enacted to “enhance status” (see Rotimi, 1984; Wright et al, 2006) where it is perceived that society recognises and respects those who achieve their wealth illegitimately (Ekpenyong, 1989). According to Rotimi (1984) when a robber successfully pulls an operation, he displays his newly acquired wealth to the admiration of his neighbours and a record can even be waxed in praise of him. This appeared to be the case in Nigeria in the 1990s, when musicians, local communities, and some religious and traditional institutions gave titles and recognitions to suspicious characters in society because they were believed to be wealthy. With that recognition, robbers see their actions not as crime but as “taking their own share of the national cake” (Rotimi, 1984). When this happens, society concurs with the

delinquent and reinforces the notion that the delinquent's neutralisation of social controls by means of qualifying the norms is an extension of the customary way of doing things rather than a gesture of complete opposition (Sykes & Matza, 1957). Where this is the case, rules and standards governing behaviour have lost their influence and are overtly ignored (Merton, 1957a: 187).

In the research carried out by Feeney (1986), different responses concerning motivation were received from participants. Out of 113 robbers interviewed in California, over 40 per cent of the respondents were motivated by things other than money which include anger, desire for excitement, impressing friends, and recovering money owed them. According to Katz (1991), devoted interest in material things, playful tricks, and intensely aggressive emotions are surrounding motivations that encourage youths to rob.

So far, money has been shown to be the main motive and arguably the most attractive objective for doing a robbery. The issue of money will also feature prominently in chapters 5 and 7 as a factor that draws youths into armed robbery. Meanwhile, some people may have money to satisfy their needs, yet they get involved in robbery. They do this not to improve their cash flow, but to satisfy "opportunities that seemed too good to pass up" (Wright & Decker, 1997: 34).

3.1.2. Opportunity and crime

On the one hand, action is dependent on opportunity; but on the other hand, a particular setting provides particular opportunities for action, and even determines those actions (Wikstrom, 2006, 2009). Scholars have argued that "mere opportunity" increases the likelihood of people getting involved in street crime (Sampson and Lauritsen, 1990; Lauritsen et al, 1991). Oppositional to that, Jammers (1995) claims that none of the respondents in his study accepted having committed robbery because there was an opportunity to do so. This casts some doubt on whether the opportunity to commit crime can of itself lure a person to do so.

It is one thing to have an opportunity, and another to utilise it to commit a crime. Whereas opportunities may create temptations or enticements to action (Wikstrom, 2006, 2009; see also Desroches, 2002), scholars suggest that people may pass up such

opportunities to commit crime for ethical, moral, or religious reason (see Johnson et al, 2000; Baier & Wright, 2001; Vito et al, 2007; Wikstrom, 2006, 2009). For some people, the opportunity is there to be taken; but others may pass up the opportunity not for moral reasons, but because they lack the courage, cleverness, or other necessary qualities to do so (Bonger, 1916). Therefore investigating why some youths commit crime and others do not enhances the theoretical understanding of crime in a significant way (Hagan & McCarthy, 1997a; see also Baron, 2006).

Opportunity theorists assume that for crime to occur there must be a suitable target, a motivated offender and the absence of capable guardian (Cohen & Felson, 1979; Felson & Cohen, 1980; Sampson & Wooldredge, 1987; Sampson & Lauritsen, 1990; Lauritsen et al, 1991). Specifically, predatory-stranger crimes such as robbery rely on the opportunity created in places where offenders converge with vulnerable victims and low surveillance (Desroches, 2002). There are two types of opportunity theory: “situational selection” which focuses on the decision offenders make in choosing situations of crime; and “theories of victimisation” which focus on the characteristics and activities of persons that contribute to their victimisation (Birkbeck & LaFree, 1993: 123-4). Drawing from the above, robbery opportunity may partly be dependent on the offenders’ ingenuity and the weak security measures surrounding their victims. However, effective security would prevent the robbery. This might be through measures such as “target hardening”. Arguably, when there is a capable guardian, robbers may still decide to make their way through after threatening or killing the victim. Capable guardianship is an issue that still needs to be further researched in the study of robbery and other situational crimes, which occur more in urban than rural areas.

3.1.3. Decision making

The decision to rob is a crucial moment for any armed robber. It marks the *terminus ad quo* (point of departure) of the offence. The offender at a certain point decides to rob: this decision, as with any other social activity, does not take place in a vacuum. It is a part of general human existence, mediated by prevailing situational and subcultural conditions (see Jacobs & Wright, 1999: 150).

This decision is governed by the offender's resolve to have more money than he presently has or can acquire through legitimate means (Conklin, 1972; Morrison & O'Donnell, 1996). It suggests that legitimate employment as a viable option to earn cash is a strategy that is deemed untenable. The reason is that offenders' need for money is usually urgent and pressing, and effort and wages are separated in space and time, hence it is likely that robbers will not wait for the necessary week or month to elapse. Another reason is that the kind of jobs open to robbers tend to be unskilled, since they are generally poorly educated, and this implies poor wages (Jacobs & Wright, 1999). When youths are out of school, they have restricted job skills and employment or earnings prospects, and are likely to commit a disproportionate number of offences (see Fagan & Freeman, 1999; Short, 1997).

3.1.4.Target selection/planning

After taking the decision to commit a robbery, the next things an offender considers include the selection of a specific target and actual planning of the robbery (Conklin, 1972). Indeed, armed robbery is sometimes enacted on the impulse of the moment, and no attempt is made to survey the target clearly (Macdonald, 1975: 52). Target selection can happen by chance or arise from the situation in which a criminal finds himself at the time. It can also be based on information or a "tip" from a friend or contact person (Gabor et al, 1987). Bank robberies in Nigeria result from "tip offs", that is to say, an insider was behind the operation. At times, it happens in the daytime when commercial banks have brought huge sums into their branch (Nkpa, 1976). When armed robberies occur in the daytime, it is an indication that robbers have become more sophisticated and their actions more deadly than ever before.

The planning stage offers the robber an opportunity to weigh the odds, which among other things include estimating the chances of detection and consequent punishment (Greenwood, 1972). It is here that the "cost and benefit" of robbery is weighed up, so as to decide if the risk is worth taking. Over time, opinions have differed whether or not robbery requires planning. Feeney and Weir (1975-1976) report that over half of the robbers they interviewed in prison reported no planning of the crime whatsoever. Gabor et al (1987) reveal that one in five of armed robberies committed by their respondents were not planned, and about an equal proportion involved preparation

that lasted for an hour or less. In England and Wales, commercial robbery involves a greater amount of planning and targets an organisation instead of an individual, while street robbery is more opportunistic, enacted as it is in the more open and less predictable environment of the street (Wright et al, 2006).

From his research, Macdonald (1975) reveals that an armed robber sees his crime in a tripartite scenario, which includes the planning, the stickup and the escape.³⁶ Fundamentally, these three issues are the key areas that may determine whether a robbery is going to take place and or even succeed in the end. Poor planning may lead to poor robbery enactment, and of course, escape might be difficult for the offenders too. Generally, robbery appears to retain elements of planning and calculation associated with property crimes (Wright & Decker, 1997: 7). From the foregoing it could be summed up that while some robberies may not be planned, others may require an element of planning, especially how escape can easily be made in case of counter attack by the police or victims and when firearms are used during the operation.

3.1.5. Use of weapons

The use of weapons is another important and delicate area in armed robbery operations. Armed robbery is what it is because weapons are involved. Previous research has established that robbery has an association with the use of firearms, knives and other weapons (O'Donnell & Morrisons, 1997; Borzycki et al, 2005). Conklin (1972) suggests that weapons use by robbers depends less on the psychological situation of the robber than on the pattern of robbery he is involved in. Furthermore, he explains that a weapon serves four purposes for the robber. First, it creates a barrier between an offender and his victim (Conklin, 1972). The barrier

³⁶Planning involves the *modus operandi* to approach the identified target with success. Once that is established, then the robbery enactment takes place at the fixed time. To carry out a robbery implies that all is ready and action becomes imminent. The length of time to operate may largely depend on the circumstances surrounding the target, that is, whether there are serious security measures hardening the target from being approached by motivated offenders. However, once a robber takes hold of the target, then escape becomes the next thing to do as soon as possible in order to avoid being apprehended.

appears to make both parties enemies immediately. Whatever each can do to overpower the other becomes very opportunistic.

Second, Conklin (1972) maintains that the use of a weapon intimidates the victim so that he will not resist surrendering his belongings to the offender, thereby reducing the likelihood of struggle, injury, and murder. It is arguable that in a scenario where the victim happens to be armed and alert at the time of robbery, the tendency might be to resort to self-defence and fight back. However, trying to do so might result in fatalities or serious injuries on one side or on both sides. Nonetheless, robbery is enabled by intimidation, without which the offender is unlikely to succeed. The more intimidation is unleashed, the more likely the victim is to surrender to save his or her life. Mouzos & Carcach (2001) stress that intimidation is a very essential tool in armed robbery; armed robbers intimidate their victims to ensure swift co-operation, prevent resistance, prevent pursuit, and dissuade them from assisting the police and the courts (Macdonald, 1975: 135).

Third, a weapon is used to make good the threat that its presence signifies (Conklin, 1972). It might be that the impact of threat in robbery is such that the victim fears what is to come. Thus, with a weapon the robber tries to express an imminent danger. Fourth, Conklin (1972) argues that a weapon helps robbers to escape from the scene of an operation, in the belief that if they can get away from the scene of robbery, the chances of their arrest would be minimised. It is assumable that every robber would likely prefer to escape after accomplishing any robbery operation and a gun or knife or other weapon gives an offender some confidence that he might not be caught during his escape. His confidence also relies on the potential to manoeuvre security measures in the robbery environment such as the police and security guard presence, a reliable escape vehicle and a safe route for escape³⁷ (Bureau of Crime Statistics & Research, 1987; Erickson 1996; Indermaur, 1996).

It is important to ask if all those who go out to rob with weapons end up being violent. Patterns of robbery in the US indicate that they are more likely to be committed using weapons; a situation that results in deadly violence across the country (Currie, 1998).

³⁷Erickson (1996: 47) found that escape route ranked second in 1985 and first in 1995 among the scale of preference for offenders when deciding to do their robbery.

A 2003 statistics show that weapons used in armed robberies across the US include firearms (42 per cent), physical force strong arm tactics (40 per cent), knives and other cutting instruments (9 per cent), and other dangerous weapons (9 per cent) (see Cassel & Bernstein, 2007: 188). Moreover, about 2,000 people (victims) are killed annually in the US during armed robberies (see Cook, 1987). It has also been reported that armed robbery attacks in Nigeria were responsible for the greatest proportion of gunshot injuries and fatalities. For example, a robbery attack in the home is more likely than that on the highway to result in fatality (21.4 per cent vs 14.3 per cent), probably due to the close range shooting (Mohammed et al, 2005: 298). As Macdonald (1975) contends, weapon use in robbery gives the envious, the resentful, and the sadistic a chance to humiliate, injure or even kill their victim. While there are many other reasons for the use of weapons, he argues, an armed robber is probably unaware of all the factors behind the force he uses.

In their Australian research, Nugent et al (1989) revealed that the presence of a weapon and threat of its use was employed by robbers as a mechanism to “convince” victims to steal their cash or other personal effects. Similarly, O’Donnell & Morrison, (1994) conclude that the majority of their UK prison respondents agreed that they carried guns during robbery for self-defence in case the victim was also armed. These reasons can be interpreted to mean that weapon use gives the robber an overpowering power to subdue his victim and helps him to succeed during an operation.

In Nigeria, firearms robbers use include self-loading guns, bren guns, submachine guns, dynamite, smoke guns, (see Rotimi, 1984) and the “AK 47”, which is a higher grade of weapon than what the security agents themselves use (Agekameh, 2003). These guns are so sophisticated with their high performance rating that during an operation some of the victims may surrender even though they are armed themselves and at times the police try to run away to save their own lives. Moreover, O’Donnell and Morrison (1994) in their UK study found that 17 per cent of their respondents used real handguns, and 24 per cent used sawn-off shotguns.

Armed robbery has become a type of crime that any bold or desperate person can participate in without requisite skills on how to use a gun (Matthews, 2002) and manoeuvre the victim(s). It may be a mistake to claim that robbers do not learn how

to use guns. They load guns and cock them, and they also press the triggers to release the bullets. Whichever way those processes have come about, there is probably a teaching and learning, and these could easily take place through the association of peers.³⁸

It has been suggested that criminals in the UK obtain their firearms from a variety of sources, which include registered firearms dealers, repairers, retailers, and those who provide storage and warehousing. These people may be corrupted, coerced, or duped into providing firearms for criminals (National Criminal Intelligence Service, 2002). On the other hand, a study conducted in Nigeria shows that robbery accomplices who live in a border town in the Republic of Benin and operate in Nigeria buy ammunitions from Liberia, Sierra Leone, the Central African Republic, Somalia, and the Congos (Agekameh, 2003). These dealings are not only illegal, but also criminal acts of sabotage against the national economy and security.

Armed robbery is a sinister business, and robbers are likely to answer false names, speak few words, and wear masks during operations to hide their real identities (Macdonald, 1975; Matthews, 1996; Agekameh, 2003). Contrariwise, most often robbers do not wear any disguises (Gabor et al, 1987). However, depending on the nature of the robbery operation, armed robbers may either disguise themselves or not. They disguise themselves in places where they are likely to be known, for fear of being identified and subsequently arrested.

The duration of any robbery operation varies according to situation and circumstance. Macdonald (1975) claims that many robberies are completed within minutes, with few words spoken and little or no time wasted, while Elechi (2003) believes that robbery operations are normally carried out over several hours in groups of between five and twenty, and involve the use of dangerous weapons. Any robbery operation that takes time is likely to involve banks or commercial institutions. During two different bank robberies in Nigeria, it took the offenders about one hour in the daytime to complete their operation, which included killing five people and leaving several others injured;

³⁸It is not enough to say that robbers use guns in robbery, the question is: how do robbers obtain their guns?

blowing up bank security doors with dynamite; and making away with millions of Naira (Oladoyinbo, 2010).

While robbery is a “risky venture”, the security of the offenders during the operation is not guaranteed, but the successful completion of any robbery represents a manifestation of the offender’s personal competence (Wright & Decker, 1997; Katz, 1988), and failure implies that luck has run out for him.

In what follows next, we shall notice that robbery has something to do with gender identity.

3.1.6. Gender identity and armed robbery

It has become a unique tradition for criminologists to regard violent offending as a universally masculine feature (see for example Wilson, 1981; Wolfgang & Ferracuti, 1967; Messerschmidt, 1993; Heimer & De Coster, 1999). While it is not enough to just “explain” violent behaviour and label it “male crime”, there is a need to transcend this perception to arrive at the rich meanings behind it (Wilson, 1981). This calls for recognition of the obvious impacts of the structural (e.g. social class) and cultural factors (such as parental and peer influence) that shape male offending patterns (Heimer & De Coster, 1999; Heimer, 1997; Sampson, 1997).

Masculinity is a behavioural reaction to the way men respond to social situations in which they participate such as school, among youth groups, on the streets, in the family and at work. Within such situations, crime can offer a strategy for “doing masculinity” (Messerschmidt, 1993). For instance, street crime stems from a subcultural location where the link between emphasised forms of masculinity and crime is easily seen (Copes & Hochstetler, 2008). Specifically, though, robbery is one of those crimes that dominate the masculine gender identity (see for example Conklin, 1972; Katz, 1988; Sullivan, 1989; Messerschmidt, 1993; Miller, 1998, 2002; Willis, 2006). In the words of Messerschmidt (1993: 107):

The robbery setting provides an ideal opportunity to construct an “essential” toughness and “maleness”: it provides a means with which to construct that certain type of masculinity – hardman. Within the social

context that ghetto and barrio boys find themselves, then, robbery is a rational practice for doing gender and for getting money.

With the use of force and attendant violence, robbery provides an opportunity for domination and humiliation of others by young street boys (see for example Katz, 1988; Messerschmidt, 1993). Perhaps this positive correlation between men and robbery reveals some truth about male identity, at least in a given culture or historical period (Katz, 1988: 238).

Masculine identity with violent crime seems to overshadow any knowledge of female criminality, which is an important area of study scholars may have ignored in the past (Norlon & Shover, 1977). Since the early 1970s, there has been a growing interest among criminologists in the study of violent crime committed by women (see for example Adler, 1975; Simon, 1975; Smart, 1976; Norland & Shover, 1977; Miller, 1998, 2005; Koons-Witt & Schram, 2003; Chukuezi, 2009). Considering the above, it may not be out of place to argue that robbery enactment cuts across gender specificity (see also Chesney-Lind & Paramore, 2001). For example, scholars (Beredugo 2003; Chukuezi, 2009) draw attention to the fact that young women are infiltrating robbery gangs in Nigeria. Elsewhere (in America), scholars have also established that women get involved in robbery (see for example Adler, 1975; Katz, 1988; Sommers & Baskins, 1993; Miller, 1998, 2005).

Women may carry out robbery operations without the aid of male associates (Adler, 1975; Sommers & Baskins, 1993), but most often, female robbers enact their robberies with their male counterparts, who may be boyfriends, partners or husbands (see Alarid et al, 1996; Wright & Decker, 1997; Miller, 1998, 2005; Koons-Witt & Schram, 2003). Over a decade ago, O'Donnell and Morrison (1994) came up with their findings that women represent at least 1 per cent of convicted armed robbers in the UK (see also Willis, 2006). A study conducted by Chukuezi (2009) in Owerri Prison, Nigeria revealed that 2 women were imprisoned for armed robbery in 1980; 3 in 1990; and 7 in the year 2000. In total, armed robbery accounts for 8.9 per cent of crimes committed by women in that jail over those three years. This suggests that the number of women in prison for armed robbery is insignificant when compared to that of men. Arguably, women commit lesser robberies than men do; yet both parties express the same reasons (notably money and status-enhancing materials such as

jewellery) for their involvement in robbery (Miller, 1998; Chesney-Lind & Paramore, 2001). Women's participation in robbery is also attributable to provocation and to economic and conspiracy motives (see Chukuezi, 2009).

As women move from their traditional feminine roles into men's, their protected feminine characteristics diminish. Consequently, they are liable to acquire more male attributes that trigger their active participation in violent crimes, which used to be the "preserve of men" (Miller, 2001, 1998). In short, it has become a pattern of women robbers to reconstruct their identities and behave like their male counterparts (Hunt, 1984; Miller, 1998; Messerschmidt, 1997, 2000, 2004; Brookman et al, 2007). Research supports the view that there is little or no gender differentiation when it comes to offending behaviour (Brookman et al, 2007; Baskin & Sommers, 1998). Nevertheless, the changing pattern of criminal opportunities available to women (as they now get involved in property offences) has also played a major role in their participation in violent crime (Miller, 2001). According to Chukuezi (2009), since 1970, there is a change in the pattern of female criminality in Nigeria. Reasons for this observed change were given by 96 per cent of her respondents to be economic instability in the country over the years, while 4 per cent agreed it was because of changes in societal values. Out of 348 participants who talked about their perception of female involvement in crime, 54 per cent concurred that women have gradually moved from misdemeanours to high profile crimes such as armed robbery (Chukuezi, 2009).

When violence is only considered as the accomplishment of maleness, then it can tell us very little about women's participation in it, just as prostitution is often associated with women and very little is known about male involvement in it (Miller, 1998, 2005). The simplistic claim that men are violent and women are not contains an atom of truth, but it fails to take into account the complexity and texture of women's lives (Simpson, 1991: 129; see also White & Kowalski, 1994; Miller, 2005). Although women robbers try to create a non-threatening image, yet they "lull would be victims to complacency" (Wright & Decker, 1997: 99). This is because the "sex role" of women robbers means that they are not taken seriously as potential criminals. Instead, their male victims often regard them as mere "sex objects", oblivious to the fact that they may indeed be violent offenders (Wright & Decker, 1997).

It is commonly said that women are the “weaker sex” compared to men. This assertion often places women in a situation of being “victims” of crime. However, Harding (1987) suggests that it is spurious to always regard women as “victims” because they have never been able to fight back, and are not able to become social agents of themselves or others. It could be argued that women’s participation in robbery is a sign that at some point they might appear violent. The ways they unleash violence against men tend to differ from the ways they deal with their fellow women. For example, during a robbery, female robbers have always refrained from body contact with their male victims, preferring to use firearms instead (Koons-Witt & Schram, 2003). However, when robbing other women, female robbers are in the habit of unleashing physical violence such as hitting, shoving and fighting (Miller, 1998; Chesney-Lind & Paramore, 2001; Koons-Witt & Schram, 2003). Arguably, though, women prostitutes are perfect stereotypes of female armed robbers, in that they are normally attracted to their vulnerable victims (Wright & Decker, 1997). It is therefore suggested that the guise of trying to have “sex” with their male victims gives them the opportunity to enact robbery there and then.

Female involvement in robbery might be in keeping with the popular adage that “what men can do, women can do even better”. Importantly, there are natural divergences between both sexes, which could explain the issues of “gender, gender inequality or gendered action” (Miller, 2002: 434-435). Those dissimilarities go a long way to proving that in essence, “gender is logically prior to behaviour, already settled, and can be understood as [the cause of] behaviour” (Connell, 1993: x). Gender remains a noticeable aspect of women’s experiences in the urban street environment, and should remain at the forefront of attempts to comprehend their participation in violent crime (Miller, 1998; see also Maher, 1997). According to Sommers and Baskin (1993: 140) “... the male lifestyle, that is, being more likely to frequent public places at night without guardianship, apparently explains observed gender differences in violent offending rates”.

Nevertheless, theory should not universalise feminine street crime (Messerschmidt, 1995: 171), but should consider the involvement of women in presumably “male”

crime (Miller, 2005: 142) as “doing gender” or “doing difference”³⁹ (Messerschmidt, 1995, 1997) and/or “gender crossing”⁴⁰ (Miller, 1998, 2002). These phrasal explanations are *prima facie* vague, leaving female participation in so-called “male crime” unexplained and/or rather inconsistent (Miller, 2002). However, for any proper explanation of feminine involvement in masculine criminal behaviour, serious emphasis must be made on the differences in the standard behaviour of women as they emerge within diverse structural and situational settings (Miller, 2002; Bottcher, 2001; Jacobs & Miller 1998; Miller 1998; Messerschmidt, 1995; Simpson & Ellis, 1995). This would also take into account the changing patterns in society, which includes economic transformations that have also created changing patterns within drugs and criminal subcultures, thus leading to greater female autonomy. Such autonomy tends to motivate female offenders to enact crime like their male counterparts (see Miller, 2001).

So far, robbery has become a crime that is seemingly unrestricted to any particular gender, but the divergences in enactment may still determine whether the offender was a female or male or that both sexes co-offended. Yet, men are obviously involved in crime than women. A consideration of the age of offenders will now reveal how the incidence of robbery peaks and diminishes over time.

3.1.7. Age and armed robbery

Age distribution seems to be one of the unquestionable characteristics of criminal behaviour, which has in recent years, become a major criminological issue (Warr, 2006) following, in particular, the seminal work of Hirschi and Gottfredson (1983). They contend that the correlation between age and crime is invariant across cultures, historical periods, and types of offence (see also LaFree, 1998; Warr, 2006). Criminologists agree that the methods used to measure crime such as self-reporting, official statistics, and victim data allude to the fact that age-specific rates of offending in the entire population peak from middle to late adolescence for most crimes, and

³⁹Messerschmidt (1995, 1997) generated notions such as “doing gender” or “doing difference” to refer to female participation in street gangs (see also Miller, 2002).

⁴⁰Miller (1998) developed the concept of “gender crossing” to refer to women who get involved in robbing men. They adopt a “prototypical masculine style”. That is to say, such women adopt a dressing code that disguises their “feminine genderedness” from the male victim.

plummet afterwards (Hirschi & Gottfredson, 1983; Wilson & Herrnstein, 1985; Farrington, 1986; Blumstein & Cohen, 1987; Steffensmeier et al, 1989; Warr, 2006). Although, drug offences might be exempt from the above argument, for the reason that they peak later, yet within the early ages (Bachman et al, 1984; Kandel & Yamaguchi, 1987; Warr, 2006).

In Nigeria, records spanning between 1975 and 1985 reveal that robbery is predominantly a male offence with a peak age range of 17 to 30 (Beredugo, 2003). This age group corroborates the youthful age in the country as cited in chapter 1 (see FRN, 2001). In Ghana, Appiahene-Gyamfi, (2003) reports that 64 per cent of armed robbery suspects are between 18 and 33 years of age. Sullivan (1989) in his US study argues that most of his respondents had become systematic armed robbers at age 16. Moreover, in their Canadian research, Gabor et al (1987) reveal that armed robbers appear to be in their teens or early twenties. Elsewhere, some Australian researchers (see Makkai & Payne, 2003; Willis, 2006) conclude that armed robbers begin regular enactments between their late teens and early twenties. Before that, they tend to have been involved in non-violent offences such as break and enter, car theft, receiving stolen goods, fraud, burglary and so on (see also Blumstein, 1995). This corroborates the UK findings of Matthews (1996) that robbery offenders must have committed burglary previously. According to Matthews (1996), the average age of those who rob UK commercial establishments with weapons is 28, while young offenders of age 20 to 25 are involved in the robbery of garages, betting shops, and post offices. Perhaps the inference we can draw from the above is that armed robbery is a crime involving people of youth age irrespective of where it happens. Nevertheless, an explanation of the different types of robbers can help clarify what each does at any given time in their operations.

3.1.8. Typologies of armed robbers

Attempts to establish typologies of robbers can be very complex due to a wide range of behaviours, and patterns that may not be easily identifiable during robberies (see for instance Gill, 2000). Nevertheless, typologies may evolve from the differences among robbers in the extent of their criminal activities, the duration of their period of inactivity, their level of specialisation, their length of participation, their planning, and

actual robbery operation (Gabor et al, 1987). Our intent here is to find out if these typologies will support the present study by influencing the offender sample and analysis (see chapter 5).

Typologies of robbers have been described either similarly or slightly differently among researchers. Conklin (1972) in his US research identified four kinds of armed robbers, namely: professionals, opportunists, addicts and alcoholics. Matthews (2002) in his study of armed robbers in the UK categorised them into amateurs, intermediates, professional and persistent robbers. For Gabor et al (1987) armed robbers in Canada can be found within four typologies, namely: chronic, professional, intensive and occasional robbers. While scholars have maintained that there is professionalism in robbery, Gabor et al (1987) believe that robbery is an operation of non-professional gang members who may well be drug abusers and alcoholics who would not care about the consequences of their actions. However, we shall now examine only six different types of robbers, which seem to corroborate the typologies for the present study, as we shall see in chapter 5.

Professional robbers are typologised consistently (see for example Conklin, 1972; Gabor et al, 1987; Matthews, 2002; Gill, 2000) and reflect the image of the robber in the public eye (Conklin, 1972). They have a commitment to robbery because it is a direct, fast, and profitable venture. The techniques employed by professional robbers include sophisticated planning, neutralisation of security measures close to the target and investigation of escape routes. They plan their operation carefully, execute it with a group of accomplices and steal a large amount of money to satisfy their hedonistic lifestyle (Conklin, 1972; Gabor et al, 1987). Their normal targets include banks, and other commercial institutions (see Gill, 2000).

Professional robbers can sometimes take people hostage as a sign that they are determined to continue and complete the operation (Gabor et al, 1987). Other scholars (see for example Smith & Louis, 2010; Matthews, 2002; Gill, 2001; Katz, 1988) see the professional robber as persistent, more experienced, viewing robbery more as a job and a way of life. The professional robber is different from other robbers because of his level of planning, selection of targets, the use of firearms and deployment of violence.

From the foregoing, it can be deduced that the professional robber is an expert in the art and makes a career out of it. He is the most violent robber and regular user of firearms during operations. It therefore appears that he would find it very difficult to adapt to another career. He is likely to justify armed robbery as the best way to earn a living in society. By associating with accomplices, he forms a criminal group as an organ for criminal behaviour.

Opportunists as Conklin (1972) reveals differ from the professionals because they get involved in robbery whenever there is an opportunity to do so. They are not committed to robbery as a long-term project but rob infrequently. Their choice of targets is where lesser amounts of cash can be stolen. These opportunists tend to be younger and more inexperienced than any other robber is, and the targets they select are unprotected and vulnerable victims (Conklin, 1972). It is likely that the choice of such targets is meant to ensure that they succeed in robbery and escape easily without arrest. While they may look for an opportunity to rob, and get it done quickly, it could be argued that without such an opportunity this type of robber will not think of getting involved in any robbery enactment.

Another type of robber is the amateur (Matthews, 2002). While amateurs differ considerably from the professionals, they are like the opportunists and are known for their low level of organisation, their selection of accessible targets, their lack of experience, their relation to violence, their use of weapons, and their preference for solo operations. Matthews (2002) further argues that amateurs have had a history of failed or attempted robberies and they usually aim for modest returns. Their involvement in robbery is an act of desperation based on financial want to meet immediate personal needs. Their relatively low level of maturity is a disadvantage and their poor performance is principally due to their gross inexperience in the art. Nonetheless, research has shown that amateur robbers far outnumber all known robbers across England/Wales (Matthews, 1996).

Addict robbers is another category, distinguished by their association with drugs. Indeed, there is considerable evidence of armed robbers' involvement in drug offences (Matthews, 1996). O'Donnell & Morrison (1994) confirmed that 21 per cent of robbers they interviewed in London resorted to drug dealing after robbery

operations. Addict robbers are those who depend on drugs to achieve their criminal objectives. They are in the habit of using virtually all drugs, hence their commitment to robbery is very low compared to their commitment to theft (Conklin, 1972).

These drug-user robbers normally engage in less planning than professionals before their operation, but their planning is more extensive than that of the opportunists. Addict robbers know before any robbery that they must maintain a regular inflow of cash to support their drug habit. Their choice of targets is made to minimise risks, and they are less likely than professionals to reduce risks. The addicts may or may not carry guns during an operation (Conklin, 1972).

In his interview of twelve addict robbers, Conklin (1972) revealed that only four of them used loaded guns during operations, which suggests that a greater number of addict robbers would probably prefer to steal without any resort to force. In their recent UK study of 41 prisoners, Bennett and Holloway (2009) conclude that among other crimes, robbery⁴¹ was chiefly associated with heroin (27 per cent) and crack use (22 per cent). Therefore, some drug addict robbers prior to drug use may commit crime, which is referred to as “crime-causing-drug-use-connections”⁴² (Bennett & Holloway, 2009: 522), whereas others commit crimes in order to obtain cash to purchase drugs (see Macdonald, 1975; Matthews, 2002; Bennett & Holloway, 2009) to feed their habit, which is known as “drug-use-causing-crime-connections”⁴³ (Bennett & Holloway 2009: 520). Thus, both connections form the economic explanations for drugs (Bennett and Holloway, 2009). Whether or not addicts use drugs as either an antecedent or a consequent to the robbery operation, their indulgence in drugs is a habit they may find difficult to give up. If the drug habit is not given up, it becomes difficult to give up armed robbery.

As with addict robbers, so also with alcoholic robbers, because both share some similarities. A 1998-1999 survey published in England and Wales shows that

⁴¹Although Bennett and Holloway (2009) did not state categorically the type of robbery they studied among other crimes in relation to drug misuse; but after a careful reading, one cannot but conclude that they meant “street robbery”.

⁴²Bennett and Holloway (2009:522) found that 11 per cent of the narratives from their respondents described “crime-caused drug connections”.

⁴³Bennett and Holloway (2009:520) found that 89 per cent of the narratives from their respondents described “drug-caused-crime connections”.

approximately 70 per cent of overall violent crime is alcohol related (see Institute of Alcoholic Studies, 2010). When people are intoxicated through alcoholic intake, they are likely to do what they might not do in a state of sobriety. This refers to the “pharmacological effects” of alcohol (see Bennett & Wright, 1984; Bennett & Holloway, 2009). Like the opportunists, alcoholic robbers are not committed to robbery as a way of life. They have no pre-plan for robbery and their crime is episodic. Unlike the professionals, addicts do not use weapons unless they have developed a habit of doing so (Conklin, 1972).

From their research, Gabor et al (1987) came up with another typology: the chronic robbers. Chronic robbers begin their career that lasts for several years at a very early age. In other words, they make criminal careers like the professionals. Like other types of robbers, chronics often commit the crimes of burglary, drug dealing and auto theft before robbery. They get involved in many robberies, and their planning is often cursory. This hasty planning distinguishes the chronics from the professionals. During an operation, chronic robbers are usually disguised and well armed just like the professionals. The proceeds of their robbery are used for drugs, alcohol and nightclubs. They are oriented toward short-term goals, which explain their poor planning of operations, the seriousness of their offences and the rare occurrence of long periods of inactivity.

So far, the different typologies of robbers indicate the unique characteristics and behavioural patterns relevant to each offender. Apart from using the typologies for descriptive purposes, we will also use them for explanatory purposes to classify our sample of respondents for this study (see chapter 5). As data will show (see chapter 5) opportunist robbers are nine in number; professional robbers and/or chronic robbers because of their obvious similarities are eight in number; amateurs are three in number; alcoholics and addicts can easily be found in the midst of the sample for the reason that most of the offenders used drug/alcohol. Among the whole lot, the professional is the typical robber because of his experience and use of a gun. It is important to stress that all the typologies mentioned in the above discourse have demonstrated the way this study has been theoretically formed. Seemingly, they will be influential in the data analyses (see chapter 5). Now let us consider the theoretical perspectives.

3.2. Theoretical perspectives

A number of criminological theories can explain the involvement of youths in armed robbery. Criminal behaviour has been construed by different schools of thought as a social construct: an idea held by most people; or as something arising from economic reasons: the disproportion between the rich (upper class) and the poor (lower class). In this study, two criminological theories, namely, social control theory and anomie-strain theory will offer explanations about the involvement of youths in armed robbery. These two theories have been chosen because they seem to be adaptable to the Nigerian context.

3.2.1. Social control theory

Hirschi is arguably the most quoted control theorist.⁴⁴ As Agnew (1991: 126) points out, Hirschi's control theory is one of the dominant criminological theories, which has amassed much empirical support since its development. As social control theory researchers have argued, the theory is capable of explaining crime and delinquency, including armed robbery (see Krohn et al, 1983; Kempf, 1993; Tittle, 1995; Evans et al, 1997; Longshore et al, 2005), hence its use in this study to explain armed robbery committed by some youths in Nigeria. The problem to be experienced here is that Hirschi's theory is an American theoretical framework, how best it will fit into the Nigerian social organisation is questionable.

The theory hinges on four cardinal principles, otherwise known as social bonds, which control criminal behaviour. They include attachment (usually to one's family or school), commitment (to the wider society), involvement (in conventional activities) and belief (in the rules of society) (Hirschi, 2002, [1969]). Hirschi's initial theory testing decades ago was based on male American youths aged 12 to 17. In this way, gender is portrayed to be synonymous with committing male crime.

⁴⁴He developed two criminological theories. First, the social control theory, which is contained in his work *Causes of Delinquency* originally, published in 1969. In 2002, Hirschi wrote a new introduction to the reprinted version of the same book. Second, Hirschi's other theory is called self control theory presented in his later work *The General Theory of Crime* co-authored with Gottfredson and published in 1990. For the purposes of this research, our interest is in the former.

According to Hirschi (2002, [1969]: 18), to violate a norm is to act contrary to the wishes and expectations of other individuals. Supposing that a person does not care about the wishes and expectations of other individuals, that is, he is not sensitive to their views, then he is to that degree not bound by their norms, so he has the freedom to deviate. Therefore accounting for deviant behaviour based on attachment does not beg the question, since the extent to which a person is attached to others can be measured independently of his deviant behaviour (Hirschi, 2002, [1969]: 19). Yet, Hirschi believes that when there is a bond of attachment between youths and their family or school, that is when the “continuing intimacy of interaction” (Lilly et al, 2007: 104) with parents and teachers is firm, crime is likely not to be committed. Thus, the absence of control can make a person delinquent (Hirschi, 2002, [1969]). In other words, crime and violent behaviour occur when social controls are weakened as traditional bonds of family, kin and ethnic groups are unable to control human conduct, and as social relations become impersonal and anonymous (Clinard & Abbott, 1973; Lodhi & Tilly, 1973; Krahn et al, 1986).

In Nigeria, it seems the youths that get involved in armed robbery are not strongly attached to family or school. What “detachment”, the opposite of attachment does, is to create unlimited freedom from conventional others and institutions, to pave way for criminal behaviour. Arguably, if there are no “chaperons” (Rock, 2002) as in a polygamous family where parental attention is divided and unequal; a broken home (divorce and/or separation); or the case of parental death; youths might be tempted to get involved in armed robbery.

Attachment to peers has not always been a constraining influence on crime (Hirschi, 2002, [1969]: 140-42). However, some scholars (see Cohen, 1955; Coleman, 1961; Krohn & Massey, 1980) argue that there is a likelihood of delinquency increasing when youths are more associated with their peers. This is based on the assumption that peer pressure can instil criminal ideologies in youths who meet with delinquent friends. In response, Hirschi (2002, [1969]) claims that youths who are “affectively tied” to their peers will be more constrained from getting involved in crime. In their critique, Krohn and Massey (1980: 530) suggest that these shifts made by Hirschi seem to bring his theory closer to differential association theory because it tries to take into account the kind of associations as well as the quality of such associations.

However, if attachment to others is a sociological counterpart of the superego or conscience, then commitment becomes the counterpart of ego or common sense (Hirschi, 2002, [1969]: 20). Simply put, when people are attached to others say for example, in a family setting, they locate their “conscience” in that bond and may not deviate or commit crime; more so if they are committed to any activity that occupies them, they develop a “common sense” which reminds them that to commit crime would mean to lose out completely.

“Commitment” as Hirschi (2002, [1969]: 20) maintains is “the rational component in conformity”. The idea that the person invests time, energy, and himself, in a certain line of activity such as education, building up a business enterprise, acquiring a reputation for virtue, may distract him from getting involved in crime because of the risk of losing the investment he has tried to make in conventional behaviour (Hirschi, 2002, [1969]: 20). In other words, commitment to society occurs when a person’s “self interest has been invested in a given set of activities” (Lilly et al, 2007), that is, his commitment overrides any other situation that could make him deviate from the conventional norm. Hirschi (2002, [1969]: 253) stresses that the idea of “commitment” is such that the interests of some people in society will be at risk if they get involved in crime. Therefore, as a person becomes committed to a conventional line of activity, he is committed to conform to the norms guiding that activity (Hirschi, 2002, [1969]: 254). It is arguable that when some Nigerian youths are committed to either education or work, they may not readily succumb to the lure of crime, because that would put at risk all they have acquired over time. On the contrary, those who are not committed to their studies or work may get involved in crime.

With involvement, Hirschi (2002, [1969]: 21) maintains that many people undoubtedly owe their virtuous living to a lack of opportunity to do the opposite. That is to say, youths can be diverted from crime if they involve their time and energy in conventional activities (Lilly et al, 2007) such as recreational and sporting facilities. As Hirschi (2002, [1969]: 22) argues, when a person is engrossed in conventional activities, the chances of thinking about crime and acting it out become remote because the person is tied to series of appointments, deadlines, specific working hours, and so on. In Nigeria, being engaged in conventional activities might not

prevent people from committing crime. Some people might still decide to commit crime (for example robbery) to make ends meet especially where lower paid jobs are not sufficient to provide for them. Nevertheless, we should also bear in mind that when some people are ordinarily idle and not committed to any conventional activity that occupies their time and minds for good, then crime may take that position; the saying “an idle mind is the devil’s workshop” holds on this occasion.

Hirschi (2002, [1969]: 255) uses “belief” to refer to the “existence of a common value system within the society or group whose norms are being violated”. It further suggests approbation of certain values and norms of society (Lilly et al, 2007) or rather; societal beliefs protect youths from peer associations that would support criminal behaviour (Link, 2008). Simply put, belief in the “rule of law” could make people less likely to commit crime. Viewed differently, peers who get involved in illegal acts follow alternative beliefs (Link, 2008). They are, as it were, diametrically opposed to the objective beliefs of the larger society and so find it difficult to conform to the rules and regulations governing such society. On this theory, if most Nigerian youths adhere to conventional beliefs, they are less at risk of getting involved in armed robbery.

Rule breaking, because of the social structure that is influenced by corruption, is widespread. Corruption is more of an embedded practice in the social structure and so may have created scepticism and disrespect for the rule of law. This poses a divide between the powerful and the powerless such that the powerless think there is one law for them and another for the powerful. However, control theory works on the basis that there are accepted and agreed social norms of law observation for all. The problem affecting the different sorts of social control breakdown in Nigeria is because the elite see themselves as above the law by taking advantage of the weak social constraints. That is crucial in understanding the social relationship between the different classes of people in Nigeria. As Zhang (2001) suggests, when control theory was applied to the explanation of bribery and corruption in China, weak social constraints was found to be a responsible factor.

Although each of Hirschi’s four principles of social bonds can independently influence criminal behaviour, empirical tests demonstrate more support for attachment

and commitment but less support for involvement and belief (Costello & Vowell, 1997). Moreover, these four variables used by Hirschi fall short of explaining all kinds of crime, and are confusing in themselves (Welch, 1998). Shechory and Laufer (2007) employed social control theory to explain Israeli youths law violations in instances of conflict between the ideological religious worldview and the laws of the country in which they reside. Four of Hirschi's social bonds (commitment, belief, attachment, and involvement) were examined among Israeli adolescents who took part in legal activity (n = 163) and illegal activity (n = 99) during the resistance to the Gaza evacuation. Their findings reveal that the model provides a partial explanation for ideological delinquency. They also found that involvement with friends and the absence of belief in the formal legal system were associated with illegal ideological activities. Attachment to friends and parents and involvement with parents had no effect on youths' participation in illegal ideological activities. These results further confirm the argument that Hirschi's theory may not be applicable to every crime and every society. Agnew's (1985) position appears to be true that when social control theory focuses on more serious forms of delinquency, its explanatory power tends to diminish.

Elsewhere in Turkey, Ozcan (2006) tested the applicability of Hirschi's control theory on 1,710 High School students in Ankara by using two-stage stratified cluster sampling. He also used factors analysis to determine the dimensions of juvenile delinquency (assault, school delinquency, and public disturbances). He finally employed regression analysis to test the theory and found that the theory played a very significant role in explaining juvenile delinquency in Turkey.

According to Agnew (1985), it seems that all tests of social control theory have been carried out using cross-sectional data. This procedure is very problematic because delinquency has a causal effect on social bonds. For instance, delinquency may cause family and school problems, thus lowering the level of attachment. It may also endanger the adolescent's current and future involvement in conventional activities, thereby lowering commitment. Finally, delinquency may lead to a reduction in the adolescent's belief in conventional values through a hardening process.

Nevertheless, a series of longitudinal studies have argued that the cross-sectional association between social control and delinquency is not necessarily because of the causal impact of control on delinquency (Agnew, 1991, 1985; Paternoster, 1988; Massey & Krohn, 1986). Therefore, the longitudinal data suggest that the cross-sectional studies have exaggerated the importance attributed to Hirschi's control theory. Except for belief, the elements of social bond appear to affect subsequent delinquency (Agnew, 1991). While longitudinal studies may raise concerns about the adequacy of Hirschi's control theory, they do not as yet provide a sufficient basis for rejecting the theory (Agnew, 1991).

Other critics argue that Hirschi intended to employ a sociological definition, but his thoughts seem to have been overshadowed by a psychological one. In short, the bond he intended was much less internalised (see Lilly et al, 1995, 2007; Welch, 1998). These social bonds seem to be applicable to individual circumstances and environments. Moreover, what causes the social bonds to break or weaken is a question which control theory has not been able to answer satisfactorily because it seems to define away or hold constant one of the dimensions of social organisation and fetishizes the other. It could not fully account for the deviant and criminal outcomes it purports to describe (Rosenfeld, 1989: 457). Hirschi's control theory is an indigenous American theory, which may not properly address most of the criminological issues in a society like Nigeria where it is being applied. The fact remains that both cultures are not the same. The sample of youths studied by Hirschi over four decades ago are quite different, virtually, in all respects from the Nigerian youths chosen for the present study.

Hirschi's theory has centred only on male offenders, and so neglected the role of female offenders. However, recent reviews can demonstrate that the theory is more applicable in predicting female than male delinquency (see Krohn & Massey, 1980; Agnew, 1985, 1991; Vito et al, 2007). A more recent study suggests that the theory can equally explain both male and female delinquency (Özbay & Özcan, 2008). However, Özbay and Özcan (2008) admit that their study did not cover some types of delinquent behaviour, for example, drug use or property crime. So, they do not know whether there exist gender differences between males and females in the relationship between social bonding variables and some other types of delinquent behaviours.

Hirschi emphasises that his control theory guides and justifies research on a wide range of topics and has few competitors in this regard. It has an extraordinary affinity to a well-known, widely practised research method (Hirschi, 2002 [1969]: xvii). His social control theory has been a boost to criminological science in understanding criminal behaviour not in the sense of “why do they do it?” but instead “why don’t we do it?” (Hirschi, 2002, [1969]: 34). Hirschi’s control theory deals with what may be regarded as “protective bonds” designed to shield or secure someone from getting involved in delinquency. Given that there is no Nigerian theoretical framework to explain crime, we cannot but invoke control theory from a more urbanised and major industrialised society like America despite its limitations.

3.2.2. Anomie-strain theory

In an attempt to explain the crime of armed robbery in Nigeria, this study employs Merton’s classic anomie-strain theory, otherwise called anomie or strain theory. The concept of anomie has been used in very different ways, in different disciplines and at different times. Historically, it could be traced through classical Greek philosophy, religious writings to sociological and psychological works (Passas, 2000). In varied contexts it acquired an assortment of connotations ranging from the Greek *a-nomos* (lawless) to sin, sacrilege, normative breakdown, and individual derangement. When we speak of “anomie tradition” we are speaking of a tradition that is hugely indebted to Emile Durkheim and Robert Merton (Passas, 2000). This anomie tradition emerged after the Industrial Revolution, and it was taken up again in the aftermath of the Great Depression of the 1930s. The differences between the anomie theories of Durkheim and Merton vividly reflect the different social settings of these scholars (Bernburg, 2002): one American, and the other European.

Anomie tradition refers to a rich body of empirical research and theorising, in which the concept of anomie plays a major role (Passas, 2000: 91). Durkheim first introduced the terminology “anomie” in his seminal work, *The Division of Labour in Society* (1893), to describe a deregulated society; a society where nothing works except normlessness that translates to deviance (see Odumosu, 1999). In his second work, *Suicide* (1897), Durkheim applied anomie to a morally deregulated condition where moral controls are no longer adequate to control people’s behaviour

(Odumosu, 1999). Where Durkheim stopped, Merton took over with the publication of his seminal article titled *Social Structure and Anomie* (1938). This work appears to be the most cited contribution in sociology (Featherstone & Deflem, 2003: 471). Over the years, Merton has revised, enlarged and replicated this work into different published textbooks (see for example Merton, 1949a, 1949b, 1957a, 1957b, 1968a, 1968b, 1995, 1997a). Unlike Durkheim, Merton (1968a: 672) took a different route in the study of anomie, with the aim of discovering how some social structures exert a definite pressure upon certain people in the society to engage in nonconformist rather than conformist behaviour.

The theory holds that any extreme emphasis upon achievement - whether this be scientific productivity, accumulation of personal wealth or, by a small stretch of the imagination, the conquests of a Don Juan - will attenuate conformity to the institutional norms governing behaviour designed to achieve the particular form of "success", especially among those who are socially disadvantaged in the competitive race. It is the conflict between cultural goals and the availability of using institutional means - whatever the character of the goals - which produces a strain toward anomie" (Merton, 1968a: 220).

Merton's anomie theory has been recognized as one of the most influential theories of crime to be developed in the twentieth century (Messner & Rosenfeld, 2001: 12; Bjerregarrd & Cochran, 2008: 31). His theory is based on three premises or propositions. First, the disjunction between aspirations and the opportunity for realising those aspirations produces strain toward deviance. Second, due to the pervasive influence of success ideology in American society, lower class people, like those of the upper classes tend to hold high aspirations for success, but unlike those of the higher classes, suffer from the socially structured lack of opportunity for realising their aspirations. That is, lower-class individuals appear to experience a greater aspiration-opportunity disjunction than do higher-class people. Therefore lower class persons are more likely to be pushed toward deviance (see Thio, 1975: 139). According to Merton, anomie theory "...centres on the acute pressures created by the discrepancy between culturally induced goals and socially structured opportunities. The responses to these pressures with the consequent strains upon individuals subject to them may involve a considerable degree of frustration and of non-rational or of irrational behaviour" (1968a: 232). Merton's (1938) anomie theory emphasises deviant behaviour as something generic without limiting it to criminal or

delinquent behaviour alone. In this case, any behaviour that does not conform to the objective norms of a given society amounts to deviance.

Merton developed five adaptive modes of strain namely: conformity, innovation, ritualism, retreatism and rebellion (1968a: 194). “Conformity” must be to both cultural goals and institutional means. It appears to be the mode of response among people who are seriously stressed (Merton, 1968a: 237; Menard, 1995: 139). “Innovation” accepts the cultural goals but rejects the institutional means to achieve the goals. As Merton continues to insist, the greatest pressures towards deviation are exerted upon the lower strata (1968a: 198, 1968b: 233-234). Innovation is therefore the most probable form of adaptation that leads to crime or delinquency (Menard, 1995). For instance, armed robbers fall within this group. “Ritualism” refuses the cultural goals while accepting the institutional means. This is normally associated with those of the upper classes (Menard, 1995), for example, bureaucrats; but it is arguable if they are deviants at all (see Doherty, 2003). “Retreatism” emphasises the rejection of both cultural goals and the institutional means to achieve them. Examples are drug addicts, drunkards, vagrants, and vagabonds, who are regarded as lower class individuals. These people according to Merton are “in the society but not in it” (1968a: 207). “Rebellion”, is clearly different from the others, and represents a transitional response, which seeks to institutionalize new measures oriented toward revamped cultural goals shared by the members of the society. It thus involves efforts to change the *status quo* rather than to perform accommodative actions within this structure, and introduces additional problems with which we are not at the moment concerned (Merton, 1968a: 676). Examples include protesters, rebels and revolutionaries.

However, these five modes of adaptation do not constitute personality traits, but may vary over time, with different sequences for different individuals. Differences in adaptation will partly depend on differences in socialization (Menard, 1995: 139). Menard further suggests that whether blocked opportunities result in deviant behaviour, at the individual level, depends on whether the individual rejects either or both of the culturally approved goals or the realization dictating culturally prescribed means of achieving those goals.

Many scholars (see Merton, 1968a; Cloward & Ohlin, 1960; Greenberg, 1977; Bernard, 1984; Farnworth & Leiber 1989; Burton & Cullen, 1992; Agnew, 1994; Hoffman & Ireland, 1995; Cernkovich et al, 2000; Baron, 2006) have argued that financial success is at the centre of strain theory; and previous studies have consistently revealed that the main motive for robbery is to acquire cash (see for example, Matthews, 2002; Desroches, 2002; Wright et al, 2006). Since that money is not legitimately available to the poor lower class of society, they obtain it through illegitimate means (see for example Agnew et al, 1996; Cernkovich et al, 2000) such as armed robbery. According to Merton (1968a), aberrant behaviour indicates dissociation between culturally defined aspirations and socially structured means.

As Agnew (2000: 116) suggests, strain theory focuses on all situations individuals feel they are being badly treated. Such situations include when others prevent or threaten to prevent other people from achieving their positively valued goals; remove or threaten to remove the positively valued stimuli that they possess; or present or threaten to present them with noxious or negatively valued stimuli. Only the first type of strain as mentioned by Agnew (2000) has received significant attention in criminology. This is because it is measured in terms of the disjunction between aspirations and expectations.

Previous research suggests that Nigerian society is in a permanent state of anomie; and the people, especially the lower class, who find themselves in that situation, are then faced with the strain of being unable to reconcile their aspirations with their limited opportunities (Odumosu, 1999). Drawing from that, it could be argued that some disenfranchised youths in Nigeria who become armed robbers, “innovate” this means to get money that is not legitimately available to them. Thus, armed robbery appears to be the quintessence of “anomic crime” (see Messner & Rosenfeld, 2001b: 154-155). For Menard (1995: 138), whether anomie, the social–structural condition pushes a person to get involved in crime, largely depends on the person’s response to the anomic condition. That response may also be dependent on the socio-structural location of the individual in society. By implication, individuals who cannot overcome the anomic situation around them through some legitimate means are highly likely to be inclined to delinquency.

Even when there are legitimate opportunities for “low paying jobs”, for instance, some lower class people feel less concerned to go for them (see for example Newman, 1999), probably due to the degrading nature of those jobs. Doing some work, no matter how “low key”, earns someone the respect for embarking on legitimate activity (see for example Newman, 1999). As Lafree (1998: 64) stresses, children from poor families are encouraged to strive for economic success and to judge themselves against this standard. It is only when they find that they are completely blocked from legitimate opportunities such as the best schools, good jobs, the cultural backgrounds necessary to enter a middle class lifestyle, that many tend to get involved in crime. Thus limited access to legitimate cash and other material resources may lead to violent offences such as armed robbery, which provides offenders’ immediate needs (see Desroches, 1995; Baron & Hartnagel, 1998). In Nigeria, as earlier noted, being wealthy tends to count more than anything else, hence young people see armed robbery as the better option to acquire wealth to live a better life. Seemingly, relative deprivation is the hotbed for crime (see Baron, 2006; Burton & Cullen, 1992; Burton et al, 1994; Box, 1987) in that it produces feelings of anger and resentment, which may rouse impulses, that are eventually expressed as violent crime (Baron, 2006; Baron & Hartnagel, 1998).

Therefore, robbery is more likely to occur when youths who are economically deprived and unemployed believe the system is faulty (see for example Baron & Hartnagel, 1998). It will not be out of place to suggest that Nigerian socio-economic structures as a whole are “faulty” because of endemic corruption, the unbridled quest for money, poverty, unemployment, and so on; hence, armed robbery becomes an “innovation”, and perhaps, an alternative option for some Nigerian youths to earn and spend cash. The spending habit of robbers suggests that they do not need the money for meaningful projects or pressing family issues. Instead, they spend their robbery money on drugs, desperate partying and more good times (Brookman et al, 2007). Moreover, in separate research projects carried out by Burney (1990) and Hallsworth (2005), it was concluded that youth robbery is not for survival, or even for profit, but for the instant cash to buy the latest fashion accessories with the most prized logos vital for “street cred” (see also Downes & Rock, 2007). It is argued that these unfolding events do not logically break with strain theories, but seek to relate them

anew to the changed socio-economic situations of late modernity (Downes and Rock, 2007).

Passas (2000) asked a very interesting question: “Is the concept of anomie culture-bound?” He gives the answer by arguing that although Merton’s theory revolves chiefly around the American Dream, its relevance is not strictly tied to contemporary North American society. This is because egalitarianism and the emphasis on material wealth can be found in other societies too. Despite the many differences between the US and other societies, some parallels can still be drawn. The application of Merton’s theory to other societies can be done when attention is paid to the interaction between culture and the capitalistic economic system that demands continual striving for profit, growth, and efficiency, and where competition may limit the available legitimate and effective means of achieving these goals.

Drawing on the above, there are some examples concerning the applicability of Merton’s theory elsewhere. On a cross-national level, Merton’s strain theory has been applied in the Italian context to account for the growth of political corruption in the 1980s (Magatti, 1996). Cao (2004) used Merton’s theory to conduct an analysis of the mean level of anomie in the US compared with other nations. Findings indicate that the mean level of anomie in the US is not particularly high. Indeed, it is significantly lower than the grand mean of all the nations put together. It is quite comparable with other English speaking countries and Scandinavian societies, but higher than Asian nations. It seems reasonable to conclude that Americans were not significantly more anomic than peoples in other societies in the 1990s. This conclusion appears to be true even after controlling social and demographic variables in the regression analysis.

Utilizing a sample of homeless Canadian street youths, Baron (2006) examined the strain theory perspective whereby relative deprivation, monetary dissatisfaction, monetary goals, and objective structural factors lead to crime. It also explored the interactions between these factors and the conditioning effects of peers, beliefs, and attributions. His findings illustrate that relative deprivation, monetary dissatisfaction, monetary goals, homelessness, and unemployment were related to crime.

Back in Nigeria, Oloruntimehin (1986) has argued that anomie-strain theory may account for certain patterns of deviance in developing countries. For example, the theory has been employed to analyse how poverty, which results from unemployment and inflation could increase criminal activities (Odumosu, 1999). A more recent study in Nigeria shows that strain theory has been applied to “Agaba boys” to account for their involvement in many forms of crime including armed robbery (see Ikoh et al, 2010).

It is important to stress that while anomie-strain theory has been invoked to explain criminal behaviour in Nigeria, the theory is somewhat naive and alien to the cultural life in Nigerian society. This is because of the obvious fact that anomie-strain theory was formulated in the urbanised and industrialized American society, and therefore bears all the hallmarks of American culture – the “American Dream”. This argument tends to contradict what Passas (2000) said above that anomie theory is not culture bound.

Nevertheless, in an attempt to make anomie theory fit within the Nigerian context, we at times make assumptions of situations and circumstances, which may not be perfect and original too. Mindful of that, if not a Western theory of crime, which theory of crime can attempt to explain crime in Nigeria now? There is no indigenous alternative now. Eventhough not all situations in Nigeria are anomic, but there are anomic conditions that generate criminal behaviour which anomie theory attempts to explain.

Since after Merton’s postulation of anomie-strain theory, a number of scholars have expanded and or modified his original thesis (Bjerregarrd & Cochran, 2008) in relation to culture, social structure, anomie and rates of crime (Chamlin & Cochran, 1995). For example, Messner and Rosenfeld (1994) proposed a compatible theory of anomie called “institutional-anomie theory”, designed to explain the high rates of crime in the United States. It has been argued that institutional anomie theory applies to rates of “crime with an instrumental character, behaviour that offers monetary rewards within the United States” (Messner & Rosenfeld, 1994: 68, 85; Chamlin & Cochran, 1995: 413; see also Bernburg, 2002). Although our interest is in the micro type of anomie-strain theory, but it may be useful to consider institutional anomie

theory because of its compatibility with anomie-strain theory. Moreover, “institutional anomie theory represents a salient attempt to revitalize Merton’s anomie theory” (Chamlin & Cochran, 1995: 414). Finally, institutional anomie theory is a macro theory that attempts to account for the interplay between the “fundamental” features of social organisation namely, culture and social structure (see also Bernburg, 2002). In line with Merton, Messner and Rosenfeld concur that American society places an over emphasis on material and monetary attainments, the so-called “American Dream”. According to them, American Dream is the “commitment to the goal of material success, to be pursued by everyone in society, under conditions of open, individual competition” (Messner & Rosenfeld, 1994: 69; see also Bjerregarrd & Cochran, 2008: 32). Like Merton, Messner and Rosenfeld suggest that the American Dream also embodies other fundamental value orientations stressed by the American culture, such as individualism, universalism, achievement, and materialism (Bjerregarrd & Cochran, 2008; Messner and Rosenfeld, 1994: 69; 2006: 129).

However, Messner and Rosenfeld seem to depart from Merton because they see the structural sources of anomic cultural ethos in the capitalist market economy, precisely in the relationship between the economy and non-economic institutions (Bernburg, 2002). When the market economy becomes an unusually powerful social institution relative to vital non-economic institutions, as happens in the US, it disrupts the usual functioning of the other institutions (Bernburg, 2002). For Messner and Rosenfeld (1994: 76), the defining characteristics of a capitalist economy are the private ownership and control of property, and free market mechanisms for the production and distribution of goods and services (see also Bjerregarrd & Cochran, 2008: 32). It is the emphasis on financial success promoted in a capitalistic society together with weakened controls from non-economic social institutions (such as the polity, religion, education and the family) – an imbalance of institutional power skewed toward the economy (i.e., “institutional anomie”) – that eventually brings about comparatively high rates of crime, especially utilitarian crime, within the US (Bjerregarrd & Cochran, 2008: 41; see also Chamlin & Cochran, 1995).

If that is transposed to the Nigerian context, it could be argued that endemic corruption, for example, is attributable to the unbridled emphasis on monetary

success prevalent in the Nigerian polity. Corruption in Nigeria has contributed in creating a colossal gap in economic inequality between the powerful and the powerless; between the rich and the poor; between the upper and the lower class. On the one hand, those of the upper class who have legitimate opportunities seem to be more corrupt than the lower class. On the other hand, the lower class people seem to emulate the high level of corruption among politicians and other public officers in Nigeria, hence their involvement in instrumental crimes like armed robbery as an innovation.

When testing for institutional anomie theory, Savolainen (2000) had a huge sample of many developed and developing countries. He looked at the impact between economic inequality and cross-national homicide rates, hypothesizing that this relationship would differ depending on the strength of both the economy and other non-economic social institutions in society. His results provide support for some of the key propositions of institutional anomie theory. In particular, Savolainen found that the interactions between income inequality, economic discrimination, and decommmodification were, as expected, negatively, although often insignificantly, related to homicide victimization rates. He also found a significant, strong, negative relationship between the interaction of income inequality and welfare spending on the homicide victimization rates. Savolainen suggested that countries with considerable welfare programs also tended to have the lowest levels of income inequality, noting that this provides strong support for the view that economic inequality is a predictor of homicide rates in societies with weak welfare support.

Again, we are interested in the micro aspect of strain theory. However, if Merton is to be evaluated in relation to Messner and Rosenfeld, Merton's approach is thus more suitable in specifying how anomic culture given in Merton but explained in institutional anomie theory creates strain to innovate due to the incompatibility of culture with people's objective situations. In this way, both theories try to supplement each other and together provide a richer macro level explanation of crime and deviance than each does independent of the other (Bernburg, 2002). Drawing on these developments, strain theory has progressively become broader in recent years. With many different types of strain being recognised, the theory now applies to people of all classes and we know the factors affecting the choice of delinquent

versus non-delinquent adaptations (Agnew, 2000). In spite of that, Agnew (2000) further stresses that many strain theory researchers still cling to the classic theory of Merton (1938); Cohen (1955); Cloward and Ohlin (1960), which may end up narrowing the position of strain theory on delinquency.

Merton has been the object of many criticisms. His generic understanding of deviant behaviour does not provide a benchmark on what anomie-strain theory can explain and what it cannot explain. In this way, it becomes a “repository” for any crime-seeking theoretical explanation. It has been argued that his theory does not take into account other important causal factors of deviance such as social interaction and illegitimate opportunities for success, which appear to be mere extensions, reformulations, or continuities of the theory instead of attempts at a critical examination of its basic assumptions (Thio, 1975: 140). The theory seems to be explaining the causation of one kind of deviance only, which he refers to as “innovation”; an adaptation that subsumes the wide majority of criminal and delinquent cases (Thio, 1975).

Although strain theory provides the theoretical framework to understand why a particular group may get involved in crime (eg. armed robbery) as an adaptive strategy, it fails to explain why only specific groups within a population that experience the same strains adapt by becoming criminal while others do not (Hallsworth, 2005: 99). Merton’s strain theory has persistently concentrated on lower class crimes without considering the crimes of the middle class (Newburn, 2007: 183; Heidensohn, 1989; Hirschi, 2002, [1969]). This may not be unrelated to the fact that lower class people are associated with the theoretical components of strain, such as poverty, lack of opportunity, and the formation of lawless groups (Hall, 2007: 3).

It has been argued that the most noticeable limitation of Merton’s theory is its exclusive reliance on inequality (as one aspect of social structure), but it also relies on access to the legitimate means of success without equally explaining how the institutional structure of society plays a role in producing the anomic strains that translate into crime (Onwudiwe, 2004). Merton’s use of terminologies lacks a holistic interpretation of the meaning he tries to convey. For example, his definition of lack of “success opportunity” is tendentiously restrictive in that it refers to the socially-

structured, thereby refusing to acknowledge the socio-psychologically induced obstacles to the achievement of higher success goals (Thio, 1975: 145). Moreover, his discourse of the aspiration-opportunity disjunction could not account for the dynamic interaction between aspirations and opportunity. Merton discusses this class differential in aspirations as if the aspirations were not affected by a person's objective lack of legitimate opportunity (Thio, 1975: 148). He also fails to suggest an inclusive social structure for American society, which can help prevent the occurrence of anomie in the polity.

Merton's argument faces a "deep structural" problem. There is a problem concerning the meaning, or even dual meaning, given to the concept of "legitimate means". It is not clear from Merton's discussion whether legitimate means refers to opportunities or outcomes, to "access" to financial rewards or financial rewards themselves. Merton's use of the terms "legitimate means," "institutional means," and "differential access" appears to be ambiguous. On the surface of his argument, they are evidently meant to refer to how opportunities are distributed, as in "the class structure involving differential access to the approved opportunities for legitimate, prestige-bearing pursuit of the culture goals" (Merton 1938: 679 cited in Rosenfeld, 1989: 495). Yet other parts of his discussion, and more importantly, the underlying "logic" of his argument contradict such usage. The result is that many of the implications for social theory, social policy, and social change that have been drawn from Merton's classic paper are seriously flawed. Specifically, strain theory does not predict that more "opportunity" will lead to less crime (Rosenfeld, 1989: 459).

Although Merton claims that his theory does not apply to middle class people at all, implicitly and explicitly he refers to the comparison between lower class people on the one hand and both middle class and upper class people on the other (Thio, 1975: 142). Evidently, he implicated himself by saying: "It may even be ... that this disjunction (between aspiration and opportunity) is more frequent in the lower strata than in the middle strata" (Merton, 1968a: 228). It can be argued that Merton's theory neither leads to the conclusion that blocked opportunities cause crime, nor to meritocratic crime policies. Perhaps, his argument can be understood as a potent critique of the opportunity policies of the 1960s and the 1970's, where they were intended to reduce crime rates (Rosenfeld, 1989: 461).

Arguably, Merton's theoretical formulations remain an unfinished business. He apparently formulated two distinct theories that he did not always clearly distinguish (Featherstone & Deflem, 2003). On the one hand, he presents an anomic theory, which refers to a deinstitutionalization of norms that occur when there is a disjunction between the emphasis on cultural goals and institutional means (see Merton 1938: 673, 1968a: 189 cited in Featherstone & Deflem, 2003). On the other hand, he features a strain theory of deviant behaviour, which argues that people are more likely to pursue illegitimate or proscribed means to attaining culturally prescribed goals when they are blocked from accessing the institutionalized means to these goals (see Merton 1938: 679, 1968a: 211 cited in Featherstone & Deflem, 2003). Merton's strain theory restricts the power and effectiveness of his anomie theory (Featherstone & Deflem, 2003); yet, those who choose to invoke his theory still refer to it as anomie-strain theory, or anomie theory or strain theory.

That aside, Merton's anomie-strain theory is a functionalist route to addressing a social phenomenon such as armed robbery in Nigeria, regarding its effects on, and its consequences for the social structure where it exists. It is positivist oriented in that it identifies pathology within the structure of society, by consistently focusing on the structure of society, and how that structure serves to produce deviant behaviours (Odumosu, 1999). Although the theory was originally structured on "American society and culture" where obvious inequality of opportunity is constantly perceived by youths (see Menrad, 1995); yet the theory is being adapted to explain crime in the Nigerian social structure where certain variables found in America may be applicable to Nigeria as well. In his study of the class structure of the United States, Kahl (1957) cited in Smythe (1958: 169) suggested six basic variables: "personal prestige, occupation, possessions, personal contact or interaction, awareness of class consciousness, and value orientations". Within the changing social scene of Nigeria, these variables are also applicable as operational tools of measurement. Each of these factors has come to take on meaning in Nigeria as a different class and status structure has emerged and a new value system has come into being. The elements of this system, somewhat in order of preference, are money, position (mainly high political, government, or public office), imposing residential building, and a large automobile, preferably American-made. Although there are other operative factors in the overall schema such as receiving publicity through the media or otherwise,

interacting with persons considered to be of position and importance and so on, these four values dominate the urban social scene and are currently the highest goals to be achieved. Thus, one finds that the contemporary socially stratified picture in the urban communities of Nigeria bears some relationship to that found in America.

The arguments of Kahl should not be interpreted to mean that both societies are strictly speaking similar in nature. Obviously, there are marked differences between both cultures. For instance, America is a far more capitalist society than Nigeria. American society is not Nigerian society that is fraught with tribal differences; the US is a major industrialised nation with social infrastructure in place, but Nigeria is still a developing nation.

Since, as noted before, there is no indigenous theory to explain the criminality of the youths in this study, we invoke the theory to do it. Despite its limitations, the theory has in the past been applied to many national and cross-national cultures in the study of delinquency. Therefore, Merton's contribution to criminological research cannot be over-emphasised.

3.3. Summary

The chapter examined past literature and the theoretical framework. It started by exploring both the causes (reasons for the criminal behaviour) and motivations (incentives or drives for committing a crime) of crime. However, previous research reveals that no crime can be committed without any motivation from the side of the offender. Many variables can motivate people to commit robbery, but money is the primary motivation because of its attractiveness and its ability to solve the immediate needs of offenders. In spite of that, robbery is arguably an opportunity crime, which any person could commit.

The decision to rob is a vital moment in the robbery process and it may involve the offender applying some element of reason to his action. Robbery involves the selection of targets and some element of planning and calculation, but sometimes it may not be planned.

Previous research confirms that weapon use is a correlate of robbery and highlights the seriousness of the offence. Weapons are used for reasons such as self-defence, easy escape, threat, and intimidation.

Robbery has been described as a masculine activity, even though women can get involved in the crime. Generally, robbery peaks in the late teens and drops between the mid-twenties and early thirties. There was a discussion of the different types of robbers as a way of knowing the profile of each. It is the professional robber who is the typical robber in the eyes of the public.

In this chapter, social control theory and anomie-strain theory have been invoked to explain the involvement of youths in armed robbery. In the next chapter, we will be considering the research methodology.

Chapter 4: Methodological framework and paradigm

Research method is indispensable in any social study. It is a means by which scholarly investigation is conducted (Mcdougal III, 2011). The process starts before fieldwork is undertaken, continues while the researcher is in the field, and finishes with the production of valuable results. In criminology, matters of method can simply be interpreted as being about types of data collected by researchers, about the methods by which they collect them and about the process in which such data are analysed (Jupp, 1993: 4). So then, doing empirical research is a systematic and rigorous process of investigation that seeks to describe phenomena and to develop explanatory concepts and theories (Bowling, 1997: 1), hence the necessity to define a specific methodology. As said before, this study will employ a qualitative research method in sourcing and analysing data that attempts to explain the involvement of youths in armed robbery.

4.1. Qualitative research design

In a general sense, qualitative methodology refers to research that produces descriptive data such as the written or spoken words of people and their observable behaviour (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). Qualitative method relies upon non-mathematical or non-statistical judgements (Higgs & Cant, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; see also Rowlands, 2005), and for the same reason, it obtains a more realistic feel of the world (Matveev, 2002) and a whole view of the phenomena being examined (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975; Patton, 1980; Matveev, 2002).

Qualitative research does not strictly impose *apriori* classification on the collection of data. In qualitative research, it is difficult to explain the difference in the quality and quantity of information gathered from different participants and the arrival at differing and inconsistent conclusions. Yet qualitative research takes place in the natural environment of respondents and shares the theoretical assumptions of the interpretive paradigm (Matveev, 2002).

4.2. Interpretive paradigm

Drawing from Heidegger's⁴⁵ "interpretive phenomenology", this research paradigm is indeed interpretive, and seeks to interpret the social and cultural world (Higgs, 1998) of armed robbers in prison custody: the so called "failed criminals" (see Wright & Decker, 1997) or "unsuccessful criminals"⁴⁶ (Jacobs et al, 2003). Within this interpretive epistemology, the researcher wants to understand the behaviour of this set of criminals and the reasons behind their behavioural patterns (see Gadamer, 1975 cited in Higgs, 1998; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998) in the enactment of armed robbery.

Thus, the interpretive paradigm does not consider the cause-effect relationships or the use of experimental method; instead, it takes a holistic account of the situational context, the timings, the subjective meanings and intentions within the specific situation (Higgs & Cant, 1998; see also Rowlands, 2005; Walsham, 1995). Both the researcher and the researched share this subjectivity to minimize illusion (Fryer, 1991; Matveev, 2002; see also Rowlands, 2005). Simply put, "within the interpretive tradition, the world and reality are interpreted by people in the context of historical and social practices" (Higgs, 1998: 137). That context can only be found in the "field" where research participants are located and localised too.

4.3. Fieldwork location and localisation

As Wagley writes, "Fieldwork is a creative endeavour" (cited in Wolcott, 1995, 23). Doing fieldwork in contrast to "mere" data gathering is "a wholehearted commitment" (Wolcott, 1995: 159; Liebling, 1999: 159). For this study, two locations were chosen for data collection namely: the metropolitan city of Abuja (the capital of Nigeria), and the cosmopolitan city of Lagos (former capital of Nigeria). Abuja was chosen as a place where documentary police and prison data could be collected because of its position as the administrative headquarters of all the federal

⁴⁵Martin Heidegger was a twentieth-century German philosopher, whose seminal work *Being and Time* published in 1962 laid emphasis on Dasein - the human being. What centrally appeals to qualitative researchers with regard to Heidegger's interpretive phenomenology is the fact that people interpret and make meanings out of their lives, and such individuals are spatio-temporally located, and are aware of their beingness (Lawler, 1998).

⁴⁶There is a saying that criminals in prison custody are the "failed criminals" or "unsuccessful criminals" while those at large in the free world are the "real criminals" or "successful criminals". Failed criminals are at times given the "second chance" to change for the better hence the prison option.

government establishments, including the criminal justice system namely: the police and the prisons. For its part, Lagos was chosen as a place for primary data collection for the following reasons. First, it is the largest city in Nigeria where supposedly people from the different tribes, states and geopolitical zones can be found. Second, it is the commercial nerve-centre of the country and indeed the most economically buoyant city in Nigeria. Third, and most importantly, Lagos is the Nigerian city that has the highest crime rate, particularly armed robbery (see Alemika & Chukwuma, 2005). Therefore, the researcher felt that sourcing his sample of respondents from Kirikiri Maximum Security Prison, which is the largest in the country, would provide the personnel for the interviews and the enabling environment to conduct such interviews.

The fieldwork was carried out in two phases during a six-week period. The first phase lasted for three weeks, between September and October 2007, while the second phase also took three weeks, between March and April 2008.

4.4. Access

After choosing the places for the fieldwork, the next thing was to gain access to those places. Gaining access to persons, organisations and data is an indispensable part of completing any research and even more so in prison research where the researcher may decide to spend some time with a particular set of people (Burton, 2000: 219). As Jacobs and Wright (2006) argue, many criminologists choose to research criminals confined in prison rather than those in the “wild” because the former is regarded to be a lot easier and more convenient than the latter. However, gaining access to a vulnerable group such as incarcerated armed robbers is one of the most difficult problems in doing this type of research.

In the Nigerian context, access to do research on armed robbery is highly bureaucratic and involves a top down procedure. It is largely based on “who do you know”, hence making connections with people who are connected with those responsible for granting access makes the difference (Schlosser, 2008). Approval is normally given by the highest officer in rank or position, for onward implementation by subordinates. Before that is done a “come today come tomorrow”, process must be observed. Before entering into the field, the researcher made several informal phone

calls and wrote letters to the Inspector General of Police, the Controller General of Prisons, a Lagos-based Criminal Defence Lawyer and the Acting Director of Public Prosecution for Lagos State. In spite of that, the researcher's presence was necessary and urgently needed to move paper work from one office to another. This exercise took about four days, and access was fully granted in all the places contact was made. Overall, it took well over eight months to gain access to do this research. Therefore, Burton (2000) advises that the earlier access is negotiated, the better, because of the unspecified period it may take to do so. If for any reason access is denied, it may be practically impossible to source for the research samples. As earlier noted (see chapter 1), following the denial of access to the English prisons, the idea of a comparative research between Nigeria and Britain was abandoned, hence the single study of Nigeria was undertaken.

4.5. Sampling

According to Smith, (1975: 105) "sampling is a procedure by which we infer the characteristics of some group of objects [or people] (a population) through experience with less than all possible elements of that group of objects [or people] (a sample)".⁴⁷ The sample used for the face-to-face open-ended interview was chosen using a snowballing or networking technique. This is a subtype of the strategic informant samples. The researcher used this technique to build up a sample of a special population (Smith, 1975) of armed robbery offenders in Nigeria in the various categories of incarceration: awaiting trials, serving determinate sentences, life sentences, or condemned to death (see chapter 5.1 for details). These respondents were a vulnerable group that needed to be contacted by those who knew them very well; hence they were notified in advance for the interview within the limited period of the research. This was possible with the assistance and maximum cooperation of the prison staff at Abuja Headquarters, Lagos State Command and Kirikiri Maximum Security Prison, and a select committee of prison inmates formally appointed by the Controller in-charge of Kirikiri Prison to offer support to the day-to-day running of the jail. These include, a Roman Catholic Catechist; Anglican Pastor; Baptist Pastor;

⁴⁷The use of the word "people" is the researcher's view because human beings are the research samples used in the social sciences.

Pentecostal Pastor; two Muslim Imams; the Principal of the Adult Education Centre; and an Elder. Most of these representatives were drawn from a diverse group in the prison environment. This select committee of prisoners organized and provided the participants through a snowball process.

On arrival at the venue of the interviews, an *ad hoc* meeting convoked by the Chief Welfare Officer in Kirikiri Prison reinforced the snowball process. Present at the meeting were the same Chief Welfare Officer, the researcher, and a select committee of prison inmates appointed by the Controller in-charge of Kirikiri prison. As we have seen, the majority of the people are representatives of the various religious groups in the prison because of the obvious importance attached to religion among the Nigerian prisoners. Although the researcher came from a religious background, but that did not in any way influence the setting up of the select committee of prison inmates. The committee had since been in existence at Kirikiri prison before the researcher came to do his research.

During the meeting, the representatives were given the opportunity to ask questions which the researcher later responded to. These informants were to supply the potential sample members (see Smith, 1975) for the proposed interviews. The meeting lasted for 30 minutes during which the researcher explained his mission to Kirikiri Prison. Fifteen minutes after the meeting, the first respondent was interviewed and a snowball process developed so that past interviewees were recruiting other potential respondents until the end of the interview period. Surprisingly, none of our respondents came from the African traditional religious group or a “non-faith” group. Neither the researcher nor those who initially recruited the participants did this on purpose. It appeared there were no such people in the prison we studied or they did not belong to any of those detained or convicted for armed robbery. If there were any, the principal and an elder who were “neutral persons” (not representing any religion) among the committee would have recruited them for interviews. That would have made a unique difference during the interviews.

However, the recruitment of prison inmates interviewed suggests that virtually every prisoner believes in God or Allah.⁴⁸ Although some scholars believe that religion guides people and serves to control their behaviour (Bosiakoh et al, 2010; Willis et al, 1999; Messner & Rosenfeld, 1997; Ali, 1985); others (Garland et al, 2006) have argued that the inclusion of religious identities within criminological research is something challenging. Moreover, it is somewhat problematic for a researcher to understand the role religion plays in people's lives, especially as the researcher may have a limited or basic knowledge of a respondent's faith group. Even when a researcher has full knowledge of a respondent's religion because he belongs to the same faith, the respondent reserves the right to discuss his religious faith or not during a research interview. For this study, the respondents reported the findings on faith, but there was no follow-up interview in that regard upon release, hence we do not have any data and do not know whether religious observance in prison is carried on as a redemptive commitment in the "free world".

The snowball sampling adopted for this research made it easier to find other inmates that are similar to the initially recruited ones based on their religious affiliations. It also helped the researcher to collate information more quickly (Smith, 1975). As earlier noted (see chapter 1), the researcher came to the task with prior knowledge of the criminal landscape of Nigeria, especially in prison, where armed robbers are concerned.⁴⁹ It can be said that: "prisons are raw, sometimes desperate special places ..." (Leibling, 1999: 152) where different sorts of people can be found for no other reason except crime or alleged criminal commission.

However, the researcher did face some problem with the snowball sampling. He was reliably informed that some of those invited for interview turned it down because they were afraid of divulging their secrets to a stranger who might reveal their crime information to the police or prison staff (see also Silberman, 1995; Jones, 1995). Since interviewing was voluntary, the refusals encountered did not skew the data in

⁴⁸Religious worship in prison is very attractive due to its structured pattern: prayers, singing, playing of drums, clapping of hands and dancing. Active participation in religious exercises helps to fight against the depression and the anxiety associated with being in jail. It is also a reference point when prison officers and chaplains recommend a prisoner to the prerogative of mercy for early release. Finally, it disposes a prisoner to receive personal gifts from religious ministers and prison visitors.

⁴⁹The researcher had worked in Owerri Prison, Nigeria, for five years. He was therefore familiar with the prison system, and knew something about prisoners in general.

any way because the total sample size (20) and the type of offenders (armed robbers) the researcher had in mind still came to be interviewed. The only thing that happened was that more time was spent replacing those who refused to participate during the interviews.

Concerning the four members of the criminal justice system, a type of non-probability sampling called purposive, purposeful, or criterion-based was used to recruit them. This type of sampling served the actual purpose and objectives of the researcher in discovering and gaining insight and understanding into a specific phenomenon of study (see Burns, 2000: 465). Purposive sampling is also employed to sample a group of individuals or settings with a specific quality (Bowling, 1997), hence the men and the woman had more than twenty years of experience in their respective departments,⁵⁰ so they were able to speak out of a wealth of experience of the justice system.

4.6. Ethics

In any social science research, there is a likelihood of ethical problems because human beings are involved (Burns, 2002). Similarly, research ethics is crucial in maintaining public confidence, protecting research sources, and guaranteeing its position as a scientific study (May, 1997: 61). In view of the above, and before getting into the fieldwork, the researcher received ethical approval from the Ethics Committee of the School of Law, University of Manchester. The approval was made subject to the researcher having met with all the requirements of the ethics of social science research as laid down by the Committee.

While in the field, the researcher gave priority to ethical issues because of the vulnerability of the offenders. Initially, he feared that not buying the participants over with money would make them boycott the interviews. This was based on speculations and reactions from the welfare officers and some prison inmates on the need for financial reward. Indeed, some of the youths also raised this issue with the link-men

⁵⁰The DIG belongs to the Nigeria Police Force, the ACG is of the Nigeria Prison Service, the Ag.DPP works in the Ministry of Justice, and the Criminal Defence Lawyer is a private Legal Practitioner.

and even requested money for food from the researcher after the interview. The researcher did not yield to their requests, which he thought would have biased or jeopardised his research, but he tried to persuade the respondents to participate in the research for two reasons. One, it would help the researcher to succeed in his PhD. Two, the research would, on completion, generate policy implications for government action in crime prevention and/or reduction. Earlier studies have shown that a desire for change and social reform can motivate people to be part of a research project (Bosworth et al, 2005).

In accordance with the ethics of research, the interviewees' consent was sought before embarking on any interview. It is important for participants to understand the nature and purpose of the research and to freely consent to take part in it (Burns, 2000). Likewise, it is their right to be aware of the possible risks and benefits that may arise from being part of the research (Kvale, 1996). In that regard, the respondents were duly informed about the aims and objectives of the research and the confidentiality of their information. Confidentiality in social science research implies a clear understanding between the researcher and the participant regarding use of collected data to prevent identification by any outside party (Burns, 2000; Kvale, 1996). Thus, the anonymity of each participant was assured. A confidentiality letter written and signed by the researcher assuring anonymity was given to each interviewee to read before interviews. All the offenders signed the consent form as evidence of their "free choice" to participate in the research. However, the researcher used pseudonyms to identify each respondent, and in that way animated his fieldwork. Before the interviews began, the researcher suggested the aid of a digital tape recorder, which was acceptable to the respondents. It was meant to help the researcher collect accurate data from the respondents.

4.7. Data collection regime and analysis

Data collection is one of the main thrusts of scientific research (see Pope et al, 2001). It provides a situation whereby the researcher explores an interviewee's opinion in full (Stroh, 2000). As said before, this research primarily involved a semi-structured face-to-face (open ended) oral interview with twenty respondents in prison custody. Interviewing a prison sample is sometimes criticised because the responses a

researcher receives may not be the true story. It is also not possible for a researcher to determine when interviewees are telling the truth. At the same time, interviewing prisoners is a common method of collecting raw data (see Brookman et al, 2007; Martin, 2000).

The sample interviewed were all male youths by gender. Previous researchers have used this method to study cohorts of active residential burglars and robbers (see Wright & Decker, 1994, 1997; Tunnell, 1992; Feeney, 1986; Conklin, 1972; Einstadter, 1969). In-depth interviews provide an opportunity for the respondents to tell their life story from the natural milieu; hence its usefulness in the study of Nigerian youths who got involved in armed robbery. As earlier stated, “youth” in Nigeria is a term applied to any person between the late teens and the age of thirty-five (see FRN, 2001) contrary to what could be found elsewhere. All those interviewed were more or less within the youth age range when they got involved in armed robbery.

Interestingly, the face-to-face interviews conducted by the researcher were a novel project as far as Kirikiri Prison was concerned. Surprisingly, the inmates were asking the researcher his reasons for conducting interviews instead of sending in the usual questionnaires for quantitative studies as other researchers do. According to some scholars (see Jones et al, 2009; Jones, 1995; Fleisher, 1989), quantitative research [in a prison setting] often focuses more on administrative concerns such as overcrowding, gang violence, recidivism, *et cetera*. In response, however, adequate care was taken to bring to the knowledge of all the participants the aims and objectives of the research, as earlier mentioned, and the reasons behind the method used namely: to explore their attitudes to the offence of armed robbery in Nigeria. Thus, the qualitative research method is crucial in achieving a full understanding of human behaviour (Jones et al, 2009; Irwin, 1987).

The environment provided for the interviews was one of the welfare offices at Kirikiri Prison. The room was kept clean for the interviews. The contents of that room were a desk and two seats: one for the researcher and the other for the respondent. The researcher’s logbook, writing pen, computer, and digital tape recorder were put into

use immediately the interviews commenced. However, we experienced intermittent power (electricity) failures on every interview day, but this did not pose any threat during the interview process because the computer battery was fully charged the previous night with the aid of a generating set at the researcher's apartment at Ajegunle, Lagos.

At Kirikiri Prison, the interview room was normally closed whenever a prisoner came to be interviewed. This was done to safeguard his confidential information and to avoid any noise and/or distraction that might come from the rest of the prison compound. The emotional tones of the respondents were mixed: some were ready to talk from the start, while others were afraid to talk immediately for fear of the extent their information would go. Only one respondent was answering his questions in short sentences, but the researcher felt it was not enough and persuaded him to give details or alternatively quit the interview. After that intervention, the respondent was confident to tell his story in details. Another respondent was looking sideways in fear before answering any question presented to him, however, he was assured that his information would not be given to the prison authorities and/or the police.

Regarding security, there was no prison warder stationed in the interview room. This was also to safeguard the confidential information coming from the interviewees. Nevertheless, one or two warders sat at the corridor leading to the interview area. In addition, a welfare officer was in the adjacent office doing his/her work, but at the same time watching movements in and around the area. All through the interviews, the personal safety of the researcher was not threatened, nor was prison security breached.

Most of the interviews lasted for one hour or more except two that lasted for 30 and 40 minutes respectively. These two were shorter for the following reasons: the one for 30 minutes was so because the interviewee wished it so and decided on his own volition to leave. It should be recalled that on the "informed consent form" provided by the researcher, respondents are free to give their time to be interviewed and are also free to leave at any stage during the interview (see appendix 2; see also Diccio-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). The interview that lasted for 40 minutes was due to security reasons. The welfare officers wanted to go for the day and prevailed upon the

researcher to end the interview abruptly. The researcher had to abide by that instruction because he was duly informed right from the beginning to adhere to all prison regulations. On average, interviews with prison inmates lasted for 1 hour, 37 minutes.

In addition, unstructured interviews were conducted with four members of the criminal justice system. They include a Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIG), an Assistant Controller-General of Prisons (ACG), an Acting Director of Public Prosecution (Ag.DPP) for Lagos State, and a Lagos based Criminal Defence Lawyer. Again, these four people were chosen because of their wealth of knowledge and experience (see for example Diccico-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Although no interview can really be considered as unstructured, some are fairly so and are approximately equivalent to guided conversations (Dicicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006: 315). On average, unstructured interviews lasted for 48 minutes. The experts were allowed to exhaust their views on the issues raised by the researcher. At the end of the interviews, secondary data was collected from prison and police records.

The interview allowed respondents to answer questions in their own way with minimum control and direction from the interviewer (see Bennett & Holloway, 2009; Bryman, 2008; Barbour, 2008; Kraska & Newman, 2008). Interestingly, the interview captured a huge amount of the respondents' views on the subject matter (Kvale, 1996) being discussed. This seems to be true because their responses pointed at some probable factors responsible for the involvement of youths in armed robbery. That was possible due to the researcher's flexibility in asking questions, and at times repeating them so that the respondents understood him very well (see Burns, 2000). That technique promoted a high level of motivation for the respondents (Burns, 2000) to be fully forthcoming.

The cohort of offenders interviewed includes illiterate (see Kumar, 1999), semi-literate and literate respondents. Each participant was addressed at his own level, and in language he could understand, which sometimes meant resorting to "Broken" or "Pidgin" English.

Pidgin is one of the most widely used languages in Nigeria, by semi literates primarily, but also by educated people, not least academics when they want to relax or be facetious or again humorously veil their gravest thoughts. It is simplified English structured in African syntax, peppered with twisted words of sometimes unknown origin, often very pithy and evocative (Galle, n.d: 4).

However, for this study, the researcher has painstakingly translated the statements of the respondents at the footnotes for readers who may not understand “Pidgin” English. Furthermore, he has clarified matters in his written analysis using conventional English. As Merriam (2009) supports, doing research involving a language other than conventional English, the researcher may have to prepare the transcript in the original language of the research and then translate verbatim into English. This involves “direct translation” (see Jiang et al, 2006), which has also been used in this study. In addition, data analysis has to be done in conventional English. This is necessary to assure the reader that the researcher understands the language issues involved, and has taken an ethical stance on translating and making clear what he has done (Marshall & Rossman, 2011: 166). In doing so, translators are active in the process of constructing accounts and an examination of their intellectual autobiographies, that is, a logical reasoning with how they come to know what to do, is a fundamental part in understanding the nature and status of their research results (Temple, 1997: 614). Although translation into other languages is based on an expert team approach involving the translator, translator reviewer and translator coordinator (Eisner & Ribeaud, 2007), but this study did not require that procedure because the researcher was born and raised in Nigeria. He speaks Pidgin English fluently, and writes it very well. Therefore he has the requisite skills for translating Pidgin English into conventional English. According to Jiang et al (2006), the quality of any translation is measured by the knowledge of the culture and the competence of the translator.

Sechrest et al (1972) claim that a good first rule in translating is to use translators who are well acquainted with the language as used by the research respondents. However, when the translator and the researcher are different individuals, the process of knowledge construction involves another layer, thus creating many different versions of what the text is saying (Temple, 1997: 614); and also creating confusion about which text to choose and which to discard. This is evidenced in the research

conducted by Temple (1997) on British-Polish community living in England. Temple hears and speaks Polish language but hired a Polish translator to help translate his interviews. During an interview with one of his research participants, Temple heard a statement in Polish Language and translated thus: “Women have to give more than men. That is how it is”; but the hired translator who had lived in England for about ten years wrote this: “Women must give more than men. That is how things are” (Temple, 1997: 615). According to Temple (1997: 616) “It is that by looking at the way the interview had been translated and asking the translator why she had done it like that I realized that our views were very different”. Any translation should aim at creating the original text (Temple, 1997: 613), and essentially the subjective meaning that the researcher wants to convey.

Although translation is time consuming, it is advantageous to the researcher who knows the language to translate the research he/she has conducted in the field. In doing so, the research findings may not be distorted. However, one of the problems of direct translation is that the individual translator may introduce his/her idiosyncracies. It would seem irrational to assert that all the translations made by a single translator are inadequate, but the probability of inadequacies of translations may go undetected (Sechrest et al, 1972). Even in “back translation” involving many translators, inadequacies still abound and may not be detected too (see Sechrest et al, 1972). Despite that, the method of direct translation was the best option for this study; and it appears to be commonly used in social science research (see Sechrest et al, 1972).

Outside criminology, “Pidgin” English has in exceptional circumstances been used in a medical research to interview some respondents regarding the traditional use of indigenous mosquito repellents to protect humans against mosquitoes and other insect bites in rural Cameroon (Ntonifor et al, 2006). What made their use of Pidgin English exceptional was that some of the respondents were not educated to the level of speaking conventional English.

With regard to the present study, no vernacular was used to simplify communication with respondents from the different tribes, partly to avoid bias and undue familiarity with some respondents who came from the researcher’s own tribe.

Record-keeping was a priority in this research because so much information was revealed to the researcher. Although a digital tape recorder was used to record all the interviews conducted, the researcher also did some manual recording in specially designed sheets for record keeping. The decision to record manually along with the tape-recorder was to back up in case the tape-recorder failed at some point during the interviews. At the end of each interview day, the researcher would transfer recorded data from his tape-recorder to his laptop. The use of a logbook was also essential for anecdotal information, which included debriefing at the end of each interview.

However, some problems came up during the research. To reduce costs, interviews were conducted with a limited number of people (20) and in a specified time. Although it was not the researcher's first experience of doing research interviews,⁵¹ it was his first experience of doing prison research on armed robbery. He was therefore not an expert but learned from each interview he carried out. Burns (2000) contends that it can be difficult to find trained and skilled interviewers with the required interpersonal skills. This stems from the fact that no two interviews are the same. The circumstances of each respondent are different and his world views of crime are independently divergent. In short, "interviewing is not all that difficult, but interviewing in which people tell you how they really think about things you are interested in learning, or how they think about the things that are important to them, is a delicate art" (Wolcott, 1995: 105). That delicacy becomes more profound where the interview points towards behaviour which is problematic or stigmatised. Then, the broaching of the topic may alarm participants so much so that they may lack the right vocabulary to discuss the issue, or they may be in denial of it or attribute it to someone else (Lee 1999: 103).

During the interviews, extensive data was collected on the study. When all the interviews have been successfully completed, the researcher organised a lunch for all the participants as a way of showing appreciation for their co-operativeness. After that, transcription started with the aid of a laptop. It involved listening to the audio and simultaneously typing in the information. Data was transcribed with the additional help of three friends who worked according to the researcher's

⁵¹In 2004, the researcher interviewed victims of people trafficking in Italy.

specifications and guidelines, which included no correction of the respondents' grammar or any form of adulteration to what they said during the interviews. The transcription took up to four months to complete.

The collected data was properly coded, and analysed with the aid of NVIVO 7 software for computerised qualitative data analysis. Data analysis entails breaking data down into bits and then "beating" the bits together. Put another way, it is a procedure of resolving data into its constituent parts, to reveal its characteristic elements and structure (Dey, 1993: 13). Practically, the theoretical models were first coded in the free nodes where two emerging themes were discovered. These themes were later broken down to generate the various answers given by the respondents, which were coded in the tree nodes. Later on, these factors were systematically (manually) grouped under four different themes (family circumstances, economic motivations, life course engagements and situational dynamics in robbery), to demonstrate how criminogenic needs link to another, and how robbery is enacted in the end.

Ideally, this thematic categorisation was to reflect the family as the initial place where criminal behaviour could be nurtured. Obviously, a dysfunctional, disorganised and ineffectual family setting could be vulnerable to economic needs that might lead to crimes like armed robbery. When people are economically disadvantaged, they may be tempted to engage in life course criminal activities. Finally, the existence of criminogenic needs is likely to shape the situational dynamics in enacting an armed robbery.

As earlier noted, the analytical approach used was "interpretive phenomenology". By this philosophy, the researcher tried to sort through the experiences of different people as interpreted through interviewees' own cultural lenses and then weigh different versions to put together a single explanation (Rubin & Rubin, 2005: 30; see also Locke et al, 1998). The purpose of analysis is not just to describe research data, but also to describe the objects or events to which the data refers so that in the end we obtain a fresh view of the data (Dey, 1993: 13). All collected data was compared with existing literature.

4.8. Research limitations

No research is perfect; and similarly, this study has its limitations. A major limitation to this study is a “lack of representative sample”. Given that Nigeria has a population of over 140 million people, and its prison establishments have 42,030 inmates (see Orakwe 2008), the sample of only 20 prison inmates in Kirikiri cannot be taken as representative of all those involved in armed robbery in Nigeria, nor can it have revealed all the information about armed robbers and their operations in the same country. However, since the youths interviewed come from five geopolitical zones out of six in the country, the reader can acquire some kind of picture of armed robbers and the factors responsible for their involvement in armed robbery. In the words of Procter and Allan (2006: 181), “the study is able to inform understanding of the wider population”.

It seems to be mainly government researchers, and only a few independent researchers, who have the resources and time to obtain representative samples (Burns, 2000). This is less problematic with qualitative research as it is not necessary to ensure that the sample is representative of the entire offenders (Bennett & Holloway, 2009). In most cases, the resources available and the practicability of obtaining the sample combine to determine the size (Procter & Allan, 2006). Nonetheless, a suitable sample size for a qualitative research project is one that adequately answers the research question(s). In addition, what is important in a qualitative study is to have an improved understanding of complex human issues, rather than generalisability of results (Marshall, 1996). For this research, the sample frame was drawn from prison inmates who are awaiting trials and/or convicted of armed robbery. Jacobs et al (2003) argue that studies of prison inmates may not be representative of the offender population. As is the case with this study, most PhD research samples are not representative because they are usually snowballed with a limited population and conducted with limited resources and limited time. Therefore doing a PhD is learning how to carry out a research project.

This study is also short of various kinds of methodological triangulations, which according to Lindegaard, (2010) would have provided a broader view of offenders’ motivations to crime because using only interviews to collect data on the offender

population often represents a “one-off and one-side” interaction between the respondents and the researcher. It could be argued that the offenders might have told the interviewer what he wanted to hear within the limited time for interviews; and in the process they (respondents) might have created “courtesy bias”,⁵² but there is no evidence that this occurred, nor evidence to the contrary for that matter. However, if this research were to be conducted again, methodological triangulations would be considered to make the findings more robust. Detailed questionnaires for quantitative analysis would be administered, and there would be more time to interview the respondents deeper so that they could reveal more answers about their motivations to armed robbery.

Each research method is unique in its own right. According to Reichardt and Cook (1979: 17), “it appears that quantitative methods have been developed most directly for the task of verifying or confirming theories and that to a large extent qualitative methods were purposely developed for the task of discovering or generating the theories” (cited in Peltó & Cleland, 2003: 361). Yet, triangulation or multiple research methods (qualitative and quantitative) are complementary and valuable processes for data analysis and interpretation, mainly for identifying common and unique variances (Airhihenbuwa, 1988: 431). In the end, one method must be subservient to the other (Peltó & Cleland, 2003: 368) depending on the level of application of each method to a study, and especially the researcher’s philosophical position (Hussein, 2009). It could be argued that the responses we have now for this research are valuable considering that the study is geared towards offenders’ perspective. This is for the reason that “prisons can also precipitate remarkable honesty” (Leibling, 1999: 152). However, as other scholars (Jacobs et al, 2003; Wright & Decker, 1994) suggest, prisoners’ accounts of their criminal behaviours may be distorted intentionally or not, as time goes on, by the prison environment and some other factors. While we understand these debates about the information given by our prison respondents, we do not accuse them for being dishonest with the researcher. At the same time, we should not take at face value the reasons they give for committing their crime.

⁵²Courtesy bias occurs when respondents give answers which may be inaccurate but which they believe the interviewers are seeking (Airhihenbuwa, 1988: 431).

The language barrier is another limitation from which this research suffers. It is true that Nigeria has over 250 dialects but the lingua franca is English. As noted before, there is widespread employment in Nigeria and some other African countries of “Pidgin” or “Broken” English. The majority of the respondents used this Pidgin English because they were unable to speak conventional English. The researcher allowed them to use that language to express their world view effectively and efficiently. It is of the essence of qualitative research to ensure that the researcher interacts with the researched in their own language and on their own terms (Kirk & Miller, 1986; Matveev, 2002).

The problem with Pidgin English is that there is no one solution to its translation (Galle, n.d), as everything depends on the translator. For this study, the researcher chose his words at the time of translation to make meaning subjectively from what the respondents said. In doing so, “translation must sometimes be a matter of approximating the meaning of a source language text rather than finding an exact counterpart in the target language” (Kameyama et al, 1991: 193). Perhaps, if the respondents were to choose their own words in conventional English, they would have chosen different vocabularies to convey their own meaning. All the same, it was advantageous that the researcher could understand, speak and translate the respondents’ Broken English without looking elsewhere for another translator, who might have ended up being a “traitor” to misguide the study. Granted that imperfections abound when translating from one language to another, what is important on this occasion is the vivid meaning that the researcher’s translation has conveyed to this study.

4.9. Method reliability and validity

Any qualitative researcher should be concerned about “reliability and validity” while designing a study, analysing results and judging the quality of the research (Golafshani, 2003; Jupp, 1993) to ensure the rigour of the study (Morse et al, 2002). *Ab initio*, this study has not been involved in any hypothesis “testing”, but if we conceive the idea of testing as a way of “information elicitation” then the most important test of any qualitative study is its quality (Golafshani, 2003; Patton, 2002).

Indeed, a good qualitative study is a veritable tool to “understand a situation that would otherwise be enigmatic or confusing” (Eisner, 1991: 58).

Reliability is synonymous with dependability, stability, consistency, predictability and accuracy (Burns, 2000: 337; see also Lincoln & Guba, 1998). To ensure reliability in qualitative research, examination of trustworthiness is vital. (Golafshani, 2003: 601). Moreover, to determine if this study is reliable, we need to know whether the findings are sensible and are agreed on by everybody concerned (Burns, 2000: 475). It should be recalled that we examined consistently the factors encouraging the involvement of youths in armed robbery. Each person responded from his own circumstances. When data was collected and analysed, the findings demonstrated meaningful answers and similar results comparable to previous research. However, new answers for possible theorising emerged during the interviews. Therefore, in considering the reliability of this research, the study was consistent and specific to the contents. Information collected was from a variety of sources namely: armed robbers in prison custody at Kirikiri – Lagos; DIG of Police; ACG of Prisons; Ag.DPP for Lagos State; and a Criminal Defence Lawyer in Lagos.

“Since there can be no validity without reliability, a demonstration of the former [validity] is sufficient to establish the latter [reliability;]” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985: 316). Depending on the researcher's ability and skill in any qualitative research, it can be argued that reliability is a consequence of the validity in a study (Golafshani, 2003: 602; Patton, 2002). Therefore, the onus lies on the researcher to indicate the validity of his research by detailing how the entire research process was carried out (Burns, 2000). Consistent with the qualitative method, a good understanding prevailed between the researcher and the respondents, which led to an active participation on both sides during the fieldwork. This enabled the researcher to make assumptions based on the multiple meanings of individual experiences (Creswell, 2003: 18).

The key concepts and variables in the study such as armed robbery, youths, polygamy, poverty, money, lack of jobs, death of parents, broken home, bad friends, better life, drugs/alcohol, corruption, gambling, age, geopolitical zone, tribe, state of

origin and others were correctly put into use so that both interviewer and interviewees understood the study (see for example May, 1997).

A valid research is one that vicariously contributes to the reader's experiences, so much so that each reader relates to their own context and method, while inferring the quality of contribution it can make for their specific context. Furthermore, what is being examined in a research project of this nature is the respondents' view or how they construct reality and how they understand the world around them, in which case, what appears to be true may be more significant than what is actually true (Burns, 2000: 476).

Above all, this study has been verified by checking, confirming, making sure, and being certain that the study is reliable and valid, thus ensuring rigour (Morse et al, 2002). Following the principles of qualitative inquiry, the analysis is self-correcting. That is to say, qualitative research is iterative rather than linear, thus enabling the researcher to move back and forth between design and implementation to make sure there is agreement among question formulation, literature, recruitment, data collection strategies, and analysis. In short, data have been systematically monitored, focus has been maintained, and the fit of data and the conceptual work of analysis and interpretation are checked and confirmed constantly (Morse et al, 2002).

4.10. Summary

The chapter set out to explain the methodological framework and paradigm. Again, the research has been designed to be a qualitative method. The interpretive paradigm has been employed to understand the world view of the sample interviewed. The fieldwork locations were Abuja and Lagos. Abuja was chosen because of its privileged position as the capital and administrative city of Nigeria where secondary data could be collected. The choice of Lagos for primary data was due to its cosmopolitan and commercial advantage. Moreover, the crime rate in Lagos has been far higher than elsewhere in Nigeria.

The chapter went on to explain how access to conduct this study was granted in Abuja and Lagos. Through snowball sampling, twenty respondents in Kirikiri Maximum

Security Prison Lagos were contacted before interview. In addition, four members of the criminal justice system were purposively chosen for an unstructured interview.

About ethical issues, the confidentiality of respondents was assured and strictly observed all through the study. The chapter also explained how primary data was collected *via* interviews, transcribed, coded and analysed using Nvivo 7 software.

Finally, the limitations to this study have been the non-representativeness of the chosen sample; lack of methodological triangulations to provide a broader view about offenders' motivations; and the use of "Pidgin English" by respondents. These shortcomings did not affect the reliability and validity of the research, because the study was content specific; and a detailed account of how it was conducted has been established. The next chapter will focus on key research findings.

Chapter 5: Key research findings

The purpose of this chapter is to present the key findings based on the fieldwork carried out in Nigeria. To begin with, we will explore the socio-cultural demographics of the armed robbery offenders interviewed, which includes their personal characteristics. This will serve as a foundation for all the other information given by the respondents during the research.

Among other things, the findings will reflect the central research question – factors responsible for the involvement of the youths in armed robbery. The outcome will be presented under four systematic subheadings. First, we will consider the family circumstances of the offenders as the initial place that informed their criminal life. Second, we will explain the economic factors that motivated them to get involved in armed robbery. Third, there will be a discussion concerning the life course engagement of the offenders, which hinges on their perceived criminal careers. Finally, we will explore the situational dynamics in carrying out an armed robbery.

5.1. Socio-cultural demographics of offender sample

It is essential to remind the reader that prison inmates are not numerical symbols. They are lively human beings, with distinctive qualities, features, likes and dislikes (Bosworth et al, 2005: 251) like any other person in the world. Perhaps, the local community and the prisoners' families often regard criminals in prison custody as "pariahs". Apart from that, their main handicap is the withdrawal of their freedom by the state. This clarification has become necessary because criminologists tend to present their analysis of prison as inhuman data, thus making prison studies "cold, calculated, surgical and polished steel" (Bosworth et al, 2005: 259). It should be emphasised that the choice of expression in this research respects the dignity of those who consented to be interviewed and refers to them with befitting terminologies such as participants, respondents, interviewees, and those interviewed instead of "subjects".

For the purposes of this study, a sample of twenty armed robbers was interviewed. The twenty respondents (all male) were confined in custody at the highest prison in the land, Kirikiri Maximum Security Prison Lagos. All those interviewed have been fictitiously named to hide their identity. It is not uncommon in prison research of this

nature to notice that most inmates have committed prior offences, which they have either been convicted of or not. Findings (see table 16 below) reveal that more than half (eleven people) have been involved in one or more offences before their present crime. This supports evidence from previous UK and Australian research (earlier cited in chapter 3) that those who get involved in armed robbery have usually committed prior offences (see for example Matthews, 1996; Makkai & Payne, 2003; Willis, 2006). A prior Ghanaian study came up with similar findings also (see Appiahene-Gyamfi, 1998).

However, it may not always be true that robbery offenders have committed previous crime or crimes; some may begin their criminal career with armed robbery. For example, findings for this study (see table 16 below) show that nine people among the sample of respondents are first time offenders who have not committed any previous offence. Their youthfulness, lack of experience, search for unprotected and vulnerable targets liken them to “opportunistic robbers” as earlier discussed (see chapter 3). Eight of those who committed previous crimes were not convicted of those offences (see table 16 below), due to the inability of the police to detect their crimes, arrest, and prosecute them. These ones are called “professional” and/or “chronic” robbers who have been in the “practice” for some years and have robbed banks and other commercial institutions. They were adept at the use of gun and planned their operations with the help of tip-offs from “insiders”. Some in this category have carried out raids up to ten times without being caught. Therefore, earlier discussion of professional and/or chronic robbers (see chapter 3), seem to mirror the type(s) found in this study.

Considering table 16 again, we notice that three previous offenders had already spent one or two criminal convictions. They can be said to be “amateurs” because they do not have much experience in robbery and have been arrested before. This supports what was discussed earlier in chapter 3 that amateur robbers must have had failed robbery attempts and previous convictions (see Matthews, 2002). Moreover, among the entire sample of respondents, some possess the typologies of addict/alcoholic robbers similar to the ones discussed in chapter 3 (see 5.4.2 for details).

Table 16: Offenders' previous offences and convictions

No of offenders	1 offence	2 offences	3 or more offences	Convictions
3	Stealing	Nil	Nil	Nil
4	Armed robbery	Nil	Nil	Nil
1	Breaking and entering	Nil	Nil	1
1	Nil	Stealing / armed robbery	Nil	1
1	Nil	Nil	Stealing, robbery and murder	2
1	Robbery	Nil	Nil	Nil
9	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil

Source: Interview data.

However, concerning what the offenders said about their previous offences (see table 16 above), one is inclined to question the honesty behind their accounts. How could only 2 people have committed between 2 and 3 offences? How could 9 people have committed just one offence each? Finally, how could 9 people have counted themselves as first time offenders without previous offences and convictions? It appears these offenders may have told the truth; or they have not told the whole truth; or they have not even told the truth in the first place. Considering what the majority said, we were able to classify them as opportunist robbers. Apparently, their degree of honesty about past criminal involvement is ambivalent, hence it does not allow us to clearly accept that they are predominantly opportunist robbers.

Then again, based on the other answers they gave about their criminal life, and what we can gather contextually, the majority of these offenders seem to be professional robbers who on many occasions may have planned and enacted their stick-ups by targeting banks, other commercial places, people's homes, motorways, and even interstate robbery operations. This corroborates the argument that armed robbery is mostly committed by persons skilled in the use of various kinds of weapons (Appiahene-Gyamfi, 1999). For Matthews (2002) armed robbery in England and Wales is less often enacted by professional and experienced "project" offenders acting in coordinated groups. He further suggests that it is becoming a deskilled offence. As noted before (see chapter 3) the professional robber is the typical robber in the public eye. This is because professional offenders are regarded as high-risk, violent offenders; while they make up only a small percentage of the offending population, they cause the greatest concern to the society (Smith & Louis, 2010; Farrington 1997). It might have been that the inability of the respondents to say accurately how many times they have offended was to avoid the possibility of incriminating

themselves for any unspent convictions. Their fear seems to be: to what extent would the information they give to the researcher about their criminal lives go? The answers they gave were their personal decisions, which justified their actions. The fact remains that these respondents are armed robbers in the real sense and not just ordinary or petty criminals.

Among the respondents (see table 17 below) five are in the condemned category, four are serving jail terms between fourteen and forty-two years, only one is serving life imprisonment, while ten are awaiting trials. The distresses associated with being behind bars are sadly underrated by conventional practical approaches to prison life. Prison is known to be associated with painful separation and loss, and the wrench of restricted contact (Liebling, 1999: 165) and lack of freedom.

Table 17: Offenders' prison status

Status	Number	Percentage
Awaiting trial males	10	50
Condemned criminals	5	25
Life imprisonment	1	5
14 to 42 years imprisonment	4	20
Total	20	100

Source: Interview data.

Only a few respondents feel that the activities of the prison system such as religious worship, education and carpentry work are helping to change their lives for the better. As people are increasingly detained in prison for a protracted period, they learn new criminal tricks and become hardened. From the findings as shown in (table 17 above), it is obvious that more people are being locked up in prison without trial for a long time.

Data from the Nigeria Prison Service (NPS) reveal that only a small number (201) of youths are serving jail terms for armed robbery in various prisons across the country (see appendix 3). It is doubtful how this number represents all those convicted of armed robbery. At the time data was being collected in April 2008, the researcher was reliably informed that many prison commands across the country had not handed in their statistical returns for 2007. Moreover, it was observed that available crime data

were still being written in pen and paper or typed with manual typewriters, as most of their offices have not been equipped with modern computer systems.

However, there are imminent plans to network the Prisons' Offices of Statistics so that data can be accessed from any part of the establishment across the country. It was gathered that the Prison's Zonal Offices would be used for the pilot project after which it can be extended to the State Commands. Official crime data, whether from the NPF or NPS are not well organised and securely stored where the public can have access to them. Instead, the authorities hide them as "restricted materials" from the citizens, who supposedly have the civil right to know and assess the performance of the criminal justice system in crime prevention and/or reduction. Lack of access to hidden crime data could adversely affect both academic research and researchers themselves, because there would be no concrete evidence to put forward about the prevalence of crime over time.

As the data below illustrate, all the offenders interviewed are Nigerian citizens by birth and originate from five out of six geopolitical zones. They also come from fourteen out of thirty-six states of the federation and belong to eight tribes out of over two hundred and fifty in the country. Interestingly, the three major tribes: Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo are represented.

Table 18: Offenders' places of origin

Number of offenders	Geopolitical Zones	States	Tribes
2	North Central	Benue and Kogi	Tiv, Igala
1	North West	Kaduna	Hausa
4	South East	Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, Imo	Igbo
4	South South	Cross River, Delta, Edo,	Efik, Urhobo, Edo
9	South West	Ogun (3), Ondo (4), Oyo (2), Lagos,	Yoruba

Source: Interview data.

Looking at the offenders' diverse places of origin, one is inclined to argue that there are certain differences in their individual characteristics and motivations to crime. Similarly, Matthews (2002) noted a variety of differences that made up his 340 respondents, with particular reference to motivation. The data collected for this study reveal that people come from different states of the federation to carry out armed robberies in any targeted state. This is known as "interstate robbery", which suggests

that the cities attract a diverse population of youths who get involved in robbery. According to Waliru:

Most of the boys committing in this Lagos State are not from Lagos State. They come from Warri, Ishan, Kogi, many many places. They come for their daily bread ... if you want to be a robber you be a robber.

During the interviews, majority of the respondents revealed that the reasons for robbing in another state are to avoid being recognised by familiar faces as an armed robber, and to avoid being apprehended by the police. This suggests that the majority of the offenders for this study are professional robbers, contrary to what is contained in table 16. All the respondents were between sixteen years and thirty-five years of age when armed robberies were committed. The age range is typical of armed robbers in Nigeria as earlier noted in chapter 3 (see Beredugo, 2003).⁵³ It is also typical of youth age in Nigeria as noted in chapter 1 (see FRN, 2001; see also Blum, 2007).

From the sample interviewed, nine people fall between the ages of sixteen and twenty, whereas six respondents were aged between twenty-one and twenty-five. Three people were aged between twenty-six and thirty, and only two respondents were aged within the range of thirty-one and thirty-five (see table 19 below). Finally, the mean age of offenders when armed robberies were committed stood at twenty-two years.

Table 19: Age of offenders when robbery was committed

Age range (Years)	Number of offenders	Percentage
16 to 20	9	45
21 to 25	6	30
26 to 30	3	15
31 to 35	2	10
Total	20	100

Source: Interview data.

⁵³It also corresponds with a London study carried out by McClintock and Gibson (1961) where the age of convicted offenders was between less than seventeen and over thirty. The two sets of data indicate that in Nigeria and Britain age distribution for armed robbery is within a similar range notwithstanding differences in culture and family upbringing.

At the time of interviews (see table 20 below) the mean age of respondents was thirty years and an age range of nineteen and forty-three.

Table 20: Age of offenders at the time of interview

Age range	Number	Percentage
19 to 23	1	5
24 to 28	9	45
29 to 33	5	25
34 to 38	3	30
39 to 43	2	10
Total	20	100

Source: Interview data.

However, if we compare their age range at the time of interviews with their age range when robberies were committed, it is likely to suggest that many must have spent a long time in prison either serving longer sentences or awaiting trials.

Concerning their marital status, data reveal that only one is legitimately married, two are in *de facto* relationships with girlfriends who raised children for them, while the remaining seventeen are unmarried. Similarly, Ekpenyong (1989) supports this; he confirms that most of his respondents are not married. It is suggested that the unmarried state of robbers easily exposes them to illicit and indiscriminate sexual pleasures, which may result in the procreation of offsprings whom they do not give regular support (Katz, 1988: 200). Furthermore, Katz (1988: 211) argues that “... sexual relations often come to stickup men because women appreciate their hard tough-guy reputations”.

Twelve out of the twenty incarcerated offenders come from monogamous families, while eight are from polygamous homes. Twelve of the respondents have two living parents (nine from monogamous homes and three from polygamous homes), five have only one living parent (three from monogamous homes and two from polygamous families). Furthermore, three have both parents dead while another three have parents who are divorced (two from families where polygamy is practised and one from a monogamous family). Although more than half of the population come from monogamous families, which probably indicates that most families have in recent times preferred this system to polygamy. The polygamous family structure remains a way of life for those involved in it, but the family processes and dynamics involved in polygamous families seem to be more problematic than in monogamous families.

From the data, one of the respondents described having come from a family with ten wives and sixty children, where conflicts, rivalries and jealousies occur frequently. As Wardle (2007) suggests, family structure may be an easy way of referring to family interaction factors and dynamics such as conflict, control, communication, caring and trust, identity support, etc., which previous research has shown to correlate with delinquency.

On the issue of education, only one respondent was able to gain a National Diploma Certificate; none of the others attempted anything beyond Senior Secondary School level. Finally, only one respondent did not receive any formal education. This is not something unusual in Nigeria, although there is no statistics to substantiate, but those who have no formal education are in the minority. However, many could not speak correct English but resorted to “Pidgin” or “Broken English”, which they may well have learnt through associating with friends. In addition, some could not write down what they spoke. Overall, the educational level of our respondents was poor (see table 21 below), implying that they would find it difficult to transit to stable employment (see Gwadz et al, 2009). From another Nigerian study, Ekpenyong (1989) came up with a similar result: his respondents were academically backward, with only 7 per cent completing secondary education. In this case, the level of education found among our respondents does not deviate from comparable levels among respondents in prior research.

Table 21: Offenders’ level of education

Level of education	Number	Percentage
None	1	5
Primary 1 to 3	1	5
Primary 4 to 6	6	30
Junior Secondary	3	15
Senior Secondary	8	40
Tertiary (National Diploma)	1	5
Total	20	100

Source: Interview data.

5.2. Family circumstances

For this study, family circumstances are regarded as initial conditions that may push offenders into committing an armed robbery. Previous research has revealed that the family backgrounds of many offenders are severely disorganised and dysfunctional (Fox, 1981). According to our findings, some offenders are coming from polygamous families, some have experienced parental divorce, and a few have experienced the death of their parent(s).

5.2.1. Polygamy

Polygamy, as a system of marriage in Nigeria, has an ancient pedigree. As a system that is prehistorically rooted in the people's culture, it has thrived in all the ethnic groups, beginning with many traditional title holders in the community. Before the advent of Christianity, the marrying of more than one wife was very common in most Nigerian cities, towns and villages. As things stand now, the influence of Christianity, unlike any other religion, is trying to obliterate polygamy from the Nigerian culture. Nevertheless, polygamy remains a widely practised valid form of marriage among traditional African societies (see Elbedour et al, 2002). While Islamic faith favours polygamy, Christianity is antithetical to it. Instead, Christianity is supportive of monogamy, which is "one man one wife".⁵⁴ This corroborates the view of scholars (Hamdan et al, 2009; Elbedour et al, 2002) that men who practice Islam are significantly more probable than are Christian men to become polygamous. For instance, in a Nigerian study conducted by Peterson (1999), 98 per cent of the polygamous wives were Muslim (see also Hamdan et al, 2009). In a Ghanaian study by Klomegah (1997), the distribution of faith groups of wives in polygamous marriages was as follows: Muslim 43 per cent, Catholic 25 per cent, Protestant 24 per cent, and no religious affiliation 39 per cent (see also Hamdan et al, 2009).

For this study, data reveal that eight respondents come from polygamous families, but seven people said their polygamous family backgrounds made them get involved in

⁵⁴According to the Qur'an 4: 3 "... marry women of your choice, two, or three or four..." On the other hand, the Bible states: "But from the beginning, God made them male and female. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh" (Mark 10: 6-8).

armed robbery, whereas only one respondent named Ezienyi did not mention polygamy as his reason. According to him, his father died when he was thirteen years of age. Then the father's second wife left the family with her only daughter and never returned. Finally, he remained with his mother and other siblings. During that time, Ezienyi was not privileged to go to school at all. Had he been to school, attachment to conventional institution would have prevented his involvement in crime (see Hirschi, 2002, [1969]). Drawing from Ezienyi's experience, not every child from a polygamous family may be privileged to have basic education. This is consequent upon the poverty that polygamy creates at times. For example, Kwelu attributes the genesis of his crime problem to inadequate family care caused by polygamy:

I come from a polygamous family where there [are] so many children and it is impossible to take proper care of everybody. If your mother is doing a good business, she will support the husband, but where the reverse is the case, she will have to ignore the older ones and look after the younger ones. I got involved in crime because I had no option. That was why I got involved....

Balolu also narrated his experience of having many wives in a family:

... it is not good for a man to have ... two wife [wives]. I know where my problem came from because all these things that are being happens to me I know that it is not ordinary ..., because since the day I have been growing, I have never even stolen my mother's money since the day of my life. But when my father went to marry another one young girl, which is we went to school together. It is because of this, I didn't know what my father see into him [her]. My father unfortunately, they fall in love to each other. So one day I came to house I now saw the girl, I now asked my mother who is marry[ing] this girl: is it my brother or my juniors one? [S]he said no, I should forget about it. My mama say I should forget about it, it is a very long story.

Of course, not all the respondents were able to use the key word "polygamy" when responding to interview questions, but they were able to say for example, "my father marry seven wives", "he marry plenty wives", and "marrying two wives". Even so, when asked any question on polygamy with their involvement in armed robbery, they

mostly referred to it as “a problem” that has made them to become “thief”[thieves] when they actually meant armed robbers.⁵⁵

However, Dimotan explains that he got into robbery because of polygamy and the attendant poverty, which made his father to fund his education halfway.

*My father marry seven wives. And from my father na me be the first son. So my father he no have money. Na Chief, but all this local Chief. He don have money. He train me for school, he cannot train me enough. I come cook enter gang, come dey thief.*⁵⁶

Lemiola admitted this about his father:

*He marry plenty wives ... to pay my school fees na wahala ... If say my papa take care of me I no go enter say I wan go dey thief*⁵⁷.

What Dimotan and Lemiola stress is that polygamy has led to their poverty and lack of education, which eventually culminated in gang formation and robbery. In a polygamous family setting, the issue at stake always is the father’s inability to fend for all the family members. His dereliction to domestic affairs is usually detrimental to his children’s upbringing in the long run. Whenever that happens, the whole burden lies on each of the wives to cater for her biological children (see for example Al Krenawi, 2001). Whether a polygamous family is wealthy or not there is bound to be a problem, resulting from, especially, the father’s divided and unequal attention in the family, such that social bonds become weak because some of the children are loved and favoured by their father while others are not. Although mothers may be there but the unique role of a father in a family is seemingly essential to strengthen the parent-child bonds. According to Elbedour et al (2002: 262), “By weakening the parent-child

⁵⁵It seems that lack of basic education, and indeed the inability of robbers to converse in conventional English have brought about the wrong use of terminology such as “thief” when the actual crime committed was “armed robbery”. It should be stressed that the offender sample was recruited for interviews based on their criminal profile as armed robbers.

⁵⁶My father married seven wives. I am the first son of my father. He has no money. He is a local chief. He has no money. He trained me at school but stooped half way. Then, I joined a gang to become a thief (armed robber).

⁵⁷He married many wives, and to pay my school fees was a problem. If my father had taken proper care of me I would not have become a thief (armed robber).

bond, polygamous family life provides a reduced level of emotional satisfaction and psychological security for the child”. In this way, “attachment” becomes loose. As control theory suggests, the bond of affection for conventional people is a major deterrent to criminal involvement (Hirschi, 2002, [1969]: 83).⁵⁸

Balolu expresses his opinion about the problem caused by polygamy:

You see for them to be marrying two wives is causing a lot of problem to the family. Is causing a lot of problem to the family. Because when you are having one wife, two wives,...three, that's when you are having another more problem entirely, another more problem will be coming. Because you have been attend[ing] to us before, but you are[have] gotten another wife entirely. All those things you have been doing to us before, you will not do it.

When interviewed Sangi agreed:

E dey cause problem, if the man no have money. But if you have money, problem no dey . Even ... problem dey too because you dey take care of this one more than this one⁵⁹

Conversely, being part of a very large polygamous family provides numerous role models that are helpful to children. In addition, a polygamous family setting generates so much warmth and affection that it tends to benefit the child's mental health (Elbedour et al, 2002). In this way, it helps to control the child's likelihood of getting involved in delinquent acts. There are other positive effects polygamy can have on the family, such as increase in the number of siblings and the creation of a large family, which is regarded as an asset. In a polygamous set-up, a father/husband is “general” to all the children and wives. The man or father is recognised as a noble and notable figure among his relatives and in his community.

⁵⁸Although Hirschi did not include polygamy in his study, but it has become necessary to invoke it to explain the involvement of youths in armed robbery.

⁵⁹Polygamy is problematic if a man has no money. However, if he has got money there will be no problem. There might still be a problem arising from unequal care among the wives.

As earlier illustrated, seven people suggested polygamy as their reason for going into armed robbery, even though they referred to “armed robbery” as “thief”. Although these respondents were under half of the total cohort interviewed, given that they constituted the entire number of individuals from such homes bar one, their responses seem to suggest that polygamy might be a factor in encouraging the youths to get involved in armed robbery. However, and as one of the offenders earlier pointed out, if a polygamous family is wealthy and the needs of the siblings are met, it is unlikely that the children will want to join the robbery bandwagon. If that is the case then, perhaps it is when polygamy is connected to poverty, that the crime channel is opened. Another important point to consider is that majority of the respondents come from families where monogamy is practised. Going on the basis of majorities alone, we might be led to conclude from this that those from monogamous families are more likely to be involved in armed robbery. Of course, everything is dependent on the family circumstances. While there is no statistics to illustrate, it is common to see that many polygamous families in Nigeria have brought up responsible, law abiding and patriotic citizens in different walks of life and levels of society.

Nevertheless, previous studies have demonstrated that polygamous marriages are more probable than are monogamous marriages to be torn by spousal conflict, tension, and jealousy (see Hamdan et al, 2009: 756; Al-Krenawi & Slonim-Nevo, 2008; Elbedour et al, 2002: 259; Achte & Schakit, 1980; Ware, 1979). It is also documented that the stress coming from a polygamous family life predisposes mothers and children to psychological problems (see Elbedour et al, 2002: 259; Eapen et al, 1998; Al-Issa, 1990). In their Israeli study, Hamdan et al (2009) found that after allowing for the influence of socio-economic factors, there were no differences between children of polygamous marriages and those of monogamous marriages for any of the psychological scales. When polygamy is the accepted social practice in a particular culture, it does not have a deleterious psychological effect on children. However, Elbedour et al (2002: 259) argue that women in polygamous families are commonly unhappy, and the addition of a second or third wife is normally very distressing to the “senior wives”. Conversely, more wives in a family are advantageous to farming and other domestic duties as there will be many hands available to do them (see Hamdan et al, 2009).

The findings of this research show that some of the wives in a polygamous home resort to machinations against the children of others by invoking extraordinary spiritual powers to inflict harm on them or even kill them. Molafi, one of the respondents said he got into armed robbery because his father's other wife (step-mother) wanted to kill him so that her biological son could become the first child of the family.⁶⁰

Many family of people e dey do juju for person...like him daddy don get two or three wife. All this wife na him dey do juju make that person die. For wetin he no like do before e go putam for him face through juju, he go dey do that kind thing make him killam no bi say na the pikin na him go be first born for the daddy, na him no good make person daddy marry like three wife, two wife, e dey cause damaging for person life to rob.⁶¹

Balolu has this to say about polygamy:

They are bringing a lot of problem to this nation. Because you see, in olden days when our[fore] father[s] was [were] marrying two wives, that is where... respect is still there. This youngest one[s] they have known to go to the herbalist house. There is not any good advice they need ... than to kill this one [me]. Let me [say], this is the first son, when I make him to craze, he will not get the same ... when I put him to shame he will not get the same...All those things cannot help a family. It is destroying the family. When I'm being brought here, there is a lot of things they have been planning to [do], if not say God spare me purposely.

Therefore, if polygamy seems problematic in bringing up children responsibly, what could happen when a child's parent(s) die?

5.2.2. Death of parents

The death of a parent or worse still, both parents may lead youths into crime. Evidence from a previous quantitative Nigerian study has shown that the death of a parent (mother) was significantly associated with delinquency (Ogunlesi, 1990). Moreover, a quantitative UK study reveals that the loss of a mother may be associated

⁶⁰In traditional African society, and with particular reference to Nigeria, the first son has the right to patrimony except where there is a written WILL by the father. At times that WILL may be ignored by the kinsmen to give the heir what naturally belongs to him such as family house.

⁶¹In many polygamous homes, other women would like to use juju or charm to kill their step-child so that their biological child would take the position of first child. It is not good for a person's father to marry many wives. It is damaging to a person's life and lures him to rob.

with higher delinquency rates than the loss of a father because mothers take major role in child-rearing in the family than fathers especially as domestic duties are often divided along gender lines (Juby & Farrington, 2001). However, modern fathers are also taking up child-rearing responsibilities (Juby & Farrington, 2001), but it may not be as mothers do it. These studies seem to suggest that a mother's role is indispensable in preventing her offsprings from getting involved in crime, hence the issue is not just death, but "who died?"

Other previous studies have different views on parental death. Raine (1993) maintains that parental death is likely to be unrelated to later criminal behaviour. In their American study, Mack et al (2007) argue that parental death is a traumatic event that is thought to produce anxiety, emotional distress, and depression in response to the personal loss, but does not usually involve the same degree of emotional resentment present in divorced families. Juby and Farrington (2001) contend that parental loss is a stressor in its own right, but it has fewer adverse effects on delinquency.

From the sample interviewed, five linked their robbery offences to the death of their parents. If a parent dies, the children are adversely affected because their hopes and aspirations are temporarily, if not permanently shattered. As their "stronghold" weakens due to death, the tendency is for them to be "chaperoneless". The parental role is unique and different from any other role someone may play in a child's upbringing. Ideally, parents are role models who direct and positively influence the lives of their children through discipline, good example and training in educational, social, spiritual and domestic issues. This corroborates the view that emotional bond between the parent and the child most probably provides a bridge across, which pass parental principles and expectations (see Hirschi, 2002, [1969]: 86). This emotional bond fosters "attachment" between a child and the parent, which as Hirschi (2002, [1969]) suggests prevents a child from delinquency. Uruka, one of the interviewees has this to say:

I can only say that ... [it was] their [my][parents] death that lead me into this situation [robbery]. If at all that they are alive, I cannot go into it. Even my mother, most especially, my mother cannot allow me because she provides whatever I need. Even with the fact that I'm the first born, she took me that I'm the last born. So, my mother cannot do without me. So, I believe that it's their deaths that lead me into this situation.

Kwelu gives a similar reason:

But when my father who “hold me very tight”[my disciplinarian] died, that September 1994 is when I left my home and went into crime proper.

It seems when children are bereft of their parents, gaining access to basic education becomes a nightmare. One of the respondents called Ezienyi who never had any formal education stressed this:

If my papa dey alive I for go school. He for train me. ⁶²

Aresu, who lost his father under the age of seven and his mother at the age of seventeen was raised by a foster mother whom he addressed as “motherhood”. If any of his biological parents were alive at those critical years of his life, he would not have become a “street boy”. He acknowledged that:

I never knew my dad before and my mum train[ed] me a little and then died ... if I have mum or dad I won't be in street claiming to be a money making machine in the street, you know, moving around trying for some survival. But it is not by my will but the way I met myself, that was the way I follow.

Drawing from the views of the above respondents, it may be suggested that parental attachment creates both social and psychological impact in the lives of children and helps determine their future. However, if any person or couples or an organisation can play the parental role as expected, it may help in the proper formation of children. When parents of younger children and teenagers in Nigeria die, close family relations (from the extended family) normally foster those children the best way they can. Alternatively, some voluntary organisations have established orphanages with record of accomplishment, where adoptive parents can go to adopt a child or children, and subsequently raise them in the same way as biological parents. Although there are no statistics to show, it is ordinarily obvious that some of the children from such backgrounds have behaved relatively well in society. Arguably, children whose parents have died may not be involved in crime if they are properly attached to loving and caring stepparents.

⁶²If my father had been alive, I would have gone to school. He would have trained me.

Given the high mortality rate in Nigeria, with life expectancy for women at 47.3 years and men 46.4 years (UN, 2008),⁶³ there is the probability of at least one of the parents (in most cases a father) dying when their children are younger. Comparatively, mortality rate in the UK is low, with life expectancy for women at 81.6 years, and men 77.2 years (see UN, 2008), it is likely that both parents will train their children before they die. It seems implausible to argue that most children who have lost one or both parents will automatically get into robbery. Where there are no proper safeguards, children from such homes may be at risk of taking to crime. Nevertheless, if there is a “chaperon” it is highly unlikely that they will get into crime.

In Britain, some close adult family relations (sisters, sisters in-law, brothers, grandparents, and so on) may informally agree in writing (as part of their WILLS) to take care of each other’s children if there is the sudden death of their parents. If only one of the parents suddenly dies, then the remaining person takes over the parenting responsibility. If children are sixteen years old and above, it seems that they may cater for themselves, and this might open the way for criminogenic opportunities. Arguably, part of the difficulties militating against the care of other people’s children if their parents suddenly die is the issue of costs surrounding their maintenance. If no close relative can take over the care of such children, the last option is the adoption agencies run by government and other voluntary organisations. The death of parents, therefore, may not necessarily cause a child’s proclivity for crime unless there are prevailing emotional, social, and psychological circumstances encouraging deviancy. One of such circumstances might be a broken home.

5.2.3. Broken home

Since the emergence of criminology in the nineteenth century, the issue of “broken home” has been a fundamental part of delinquency theory (Juby & Farrington, 2001: 22; Farrington, 2002; Haas et al, 2004). In Nigeria, it is still a taboo to separate and or divorce from a marriage relationship. Indeed, Christianity, Islam, and African Traditional Religion (ATR) hold in high esteem the institution of marriage as

⁶³“The United Nations World Statistics Pocketbook 2008 is an authoritative and comprehensive compilation of 55 key statistical indicators in convenient country profile format. This edition presents available data for 216 countries and areas, from over 20 international statistical sources, generally for the years 2000, 2005 and 2007” (see data.un.org/search).

something sacrosanct, and a lifelong commitment by both man and woman. It is essentially the source of offspring generation and community cohesion.

A broken home has the tendency of presenting a child with unlimited and unsupervised freedom that may expose him to a wrong career path that leads to crime. Two respondents mentioned “broken home” as their reason for being involved in armed robbery. In the words of Shasha:

Like for me just because of it [divorce] the family scatter. In the way my family scatter, that's what made [me] involve [in armed robbery] ... By then ... when I come back from village and decided to go[to] school, and my uncle said he don't have power to sponsor me. That's what made me to join conductor. There's no body to help me. From conductor that's how the crime come out.⁶⁴

Where the parents are not living together as husband and wife due to relationship problems resulting from divorce, their children may become increasingly vulnerable to feelings of anger, loneliness and sadness. Previous studies suggest that compared to their counterparts living in intact families with both biological parents, children from nontraditional family structures exhibited more aggressive and antisocial behaviours, conduct disorders, communication difficulties, and adjustment problems. They also had a poor self-concept and higher rates of school attrition, sexual activity, drug and alcohol abuse (Hamdan et al, 2009; see also Wardle, 2007; Cohen, 2002). On the contrary, Hirschi's (2002, [1969]: 87) research data reveal that children living with both parents before the age of five years are just as likely to have been involved in delinquent activities as children separated from one or both parents at the same age. This suggests that there are no positive effects of attachment for children living with both parents at an early age.

Nevertheless, previous studies have shown that the damaging effects of separation and divorce on attachment primarily caused higher rates of delinquency among disrupted family lives. Children from broken homes were more at risk of delinquent behaviour because resentment towards their parents made them less affectionate and

⁶⁴I got involved in crime due to my parents' divorce. At that time when I wanted to go to school, my uncle said he could not help to see me through. That made me to become a bus conductor, and I finally saw myself in crime.

communicative (Juby & Farrington, 2001; Barber & Maine, 2007). Control theorists argue that in homes characterized by an absent parent, conflict and tension, or a lack of familial love and support, youths reared in these environments will be more inclined to criminal behaviours (see Bumphus & Anderson, 1999). Other past studies have also demonstrated that the effects of divorce on children have negative consequences for boys than for girls (Hines, 1997; Morris & Cherlin, 1995). It seems accurate to argue that the effects of divorce vary qualitatively according to the developmental status of children (Hines, 1997). A common understanding is that earlier breaks will have more developmental effects on children than later ones (see Wells & Rankin, 1986). If a broken home, for instance, causes a child's alienation from the parent(s), he will not learn or will not have the feeling for moral rules; he will not develop an adequate conscience or superego (see Hirschi, 2002, [1969]: 86) that could prevent delinquent behaviour.

Findings have also revealed that the effects of a broken home on a child include crime, lack of discipline and lack of education. All these put together point to weak attachment of the child to the parents. From his grim experience of a broken home Lemiola said:

Ah, e do many thing[s] to my life. If my parents, they dey together, I for no enter [into] crime. Even self, I for no reach this place wey I dey because they for join hand[s][to] beat me. They go dey talk to me, even school me I no go, they go try to send me go[back to] school.⁶⁵

As social control theory suggests, there is greater delinquency in broken homes rather than in intact homes because youths from broken homes have weak attachments to parents. Since the father is usually absent, such families are less likely to provide the required supervision and discipline (see Bumphus & Anderson, 1999: 310; see also Wardle, 2007). Furthermore, other scholars (see for example Mack et al, 2007; Rebellon, 2002; Sampson & Laub, 1993) maintain that many single-parent families are, by nature, a social setting that impedes the establishment of bonds to conformity because half of the parental unit is absent and unable to provide proper control,

⁶⁵It did many things to my life. If my parents were together, I would not have entered into crime. I would not have been in prison, because they would have beaten me up. They would have talked to me. Although I did not go to school, they would have tried to send me back to school.

supervision, and socialization of the child. It is therefore argued that single parent families, and in particular mother-only families, produce more delinquent children than two-parent families (Ngale, 2009; Wright & Wright, 1994). In her US study, McCord (1991) differs by suggesting that competent mothers who are self-confident, provided leadership, consistently nonpunitive in discipline and affectionate seem to insulate a child against getting involved in crime. Bumphus and Anderson (1999) also believe that single-parent families are not more criminogenic than two-parent families. Moreover, it has been stressed that there is no relationship between female family headship and delinquency, and when it comes to instilling nondelinquent attitudes, female-headed households are just as effective as two-parent households (Austin, 1992; Bumphus & Anderson, 1999).

However, fathers who interact with their wives in ways that exhibit high mutual esteem, who are not highly aggressive, and who generally get along well with their wives become models for socialized behaviour. On the contrary, fathers who undermine their wives, who fight with the family, and who are aggressive become models of antisocial behaviour. Both types of fathers, it seems, educate their sons how to behave when they become adults (McCord, 1991: 412).

In spite of inconsistencies and varied opinions from previous research, and considering the above findings for this study, it is probably true that the idea of a broken home is a risk factor that encourages youths into armed robbery. As of today, “broken home” is not yet a serious issue to worry about in Nigeria. For that reason, it may be questionable to suggest that children from broken homes in Nigeria might take to robbery. Even if it happens, it is likely to be circumstantial and particular. Apparently, threatened divorce or separation cases in Nigeria receive the appropriate attention from the extended family members. The system of the extended family is a unique tie that brings consanguine relations together in good times and in bad. When family crises like separation and/or divorce suddenly crop up, such problems are usually dealt with by traditional methods of adjudication without recourse to the law courts.

The system of extended families is less common in Western countries like Britain, where nuclear families tend to be self-centred entities, not so accustomed to looking

for help to extended family members. As previous research has revealed, children from broken homes in Britain can often be vulnerable to the lure of criminal activities (see Farrington, 1990). Nevertheless, in civilised societies, divorced parents, (both or either) may have the right to child custody or visit until the age of 18, unless such right has previously been abused and/or withdrawn. Parental physical presence around their child creates the specific interaction, which is a powerful determiner of the child's overall development (Hines, 1997) and intimacy with the parents. That relationship implies an "attachment", which as previously mentioned by Hirschi (2002, [1969]), prevents a child from criminal behaviour. While attachment to parents may prevent an early development of delinquent peers, it might do little to reduce delinquency among already existing delinquent peers (Warr, 2006) who owe their loyalty to peer pressure than to parental control.

Some scholars (Wells & Rankin, 1986) argue that parents may be physically present, but psychologically absent from the family because of neglect, indifference and or hostility. For Hirschi (2002, [1969: 88-89]), "the important consideration is whether the parent is psychologically present Children who perceive their parents as unaware of their whereabouts are highly likely to have committed delinquent acts". The roles of father and mother are equally important in the upbringing of children until adulthood; if the role of any becomes weak or not properly performed at the right time, it might create a pathway for the children to join criminal groups in due course. This also might have been the problem faced by our sample of respondents who blamed the factor of broken home for their involvement in armed robbery. Then again, Warr (2006) admits that while attachment to parents is not sufficient to prevent delinquent peers, the time spent with family (parents and children together) is a more potent mechanism in not only counteracting and overcoming more serious delinquent behaviour, but also inhibiting peer influence that makes such behaviour possible.

As some scholars (Hines, 1997: 380; Hetherington, 1993) suggest, early adolescent is a time of increased criminal behaviour in children from divorced and non-divorced homes, but the impact is more in those from divorced homes who are normally worse off economically. Wardle (2007: 96) concludes that maintaining the integrity of a marriage (that is not plagued by the high conflict of domestic violence) is a great protector against children getting involved in criminal activity. Intact marriage

appears to be a significant protective factor in keeping boys out of serious delinquent activity.

5.3. Economic motivations

As noted before, motivation is a major ingredient for robbery to occur. For a better understanding of the motivation of offenders, it is necessary to understand the circumstances for robbery that are familiar to them (Katz, 1991). The sample of our respondents identified some economic factors responsible for their crime.

5.3.1. Lack of jobs

Lack of jobs was mentioned by nearly half (nine) of the respondents from our sample as their reason for getting involved in armed robbery. On the issue of employment, three of the respondents are employed in low earning jobs such as conductors and drivers, while the great majority are unemployed. This also corroborates previous research, which shows that robbery offenders are normally labourers and casual workers (see McClintock & Gibson, 1961). In the main, robbery offenders either hold menial jobs or are unemployed before their involvement in the crime.

Research has also shown that employability largely discourages youth involvement in crime (see Good et al, 1986; Farrington et al, 1986; see also Farrall & Bowling, 1999). A large body of literature attribute crime to joblessness (see for example Fagan & Freeman, 1999; Good et al, 1986). Some youths who have been educated make an honest effort to look for jobs to earn a living and shun criminality. When they are despairing of any job coming their way, then robbery often suggests itself to them as the next available option. It could be argued that as legitimate opportunities for youths to climb the employment ladder become rare, they are pushed into creating illegitimate opportunities as a panacea. Therefore, when youths are economically stressed, and cannot gain access to any means of livelihood, some would probably end up being armed robbers (see for example Oluwasola, 2007; Chukuezi, 2009). Hamedu got involved in robbery while in such a situation:

So after looking for a job here and there, without getting any one, then after learning a job; I learnt mechanical engineering in a company. So after then, I tried as much as possible to search for my own kind of job to

do to no avail. And I'm a kind of person that don't really like depending on people for anything.

A recent *Punch* Newspaper⁶⁶ publication that featured the Minister of Youth Development in Nigeria revealed the unhealthy escalation of youth unemployment. From the 2006 provisional census data, 80 million people make up the national youth population - that is 60 per cent of Nigeria's population. Out of that, 64 million have no jobs. Only 10 per cent of graduates each year get into paid employment (Ojiabor, 2008). While the formal economic activities such as industries, commerce, services or administration account for a relatively insignificant portion of employment opportunities in Nigerian cities, the informal economy scattered across many parts of the country provide between 70 and 80 per cent of job opportunities for the citizens (Oluwasola, 2007: 3). Though the informal sector are all small in scale measured in terms of capital used and people employed, many are indeed very small having insignificant amount of capital and operated by a single person (Oluwasola, 2007: 3-4).

It seems there is no suitable instrument for the creation of jobs in Nigeria. Even the few available jobs are not offered on merit to the best candidates. Instead the "man know man"⁶⁷ rationale or so-called "godfatherism" is used to deny the best candidates jobs. Hundreds of thousands of graduates are turned out every year from the local universities and other tertiary institutions to join the labour force. After the compulsory "National Youth Service"⁶⁸, which lasts for a year, the agonies of the umpteen youths begin to unfold.

The government has been criticised for the current lack of jobs in the country. It seems that politicians always promise to address the unemployment problem when voted into power. When they get at the reins, promises made to people may no longer be taken seriously. Many idle graduates are bored by their joblessness, and to overcome that, some may take to a quasi-self-employment such as "street hawking", a

⁶⁶It was published on Wednesday, 16 July 2008.

⁶⁷This is a system whereby rich and prominent people present their candidates for available jobs in the country. Sadly, those who are qualified but have no person to speak for them will not get any job.

⁶⁸In this programme yearly graduates from tertiary institutions across the country are sent to work in different parts of the country. It is a preparation for joining the labour force. The Youth Service work is stipendiary on the part of the Federal Government. However, the host employers may generously choose to give their staff some token payment.

pattern of “street economy”. Scholars have argued that street economy provides critical and instant financial support for young people in dire need. It also gives them the freedom to be self-independent, flexible with working hours and non-accountable to anybody. At the same time, it is dangerous, demoralising and treacherous (Gwadz et al, 2009: 370), thus making criminal opportunities easily accessible. According to Aresu:

Many people are graduates out there but no work to do. I know many graduate they are selling, they are hawking in the “go slow”⁶⁹, they never see any vacant office, ... so what will be the next action for such a graduate that finished school and never see[n] a work. He will lure himself into such game, which he never knew is a bad game. Who is the cause, the government is the cause.

Having a job is one thing, having a good and secure job is another. When people are not satisfied with their job due to a poor wage, they may get involved in criminal activities like robbery to make ends meet. However, if somebody is fortunate enough to get a good job, looking elsewhere for crime is less likely. Previous studies maintain that exposure to high-quality jobs leads to a reduction in crime (Uggen, 1996; Fagan & Freeman, 1999). Furthermore, a regular job is a framework for daily living. It moderates a person’s life, imposing discipline and regularity (Wilson, 1996). Molafi agrees that:

If [a] person no get better something, correct better work, how manage, you no go rob ? The person go rob.⁷⁰

In other words, it seems to be true that a regular and secure job negates criminal intent, in that it gives contentment and fulfilment to the recipient. As previous American study suggests, the aspiration of having a good job or career seems vague and may be understood differently by different people; nevertheless, this is consistent with Merton’s argument on culturally prescribed goals (see Menard, 1995). On the contrary, if people are unemployed, they have ample time to waste doing nothing. When subsequently they are presented with illegitimate ways of survival that seem attractive, they might succumb to such temptations. As Merton (1968a) has earlier

⁶⁹“Go slow” refers to traffic jam which is very common along the motorways in Lagos.

⁷⁰If a person has not got a better job, he will rob.

argued, some social structures in society have exerted a definite pressure upon individuals to get involved in nonconformist behaviour. During interview, Obvuma responded by saying that:

One, there is no work in our country in Nigeria. And you will see some people will finish their school but to get work will be very difficult for them.

The rigours of job hunt may make some impatient youths take to armed robbery as a “magic potion”. It was a typical case for Hamedu who said:

I was just sitting idle at home, and then a friend of mine came to look for me. He said there is work out there that we need to do, which will fetch us money.

Although it has also been debated repeatedly whether unemployment may or may not lead to crime, but Gill (2000) confirms that unemployment is the most significant variable that attracted 41 per cent of all his respondents to get involved in robbery. Looking at the current situation in Nigeria, one would be inclined to argue that lack of jobs is a major phenomenon that pushes people into crimes such as robbery. Since the occupational domain is the legitimate opportunity structure for people, it sounds logical to argue that unemployment could be positively linked with criminal involvement (see Odumosu, 1999). At the same time, it has to be remembered that, there are some people who have been out of work for a number of years but did not want to get into crime. There are still some employed people who get into robbery for another reason. For example, Bolati made it clear:

Like my own, I get work. If not because of “bad friend” wey come [to] meet me. I no plan am.⁷¹

In short, given that past criminological literature on unemployment and crime is still inconclusive (see for example Sheptycki, 2009), this study has followed that line of thought. As the data have shown, some unemployed and employed people do commit crime. That being the case, and since a minor proportion of respondents (45 per cent) suggested unemployment as a motivation for their involvement in armed robbery, it

⁷¹In my own case, I had a job. If not because of bad friend who came to meet me, I did not plan to rob.

seems implausible to suppose that unemployment properly accounts for the youth involvement in that crime. Although many people regard unemployment as criminogenic, yet something could be learnt from the Australian research where unemployment was rarely the main reason for the respondents' involvement in armed robbery (Nugent et al, 1989). Then again, it may be difficult to deny completely that unemployment could lead youths into armed robbery. At the same time, it might be a good idea to consider the link between poverty and robbery.

5.3.2. Poverty

Sixteen of the respondents mentioned poverty as a factor responsible for their involvement in robbery. As data reveal, the sixteen interviewees are from poor families. Similarly, Matthews (2002) confirms that a vast majority of robbers are from “on the breadline” family settings. It is often assumed that poverty and social inequality could explain the problem of crime and delinquency in the developing countries [including Nigeria], which are normally regarded as poor countries. Following from that, it seems reasonable to link the level of poverty in such countries with their level of criminality, and *vice versa* (Clinard & Abbott, 1973). However, there are no social indicators that universally predict the extent of crime in a country (UNODC, 2005). When there are problems in a country or any part of a country, poverty can make them worse. In part, this happens because poor people are likely to be people with other problems such as joblessness or low educational attainment. These are not only people with low resources; they are often stigmatised and socially excluded (Spicker, 2001). Goldsmith and Blakely (1992) for example, distinguish “poverty as pathology” from “poverty as incident or accident” and “poverty as structure.” From the look of things, poverty as structure is rooted in Nigeria.

It has been argued that poverty is one of Nigeria's greatest problems (Oyebade, 2003), which as noted in chapter 2, adds to the crime problem in the country (see Oluwasola, 2007). The poverty rate in Nigeria has spiralled dramatically and disproportionately in recent years. Seemingly, populist opinion has decried the untold hardship and unimaginable suffering poisoning the lives of many of the citizenry. We should not be surprised then that a majority of the respondents referred to poverty as their motivation for being involved in robbery. Virtually, all the respondents come from

poor families where it is extremely difficult to afford three square meals in a day. As a solution, children from such families try to “fight” poverty by getting involved in armed robbery. When interviewed, Lemiola confirmed that:

*All those boys, all of us come from poor family. Because in the morning sometimes before we go school, no food for us to eat. E dey cause make people dey go thief.*⁷²

Even those who attempted going to school found it hard for their families to pay their tuition fees, hence they got involved in armed robbery to see themselves through. As Afadi rightly pointed out:

... you know some of them, they can't pay their school fees. The family can't pay their school fees. They feel that is the way they can use to take care of themselves to pay their school fees and sponsor themselves [themselves] in school.

As Odumosu (1999) earlier suggested, since the lower class individuals in Nigeria find themselves in an anomic situation, they are strained in such a way that they are unable to reconcile their aspiration with their limited opportunities, hence their involvement in crime. Poverty suggests an inadequate standard of living, unequal income distribution, inability to achieve one's goals and aspirations as expected, or a subculture of certain behaviour and attitudes (Clinard & Abbott, 1973). To close the inequality gap, some desperate youths may subscribe to armed robbery as a viable option. Waliru is a typical example:

And we the son[s] of poor man, we cannot just open our eyes and die [of] hunger like that. So, we have to go out and look for money by all means, anyhow.

Balolu has a similar experience:

No one wants to help the poorest one[s]. That is why the poorest one [s] want to take it by violent because the biggest one[s], they don't want to render the help.

⁷²All of us got involved in crime because we came from poor families. In the mornings before we went to school there may not be any food for us to eat.

In capitalist societies like Nigeria (see Marenin, 1987), it is obvious that opportunities to achieve economic security are unequally distributed between the rich and the poor. Some people are left to fend for themselves in the quest for economic survival. In the process, crime is likely to be committed through the breaking of some laws (Gordon, 1971). It can be argued that armed robbery is one of the crimes that is inversely proportional to the economic situation of Nigeria (see Odumosu, 1999), where some lower class youths get involved in armed robberies to improve the lot of their families. Ufem for example said:

*Many people dey struggle just to survive. Na the thing wey dey make crime dey for the country. Because of poverty, na poverty, dey lead us to crime. If our families them get, our parents get, but because our parents no get [anything] na him dey make us dey commit crime.*⁷³

It has been observed time after time that the gulf between the rich and poor in Nigeria is wide. As the rich tend to become richer, the poor become poorer. Inequality is obviously an overt reality among the entire Nigerian population. Supportively, anomie-strain theory maintains that while lower class people face the greatest strain, those of the upper class face the least (LaFree, 1998; Merton, 1938). A United Nations estimate shows that a huge youth population in Nigeria (25 million) is economically, socially and politically deprived. Consequently, some would probably belong to the armed criminals and gangs (Centre for International Cooperation and Security [CICS], 2005)⁷⁴ scattered across the length and breadth of the country. In addition, previous study shows that the high rate of poverty in Nigeria has led to an increase in property crimes such as armed robbery (Odumosu, 1999). When poverty is combined with high levels of economic and social aspirations, criminal activities will emerge (Odumosu, 1999) because the lower class individuals will be strained to attain the success goals *via* an illegitimate means (Merton, 1938; Rebellon et al, 2009).

Considering the present economic hardship, hunger, sickness, “human inflicted” suffering, and high mortality rate in Nigeria, it seems that poverty could be a major factor accounting for the youth involvement in armed robbery. Poverty is integral to

⁷³Many people are struggling to survive, that is why there is crime in this country. Poverty leads us to crime because our parents have nothing.

⁷⁴This centre is based at the Department of Peace Studies, University of Bradford, UK.

the underclass argument, and some scholars (Burke & Sunley, 1998: 37) have argued that the dearth of economic resources causes compensatory efforts to achieve some form of economic self-adjustment. In short, and as Conklin (1972) suggests, the relationship between crime and poverty can better be explained in a more subtle way by “relative deprivation”, in which an individual’s assessment of his relative position in society is more significant in explaining his behaviour than the absolute level he occupies in that society. As Odumosu (1999: 73) puts it, the social environment of the poor lures them to crime rather than their physical environment. This appears to be the *status quo* in Nigeria where a person’s worth in life and his contribution to society is only measured by his wealthy position.

5.3.3. Money

Seventeen people interviewed mentioned “money” as a factor that lured them into armed robbery. The criminal inclination with money resides in the power of its emotional attachment to elicit an instrumental attitude (Engadhl, 2008). As noted before, previous studies have always identified money as the main motivation for armed robbery (see for example, Matthews, 2002; Wright & Decker, 1997). This is partly due to the idea that robbers decide to rob based on the inherent financial gains. This corroborates the opinion of Desroches (2002: 70) that economists in general believe that property crimes are the result of rational decision-making reached by people who confront a problem faced by many others; that is, “a need for cash”. Money not only motivates, it influences and persuades street youths to become armed robbers. Merton’s (1938) anomie-strain theory stresses financial success. Since not every person has equal access to the achievement of legitimate financial success, those who are disadvantaged in that way try to look for it elsewhere (see Odumosu, 1999). When asked to explain how he got involved in robbery, Ogunsu affirmed:

Na money now ... na money ... You know say, some people now, na money oh, because if [a] person no get money, some people no go enjoy this life.⁷⁵

Molafi stresses the same thing:

⁷⁵It is money. Without it people will not enjoy this life.

Everybody like[s] to spend money, if money no dey for person['s] life, the person no be human being for this life.⁷⁶

The acquisition of money requires the maximum cooperation of members of the robbery group. The “justice” among robbers is that everyone must “hustle” and no one should be idle and dependent on anyone else. This points to the common saying: “if you cannot beat them, join them”. Afadi narrates his experience:

My friends now! I went and asked them to give me some money, they said that I should come along that they want to introduce this something to me the way I will use in making the money, that I should stop folding my hands and be looking.

Obvuma has a similar opinion:

If they ... have, they will not like to help unless you will gang up with them and find your own money too. That is why you will like to follow them and do that.

In Nigeria, pride of ownership and independence are special attributes to which people aspire. Every person seeks admission to the class of the “successful group” either by legitimate or illegitimate means. Sometimes people’s efforts to succeed *via* a legitimate business meet with failure, and a disappointment like this might cause them to engage in crime as the next best option. Therefore strain theory suggests that when people are in situations of social structural strain, they experience frustration, which would push them to commit crime (see Onwudiwe, 2004; Merton, 1938). Aresu’s experience is a typical example of the sort of frustration faced by the majority of the respondents:

I have tried my possible best. I have gone into legitimate business, I have done different kinds of business, I have “selled” [sold] different kind[s] of market but no way. Then I said, men, since I don’t know any way that will bring me into the higher level, then I said let me go into crime, may be crime will make fast money for me

Agnew (1992) believes that the failure to achieve positively valued goods like money, status, and autonomy are sources of strain that can lead people to commit

⁷⁶Everybody likes to spend money. If there is no money in a person’s life, that person is not a human being.

crime or display deviant behaviour. Human beings are naturally insatiable regarding needs and wants. That is to say, the quest for money pervades the people's culture, they are "assailed" with images that constantly promote the importance of financial success; its attractive power is so strong that it defuses any possibility that other values may limit the craving for it (Engadhl, 2008). Sangi is a typical example:

I want to [be]rich ... to get more money.

Lemiola reports about other robbers and himself:

As dem see money, money, for the work na him dey encourage them. If they ... go today they eat money, second day they eat money, they go ... go more, [and] more.⁷⁷

It is extremely difficult to know what amount of money a group of armed robbers may steal and be satisfied. Indeed, they may not know the particular amount that satisfies them, because they have always been in the habit of getting and spending money, hence it is unlikely that they will abandon robbery easily. According to Ufem:

... if we see the money wey we dey find, we no go rob again. But if we never see the money ... we dey find we will continue to rob.⁷⁸

However, people are thrilled by the constant flow of cash coming from robbery and revel in it. This thrill becomes an addiction driving them to further robbery. As Molafi explains:

... because off[the] money ... inside the robbery ... people ... rush [to]go there.⁷⁹

When they get hold of that kind of money, they lavish it on mere pleasure. For example, Obvuma admits:

Our own is to just get money, fine with the money, to pleasure.

⁷⁷The money robbers see in robbery encourages them to continue to rob. If they rob today and eat the money, they rob tomorrow and eat the money, they will continue to rob.

⁷⁸If we see the amount we are looking for we stop robbing people. But if not, we continue until we find such money.

⁷⁹It is because of the money in robbery that people are lured into it.

Moreover, Dimotan has a similar view:

*Na money now. You want to make up ... You want ... people [to] say you dey special, people go look[at] you, you dey nice, people go admire you.*⁸⁰

The value attached to money transcends the way it is spent on consumer goods or its use to enhance power (Merton, 1968a; Engadhl, 2008). Considering that robbery is an economic crime, it might be expected that would-be robbers mentally calculate if they need money and which legitimate or illegitimate opportunities are accessible (Desroches, 2002). Some youths are lured into armed robbery when they see that their peers have more money to spend than they do. This scenario creates jealousy and makes it somewhat competitive for the less fortunate youths to “stick up”. For example, Konashe explains that:

*... You know say some people they don't have ... money in their pocket, they will misbehave. You see your friends spending money, you ... say ah! my friends get money pass me*⁸¹

Lemiola has a similar reason for his criminal involvement:

*Like this is my friend now, e get money. He ... buy[s] everything, me I no get. I fit from there enter robbery. Say [for example] my friend ... buy this vehicle, na him get this supermarket ... I fit [because of] jealousy enter robbery.*⁸²

Ogunsu also shares an experience not too different from others:

*You know say people for robbery, if you see some guys if you see the things ... him wear for body. Them go say na wah, see wetin the guy wear. If to say him no know where to see money, he go enter club, say “Omo”[boy] wetin dey happen?... follow them go, if them kill am “na salaam”[that is that]. If them succeed*⁸³

⁸⁰It is because of money. You want to be rich so that people can admire you.

⁸¹If some people do not have money in their pockets, they will begin to misbehave. You see your friends spending money, you say ah! My friends are richer than me.

⁸²If for example my friend has got money, he buys everything that we need to use and I did not buy. I may be jealous of him and thus end up in robbery.

⁸³When some people see some guys, they will wonder and say: see what this man (robber) is wearing. If he does not know where to get money, he will go to the club and ask some friends how to get it done. It is either he robs and succeeds or he robs and is killed - that is that.

Some criminals may not establish whether they are strained or frustrated in isolation; on the contrary, they compare themselves with one another, and such comparisons can greatly affect their level of strain (Agnew, 1997). In their desire to make money, robbers cease to care about the risks involved. They believe that the gains are more rewarding than the risks, which are regarded as inconsequential. This corroborates Coleman's (1992: 831) opinion that, "crime is just another strategy of the game to be pursued if the benefits outweigh the risks". Contrariwise, Matthews (2002) argues that the majority of armed robbers neither consider the costs and benefits nor take into account other factors relevant to their action. Rather they are propelled by instantaneous pressures, varying moods, or thrills, and are often roused by alcohol and drugs. All these social and emotional factors and indeed the financial gain are utilitarian purposes that lure some youths into armed robbery. If doing a robbery is not a utilitarian matter, it is not clear that youths would have been attracted to risk their lives for it. Their foolhardiness in a stickup is a sign of "great expectation" – to get money. According to Aresu:

I have signed my life, do or die to make money.

Findings reveal that once an armed robber is arrested and found guilty, the police would freeze his assets. Since money is an issue in doing an armed robbery, it is also something that may lead someone into serious consequences such as arrest, imprisonment and at times loss of life. As Waliru advises:

The money is so sweet. Robbery money is very, very sweet. But at the same time when you fall into a robbery problem ... when you are caught in that very particular case you will know that as the robbery is very sweet ... that is how the bitterness of robbery is bitter.

Kwelu shares a similar view:

...In the case of making more and more money, you get some people they remain in the crime...Some make millions, only one attempt ... the person is killed once and for all.

Again, criminologists across cultures and countries have always concluded that doing a robbery is the fastest way of gaining cash after all (see Feeney, 1986; Nugent et al, 1986; Ekpenyong, 1989; Wright & Decker, 1997; Gill 2000; Matthews, 2002). This

study seems to support that argument; however, money is just a means to an end, which is usually what that cash will do for the robbers. In line with that, Matthews (2002) suggests that the money acquired through robbery is to be consumed instantly to satisfy the offender's longings and aspirations. His aim in looking for money is not to buy weapons and materials for subsequent enactments or to pay some people. In essence, the present-day robber is only interested in "earning and burning" cash. This supports the view that research on robbery gives us little information about the spending habits and lifestyle of offenders than that they confess spending the money rapidly and unwisely (Desroches, 2002) as a way of enjoying a better life.

5.3.4. Better life

The data have shown that nine people were motivated to get involved in robbery because they wanted to enjoy a better life. Ordinarily, every human being may aspire to live a better life. A better life could reflect either a positive or a negative achievement. Negatively, it has come into the criminological realm and can be linked with corruption. Nigerian society is fast becoming urbanised, as more and more people want to enjoy a better life and be comfortable. A better life is mainly enjoyed by the upper class in Nigeria namely: politicians and those in the corridors of power, to the detriment of the lower class. The upper class have access to fine cars, luxurious houses, expensive dresses and jewelleries and much more. Given the unjust social structure in Nigeria, which is anomic, the lower class youths are likely to exhibit deviant and adaptive behaviour (Odumosu, 1999; see also Merton, 1938) when trying to live a better life like the upper class. An armed robber's vision of a better life may also be triggered by ostentatious lifestyle. For Lemiola:

We like to buy motor, spend money, buy cloth, carry better woman ... go[to] hotel ... [and] rock , go[and] do anything.

Oluremi agrees that they get involved in armed robbery because:

Everybody wants to be richer, everybody want[s] to live in a comfortable, palatable house, put on nice shoes, ride the best car. Just want to live comfortable.

Drawing from the above, it is likely that robbers get involved in crime because of the rapid social changes informed by better life. As a society imbibes an urban character, it develops deviant behavioural patterns such as armed robbery (Ilegbune (1998). Urban areas are particularly targeted by robbers seeking a better life due to the increase in goods and services and especially due to the presence of large amounts of cash. As Lemiola puts it:

*Na there money plenty pass ... bank robbery, supermarket, any store, company*⁸⁴

When asked about his reason for getting involved in armed robbery, Ewesu said:

You know human beings, generally we react to whatever we see or things like that. Flashy cars can make someone to think when am I going to have my own too? Or when you see buildings, you'll be thinking like ah! look at this beautiful house, when am I going to have mine too. So you can intimidate people with them.

To fit into any cultural or social environment, the right dress must be worn. Pertaining to street life, the dress code mainly calls for a courageous display of the latest fashion. The wearer is identified as someone who has risen above the financial problems some of his colleagues on the streets still face (Katz, 1988; Wright & Decker, 1997). In the process of thinking how to be comfortable, one gets obsessed with robbery and eventually performs the act. Similarly, Dimotan was faced with such thoughts after seeing the way his mates appeared in society. So he decided to join the robbery group to be like them:

*How I ... see my mates do well, all these big children I ... see them ... clean up. I want to wear my own shoe make girls see me them go say this boy na him. I want to wear jewelleries, wear watch, wear gold for neck, anything wey come I want to buy am make people know say I dey.*⁸⁵

For the criminal mind therefore, those material things that enhance status in society, and equally create a better life can easily be acquired through armed robbery. To keep up appearances, robbery offenders tend to create a look of cool transcendence that

⁸⁴There is plenty of money in bank robbery, supermarket, stores and companies.

⁸⁵I saw my mates doing well; I decided that I would want to wear my own shoes and jewelleries so that girls will see me. I also want people to recognise my presence.

suggests their membership of the “aristocracy of the streets” (Wright & Decker, 1997: 40). In this sense, choosing a better life is utilitarian for the robber because he is ready to grab the economic gains irrespective of the risks involved. For example, Afadi highlighted how he was trapped into armed robbery:

I'm normally carried away because I wish to be like them and have what they have. I normally think big. I believe one day I'm going to have those things. My dream is that I want to make it in life. I want to become somebody big, somebody that people will talk of, that so, so person is in the society. So when I see them ride in flashy cars, I always wish to be like them. So that's it.

Robbers acquire material things, hoping that those things will enable them to live independent and comfortable lives without recourse to support from others. Afadi said:

My main reason is for me to use it and take care of myself.

Hamedu has the same motive for doing robbery:

I believe in catering for myself; I don't have to wait for my parents to provide my needs ... I don't like depending on anybody. I prefer catering for myself.

The armed robber also extends his vision of a better life to his family members. Similarly, the robbery proceeds can be used for “good causes”. Of course, that does not in any way justify the criminal action, nor does it decriminalise the offence. However, it goes to demonstrate how societal norms have been broken down so much so that they no longer control the social activities of people (see Odumosu, 1999). The *status quo* is such that valued goals become ill-conceived and the society cannot provide people with normative limits on their desires (Bernburg, 2002: 729). As earlier stated, people would want to get money but are less concerned about the means to achieve it. For example, Kwelu maintains that:

My reasons for getting involved. I want to become ... or make my money through the armed robbery, then build my house, cars, get some job, or business or marriage and take care of my family; and the rest of my sisters and brothers.

As earlier discussed, some families and some influential people and organisations in the society often welcome this system of robbing to enhance status. That gives the robber the impetus to forge ahead with his criminal career. Apparently, some people are tempted to aim at a certain level in life, which they see others rise to. When they cannot reach such a level through a legitimate means (Odumosu, 1999; Merton 1938), they get into robbery to achieve those things, which they believe add flavour to life and status in society. Contrariwise, better life can still be attained by dint of hard work, perseverance and optimism. In contemporary Nigeria, many people still believe they can be comfortable in the most respectable and honourable way without getting to damage their credibility through criminal involvement. It is therefore doubtful if the desire for a better life can be sufficient reason for youth involvement in armed robbery. Corruption might have an upper hand in the polity.

5.3.5. Corruption

Corruption has been discussed in chapter 2. It is an existing phenomenon in all societies; however, it is also obviously more common in some societies than in others (Huntington, 2009). Corruption in Nigeria has a protracted history. First, there is a colonial dimension. As noted earlier (see chapter 2) corruption was injected into the Nigerian ethos in the aftermath of the Berlin Conference of 1884-85, in which the European powers engaged in the “balkanisation” of Africa (Olaleye-Oruene, 2007: 233). Next, the British colonisers transplanted their laws and governmental systems into Nigeria. By then, they appropriated huge aspects of the Nigerian economy and sent them to Britain. According to Osoba (1996: 373):

Thus the colonial authorities and their collaborators presided over a fraudulent and corrupt accumulation system, which facilitated the appropriation of huge surpluses for shipment to the metropolis from Nigerian peasant farmers and other petty producers via unequal terms of trade; Nigerian workers via meagre, often below subsistence, wages; all adults via primitive and exorbitant taxation; and the entire population (including unborn generations) via exclusive monopoly rights of exploitation granted to British and other European firms over Nigeria's mineral and other natural resources.

Drawing from Osoba's opinion, the colonisers became the corrupters of their subjects. Knowingly and unknowingly, they sowed the seeds of corruption, which have germinated and sprouted to full blown today. Since the post-colonial era, the trajectory of corruption in Nigeria has taken a neo-colonial dimension whereby the indigenes, especially those in government, other public officials and the elite, perpetuate the problem against their society. It is little wonder that corruption is a system used by the capitalist class who emerged from colonialism to accumulate wealth through the inflation of contracts, over-invoicing, collection of bribes, and privatisation of public companies at give away prices (see Uzoh, 2007). There is also evidence that corruption is a conundrum that has infested every aspect of the people's life in Nigeria. Again (see chapter 2), Transparency International (2001-2010) found Nigeria to be one of the most corrupt nations in the world. Moreover, in the WGI (see chapter 2) Nigeria was found to be more corrupt when compared to Ghana and South Africa (see also appendix 1).

Data for this study reveal that more than half (eleven) of the respondents mentioned corruption as the justification for their being involved in armed robbery. How do they justify what they do? They apportion blame on those in government, who have access to legitimate opportunities, for being corrupt, while arguing that they (robbers) have no access to legitimate opportunities. According to Waliru:

Nigeria will worst for every situation and the government make children to corrupt. If anything happen for this country now the big man will send their children outside of this country... That's how you see boys of nowadays commit robbery...it was because of the Nigerian Government...

Considering their socio-cultural demographic factors, these respondents appear to be the less privileged of society (see 5.1 above) but the corrupt society has made them to embrace "man-made" suffering which they try to overcome through robbery. For Waliru:

I believe I can't be suffering like this. It was because of how things go in the country.

Corruption has become a “code of conduct” for many in the corridors of power who are deeply involved in it. In this way “crime is not the result of positive training or unsatisfied desire but rather the expression of natural tendencies” (Hirschi & Rudisill, 1976: 20-21).

Corruption not only drains scarce state resources, but also hinders efforts at broader economic and social development (Sita, 2004; Harsch, 2004). In a society ruined by corruption, the less privileged that have limited access to legitimate opportunities may feel frustrated and consequently decide how to deal with the situation, especially “how to survive”. The situation in Nigeria made Waliru to take to armed robber because:

Nigerian Government ..., because of how they just sit down on what belongs to each and every one of us ... I never think of falling in that kind of incident, I mean in that kind of business. But it was how the Nigerian Government rule us, it was because of how they take care of our resources. It was because of how they know about themselves and not thinking about the others.

Scholars (Cochran & Bjerregarrd, 2011; Messner & Rosenfeld, 2001) have argued that the political system as a social institution is used as a vehicle to promote and attain collective goals, unless co-opted by the economy. In addition, involvement in the political process can promote a sense of community spirit and lead to a reduction in anomie. This second premise seems not to be the case in Nigeria because of the corrupt political landscape.

In recent times, the looting and theft of public funds in Nigeria have reached at an alarming rate. Corrupt officials exploit the nation’s economy and stash public funds in foreign banks thereby causing poverty in the polity. It is on record that during the first five years of Obasanjo’s regime (1999-2007), public funds (worth \$505.5 million) stolen by Nigerians were recovered from foreign banks (The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/The World Bank, 2007). When public funds are mismanaged, no person takes responsibility for such misconduct. It is regrettable that most public servants do not depend on their monthly salaries for subsistence, but on lump sums coming from an unaccounted source. At times, it is claimed that the salary, being a fixed amount, may not be enough for their upkeep, given the present high cost

of living. Arguably, the urge to live up to what some regard as “social expectations” produces conducts that are socially problematic (Olurode, 2005) hence anomie becomes the norm. As those in government fail to live up to expectation, criminal behaviour becomes an imminent option for the poor youths that seem to emulate them. Ekpenyong (1989) advises that the scale and rapidity of change in Nigeria have triggered socio-structural dislodgment and institutional irregularities that produce crime. That is why Aresu is of the opinion that:

... the government is embezzling the money, embezzling the profit. So what do you want the masses to do?

The data also reveal that corruption increases because the rich are not offering social justice to the poor. In a corrupt social structure like Nigeria, injustice seems to have become a measure for denying the poor masses their civic and human rights. This may stem from the idea that Nigeria is arguably not an egalitarian society where equality of opportunity prevails. Rather there is a clear manifestation of “structural inequality” in the country. This has been identified by Afadi:

There are some Nigerians that are rich, that are in position of things, which they can help the poor masses who doesn't [do not] have. When they cannot help them, corruption increases. You see people who cannot be able to feed three times a day in their family home; they'd like to go out to look for money to feed their families. All these lead to corruption.

Uruka explains why he got into robbery:

Because of the injustice, because of the people who are at the top, they don't look after the needs of the masses ... in this country today, most men they like eating alone and turning injustice into justice.

Again, since those in government who have legitimate opportunities and a whole range of advantages to themselves than these respondents are corrupt, it follows that the respondents who are debarred from corrupt practices decide to rob because they do not have the kind of access corruption can give them. Supportively, strain theory suggests that crime will be relatively high whenever legitimate opportunities to achieve success are blocked to the lower class individuals (Merton, 1968a; Cohen, 1955; Cloward & Ohlin, 1960; Odumosu, 1999).

Essentially, the endemic corruption in Nigeria demonstrates the level of moral decay in the country and how the different classes of people can perpetrate acts of dishonesty, at times with impunity. As the contagion is obvious and everywhere, it suggests that there is no strong social control in the polity; and as Okonkwo (2002) maintains, the law on corruption is still unclear. Therefore control theorists argue that delinquency is not made possible by beliefs that require delinquency but is rather caused by the absence of (effective) beliefs that forbid delinquency (see Hirschi, (2002, [1969])). In this way, control theorists seem to agree with Merton and other anomie theorists that normlessness, and not a system of norms, is at the core of nonnormative behaviour (see Hirschi, (2002, [1969])).

Ordinarily, robbery and corruption are two different crimes: one is a violent crime and the other is a white-collar crime. For this study, there are two opposing views from our respondents. On the one hand, data suggest that robbery has no link with corruption, but on the other hand, data reveal there appears to be some connection. For example, Oluremi said there is no relationship:

I don't think that robbery has something to do with corruption...A robber can't collect bribe.

Oluremi's understanding seems to narrow the definition of corruption as the mere giving and taking of money to influence a person to do something for somebody. Of course, that is the common understanding in society and for that reason people talk about "bribery and corruption" synonymously. As noted in many parts of this piece of research, corruption is far more than that. For example, corruption is behaviour of public officials, which deviates from conventional norms in order to serve private ends (Huntington, 2009: 253). This means that a corrupt government is not at the service of the people they claim to be serving. That is why Oluremi advises:

If government put necessary things in place, there won't be robbery.

Molafi who talked about some sort of relationship between robbery and corruption also tried to widen the scope of what he understands as corruption. He believes that when people are involved in different sorts of crime, they are corrupt and doing

robbery at the same time. By his understanding, robbery is not limited to those who carry gun to do the crime. Others who cheat are robbers as well:

Robbery is corruption too. If this nation good ... everything good for this nation. Citizen of this nation e balance, no person go like to cheat. Na for inside corruption na him thief come enter. All this 419 you dey hear is a corruption to thief. Na only person carry gun na him dey rob people...?⁸⁶

The divergent opinions in relation to robbery and corruption are largely dependent on the subjective understanding of each respondent and their life experiences about the situation of things in Nigeria. Since robbery and corruption are acts of dishonesty, no matter who is involved, the data above seem to suggest that acts of dishonesty among the Nigerian elite could equally beget acts of dishonesty among the lower class Nigerian youths, hence their participation in armed robberies. One could liken the Nigerian situation to what Huntington (2009: 255) refers to as “the corruption of the poor and the corruption of the rich”. Given that corruption has become a way of life for many in Nigeria, it is suggested that anomie theory affects both the poor and the rich.

Again, corruption in Nigeria undermines the rule of law at the highest level of society and it translates to the things robbers do. The laws and norms apply to everybody else and do not apply to the upper class. As the lower class are faced with abject poverty, inequality and massive unemployment, they emulate the illegal tactics of the corrupt upper class in Nigerian society by also engaging in innovative means to obtain wealth and material success (Onwudiwe, 2004). As findings have shown, armed robbery is one such innovative means hence offenders neutralize their actions by “denial of responsibility” (see Sykes & Matza, 1957). It is arguable that neutralization techniques are favourable to certain cultural contexts (see Maruna & Copes, 2004), for example, corruption in Nigeria seems to encourage armed robbers to commit crime while blaming the government and their agencies for being responsible. Neutralizations are “extensions of patterns of thought prevalent in society rather than

⁸⁶Robbery is corruption too. If this nation is good, everything in it becomes good, and citizens of this nation are settled, no person would like to cheat. Corruption brings forth robbery. All these 419 (fraudsters) you hear about are involved in both corruption and theft. Is it only the person carrying a gun that robs people?... All of them are involved in robbery.

something created *de novo*” (Sykes & Matza, 1957: 669; see also Matza & Sykes 1961). They “precede deviant behaviour and make deviant behaviour possible” (Sykes & Matza, 1957: 666).

As noted before (see chapter 2), corruption in Nigeria is not only at the government level but also among its security agencies, such as the police and the military. Some members of these agencies sabotage the security of the country by aiding and abetting armed robbery operations; and sometimes actually carrying them out across the country for monetary rewards. Kwelu maintains that:

Ah, not only they help them to get instrument. At times they involve in crime. Soldiers involve in crime, police involve in crime.

Oluremi has a similar opinion:

Some police, some of them help people to get involved by giving them their ammunition.

When those who should be protecting the citizens turn against them and support the active armed robbers, there is a total breach of trust in the system. That helps to explain the level of corruption in the higher echelon of society. According to Obvuma:

If they didn't support they will not go along with us, and they will not bring gun for us.

Corruption requires some recognition of the distinction between public role and private interest (Huntington, 2009: 254). Apparently, that distinction is not recognisable among many public servants in Nigeria. Data reveal that the level of corruption among the police is such that when they arrest robbers and confiscate their stolen money, they (police) try to appropriate such funds for their private use without paying them into the public coffers. At times, the police go as far as threatening the lives of offenders from whom they confiscated such money. Sangi explains his experience:

Police will come and collect the money they won't give it to government purse, they will take it to their own private home. Some if you argue with them they will broke [break] your leg and do anything with you....

At times, some military men in uniform collude with robbers who disguise themselves as commercial bus transporters. The robbers sit as “ordinary” passengers, while the man in uniform (preferably a genuine military staff) sits with the driver in the front seat. The military presence in the bus serves to attract prospective passengers on the roadside to opt for the bus as a secure one to travel in. Genuine passengers who join the bus will eventually become vulnerable targets. This system has been in vogue in Nigeria for nearly a decade. It is very attractive to youths who get involved because it helps them to rob people inside the bus at gunpoint. When interviewed Shasha revealed that:

They call it “push me down”. The people [robbers] ... will call passenger to[the] motor. When them reach on base for road, some people ... started collect them money. Soldier use[d] to sit in front. So when them get for road police no fit stop them because of that soldier.⁸⁷

The above developments suggest that weak institutional controls are a boost to corrupt practices that lead to robbery, which indicate again that Nigerian society is anomic. It has been argued that high rates of instrumental criminal activity are promoted when there are culturally produced pressures to secure monetary rewards, combined with weak controls from noneconomic social institutions (Messner & Rosenfeld, 1994; see also Chamlin & Cochran, 1995; Rosenfeld & Messner, 2000).

Furthermore, there is a kind of “demand and supply” trend in the armed robbery “business” which seems to have been supported by the corrupt Nigerian society. There are those who do the actual robbery, and there are those who buy the spoils. Armed robbers believe that both parties are doing the same robbery business. Beyond that, those who buy stolen goods are seriously encouraging the continuation of robbery operations. The activities of such people aim at sabotaging the economic progress of the country, which more often than not, they succeed in doing with impunity. It may not be doubtful to argue that corruption in Nigeria is a systemic

⁸⁷They call it “push me down”. The robbery is normally carried out inside a bus in the middle of the road. A military man in uniform sits in front of the bus so that the police would not stop and search the bus.

problem; hence the concept of anomie proffers an indication, if not an explanation, of the process of institutionalization of systemic corruption (Becquart-Lelercq, 1999: 206). Balolu one of the respondents explains:

There is a lot of buyer who motolise [mobilise] the boys, who sponsor the boys ... don't worry how many gun[s] you people need? [The buyer will say] I need so, so vehicle. And those boys ... go on to get those vehicle for him. Is he helping or destroying this nation? He is destroying this nation. He is not helping this nation. There is one proverb wey Yoruba man dey make which says "Eni to lo si oja lo jale ko je bi, bi eni to gbaa lowe e", That is: "The person who went to the market to steal is no less a thief than the principal thief who collected the stolen things".⁸⁸

As findings have shown, corruption is commonplace in Nigeria. Regrettably, it has affected the peace and tranquillity of the country by apparently fuelling tribal conflict in the Niger Delta where youths native to the area have been agitating for oil and gas as their "patrimony". Moreover, the corrupt nature of the country is arguably a discouragement to foreign investors who would like to do businesses in Nigeria and with Nigerians. Hamedu articulates this:

But due to the fact that there is bribery and corruption everywhere, there is no peace in the country. Even out there, the whole world used to hear it so definitely, it will scare away some of the investors that at least the country need to benefit from. For example, the Niger Delta crisis.

As Nodland and Hjellestad (2007) have documented, it is equally challenging to establish clearly what motivates these militant youths in the Niger Delta. Most of them justify their actions in political terms. Some of them do so convincingly as they insist on less corruption, cleaner waters and fairer revenue distribution. Some do not. As things are, the Nigerian oil crisis has more than its fair share of rouges whose only real motivation is banditry and opportunist crime. However, politicians native to the locality are still in the fight for resource control such that violent protest has become

⁸⁸Some buyers of stolen goods sponsor these boys by providing them with guns. They normally tell them that: I need such a vehicle, which they will eventually provide. Is the buyer helping or destroying this nation? He is not helping this nation. According to a Yoruba proverb: "The person who went to the market to steal is no less a thief than the principal thief who collected the stolen things".

part of the “political rent seeking”.⁸⁹ These events help to explain the extent corruption has eaten deep into the fabric of Nigerian society and why the youths in our study blame the elite group for being corrupt.

Since corruption has been entrenched in the Nigerian social system, and considering the common saying that apparently “everybody in Nigeria is corrupt”, it seems difficult to eradicate or even control the problem. As Rosenfeld and Messner (2000: 176) argue, anomic societies will inevitably find it difficult to exercise social control over the behaviour of individuals who feel free to employ whatever means that prove most effective in reaching personal goals. Molafi explains the difficulty in combating corruption:

*No president fit stop corruption finally. No body e fit stop corruption, na only God na him fit stop corruption or thief... na only God na him fit stopam. All their president e dey na thief, all of them na thief, all these elders e dey thief, all them generation make then go to school London, make them go every where...na so e go be, no body fit stopam na only God na him fit stop corruption for this nation.*⁹⁰

For this study, the issue of corruption is essential because a significant number of respondents mentioned it as one of their reasons for getting involved in armed robbery. Although, it may not be enough reason to break the law, but one question calls to mind: why is the rule of law not upheld in Nigeria? Seemingly, there is a fracture within the rule of law. It is difficult for more than fifty years of independence to have a country where the rule of law is not properly enforced.

Corruption is so visible in Nigeria, but apparently hidden in some societies which may arguably be more corrupt than Nigeria. For example, in post-Communist Russia, signs of political corruption in the sense of the use of public position for personal gain are obvious. Agencies and firms engaged in monitoring levels of corruption as perceived

⁸⁹The way some politicians or an elite group collect money or rather receive bribes directly from multinational oil companies for their selfish ends. Such funds are illegitimate and untaxed, however, they are meant to assuage such politicians who are believed to be influential in their local communities. Once the politicians are “settled financially”, they can convince the rest of their community to refrain from further insurrection and allow the oil companies to continue their exploration.

⁹⁰No president can finally stop corruption. No body can stop corruption or thief (robbery), it is only God who can stop it. All the presidents are “robbers”, all of them are robbers, all the elders are robbers. All their generations may go to London and study, let them go everywhere ... corruption will remain in Nigeria. No body, except God can stop corruption in this nation.

by the business community place Russia among the most corrupt countries in the world. Such assessments have resonated with the peculiarities of the Russian approach to privatization, which provided a small minority of the population with unprecedented opportunities to enrich itself in a process which is now identified, not least by Vladimir Putin,⁹¹ as having been fraught with avoidable mistakes. Therefore corruption in post-Communist Russia can most usefully be interpreted as the extension of Soviet coping strategies, developed in the command economy, to the opportunities opened up by marketisation (Kneen, 2000: 349).

Moreover, since the founding of the People's Republic of China, corruption has covertly been part of the Communist Government's agenda. Following the implementation of the economic reform and open door policy in the early 1980s, corruption has become a serious national problem in China, and public officials are so much involved (Zhang, 2001). The aim of the reform and open door policy was to modernise China's economy and technology. Instead, it weakened the traditional social constraints on people's behaviour such as "worship of the communist doctrines", and injected a new behavioural ideology into the Chinese society, which says: "getting rich is glorious". Consequently, corruption has spread across all levels of Chinese society especially among public office holders (see Zhang, 2001: 26). What is common among these three states is that the "elite group" is responsible for corruption in each country. However, given that corruption is also an embedded practice in Nigeria, that seems to be the kind of fault-line the youths in our study point at, hence their involvement in armed robbery.

Despite the common assumption that every where is corrupt and every body is corrupt too, it is important to stress that there are still some law-abiding citizens in Nigeria. Why is it that corruption does not apply to them? Although there are no statistics to illustrate, but those who may not be corrupt seem to be people of integrity and morality. While corruption is obviously a cankerworm in Nigerian society, our study suggests that it is also a significant factor for the involvement of youths in armed robbery.

⁹¹Former Russian President, but now Prime Minister.

5.4. Life course engagement

Life course engagement in crime implies persistence in criminal behaviour. Past literature has shown that young offenders persist in crime because of peer group or rather the important role of companions in the life of a criminal (see Laub & Sampson, 2006). The peers who develop a long criminal career are probably the so-called “bad friends” who do bad things together; drug/alcohol addicts; and gamblers as our findings have revealed below.

5.4.1. “Bad friends”

Nineteen out of the twenty respondents interviewed referred to “bad friends” as the major factor that led them into armed robbery. Interestingly, the respondents define co-respondents as “bad friends” because of their criminal actions. Ordinarily, the phrase “bad friends” refers to friends who behave badly. They tend to be saying that “we all do bad things together”. What is critical here is that these “bad friends” are youths who have shared experiences or shared views; people who do things illegal. They are perceived to be bad because they are criminals; they get involved in crimes such as armed robbery. These respondents single “bad friends” out to take away responsibility out of themselves. For Obvuma:

People get involved in armed robbery because of “bad friends”.

Their externalisation may be interesting because they are looking for bad friends like themselves. They may as well be “good friends” because they share things (such as money, drugs, alcohol) in common. Therefore, this group of friends appears to belong to a “unique fraternity” where their common good is paramount. In the words of Dimotan:

We meet where we dey smoke our drug.⁹²

It could also be that they used the word “bad friends” to bring to the knowledge of the researcher that their involvement in armed robbery is something bad. Although they

⁹²We meet where we smoke our drugs.

seem to be aware that their criminal involvement is something bad, but the company of bad friends gives them the momentum to forge ahead. Ewusu admits that:

So we have a friend in Unilag.⁹³ So the guy, while we wanted to see him, we do things [robbery] there.

Delinquency theorists contest that the friendship so evident in delinquency is true of most adolescent activities. They also argue that adolescents are notoriously gregarious individuals who do everything in groups, including law breaking (Warr, 2006, 40; Kornhauser, 1978). Apart from law breaking, adolescents can still do other legal things in groups. Since adolescents can do both legal and illegal things in groups, it remains unclear whether the group nature of delinquency has any causal significance or is merely epiphenomenal (Warr, 2006). In spite of that, those who mentioned bad friends admitted being involved in group offending. Uruka is of the opinion that:

... there is no one born today and born of robbery. We came into this world and meet robbery through friends, through bad friends. There is no one that was born and said he will become robbery [a robber], no. So it is through bad friends....

Kwelu concedes that:

The case of my committing crime is as a result of bad friends. I mingled with bad friends right from my secondary school days. When I dropped out I started committing crime

In the same vein, Oluremi agrees that:

Let me say bad friends “shaa”[he exclaims], and they involved me in the robbery something.

In the words of Obvuma:

My friends called me that I should follow them to do the business of robbery. Then I started with them.

⁹³ “Unilag” means University of Lagos.

For Konashe:

*You know say na always friends dey lead person to this kind of thing (robbery)...*⁹⁴

The above responses seem to support the opinion of Normandeau (1968b: 3) that getting involved in robbery is a structured event which may arise from a learned behaviour committed within socio-culturally defined sets of situations. As earlier noted, previous Nigerian studies suggest that armed robbers normally operate in groups (see Marenin, 1997; Elechi, 2003; Ikoh et al, 2010). Supportively, Appiahene-Gyamfi (1998), argues that over 98 percent of robberies in Ghana are gang related. For this study also, almost all the respondents were involved in group criminality. However, only one person did not mention “bad friends” as what lured him into robbery. He admitted having no criminal friend. According to Ezienyi:

*For “thief” I no get friend.*⁹⁵

An American study confirmed that lone offenders carried out over 50 per cent of all robberies in 1982 (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1984). According to Deakin et al (2003), solo criminals in Britain are more likely to be involved in theft from persons than in robberies. Elsewhere in the US, research confirms that most offenders are co-offenders, while a lone offender seems to be uncommon (Reiss, 1988). All the same, other American studies have shown that during their youth, and all through their criminal careers, group offending and individual offending are interwoven (Shaw & McKay, 1931; Reiss, 1988; Felson, 2003). In Britain, for example, most armed robberies are unsophisticated and or opportunistic, often carried out by lone offenders who target instant cash to fund their immediate needs (see UK Threat Assessment, 2009/2010). Furthermore, highly sophisticated armed robberies, which target greater rewards are said to be much rare in Britain (see UK Threat Assessment, 2009/2010). They seem to attract a group or groups of offenders.

“Bad friends” may not be the simple reason why these young men got involved in armed robbery. It seems there is something beyond that; a sort of injustice going on in

⁹⁴You know that friends always lead other people to do robbery.

⁹⁵I have no friend who gets involved in robbery.

Nigerian society, which motivates them to take to crime as part of the way to actualise their existence. As anomie-strain theory earlier maintained, crime is a response to social structures that produce anomie (see Merton, 1938). These “bad friends” seem to be self-serving by qualifying themselves as victims. Their involvement in crime is a way of seeking self-justification against society, which they cast their blame on. This corroborates the view of strain theorists that crime and delinquency are the product of social forces driving people to do things they otherwise would not do (Bernard, 1984: 358; see also Featherstone & Deflem, 2003: 484). Their becoming “bad friends” could be a way of addressing the problems of a decadent Nigerian society where social injustice is overtly known. According to the UNODC (2005: 4):

Those who feel themselves to be the victims of social injustice may not feel compelled to obey the laws of the system that marginalises them. In fact, since compliance with the law may be seen as enabling exploitation, defiance of the law may be seen as courageous in marginalised communities. The line between “civil disobedience” and profit-seeking criminality may become blurred in the minds of some.

Similarly, in his study of homeless Canadian youths and street crime, Baron (2006) suggests that his respondents’ sense of injustice appears so great that they will engage in activities they believe to be morally wrong to right this sense of injustice.

Findings for this study reveal that the “bad friends” see themselves as those at the margins of society so much so that the government is less interested in addressing their problems as fellow citizens. The problems of these “bad friends” could be located within what Merton (1968a: 199) calls “the combination of the cultural emphasis and the social structure which produces intense pressure for deviation”. Uruka explains that their becoming bad friends is:

Because of the people who are at the top, they don’t look after the needs of the masses.

Since the respondents seem to be denied access to legitimate opportunities, they are strained to come together as “bad friends” to “innovate” and enact armed robberies. According to Featherstone and Deflem (2003: 480), the deviant form of innovation is disproportionately present in those strata where legitimate opportunities for attaining the cultural goals are less or not accessible.

When these bad friends come together, based on their conceived idea of society, they formulate their own morality and way of life and live by that as the acceptable norm. According to Waliru:

Nigerian Government made many to commit such offence. Because when I was under my parents, I never admit in my mind that I'm going to become a robber; but due to how our country is and due to how everything hard. Our parents that born us they have nothing to live [on] now talk of how to take care of the children they born. So we children of nowadays that's why they call us "millennium boys". We are fight[ing] for ourselves. When we look at our side now we see that majority of those who are committing the thing are under-aged, age of 22, 23, 18, 19 years carrying gun up and down, why?

Supportively, Warr (2006) argues that it is sometimes the case that groups create their own moral climate; they define what is acceptable behaviour within their own self-contained social environment. By creating their own ethical reality, they cancel out the cultural definitions that exist outside the group and that may control the actions of those very members in situations away from their companions.

These bad friends are just local boys in the community but they are not normally known to non-members, or even to parents because of the undercover nature of their membership and the illegal activities they embark on. In essence, they are a network of criminal colleagues who get involved in armed robbery. Afadi admits that:

It is because we're friends and anything we want to do we do it together secretly between ourselves. Because we don't want anybody to know what we do.

Kwelu explains that:

Bad friends are everywhere. You cannot recognise them until you mingle with them ... So you cannot know bad friends not until you're involved with them. They're everywhere.

Similarly, this is a common feature among the "Agaba gang culture" in the Southern part of Nigeria (see Pratten, 2009). Data for this study reveal that any prospective member of the "bad friends" must be compelled to pass through some initiation rites. Apparently, initiation rites assure continuity of the group. Those rites serve to convey

the norms of the system to new members, to preserve the system for the future. Most importantly, the rites of initiation or passage indicate an underlying culture that exists (Grapendaal, 1990). For this study, it was non-violent although a knife was presented to would be initiates in the process. This suggests a sign of “bravery” or “bravado” to face the challenges of armed robbery operations in future. The offer of colanuts, oil and drinks suggests a “communion” with the old and new members. Oath taking suggests “honesty, trust, and confidence” among the members. A witch doctor working for the group, who is presumably “an elder” normally performs the initiation rite with some incantations. The entire process makes the whole enterprise to look like a “covenant” so that the members can share things together. By doing so, the group’s solidarity is assured. Here is Balolu’s experience:

... when I came there they [bad friends] now started to bring knife, cola, oil, ... they say ... that I should sit down. There is one man, he now came out, an elderly man. When the man came out, the man bring [brought] him [his] wine. When the man bring him [his] wine, I now begin to tell the man ... what is happening here, before the man now say okay is that the man, they now say he is the man. The man say I should break a cola, I break [broke] a cola, I should hold the knife, I hold [held] a knife. He now put the Schnapps [hot drink] into a cup that I should swear that whatsoever I see here I’m not going to talk it out, I now said whatever I see here I am not going to talk it out. And I should make a vow that I will be a member of this cult. I now said okay, I will be a member of this cult. So he pour[ed] that wine on top of that knife. He now poured it. He now said as from today I’m a member; a member of what? That was when I say okay this is another thing entirely.

Data reveal that belonging to the group of “bad friends” is like belonging to a “gang” or a kind of “secret society” such that when they take an oath, they are bound by it. They are not permitted to divulge any of the group’s secrets for any reason whatsoever. In that sense, the group’s secret is as valuable as their lives. The researcher was informed that any attempt to reveal such secrets would pose a serious risk to their lives. As a result of that, Kwelu seemed to be too scared and reserved when responding to the interview:

It is very difficult to say it when you are in this place ... it’s like a gang formed, a gang formed and it depends on the group, you people might

decided to take oath. That is why I did not say much. But assuming you took oath and you did not say more again, you cannot involve in that oath. Whenever you take oath you cannot say more than what you're supposed to say. If you do, may be, you will lose your life because over there they will know and they will tell you.

These “bad friends” are seriously influenced by their criminal actions. This is because as noted before, they appear to have strong social bonds formed out of shared values. Such bonds might have some link with their tribal affinity, considering that the majority (13) of the respondents come from two (Igbo and Yoruba) out of the three major tribes in the country (see table 18). Moreover, the issue of migration seems to play an important role because the vast majority of youths from different parts of the country migrate to Lagos to look for jobs and other legitimate or illegitimate means of survival. It may be possible that people with similar views about the *status quo* in the country could meet and become criminal friends. As anomie-strain theory suggests, structural deprivation or inequality is likely to produce pressures to deviate under very specific and distinct cultural circumstances (see Rosenfeld, 1989: 458).

As data reveal, bad friends have the capacity to convince and decoy any of their members into doing a robbery with them. For example, Ewesu narrates:

*... If I don't go with that my guy there is no way I would know about things like that because the guy knows a lot about things like that*⁹⁶

Similarly, Hamedu tells his story:

I was just sitting idle at home, and then a friend of mine came to look for me. He said there is work out there that we need to do, which will fetch us money. I asked him what type of job it was and he told me that there was a boutique at Apapa area. He said a woman owns the boutique and that she's a drug pusher, she has “hard currencies” and all that. Since for the fact we've been looking for jobs to no avail, let's go there and raid the place. That was how we got started. We went there, tied up the sales girl and began to raid the shop.

Drawing on Hemedu's story, we see how criminogenic needs attracted him and his friends to get involvement in robbery.

⁹⁶Without moving with that my guy there is no way I would have known about armed robbery. My guy knows much about things like that.

Oluremi's situation is quite different. He is from an average family that can cater for him, but he joined the group of bad friends to do something bad which they do. It might be that he wanted to experience the activity of bad friends as part of his youthful exuberance.

My family they are okay ... I won't say may be I am hungry that I got into robbery. I am not hungry that I got into robbery. It is because of bad, bad friends. "Shee"[he exclaims] [do] you understand? As a matter of fact I have never done such a thing in my life before. I was supposed to be in school, may be graduated by now. I was given admission the same day I was apprehended by the police ... My family are okay. They are not hungry. God is providing. They are okay.

As Wright and Decker (1997) had earlier argued, those who have enough money to deal with their immediate needs still get involved in robberies. This is not to improve their financial situation, but because they see it as an opportunity that seems too good to lose. That opportunity may have something to do with the association of peers, which as noted before has something to do with youth delinquency (see Cohen, 1955; Coleman, 1961; Krohn & Massey, 1980).

Joining bad friends can take any form or shape. Fundamentally, the person in question must be the right candidate for the "rough business", and an assessment is done with his initial appearance before the old members of the group. In addition, the membership has to be attractive to entice prospective members to join the group. People are normally lured with money, partying and other material things. Those who do the talking will be very shrewd, and of course not divulging the major secrets about the group. In the end, prospective members would see it as a worthy venture, and something that might change their lives in future. The friendship among the respondents helps them to share views about the society around them such as partying, money, stealing and so on. During interview, Balolu described how he joined the group of bad friends:

So the first thing when you are being joined them, they will first of all look [at] you. You know there is some certain thing they will use to attract you. Like they ...[can] say okay "old boy" ... [are] you rich? No, or old boy we have a party to go,... so, so, so, cloth ... we...[shall] wear. They will know that you have no money to buy it ... So from there this one can say okay I will brought [bring] for you. All those small, small things, they will use

small, small thing[s], they will not tell you open[ly]. For the first time they will never tell you direct. They will start from a little, to a little; from the small one, to small one. May be you have a problem now or they can set you up. May be this is your room at home now, they know that this is your last money that is there now. They can send one of their group now to go and steal it ... When you get there you will not see it again. You will now feel that ah ah, where is this money ... They have steal [stolen] your thing? Ah, and ... this thing you want to buy now. This thing you must buy it oh ... How much they are selling the thing? You say okay I will buy it for you. From there now, they are using this now to attract you ... to that their place.

Kwelu's version of membership into the group of "bad friends" reads:

It's like a society. Before you get into a society, those people will get to you. If they don't get to you, then you cannot join them except you come through giving gifts, getting closer to them and before you know it, you will be well introduced. They give you things, take you to wherever they want to take you and by the time you know you've become a part of them.

Similarly, an American study by Jacobs and Wright (1999) has shown that the involvement in street culture was an important intervening variable that influenced and directed armed robber's perceived need for cash (see also Nihart et al, 2005). Konashe explains his involvement with bad friends to enact a robbery as something born out of material need:

When you are doing something and you are looking at your other mates, they are looking fine, no body to help, you look for a way for yourself to look for money.

Sometimes those who join the group of bad friends are deceived at the first instance; or rather, they are not well informed about what the group does. Probably, this is done in order not to discourage prospective members from joining the group. Before a new member is well informed about the secrets of the group, he must have carried out at least a robbery operation with them. Armed robbery is something that is better experienced rather than heard because if people were to be fully informed about the practical details of the crime, some might not venture to attempt it. This is described thus by Oluremi:

I was not told the particular thing I was going for. If I was told okay we are going ... [to] target drug or robbery, maybe I will decide let's go or

let me stay. Just take me there without my consent. We are going for shopping is different from getting into robbery action.

Although Oluremi was hoodwinked to get into armed robbery, he was never coerced into the “business”, yet he decided to follow the “bad friends”. When they got there, he felt disturbed, jittered, and confused so much so that he was reduced to a kind of paralysis and subsequently apprehended by the police.

As a matter of fact, they did not lure me but I asked what are you doing? Show me the way. They did not tell me anything one on one. Just okay one day I will take you out to see what I’m doing. Getting there I’m so surprised.

Among the “bad friends”, the easy way to become popular is to impress a group of peers with the crime they enact. In doing so, they also earn more respect among their members. According to Balolu:

So anywhere wey we go them know say na “boy -o- boy”. We go appear they know say this person na guy man. He go say how far, we get work.⁹⁷

As Warr (2006) suggests, proponents of “peer influence” consistently maintain that the number of delinquent friends an individual has is a better predictor of his criminal behaviour. Indeed criminal peers seem to have a strong influence on whether strained individuals get involved in crime (Baron, 2006; Merton, 1968a; Cloward & Ohlin, 1960; Cohen, 1955). For this study, the “bad friends” did not come together to carry out robbery operations based on peer influence, but primarily for the sake of friendship and loyalty to the group. That is to say, once a person joins the “bad friends” company, he surrenders his loyalty to the group. This is essential to ensure continuity and progress. Scholars like Warr (2006) stress that loyalty in connection with criminal behaviour means more than ratting on your friends. It often means to engage in risky or illegal behaviour in which one would not otherwise involve oneself in order to preserve or solidify a friendship. Loyalty provides a form of moral cover

⁹⁷So any where we go they will know that “boy-o-boy” (a person that impresses is around), We will appear and they know that this person is a guy. He will say how far, do we have any work to do?

for illegal behaviour. It invokes a moral imperative that supersedes or nullifies the moral gravity of the crime.

These friends are from different age groups; the older peers are more experienced than those of the same age group are, but they still do things as a team. Ufem admitted that:

I ... meet both my seniors and my mates ... we ... run things together ... [and they will]...go their way.

From our findings there is no specific limit to the number of the so-called bad friends who get involved in robbery. These are different youths from different backgrounds who meet each other to agree on a common purpose to help themselves. According to Dimotan:

*Na different different guys wey I get. No bi one, no be two. Because na Ghetto we go, ghetto. We fit go Ijora get friends.*⁹⁸

Data revealed that junior members of the group of bad friends can be involved in the sale of goods stolen by their senior colleagues. This is a way of bringing a robbery process to a successful completion. Sangi explains:

*... them go go steal another man's property carry am come and them go give us money, dash us something tell us go and carry this thing to so so where, give us money for transport, you know they give us a lot of money....*⁹⁹

“Bad friends” play a role in the socialisation process. The grooming environment for these friends arises from living in the same area, being in the same school, staying together at joints and street corners, and going to clubs, for example. These venues provide the setting for freedom of association and interaction. Warr (2006) also confirms that youths find residential proximity and being in the same school as

⁹⁸I have different different guys, it is not one or two. Because we go to Ghetto, we can also get friends from Ijora.

⁹⁹They will go and steal something from somebody and give us to sell somewhere. They give us a lot of money including money for our transport.

obvious sources of propinquity. It is suggested that when these “bad friends” are very close to each other, they create a forum for criminal networking.

From Oluremi’s experience:

Some of them, we live together in the same environment, in the same area. That’s how I just meet them. We live in the same area. And the person who live[s] in the same area will introduce you to somebody else. So you get to know people....

Ufem, who joined bad friends at school, said:

When I was in school, I normally get out from the class, from the school compound. We normally went to the joint and smoke[d]. We do all sorts of things. That was where I stopped my school, at that primary six. I have not been able to cool down and study my books.

Kwelu had a similar experience:

And when we ... drop out we come together,... we will be collecting individual things with “instruments” [guns] Everybody run[s] around in order to get those instruments ... I just went astray because of bad friends.

For Ogunsu:

That group na club to club. If you go club now you go see many many guys. If to say yes you wan carry any body na there you go know. Him go say him dey for this deal.¹⁰⁰

When these friends meet for the first time and try to introduce themselves, then street culture unfolds in earnest. “Street culture revolves around the enjoyment of ‘good times’ with minimal obligations and commitments that are external to the immediate social setting” (see Shover & Honaker, 1992: 283 cited in Wright & Decker, 1997: 37). According to Baron and Hartnagel (1998) the more young people roam the

¹⁰⁰That group goes from one club to another. If you go to a club, you will see many guys. If you want to go out with anybody, you will know from there. Immediately, the person will tell you that he is interested in the deal.

streets, the more they live an isolated life of the street such that they become deeply involved in street lifestyle.

Ewusu's crime problem emerged after he had been duped by the syndicate processing a Liberian visa for him. Then he started moving up and down the streets until he met a criminal friend who was a student like himself:

As I was duped, so I go from one joint to another joint to calm myself. That was where I meet him. I met him where we drink and smoke ... I was in the joint you know, I met the guy while we were sitting together ... He is frequent in the joint very well. So we discussed one day, he was a student as well ..., and that was how we started relating.

Living on the street means getting involved in armed robbery, drugs/alcohol, gambling and similar illegal activities. As some scholars (see for instance Inciardi et al, 1993; Baron & Hartnagel, 1998; Jacob & Wright, 1999; Brookman et al, 2008) stress, it is through the street association of peers, that a criminal environment is formed or created where violent crimes such as robbery are not only modelled, but also practised and reinforced.

In the circle of bad friends who roam the streets, the period of building trust varies. Mindful of the risky nature of their criminality, trusting each other is the only way for armed robbers to move forward because armed robbery is something that involves money and life. Sangi for example explains:

Why we dey trust each other be say, may be you and some people are do something and may be we don dey many years and nobody don leak our matter of purpose, we go still dey like that ... we no cheat each other, we share the equal money, na money dey make problem come out. When that one no happen, we no dey do bad against each other....¹⁰¹

The process of mutual familiarisation may take only a matter of days, or it may take months, or it may last for years. Everything depends on individual circumstances. Oluremi had been mixing with his "bad friends" for only a very short period before he got involved in robbery:

¹⁰¹We trust each other when we must have stayed together for many years and no one leaks our secrets and we did not cheat each other, and we shared our money equally because that is the usual problem that arises otherwise we have nothing against one another.

... Let me say 4 to 5 months.

Uruka's experience was different: the period between his first meeting with "bad friends" and his first robbery with them was much longer.

Yes. I stayed with them for about three years before I started doing this [robbery].

Apparently, the longer bad friends stay together, the more they build trust, the more they discuss and learn from each other how to carry out a successful armed robbery. A popular sociological principle of "homophily" states that: "people make friends with people who are similar to themselves" (Warr, 2006: 41). While this school of thought claims that the causal direction between delinquency and friends are oppositional to that implied by peer influence, they admit that "people ... do not become delinquents because they acquire delinquent friends; they acquire delinquent friends after they themselves have become delinquent" (Warr, 2006: 41). Glueck and Glueck (1950) had previously carried out a seminal study on that. From his study, Gill (2000) found that 24 per cent (the third highest in order of significance) of his interviewees admitted they were urged to get involved in armed robbery by their friends. Again, it can finally be suggested that what defines the respondents in our study as "bad friends" is their criminal action, which they exhibit together with their members.

5.4.2. Drugs/alcohol

As noted in chapter 3, previous studies have established that drugs and alcohol are correlates of armed robbery (see for example, Conklin, 1972; O'Donnell & Morrison, 1994; Matthews, 1996; Willis, 2006). Matthews (2002) has argued that whenever drugs are mentioned together with crime, there are two things at issue: either drug taking or drug dealing. Drug taking normally involves providing money to buy drugs to sustain a habit. Robbers involved in drug taking see the "money for drugs" as a major economic rationale for robbery to occur. Those who deal on drugs fund their own drug use from the surplus money they accumulate (Bennett & Holloway, 2009). In the early 1990s, an anthropological review largely based on "impressions" indicated that criminal behaviour in Nigeria had a strong association with trafficking in and use of hard drugs (Klein, 1994 cited in Adesanya et al, 1997).

From those interviewed for this study, ten respondents admitted that drugs/alcohol made them to get involved in armed robbery. In Nigeria, drug taking and alcohol abuse are illegal, but criminals see it as an illegitimate means to achieve their own ends. Drawing on Merton's (1938) anomie-strain theory, when the relationship between cultural goals and legitimate opportunities become incongruent, people tend to adapt to structurally produced strain or anomie in alternative ways, such as drugs/alcohol, and robbery. Ogunsu who was both a drug dealer and robbery accomplice shares his experience:

*This robbery no good because that time I ... [was in the] free world I be Smokey seller. But boys ... [used to] come [and] smoke, but they ... [will] ... give me gun say make I dey keep am for them.*¹⁰²

Some respondents mentioned three main drugs (cocaine, heroin, and cannabis), which they took at some point before or after a robbery operation. Buying these illegal substances cost a great deal of money.¹⁰³ In Nigeria, cannabis is often referred to as "Indian hemp" alias "guff". It is arguably the most common drug in the country. According to a UN (2005) survey, the primary "problem drug" in Africa is cannabis, which is more responsible for the admissions to treatment than any other drug. It also accounts for Africa's main drug export, responsible for a quarter of global seizures. Between 2000 and 2003, some 32 per cent of cannabis herb was seized in Nigeria.

For this research, data demonstrate that some of the respondents start taking drugs at joints or on street corners, until the group becomes feral and their thoughts turn to robbery, for which the members themselves normally suggest the robbery targets. Ufem describes the environment where they meet as the centre of criminal operation:

*You know say that place just like joint. Any person wey dey come [to] smoke come there. Even police officers, ..., soldier ... come here. Na that place bad boys dey. Na there we dey meet ourselves ... na there person go come tell us say money, "taji" dey so, so place, make we come collect am.*¹⁰⁴

¹⁰²This robbery is not good because when I was in the "free world" I was a drug seller. However, boys used to come and smoke. Then they would give me guns to keep for them.

¹⁰³For example, a pinch of cocaine or heroin can cost something in the region of N3,000 or £15.

¹⁰⁴People go there to smoke. Even police officers and soldiers go there. Bad boys converge there, and we meet ourselves there. It is there that a person will inform us that there is money somewhere, let us go and collect it.

Some respondents claim there is a kind of “spirit” inherent in drugs that pushes people into the temptation of getting involved in armed robbery. That sort of “spirit” appears to be the “intoxicant” found in drugs, which makes people loose control of their behaviours. That “spirit” becomes active in such people when they indulge in taking illegal drugs. According to Molafi:

If you dey smoke “Igboo” [Indian hemp], dey smoke “Cigar” [Cigarette], the spirit dey inside the smoke e go draw you enter to thief.¹⁰⁵

Afadi has a similar version:

When you [I] smoke, there is a spirit that normally comes into me and we start thinking of ways to make money. This one will say he wants to become a millionaire, this one will say he wants to be rich. This one will say he wants to fly all [over] the world.

Such influences numb the senses of robbers and their actions become more lethal. Drugs and alcohol strip away all respect and regard for human lives and properties. It becomes a “do or die” affair when robbers face their targets. Aresu admitted that:

Yea, so after taking that is just like I see nobody and I don’t want to know who is who because my inspiration is double then and any interruption to my surrounding I will like to take some action or some act to defend myself or to chase them. So I normally act, my action would just make me to act. It intoxicates me to the level, which I can just do and undo and that is why I don’t take it any how. I take it when I want to move for my action, so that when I am doing my action I won’t look back, rather I end my game before looking back. That is what [why] I normally take it.

Dimotan has a similar experience:

You go smoke am, cocaine and heroin, your body go be like say the power ...[of] the whole world wey you see. E go boost your morale to do anything. You go look[at] somebody like foul, ... like ... chicken.¹⁰⁶

In the same vein, Ufem explains:

If to say we want go rob, I go smoke Indian hemp so that I go get extra power.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵If you smoke Indian hemp or cigarette, the smoking “spirit” will draw you into robbery.

¹⁰⁶When you smoke cocaine or heroin, your body will be energised. It will boost your morale to do anything. You will regard a human being as a chicken.

Obvuma's story is not different:

That time we were outside I smoke Indian hemp and drink big stout. You cannot work without putting something in your mouth. We will be high. To rob, it is not easy. Before someone can rob he must smoke high. If he is not smoking he must be drinking cocaine. Without that the person cannot move in action when he is operating.

As noted before, previous studies have attributed such behaviours as the pharmacological effects of drugs/alcohol (see Bennett & Holloway, 2009; Bennett & Wright, 1984; Cromwell et al, 1991). Although, some take drugs and alcohol and act recklessly, others take them and yet remain sober and reflective before enacting a robbery operation. Previous research has demonstrated that robbers who have never been addicted are prone to attack more difficult targets (Van Koppen & Jansen, 1998). Apparently, many offenders rely on drugs and alcohol as aids to carrying out robberies because they provide a crutch. Overall, substance intake makes the offender to be reflective, gives him confidence that he can accomplish the robbery operation and come back successfully. This is based on the psychopharmacological explanation that chemical properties found in drugs could affect people's behavioural pattern directly or indirectly (see Agozino et al, 2009; Bennett & Holloway, 2005). Ufem is of the view that:

When I smoke Indian hemp it makes me to meditate well. So that[s] what I do, I will do it normally.

In the same way, Ogunsu describes his experience:

The time wey I dey for free world, if you wan[t] go look for money, if you smoke Igboo na him dey give you confidence, because ... where you dey go goh, goh, you dey go for action.¹⁰⁸

For Waliru:

Before I go, after taking my Indian hemp, I take Chelsea mix it with Egovin, for the temperature to be high, for the thing to shack.¹⁰⁹ That alone is enough for you to operate.

¹⁰⁷When we want to go and rob, I will smoke Indian hemp in order to gain extra power within me.

¹⁰⁸When I was in the "free world" if you want to go and look for money, if you smoke Indian hemp, it gives you confidence because you are going for action.

The above respondents can be classified as addicts and alcoholic robbers because they significantly bear similar characteristics with previous typologies discussed in chapter 3. Prior research has also shown that the simultaneous use of multiple drugs is likely to increase intoxication thus creating unique metabolites, which was absent when drugs were used individually. These metabolites may be more toxic than those formed when the drugs are taken individually (Bennett and Holloway, 2005). Furthermore, a combined use of drugs (cocaine) and alcohol might bump up extra neuronal dopamine and serotonin levels which may lead to a shortfall in impulse control and to violent criminal activity (Bennett and Holloway, 2005).

Other offenders interviewed for this study believe they could still rob perfectly well without using any drugs or alcohol. Although, they may still be strained by the anomic condition in the country, but they avoid the use of drugs or alcohol prior to a robbery for personal reasons. Such people are capable of great audacity in enacting a robbery once they have made up their minds to get it done. They are widely believed to be more dangerous than those who use drugs. Bolati explains:

*...some people them no dey smoke anything. Na them brutal pass [others].
Me I dey fear them because dangerous shooting dey for their hand, they
no dey fear...*¹¹⁰

Implicitly, such category of robbers are “experts” or “professionals” in the field of robbery (see chapter 3), and as two previous studies (Walsh, 1986; Gill, 2001) highlight, “professional robbers” are not motivated by either drugs or alcohol. They are more adept at their robbery enactment more than anything else. Moreover, as discussed in chapter 3, no mention of drugs or alcohol was linked with the professional robbers, thus suggesting that the present study does not differ from previous research.

Hamedu has a different experience from others, which partly springs from his commitment to Islamic faith. Although the “Koran” forbids the use of alcohol, it is silent about drugs. The option to use drugs or not is that of the individual. Therefore,

¹⁰⁹‘Shack’ here means to get intoxicated.

¹¹⁰Those who do not smoke anything are more brutal. I am afraid of them because their shooting is very dangerous.

Hamedu chose not to smoke cigarette because he sees it as something dangerous to health. Instead, he prefers to use Indian hemp, which helps him to remain calm and avoid getting into trouble.

It makes me look more matured. I like to stay away from trouble whenever I smoke hemp. It lightens my spirit. Even if you're looking for my trouble or I had you in mind then all of a sudden I see you around at the time of smoking, I'll overlook you at that point in time. You might even come and intimidate me I'll just ignore you. Then I'm in a state of mind and I don't like trouble.

Furthermore, Hamedu maintains that if he takes any substance before enacting a robbery, it will make him feel guilty and may change his mind from carrying out the operation.

When I wanted to commit that crime I refused to take anything because if I had done that, I would have changed my mind. My conscience would have pricked me. It would calm me more. I won't have that courage to do it.

Whether drugs and alcohol are used or not, the crucial thing with robbery is, as earlier noted, “bravado” or rather the “courage” to do it, which is hidden in the human mind. The bravery of the armed robber may determine his use of violence during an operation. According to Aresu:

You know many are heartless, and many use some chemical liquid like whiskey and some use chemical powder like cocaine to high the inspiration, and many use their natural morality.

When interviewed, Konashe responded by saying:

Some people don't use to smoke before they go on operation. It depend[s] on your mind. If you don't have the mind you cannot rob

From their research, Bennett and Holloway (2009) conclude that the “courage to offend” was at times required through the taking of drugs before an offence such as robbery was committed. Similarly, the use of drugs by some youths gives them an opportunity to carry out predatory forms of masculinity with violence (see Matthews, 2002; Chaiken & Chaiken, 1990). As earlier mentioned, some influential studies have

suggested that those who rob do so to feed their drug habits (see Macdonald, 1975; Gill, 2000; Matthews, 2002; Bennett & Holloway, 2009).

However, as can be inferred from this study, the youths that get involved in armed robbery in Nigeria, do not necessarily aim at feeding their drug habits. Instead, they use drugs for a stimulus to help them to face and overcome obstacles to their robbery operation. Supportively, a previous study of condemned armed robbers at Benin City Prison in Nigeria has shown that violent offenders usually use cannabis and alcohol on a daily basis before the commission of their crimes (see Adamson & Malomo, 1991 cited in Adesanya et al, 1997: 39-40). Similarly, an American study by Conklin (1972) suggests that a common answer for the rise in robbery rates given by incarcerated robbers was increased drug use. Apparently, if offenders use drugs and alcohol after a robbery, it is likely to be purely for pleasure and partying as a way of celebrating the success of a robbery.

Even though, drugs and alcohol have long been associated with criminal activities, some criminologists maintain that the precise nature of that association is still contentious (Sutherland & Cressey, 1970; Chaiken & Chaiken, 1990; Hough, 1996; Bean 2002; South, 2002; Dingwall, 2005; Hucklesby, 2008). In view of that, scholars still complain that very little is known about the causal connection between drugs and crime (Bennett & Holloway, 2009). Other developments in criminological research focussing on drug-crime and crime-drug relationships are worth examining with caution and criticism. For example, Goldstein's (1985) influential tripartite taxonomy (economic compulsive, psychopharmacological and systemic),¹¹¹ tried to explain the causal connection between drug use and crime; though, Goldstein was criticised for generating unelaborated assumptions that were not mutually exclusive, and so could not explain that linkage between drug use and crime (Parker & Aurhahn, 1998: 306; Bennett & Holloway, 2009). A further critique levelled against Goldstein was that he over-flogged the importance of the systemic model at the detriment of the economic model, yet the systemic model could not be applicable to a large proportion of

¹¹¹The economic compulsive model explains that crime is committed as a means of raising cash to support drug habit. The psychopharmacological model maintains that crime occurs when drug use results in change or impairment in cognitive functioning. The systemic model is associated with crime that occurs because of drug distribution and use (Bennett & Holloway, 2009: 513).

youthful drug users when it was tested (see Bennett & Holloway, 2009; White & Gorman, 2000).

Currently, Bennett and Holloway (2009) have identified some more detailed and systematic mechanisms connecting drug use and specific crimes such as robbery. Their procedure was to advance on Goldstein's taxonomy, and to arrive at their tripartite (economic, pharmacological and lifestyle) explanations of "drug-crime", and "crime-drug" connections with specific crimes. They applied such to a cohort of 41 respondents in prison custody who had been involved in drug misuse and crimes such as assault, robbery, burglary, drug dealing, shoplifting, and handling of stolen goods.

In short, as can be extrapolated from the data for this study, it probably depends on the individual circumstances and capabilities whether or not drugs and alcohol lead someone to commit armed robbery. Gambling might as well offer some explanation about robbery.

5.4.3. Gambling

Five respondents mentioned gambling as a factor that might lead youths into armed robbery. Previous study has revealed that gambling behaviour starts very early in a person's life (Ladouceur et al, 1994). This is also supported by the present study. Youths who indulge in gambling develop a huge appetite for money, they specialise in how to get it and how to spend it. Among the respondents, doing gambling arose out of the urge to get money in an anomic society like Nigeria because they feel that money could be quickly acquired through the illegitimate way. Strain theory argues that as society pressures people to achieve success, it denies equal access to attain this success (Frey, 1984; Merton, 1938), hence the innovative behaviour such as gambling, which creates an opportunity, although illegitimate, for people to alleviate the frustrations experienced in their efforts to be successful in life, a socially approved goal. Therefore, denied opportunity explains the reason behind lower and working class gambling (Frey, 1984: 111).

Gambling is of course a pool of risk; a game of uncertainty; a game where people who stake their money either win a fortune or totally lose out. It seems that youths who are

addicted to gambling become school dropouts with the intention of getting involved in crimes such as armed robbery. Sangi explains:

... why me I join[ed] robbery, we are living at Lawanson and ... [anytime] I went to that market I will go and play gamble, eat each other's money. From there we are going there, looking for double money and go there and at a point we stop[ped] going to school. We keep our bag somewhere and go and play gamble.

In the case of Dimotan, he started gambling as a small boy. He was doing it just for something to do when he had time on his hands:

Make we get busy. Make we no dey idol. We just dey busy. Just dey use that one dey pass time ... Na so we put am for work.¹¹²

Obvuma tells how he and his friends entered into armed robbery through gambling:

It is when I finished my secondary school, me and my friends then we started playing table tennis, playing different kinds of sports. After that we started putting money in playing gambling. So it is from that gambling that we fall into business of robbery.

First, gambling may not directly lead to robbery; however, it exposes someone to petty stealing of money to support that habit. Thereafter, it could degenerate to robbery as Obvuma explains:

Formerly we steal our father money to play it. But we didn't even steal our father money again but we now gang up to go and find our own money. That is how we got into the business of robbery.

Sangi also describes how he was caught-up in gambling as an errand boy, and later graduated to armed robbery.

All those people wey dey inside that market wey them dey play gamble together. Na them they go dey rob, but we we dey go to school and later we go play gamble with them. And so from there them go dey send us message say I should go and buy something come, go and call that girls

¹¹²Let us be busy, let us not be idle. We are just busy. We used that to waste our time. Later we entered into crime work.

*come, I should go and call em wife come, go and keep em wife to so, so hotel. And so from there me too I open eye, I stop to go school.*¹¹³

Robbers in anticipation of a future robbery can also indulge in gambling. Armed robbers prefer to get through the money they steal from people and companies on the assumption that they will get more from their next heist. When robbers gamble, it serves as a recreational and amusement activity for them. Perhaps it helps them shortly to forget the violence they have inflicted and the damage they have caused to human lives and property. Moreover, they find great enjoyment in having money and spending it that way. That proves the spontaneity inherent in street culture; hence armed robbers prefer to live only for the moment (Wright and Decker, 1997). For example, Aresu acknowledges that:

Yea, we normally play gambling 24. We are not sleeping, we play gamble 24 without sleeping. Just to make fun, just to pass ourselves till the day we can play any other game of robber[y]. We only sit ourselves playing gambles, using our money because the money is coming in a way which we can spend it.

Given that a small proportion of respondents (25 per cent) mentioned gambling as a factor that could lead to robbery begs the question whether it is a plausible motivation for the youth involvement in armed robbery. Nonetheless, let us consider the situational dynamics in carrying out an armed robbery.

5. 5. Situational dynamics in carrying out an armed robbery

The explanations of crime can be situational or dispositional (Alarid et al, 2009). Our concern is on criminal situations. Whereas armed robbery can occur in space and time, certain intervening situations are likely to make it possible. Those situations are groups of stimuli, involving “an array of objects and actions which cover a time span” (Pervin, 1978: 79; see also Birkbeck & Lafree, 1993: 116). Criminal situations are identified by “who is involved, what is going on, and where the action is taking place”. When one of those components changes so does the situation. Situations may

¹¹³Those who gamble together at the market place are the same people who do the robbery. However, we go to school and later play gamble with them. From there they sent us to buy things for them, call girls for them, call their wives and keep them at the hotel. It was there that my eyes were opened to crime and I stopped going to school.

last a few seconds or several hours (Birkbeck & Lafree, 1993: 116). Like other situational crimes, armed robbery must necessarily occur within a particular setting where the actor is subjectively represented (see for example Birkbeck & Lafree, 1993).

Data illustrate that some of the youths who get involved in armed robbery may appear gentle, calm and humble. At times, they pretend to be engaged in some “legitimate work”, but in fact are involved in illegitimate work. The main activity, “robbery” is carried out where, as earlier noted, they feel no person could identify them easily. Dimotan who had such an experience narrates:

Robbery dey every where. Na gentle people dey do robbery. People wey dey quiet, people dey humbleness. You go think say this one no go fit do anything ... Just like me I dey work for seaport, I dey carry oyibo for girls. Them no know say I be thief¹¹⁴

Whereas robbery can occur anywhere, the situation may be backed-up by the offenders’ decision to commit a robbery.

5.5.1. Decision making

The decision to rob was discussed in chapter 3. However, for this study, the decision making process is driven by a sense of dislocation in Nigerian society; where societal norms are no longer upheld by the people. Although the respondents share the goals of society but they do not have the means to achieve them, hence the decision to get involved in armed robbery. As data suggest, some of the youths in desperation of making ends meet see the decision to do robbery as the last option. One of the respondents named Aresu agrees that:

Yes we make a decision that we are going to do it, because we have search[ed] in many ways that will be a easy way we are going to get the capital but we just look that “men” this is the way that will be faster, that is why we just say “men” this is the way we want to do it.

Ufem also admits that:

¹¹⁴ Robbery is everywhere. Gentle people are involved in it; those who are quiet and humble. Just like me, I work at the seaport; I bring girls for the white men, but they do not know that I am a thief.

*We dey take decision ... we dey in need of money.*¹¹⁵

The responses given by Aresu and Ufem are deemed rational in that they were prepared to carry out the robbery because of the financial gains. Whenever robbers find it difficult to explain how they involved themselves in armed robbery, they tend to claim being irrational thereby apportioning blame on something else. For instance, a first time offender and “lone robber” like Ezienyi claimed to be irrational, and blamed the “devil” for pushing him into the offence, even though he had made up his mind at home before setting out. It could be argued that he was pushed into robbery by what Merton (1968a: 232) earlier identified as “the acute pressures created by the discrepancy between culturally induced goals and socially structured opportunities”. In addition Merton, suggests that criminal behaviour in response to anomie may be rational, non-rational or irrational. This was the problem faced by Ezienyi when he said:

*I no even take my mind say make I go rob. I no get sense, the brain at all I no get[sense] at all, at all ... na devil na him push me*¹¹⁶

It is suggested that armed robbers may be strained by the pressures around them, hence the decision to enact a robbery. For example, Ezienyi’s decision to rob made him carry a gun with the intention not to injure or kill anybody, but to earn a living for the day through violent threat. As Katz (1991: 283-4) stresses, the proposition that offenders characteristically monitor their use of violence according to a utilitarian calculus about the means of intimidation that they have (bare arms, knives, guns) and the minimal use of force to control victims ignores the irrational commitment that is essential for constantly committing the crime.

5.5.2. Planning

Data reveal that some of the respondents planned their robberies while others suddenly enacted theirs without planning. Previous studies share both views as well (see for example Conklin, 1972; Macdonald, 1975; Desroches, 2002). It was

¹¹⁵We take decisions because we are in need of money.

¹¹⁶I did not decide to rob. I have no sense; I have no brain at all. I have no sense at all. It was the devil that pushed me to rob.

suggested during interview that bank robberies are usually planned before enactment. Supportively, Australian studies showed that bank robbers tended to engage in more planning than those who target other types of premises (Borzycki, 2003; Nugent et al, 1989). Planning to enact a robbery may take a short or long period depending on the circumstances of the perpetrators. The way a robbery is planned, however, may determine its ultimate outcome. Kwelu believes that:

[Robbery] ... is like a company ... like a job, like a market - hawking in the street. It is a job, we plan for it, we work for it

Data also show that armed robbery can be planned without some potential perpetrators who belong to the same criminal group. Whenever they arrive to join the group, they are given some briefing about the proposed crime environment and all that should be done on reaching there. Afadi saw himself in that situation:

They told me because I was not there with them. They told me that there is a place they want me to go and they need me to go with them ... I was not there when they planned it. I was not there when they mapped out the place they want us to go.

The youths who plan robberies appear to be disaffected by the social structure around them. Therefore “the social structure strains the cultural values, making action in accord with them readily possible for those occupying certain statuses within the society and difficult or impossible for others” (Merton, 1968a: 216–17).

Most robberies involve little planning; and offenders are often intoxicated or under the influence of drugs when they commit the crime (see Birkbeck & LaFree, 1993; Katz, 1988, 1991). However, it has earlier been suggested (see chapter 3) that not all robberies are planned before they are enacted. Such unplanned stickups are enacted out of desperation to solve some immediate problems. Ezienyi, for one, admitted that he did not plan his robbery:

I never plan or get experience. I no get am before.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷I have never planned or had any previous experience of robbery.

It seems implausible to say that robbery may not be planned at all. Once a decision has been made, the planning can either be covert and mental for a “lone robber” or secret and vocal for a group of robbers. Arguably, by entering into a property to confront a person with a weapon to rob him presupposes some element of planning. As Desroches, (2002: 125) puts it, “since robbery is seldom planned in detail, offenders are likely to use whatever weapons are at their disposal”. Equally important, they require the cooperation of outsiders who are very familiar with the target.

5.5.3. Cooperation from outsiders

As data illustrate, an informant’s cooperation is deemed necessary to succeed in an armed robbery operation. Although informants are outside of the robbery group, often times, they are insiders¹¹⁸ who provide relevant information to the robbers in order to attack a particular target. For example, it is essential that a bank robbery be preceded by adequate information concerning the proposed target. Lemiola explains:

*Like bank robbery: before bank robbery fit go work na information. Express high way robbery before e go robbery na information. All those night robbery wey dey go rob for night, some information, some no be information. Like all those white people wey dey dey buy cocoa exporter and importer. If they don come they carry money come begin dey go for road they dey give information say so, so, so white man dey come, e dey bring so so so amount dey come for so, so, so day. Na information.*¹¹⁹

Informants and active robbers are criminal accomplices; they know each other more closely and share relevant information pertaining to potential targets to hit. Konashe describes that relationship and the way it works:

... Like now you are working in the bank and you are my friend. Let’s say I’m a robbery [robber] and you need a money, and you know their secret. When you bring a target for me, and you are my friend, before you come I’m in bank then. They will give us the time when they brought the money, the time the person hold the strong key, ... If you do not [know] somebody in that side, somebody cannot ... enter there. Somebody give them the guideline how they enter - that is the people working around there.

¹¹⁸“Insider” here refers to a person connected to a particular target as a staff or member of that environment.

¹¹⁹Bank robbery can succeed through information. Highway robbery can also succeed through information. Some night robberies are carried out through information, some are not. All those white people who export and import cocoa, as soon as they set off for business, their information is given on time describing the potential victim and how much money he is coming with.

Robbers may require pieces of information to rob a family home, especially, when potential victims have returned from overseas trip with presumably some foreign currencies in their possession. Relatives, domestic workers, or fellow robbers who feel there is something to be stolen from a particular target may disseminate information that leads to a robbery. It is the belief of Konashe that:

They give information. You know...people live in compound now, ... some people come from London, if they hear about the thing [money] they will come and rob the person.

At times robbers can operate without any piece of information, especially when there is no informant to work with. It is likely that such robbers do not always succeed in their operations. Based on the balance of probabilities, most targets they attack do not possess instant cash, and of course, the safety of the robbers in operation is in jeopardy. When asked do people rob with information or not? Bolati replied:

Some people dey go with information, some people dey go like that. Some people fit see the place wey them pack motor in front of person house. Some people dey go give them target¹²⁰

Based on tip-offs, those who commit armed robberies on the highways or motorways have specific targets in mind. Without prior information, “highway robbers” may still unleash an attack on any oncoming vehicle of their choice. They normally target luxurious buses in the middle of the night with the hope of ransacking their on-board passengers. One of their machinations on this occasion is to set “dangerous traps” on the tarred roads, so that any vehicle that runs on them will break down instantaneously. When that happens, armed robbers emerge out of the blue to rob the unfortunate victims. Domitan explains how the trap works:

That setting work wey we dey do, e dey catch luxurious bus people wey de travel from east. If you no stop commasize, it will take bus self ... Na setting work. All those rail iron, you know rail iron, all those railway we cuttam into double, we go carry am for waterproof for night put am inside road. E fit go match am, make the motor be caterpillar, any how the motor be, make e be Jeep it go stop ... Na so we dey operate.¹²¹

¹²⁰Some people go with information, but some do not. Some can see where cars are parked in front of somebody’s house and start to rob the target.

¹²¹We are involved in setting traps for luxurious buses that travel from the East of the country. If the bus does not stop and pack immediately, it must still stop after some distance. It is a setting work; we

As findings demonstrate, the timing of a robbery varies regarding different groups of robbers. Whenever an armed robbery is enacted, it is a risky venture; although, doing it in the day time is more dangerous than at night. Those who rob during the day are the so-called “senior boys”.¹²² These robbers do not see Nigerian society as a just social structure, that is why they follow the illegitimate way to achieve what the legitimate means could not offer them (see Merton, 1968a). Egbue (2006) is of the view that every so often, armed robbers attack huge numbers of passengers of daytime public transportation and strip them of their cash, or even mow them down. Regardless of security provided on these journeys, gangs of youthful armed robbers swoop suddenly on travellers and wreak havoc on them.

In addition, data suggest that “junior boys”¹²³ normally get involved at night; still, senior boys can also rob at night depending on the target sought. For Konashe, robbing at night:

Is all those who work around 2.00 o'clock to 4.30 or 5.00.

No matter the time a robbery may be enacted (day or night), it is not an easy task; it is something that may result in the death of either the victim or the offender. According to Lemiola:

*You know say the work wey they wan go do na heavy work. Robbery na heavy work. It can lead to death ...You wey you wan look person for inside, house, abi na company, when una go look una self koro koro, you either die. This work wey I dey go I fit go and die I fit I no go come back. If they attack you una go face una self, anything fit happen.*¹²⁴

Given that robbery may lead to the death of robbers especially when those (victims) who know them spot them out later on, some robbers may decide to disguise themselves to avoid being detected.

use iron and cut them into double. At night, we cover those weapons with waterproof and place them on the road. Therefore, any vehicle that matches on them must stop. That is how we operate.

¹²²“Senior boys” here means that they are “daring and deadly”.

¹²³“Junior boys” are “less daring and less deadly” too.

¹²⁴You are aware that what you want to do is a heavy work. Robbery is a heavy work that can lead to death. You want to go and rob somebody’s house or a company: after looking at yourself, it is either death or life. If they attack you, and you retaliate, anything can happen.

5.5.4. Masked or unmasked

While previous research in England, Nigeria and Australia revealed that armed robbers wear masks to disguise themselves (see Matthews, 1996; Agakameh, 2003; Borzycki, 2003), others have illustrated that in Canada robbers do not wear masks (see Gabor et al, 1987). In this study, it is partly demonstrated that robbers wear masks – with particular reference to those who rob banks. However, it is believed that most armed robbers do not cover their faces. It is suggested that those who disguise themselves are either assassins or hangmen. According to Shasha:

I believe the people who want to cover them [their] face, may be some robbery they want to go for bank. And morning or afternoon they want to go for bank, they will cover face. Most of the people who use[ed] to cover face and go and rob, I don't believe that they are armed robber[s] ... Maybe, they are assassins or anything ...[A] robber is not that kind of may be to cover face. I don't believe that they have time to cover face.

Armed robbers are desperate to get money by all available means. Whether they disguise themselves or not during their operation is immaterial, but their involvement in armed robbery is an innovation geared towards attaining the required cultural goals in society. As strain theory earlier suggested, deviant form of innovation is disproportionately present in those strata where legitimate opportunities for reaching the cultural goals are limited or inaccessible (see Featherstone & Deflem, 2003: 480). Since some offenders can wear masks and others cannot, however, the use of any weapon in robbery intensifies the crime.

5.5.5. Use of weapons

As discussed earlier, armed robbery involves the use of weapon and violence (see for example Conklin, 1972; Rotimi, 1984; Nugent et al, 1989; O'Donnell & Morrisons, 1997; Currie, 1998; Mouzos & Carcach, 2001; Cassel & Bernstein, 2007). Under the CCA,¹²⁵ the twenty youths interviewed have been labelled “armed robbers” because they attempted to carry out, abetted or carried out a robbery or robberies with a weapon or weapons either as a group or as individuals. The weapons may have been used to threaten, intimidate, maim or even kill the victims at some point.

¹²⁵ See CAP 77, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 1990, Chapter 36, Sections 401 to 403.

The most popular weapon for armed robbery operations in Nigeria is the “gun”. Unsurprisingly then, the majority of the respondents (sixteen) used guns to do their robberies, while four used knives and imitation guns in their raids. Those who used knives and imitation guns belonged to the same group. When interviewed they said they had no access to proper guns at the time of enactment, otherwise they would have used them. Particularly, a gun is extremely useful against victims who are physically strong, armed, or otherwise relatively invulnerable – the gun is “the great equalizer” (Cook, 1981: 65). Therefore, Bolati explains that a gun is preferable to a knife when they go for a robbery:

*We are ready to shoot whether police die or no die, whether people dey near or not, nothing concern us ...We can fire kwu, kwu, kwu ... E hard before you go see robbery say robbery ah, cutlass gooh na before, before. Na gun gooh be the men, the men before robbery go hold*¹²⁶

According to Ufem, either a gun or a knife can be used to carry out a robbery and hit at the required target successfully.

You know if you did not use gun you will not be able to collect money from the person. The person will be dragging with you. But immediately they saw the gun or they saw the UTC knife, they will cooperate and bring out the money.

That notwithstanding, the nature of armed robbery remains the same as Kwelu explains:

Robbery is robbery...Robbery is horror. If I use a knife, any object that can take human life in order to take what belongs to that person is robbery. That is that.

In that vein, Ufem admits that the consequences of robbery remain the same despite the type of weapon used.

¹²⁶We are ready to shoot without minding whether police is killed or not, whether people are near or not; we are not bothered. We can fire kwu, kwu, kwu. It is hard to see a robbery where only cutlass is used; that was in the past. Presently, a gun is the main weapon before robbery can be enacted.

*Yes, the consequences are the same... Now let's say whether they catch you with gun or knife the crime na the same.*¹²⁷

Before any operation, robbers ensure that their guns are in good condition by carrying out a testing exercise involving uploading with bullets, cocking and shooting. The use of weapons is self-assuring to the robbers that nothing will happen to them. Although, weapons are for self-protection, robbers are capable of using them to first attack their worst enemies (the police) on sight. As some scholars (Jacobs & Wright, 2008; Rosenfeld et al, 2003) maintain, robbers have doubts about the police and see them as little greater than predators with an emblem. Findings show that some of the respondents must have committed “robbery-murder” by killing the police during a robbery operation. Dimotan for example said:

*... No bi only armed robbery work we dey do ... both police we dey catch them, base them, carry the gun, kill themself gooh, put them into soak away pit, find our way*¹²⁸

In addition, he confirms how arrogantly confident they are in carrying out the “dangerous business”:

*We dey on confidence say nothing go happen, na only death. We trust ourselves say nothing go happen. We get our ammunition. We dey carry AK47, we dey carry pistol. We dey kill police carry them ammunition go operation.*¹²⁹

Bolati also admits:

*Na the gun wey I hold na him I trust. I know say it can release 35 rounds and before e go finish, e finish I take another one.*¹³⁰

Carrying out a robbery requires being prepared either to unleash violence on the victim or to abstain from violence. A UK study reveals that violence is firstly

¹²⁷Yes, the consequences of robbery remain the same. If you are caught with either a knife or a gun, the crime remains the same.

¹²⁸We are not only involved in armed robbery. We also catch police officers, kill them and put their corpses into the sewage pit. Then we take their guns and go our way.

¹²⁹We are confident that nothing will happen. At worst, it is only death. We trust ourselves, and believe that nothing will happen. We have our ammunition; we use AK47, we also use pistols. We can kill police and use their ammunition during our operation.

¹³⁰I trust the gun I have on hand more than anything else. I know it is capable of releasing thirty five rounds. When that finishes, I will take another one.

employed by an offender in order to weaken his victim and gain compliance (Deakin et al, 2003), because the robber is always mindful of unpredictability in the victim's response hence he plans accordingly (Shover, 1996). Data reveal that the actual situation normally dictates what can be done, yet the physical presence of a robber's gun predicts danger on the part of a victim (Desroches, 2002). Kwelu explains:

Whenever we went for operation it's like when you are ready to go to school ... it has nothing to do with being in school. Whether violence or not since you people are going for the job, you will be well prepared. So when people meet in that place and they cooperate, fine, there will be no violent there. You people will rob and come back. So when they did not cooperate you people will show them why you people are there. They will now dance you people tune. Without going ... there with instruments, nothing can ... easily bring it to you except you show them.

Kwelu's explanation corroborates Cook's (1981) argument that robbers who engage in planning and who look for big scores will make an effort to provide themselves with the most suitable weapon, usually some type of firearm. Apparently, "by carrying a weapon, the robber has decided to use force, if necessary either to commit the crime or to resist arrest" (Cassel & Bernstein, 2007: 188). Findings reveal that each group of robbers is unique and does things differently. Some will not use violence while others will prefer to unleash physical injury on their victims. Moreover, some may go to the extent of raping some of their female victims. Hamedu believes that:

In so many aspects if the victims comply very well, they'll just go there and take whatever they want ... Assuming there was an argument with the robbers, definitely there must be gunshots or someone will be hurt. Although some criminals believe in doing their things swiftly and going their way, some would also want to do the rough thing such as injury or even rape.

It was discovered during interviews that robbers who visit wealthy people are very cautious with every step their victims take. If there is any "misbehaviour" or lack of cooperation, the robbers are most likely to release their trigger on the victim(s). According to Shasha:

...You see some of the big man when you get to them house,...where is your money ...? Some of them immediately them will go inside bring

*money and say take, and they will collect the money. Some people when you ask them where is your money, may be they will say okay follow me to inside. And immediately they get inside, may be the robber dey back and the big man dey in front. When you want to take him inside, he can try to grab the gun from the robbery. I believe that the robbery is not carelessness. So immediately he want to move any move you can shoot him.*¹³¹

As Obvuma, one of the respondents, suggests, using violence during a robbery depends largely on the decision of the “kingpin”. If he has a “human face”, he will probably command his group to be gentle and merciful to their victims. On the contrary, he may instruct them to be brutal:

... And it depends on their leader that lead them to the work. Because some leader they have mercy when they are working. They will not kill. Some leader will not kill, they will not ..., their own is to just fire up so that they will collect what they want to collect. But there are some they will collect what they want to collect and they will kill the person.

Some of the respondents reported that weapons could be used to kill their informants during or immediately after a robbery. This is for two reasons. First, to deny the informant some share of the robbery proceeds. Second, to make it difficult for him to divulge the sources of their (robbers’) wealth. This suggests that for reasons best known to them, robbers are prepared to kill and conceal their secrecy. When interviewed, Sangi highlights:

*May be the information, the person wey bring the information them go say make them hammer the one person say na him be one person wey can tackle am may be if him have money tomorrow the person can tackle am say na him come that bank come steal the money. You can give the main man, tell the master say make him hammer am for am.*¹³²

¹³¹When robbers go to rob in a big man’s house, some of them will immediately give you the money. When you ask some for money, they will say: follow me to my bedroom. Immediately they get inside, the big man may attempt to seize the gun from the robber. Since the robber is not careless, he may respond violently with the gun.

¹³²A group of robbers may decide to eliminate their informant because they are suspicious that he may be in a position in future to tell how they managed to earn money in life by robbing a bank. The group leader may carry out that kind of shooting.

Doing a robbery without any weapon is a serious risk for the robbers. To use weapons, particularly guns imply that they are readily available; it also depends on the *modus operandi*; and the population of victims to control during a particular robbery (Desroches, 2002). Moreover, robbers can use weapons to avoid apprehension by the police or by the victims. Bolati explains:

*Ah. Na because make police no catch them, anybody no catch them. Like somebody like me now police goo na him I like make them come meet me ... I know for myself na God catch me, no be human being because no body ... If somebody fit come, 200 police make them come ... them no go fit shoot anyhow.*¹³³

It is not always the case that those who use weapons to rob escape an arrest ultimately. As noted before (see chapter 3), whenever robbers succeed in a heist, it is termed that “they are lucky”. On the contrary, if the pendulum swings to the side of the security operatives, and the robbers are arrested during an operation, it is termed that “luck ran out for them”. The latter was the situation of the cohort interviewed for this study. For example, Ezienyi was arrested in the real act:

*My mind tell me say if I take that gun him go give me the money. Na fight me and him dey fight sotee police people ... The way he [victim] dey shout “oleh, oleh” then people come come out, come catch me.*¹³⁴

Drawing from Ezienyi’s experience, and as anomie-strain theory suggests, individuals who are blocked from reaching the “wealth goals” of society will often employ illegal methods for attaining monetary success (see Merton, 1938: 679; Featherstone & Deflem, 2003: 480).

Findings also reveal that robbers can buy weapons such as guns from dealers, get them from the police or from the military armoury for a handsome reward upon return. Waliru opines:

¹³³Weapons are used during a robbery to avoid being caught by the police or by the ordinary people. I know that it was God who caught me; no human being could catch me. Even if two hundred police officers come around, they will be unable to defeat me.

¹³⁴It was my intention that if I had a gun on hand the man would give me the money. However, we started fighting until the police came and arrested me. The way the victim was shouting ‘thief, thief,’ alerted the people nearby to come and apprehend me.

When we want to go there are some officers: police officer, army officer, navy officer, air force officer. Most of them, they use gun, they give us gun. They give us instrument and they look for return. And we may at times go to one barrack and discuss with one officer and he give us instrument we give him money and let his mind calm down and take away the instrument ... We want to cooperate with one officer if he can be able to provide us with instruments ... We may say when we return the instrument [we leave him] with N150, 000. That is under one day.

In addition, they can obtain guns from children of soldiers or of police officers. Finally, armed robbers can steal guns from the homes of rich people during raids. Many of the respondents got their initial good guns through the latter means. Before that, they had used locally made guns called “Awka made”.¹³⁵ However, previous study seems to differ in this respect, because as noted in chapter 3, robbery accomplices buy weapons for their colleagues from other African countries (see Agekameh, 2003). In short, the use of weapons is synonymous with armed robbery in Nigeria. Violence starts when offenders use threat or force to take what does not belong to them. Crucially, weapons are used to get hold of the actual target sought. According to Konashe:

... when you have your gun, you will have your money.

Inasmuch as armed robbers may be potentially violent in the pursuit of their goal, their primary intention is not to kill anybody unless when there is an open confrontation with their victims. As Shasha confirms:

Ah [robbers] they are no dagger-killer, they are not assassin, they are looking for money.

If for any reason robbers do not want to use any weapon during their robberies, they design a procedure of succeeding without arms. This may involve choosing weaker

¹³⁵“Awka made” guns are manufactured in Awka, Anambra State, in the South East of Nigeria. However, any locally made gun from any part of Nigeria can be branded as “Awka made”. Awka made has a strong connection with the Biafra/Nigeria civil war 1967-1970. Awka belonged to Biafra during the war, and the local people manufactured the guns to assist in the war against Nigeria.

and vulnerable victims who are most likely to offer no resistance (Desroches, 2002), or depend on the extraordinary power of “juju”.

5.5.6. “Juju” power

Although the extraordinary power of “juju” or “jazz” or “charm” appears to be lacking in criminological literature, it was discovered during this study, and indeed played a key role in most of the robberies carried out by the offender respondents. When asked, do you use juju for robbery? Dimotan confirmed:

*Yes we dey get juju...*¹³⁶

Generally, “juju” is man-made. It is part of the supernatural belief system in African Traditional Religion and essentially a tribal practice. In every tribe in Nigeria, there are “native doctors” or “witch doctors” or “medicine men” who conjure juju or charm for their clients. These “native doctors” claim to have all the answers to virtually every human problem such as sickness, fertility/procreation, self-protection, good-luck/success and prosperity. Juju may be pierced into the body, worn as rings or chains, kept in a particular place as directed by the “native doctor”. People from other tribes may travel to far distant tribes or nearby tribes to make their own juju. They do this so that friends and neighbours may not know they have consulted a “native doctor”. Apparently, the juju most of the robbers used was conjured in Yoruba tribe hence the vernacular “Baba Lao” meaning “native doctor”. When asked, where do you get the juju? Dimotan replied:

*Baba Lao..na afar we de get am.*¹³⁷

Armed robbers use juju to protect themselves from being arrested, injured or killed in a robbery. During consultation, the robbers normally tell their native doctor the truth that they are going to rob to provide for themselves, hence the need to be protected from any harm whatsoever, especially gunshots. The respondents confessed that such

¹³⁶Yes we get juju.

¹³⁷ From the native doctor. We get it from a far distant place.

extraordinary powers from juju are effective but not always. While they can conjure it collectively, some still prefer to do a private juju for further support. What this translates to is that in so far as armed robbers try to protect themselves as a group, their individual lives are far more important, hence the need for self preservation. Kwelu maintains that:

I mean you have to arrange yourselves proper, different, no matter what you people did together.

Juju can also be used to foretell the future of a robbery operation; whether the robbers will succeed or not. If there is an impending danger on the way, the “native doctor” will warn them not to go. Obvuma opines:

Yes ... some before they go they will tell Baba Lao so that Baba Lao will help them look road, if road good .If road no good Baba Lao will tell them say that road no good make them no go.¹³⁸

As data revealed, while some robbers said they do not employ any extraordinary power to rob successfully, others said it was a *conditio sine qua non*. The former appears to take a higher risk because once any bullet is shot at them, the possibility of injuring or even killing them is highly likely. The latter group seems to trust in the power of juju more than any thing else in the belief that it will not allow any bullet to enter their bodies. According to Bolati:

Some people dey use oh. I no dey use. Some people dey go Baba Lao place, them go do something make gun no enter them. So me I no do anything. Na him make them fire me for leg gun enter....¹³⁹

Similarly, Lemiola believes that:

¹³⁸Yes before some people go for particular a robbery, they will consult the “native doctor” to fortell the future of the operation. If the road will be good he will tell them to go. On the contrary, if the road will be dangerous, he will tell them not to go.

¹³⁹Some people use juju but I do not. Some go to the native doctor to conjure something so that no bullet can enter into their body. For me I do not use anything. That was why they shot me at the leg and it entered.

No be everybody dey use juju. Some dey use ordinary eyes, some dey smoke bana wey be say na real medicine, some say na Igboo smoke, some e fit be like drink wey e don drink, nothing wey e no fit do.¹⁴⁰

During an active robbery operation, juju or charm can be used as a “harmless weapon” to substitute for a gun, as Konashe explains:

You can knock at somebody’s [door], charm like this “gwa” him be gun. You know say some people use gun to rob the house, some people use charm to work.¹⁴¹

The youths involved in this sort of activity see themselves as those who have no future in society; hence, it is the social structure that is postulated to be putting pressure on people to commit crime (Featherstone & Deflem, 2003: 480).

Further findings reveal that robbers can wear the “juju” to have a successful escape during or after a robbery. It helps them to “physically disappear” from the crime scene in case of any arrest. The juju also serves as “spiritual” body armour by repelling any bullet from entering their bodies, let alone injuring or killing them. It therefore motivates the robbers who use them to forge ahead in a “live robbery operation” while being conscious of an imminent or even immediate danger. Ufem has this to say:

Like me the time wey I dey for “free world” I dey use juju say if them shoot me it no go enter.¹⁴²

“Juju” or “jazz” is also essential for those who rob banks because “enemies” (such as the police or private security agents) may attack the robbers in an attempt to safeguard huge sums of money lodged in the banks belonging to individuals, companies and

¹⁴⁰Not everybody uses juju. Some use their ordinary eyes, some smoke banana, which is real medicine, some use Indian Hemp, some use some sort of drink. There is nothing people cannot do.

¹⁴¹You could hit the charm at somebody’s door as if it was a gun. You know that some people use gun to rob a house, while some use charm to rob.

¹⁴²When I was in the free world enacting robberies, I use “juju” to repel and prevent any bullet from entering into my body.

governments. It is interesting that some of our respondents refer to bank robbery as “international robbery” because money is always found there. To operate as a bank robber requires a lot of skills, risks, bravery and confidence in the protection offered by juju. As Sangi suggests:

“International robbery” is bank robbery. Where money dey, ... And if you go international robbery you will have some jazz on the body, gun cannot touch you, you go dey smart e, so if dey shoot you e no go enter until them go away. Some police will cause them they will finish police and go away, except God say them go hold them, nowhere wey they say money dey, go there with confidence they go enter there rob and go away.¹⁴³

Data has also shown that charm does a lot for the robbers who use it. Armed robbers provide themselves with juju because it offers them the opportunity to physically “disappear” from their enemies who may shoot to kill them. According to Kwelu:

Yes there is a lot of things. You get prepared. They shoot you it won't go inside you disappear.

Kwelu referred to his “role model”, an erstwhile notorious robbery “king pin” in the country during the 1990s that used juju to rob. His juju failed him, which led to his being shot and later arrested by the police:

It is great, it is possible. You all know the former Anini, he is from Edo. I love him so much. Whenever I pick him [his] thing and read it, it gives me joy. Generation, generation will hear his history ... he disappears. When he was shot by the police the first one entered. I was very bitter, it is not supposed to enter.

¹⁴³International robbery is bank robbery. Where money is. If you go to rob a bank, you need to wear some jazz on your body so that gunshots will not touch you. You should be smart. If you are shot in the body, it will not enter until they go away. Some police will cause them (robbers), they will deal with the police and go away too. Except God says they must be caught. Anywhere there is money they will enter with confidence, rob, and go away without being caught.

Apart from other things the juju does for the robbers, it helps to hypnotise their victims and enemies thereby providing a propitious moment for a robbery to take place. Molafi explains:

*That juju, na if you don doam like that. If you want go for police station, all the police wey dey for that station..all of them go sleep, all of them go sleep you go just enter police station collect gun....*¹⁴⁴

Apparently, “juju” is an unpredictable “man-made” object, which may disappoint the user at any time. Most robbers believe that using “juju” in a robbery requires a limited time to operate with it. Robbers are supposed to keep to the rules of the charm otherwise it becomes ineffective. One of the rules is avoiding sexual intercourse with women at certain periods or even not allowing women to touch the charm because there is an African traditional “belief” that once a woman touches the charm made for a man it becomes ineffective. For any juju to remain active, it needs to be renewed with the “native doctor” who conjured it. To do so requires an extra cost on the client. According to kwelu:

Yes, at times it disappoints, may be you have go[ne] contrary. May be you don't let woman bring it or do this or do that ... To renew it two, two weeks, you have to be unmarried and you renew it two, two weeks...There are a lot of things.

However, if a robber uses juju to rob for a long time, it is possible to get caught and be killed. So then, being involved in the robbery business should not last for years. As soon as the robber gets the targeted money, the best option is to desist from the crime. Molafi highlights that:

*E dey fade. No juju e no dey fade. Among all of them, them go takam do wetin them wan do like one year... see the money every day by day. Na him e de be them like no body fit thief pass three years...*¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁴ When you have conjured your juju. If you want to steal from the police station, all the police staff will fall asleep, and you will enter there and collect their guns.

Data reveal that juju is far less superior to God. It can easily cease to remain effective.

For Dimotan:

E dey fade. Na God pass juju. We dey tie juju for body. We de do sacrifice for juju inside my house.¹⁴⁶

Although some robbers depend on the extra ordinary power of “juju” for protection, but the government sees it as something superstitious. Therefore, juju may not prevent the intended arrest of any robber at any point in time. As Molafi rightly pointed out:

Government no believe say juju dey. If government want catch, him go catch you with your juju.¹⁴⁷

Inasmuch as every robber we interviewed believes that God is the best protector, yet some respondents believe that those who wear juju are wise people. Their wisdom might stem from the idea that they believe in both God and juju for dual protection against any sort of enemy attack. In the end, God’s protection is the best and most reliable. For instance, Ufem maintains that:

Na the wise ones dey use juju but it dey fade but it dey work. For the robbery na only God go protect somebody.¹⁴⁸

It is obvious that no armed robber would like to be injured or arrested while in operation. Based on this premise, their protection is very important more than

¹⁴⁵It fades, every juju can fade. Robbers will use juju to do whatever they want to do, get the money every day. That is why it is not possible to get involved in robbery for more than three years without being caught.

¹⁴⁶It fades. God is superior to juju. We tie juju around the body. We sacrifice to the juju inside my house.

¹⁴⁷Government does not believe in juju. If they want to arrest anybody, they will arrest him and his juju.

¹⁴⁸It is the wise robbers that use “juju”, although its power can fade, it also works. It is only God who protects someone carrying out a robbery operation.

anything else. Overall, the protection from God is far more important for the robbers to go on an operation and come back safely, hence their belief in God.

5.5.7. Belief in “God”

As noted before, all those interviewed believe in God as each belongs to one faith group or another namely: Roman Catholic, Anglican, Baptist, Protestant Group of Churches, and Muslim. Seemingly, the place of God in armed robbery operation is lacking in criminological literature, however, we have discovered it in this study.

Belief in God is a common practice among all the tribes in Africa. In African Traditional Religion, God is recognised, adored and worshipped as the “Supreme Being”, who is understood and named differently by each tribe. However, there are other minor gods and deities, which our ancestors worshipped in the image of symbolic trees, artefacts and other man-made objects. Whereas the ancestors believed that the minor gods gave them instant protection, they also held the belief in the Supreme Being as an ubiquitous “Spirit” whom them must pray to.

Prayer is a spiritual exercise most people are associated with, not least the armed robbers we interviewed. They seem to believe that once God is invoked in anything they are doing (whether good or bad), they are safe to carry on doing that. It is not surprising that before setting-off for any operation robbers pray to God for protection and success. They believe strongly that if God decides that any of them must be caught, he will definitely be caught.

Although armed robbery is a felony that is utterly reprehensible, which like murder, theft and adultery are considered punishable by God (see Metuh, 1973), yet robbers trust that God still answers their prayer. Prayer becomes their last ritual before they set on a specific target. It becomes a way of drawing God’s attention for protection and guidance before taking on a risky operation such as armed robbery. Most importantly, the type of prayer the robbers offer to God seems to suggest that in the criminal world, good and evil are not contradictory to each other. It might be the thought of robbers that when God is invoked before a robbery, he spiritually sanctifies

their intended activity, thus approving their operation. Indeed, the prayer robbers say before doing a robbery appears to be an assurance of divine support for success. According to Waliru:

...We also believe that God is with us because as for me whenever I want to go out for any outing I do prayer to my God. I kneel down and go to my God in prayer and I believe that God answer me despite the fact that I'm committing evil

It is also Kwelu's opinion that:

even if you are doing evil, before going for the evil you call God's name first, because I feel doing the evil without God's name to be mentioned, you won't go and come back.

An interesting aspect of the above prayers is the deep faith in God exhibited by the robbers. Although robbers are aware that their actions are evil, they forge ahead to use any means available to them, including invoking God through prayer, to justify and achieve their ambition. Boran and Hartnagel (2002) argue that when people are strained they look for alternative means of goal achievement (see also Merton 1938). Whereas it may be argued that robbers pray for the wrong reason, they may claim to have a good intention for being involved in crime. That is why it is striking the way robbers formulate their prayers. They see themselves as people desperately in need of their "daily bread" which has been denied them by the government, hence their specific interest is in money rather than in the destruction of human life. With the intention of "human need" in mind, robbers seem to believe that God still answers their prayer. Their main concerns are to: set on, do the robbery, and come back safely with the proceeds unharmed and or unarrested by their enemies. According to Waliru:

There is no robber that prays God I want to go and rob let them kill me, or people arrest us. No, we pray for money also to the same God. We know that God answer prayer

For their prayers to be valid, certain requirements must be fulfilled. First, their prayers must have two essential requirements: matter and form. The material element is

“alcohol” which is believed in African Traditional Religion as part of the food offered to the “spirits” and “deities”. The “formular” involves the invocation of “God’s name”, eventhough any robber may pattern his prayer according to his own style. A final reason that validates their prayer is this: the robbers must drink the alcohol used for the libation, as a sign of both divine and human “communion”. In African Traditional Societies, especially in Nigeria, most prayers people offer to God are made through deities, but prayers of invocation are made directly to God (Metuh, 1973) because God is the Supreme Being who must be invoked directly for immediate intervention in a special moment of need. In offering such invocations, the suppliant believes that his prayers will be answered, notwithstanding the rightness or wrongness of the intention. For example, this is Ufem’s prayer of invocation before going for a robbery operation:

*I go pour Chelsea for ground beg God say na our stomach we dey go find, say make we go and come back, say make nothing happen to us.*¹⁴⁹

Konashe also confirms that robbers:

Pray to God, say the way they are going should God succeed them. Anything they are looking for, they are looking for money they don’t want to go and kill people.

Invoking the name of God before enacting a robbery could be regarded as a misnomer in the eyes of the public, but for the robbers, there is nothing wrong considering that they do it without any remorse of conscience. Their thought is not about morality but about success in their operation no matter how it comes about. This success becomes a reality when robbers come back from an operation with huge sums of money. Waliru opines:

Though they [we] are committing such offence we pray that God should help us to go and come back. We want to go and make money and come back. A robber should pray let me see what I am looking for. We do pray provide dollar for me...

¹⁴⁹I will use “Chelsea” to pour libation, begging God that as we go out to fend for our “stomach”, please bring us back safe and sound.

From the foregoing, it appears that belief in God may not wield a greater influence on the robbers' propensity to enact their operation; rather it is used as a tool to achieve their self-interests which point toward monetary success, which is one of the main motives for getting involved in armed robbery.

5.6. Summary

The chapter set out to consider the research questions based on the fieldwork carried out at Kirikiri Maximum Security Prison, Lagos. Moreover, to present the factors for the involvement of the youths in armed robbery, we considered the following thematic sequence: family circumstances of offenders, their economic motivations, their life course engagements, and the situational dynamic factors.

Although the respondents were localised in prison, they came from diverse tribal and geopolitical backgrounds across the country. Yet there are not enough samples to generalise about armed robbers in Nigeria. It has to be understood that each of the interviewees responded subjectively, and independent of another.

Despite the number of respondents interviewed, it is arguable that their reasons mainly revolved around cultural and socio-economic factors. Again, and as can be deduced from the data, it is therefore suggested that the group of "bad friends" is the main catalyst responsible for armed robbery in the country. What defines these friends as bad is their criminal actions rather than peer influence. In that sense, they create a morality particular to their members, which they always defend. Although they are aware that their actions are bad and illegal but they blame the government for what they (respondents) do. It can be summed up that they seem to be strained to get money as a result of the poverty and corrupt social structure prevalent in the country.

Chapter 6: Response to armed robbery

Now that the key research findings have been presented, we can suggest some possible preventive and/or reductive measures to respond to armed robbery. This chapter is mainly based on the contributions of offenders and the members of the criminal justice system interviewed. Thus, for the purposes of clarity, it has been divided into two dimensions namely, the offenders' views and the views of the criminal justice system.

6.1. Offenders' response

Since being in the company of "bad friends" as mentioned during interviews (see chapter 5) is arguably the most significant variable that led youths into robbery, it has been suggested that if youths in Nigeria are to move forward, such a confraternity and the illicit activities associated with it should be avoided completely. Afadi says:

If you can ... forsake all the friends ... you know ... that will lead you into that very act because when you begin to ... meet bad friend[s] you know, talking about things that are irrelevant, that did not have meaning. When you begin to hear about something like that it begin[s] to move your spirit. You know you will like to join them to know what they are doing, so you can do yours also. So you will forsake other things and focus your attention on were [where] you are going to, you[r] dreams and all that. Bad things will not come into your mind again because of: you forsake your old friends, old ways. You stopped smoking, you know, things like that !!!

Kwelu has a similar view, but goes on to suggest an alternative to bad friends:

If you don't want to be bad, you will have to step aside and move around with good friends.

Apparently, it is a matter of common sense to know that when youths associate with good peers, they are highly unlikely to discuss criminal activities, not to talk of carrying them out. This ideology is largely dependent on the common saying: "tell me whom you go with and I will tell you who you are".

As noted in chapter 5, the majority of the respondents criticised the Nigerian government for being egocentric and corrupt, so much so that the socio-economic

conditions of the citizens are ignored. Those who point accusing fingers at the government wished that poverty could be made a thing of history in Nigeria, because this would help to keep robbery in check. This alludes to the opinion that governments cannot combat crime effectively, and particularly robbery, if they continue to ignore the social and economic conditions that caused it (see Desroches, 2002). Aresu believes that:

The only solution is for government to shut down the ways of poverty in this country....because they are the beginning, they are the founder. They are founder of it.

Some are of the view that if education and jobs are provided for the youths, the crime problem will ameliorate. Kwelu is of the opinion that:

Number one: Government need to intervene in education level. God blessed this country with resources and many of us we are not benefitting from the resources being the free citizen of this country, and is unfair. If government can be using the resources to benefit the indigene by approve [approving] education to [for] them or job you when you are graduated....So the government need to do something about that.... Our country economy should be about all those things.

For Balolu:

When there is job you see all this crime will less[en]...

Hamedu has a similar opinion:

I believe the government and the society should do a lot to eradicate crime by providing job opportunities and by fighting crime.

Aresu also has this to say:

So this time I just want to find something good doing. That is why I am pleading to the nation, I am pleading to Nigeria, I am pleading to the government that it should find good things for us so that when we come out we won't remember the past, so that, that motivative spirit, that violent, that heartless spirit won't motivate back. So that it will just die like that. So that someone will find a good thing that he believe that okay this is what I want to do to the end of my life. I don't want to go back to that crime again. Then my mind is very hard but now my mind has

soft[ened]. I guard the formula of fear so I can't just come out from this prison and say no eh, to good solution now.

Waliru maintains that if the *status quo* in the country is not redressed, it will be impossible to stop crime from occurring. He compares Nigeria with other countries and argues that the government should meet the basic standard of living for the common people in Nigeria:

Let me now tell you something: unless Nigeria change crime cannot stop. No government can stop crime. What can stop crime is if they put things in order in this Nigeria. If they cannot do that let them not think of stopping crime. Our leadership are the cause of it. They are the one causing us to commit crime in Nigeria. Thank God you have went to oversea. You yourself can testify the way, though I have never been there but I have heard story, I have heard news of how they live. In this very Nigeria we are very worst. I am not trying to say that robbery business is a good business but at the same time eh we must do something. He wants to work, there is nowhere for you to work, there is no work. Forget about school cert [certificate] or no school cert [certificate], they will say he wants to work they will say he wants to pay 2,500 per month, 3,000, 4,000, 5,000 per month. What can 5,000 per month? Okay if I'm living at Ikeja and working at Iyana Ipaja taking bus to my place every day coming back in a month I will spend more that N5,000 but where I am working they are paying me N5,000 as a salary. How can that satisfy me?

The assumption here, and as noted before (see chapter 5), is that when people are exposed to better job opportunities, crime will be reduced (see also Uggen, 1996; Fagan & Freeman, 1999).

As mentioned in the previous chapter, all the respondents believe in God and are members of the different faith groups in prison. They also admitted having prayed to God for success during their robbery operations. Moreover, most of the respondents believe that religion has *afortiori* played a unique role in their reformation. The prison environment has partly transformed their lives due to the religious activities they participate in every day. Interestingly, both Christians and Muslims say they have benefited from that. Their prayers, singing, and dancing are not only emotional but also transcendental. In this regard, being in prison provides an opportunity for them to renew their spiritual lives. Even though prison is very far from being the best of places, yet the experience can be instructive. As their statements reveal, robbers who find themselves in prison see it as a “second chance” to reform. Molafi says:

When the person enter[s] this condition, prison, he go know say ah, God dey. He go leave bad something, you go near God ... Only when God wan[ts] [to] use you to do something, he go carry you come to this place[and] give you second chance to change. When the person dey for inside the world, e no go change unless if the person come[s] into this place....¹⁵⁰

Afadi made a similar response:

We are changed persons because we don't want to die. The fact that we said that we have a future and that we have something good deposited in us and that is useful out there. We don't want to ... die, so we use it to do something.

For Obvuma:

Prison help[ed] me oh. When I dey [was] outside and I didn't go to church, when I came to prison I[started] go[ing] to church. I hear[d] the word of God and I repented. That is why I say prison helped me.

Aresu also explains his ordeal:

Now that I have realised myself, prison has changed me. Prison have [has] bring [brought] out the formula of fear in me. The kind of mind that I have before I do not have it again.

Uruka's personal experience in prison reveals that:

Prison is not the best place to stay but at least it is good for someone to stay but not to stay long because the people outside will say that good things cannot come out of prison as the Bible will say "can anything good come out of Nazareth?" I believe today that good things can come out of prison. If you know the reason why you are here, because the bible says that out of prison cometh holy, but it is not for everybody but you don't know that you came to prison for a purpose after all, Joseph went to prison because he revealed his visions to his brothers. They now hate him and put him in prison but while Joseph was still in prison, he discovered his talent. So I believe here, if you hear, you can discover your talents and discover that God has a purpose of bringing you here not for the sake that you have committed crime. They[There]are some people that are even

¹⁵⁰When a person enters prison, he will know that there is God. He will forsake his bad habits and draw nearer to God. If God wants to use you to do something, he will bring you here and give you a second chance to change. When the person is in the world he will not change unless he comes into prison.

committing more crime than we commit and today, they're still in the real world. So I believe God has a way of doing his things that's why He brought us here, not because He hates us but if you want to be reformed, you come to Him.

Some of their positive stories about the prison environment have to a great extent been made possible partly through the encouragements they receive from religious leaders and the charitable organisations that visit frequently with the message of hope, and partly through the advice they receive from some prison staff. Indeed, prison staff are key players in shaping the prisoners' knowledge of prison life; they mediate, and to an extent regulate the prison experience for prisoners (Fenwick & Bennett, 2009).

While in prison, some inmates manage to develop some vocational and management skills. In this sense, they believe that "prison works". However, others believe that prison has not been very helpful to their situation due to prolonged detention, and the incessant adjournments, as Ufem for example complains:

The prison environment is not helping me. I am tired of this place that I am now. I have stayed long now. I have stayed here for six years. I went to court on Tuesday they now adjointed [adjourned] my case until next month.

Another criticism levelled against the NPS is that instead of reforming people, it makes people worse than they were before they went in. Since prison officers who are state agents control the prison regime, they must inevitably satisfy the aspirations of their employer, that is, the State. Where the exercise of power is developed through relationships, prisoners see it as sensible, morally justified and legitimate (Fenwick & Bennett, 2009). However, where the power is mainly coercive, prisoners are less likely to recognise staff as fellow human beings or their authority as legitimate and unchallengeable (Fenwick & Bennett, 2009). Hence, some inmates become very mean and vengeful while in custody, and they make plans to retaliate by unleashing themselves on future targets upon release. Waliru makes his view known:

The way they treat us in this Nigeria Prison, it makes someone to go out of prison and butcher more.

Similarly, Uruka hints that:

Some people they think about how to go back to crime. You know all fingers are not equal, they're even planning if at all they are going to be released, they want to go and make their money, as they have not made their money

It is arguable that the overall welfare of prison inmates in Nigeria is still below international standards. For example, healthcare and feeding are always inadequate (Ogunleye, 2007). This corroborates the findings for this research. The researcher was informed that sick inmates who consult the doctor might be told to go and buy their prescriptions. Amnesty International (2008) has documented a similar report on prisoners' healthcare situation in Nigeria. According to Mr Olusola Ogundipe,¹⁵¹ during a Nigeria Television Authority (NTA) programme, it was only late last year that the Federal Government added N50 to the food allowance of each inmate. The current food allowance for a Nigerian prisoner per day is N200.¹⁵² Considering the present high cost of living in the country, N200 cannot buy a good loaf of bread, still less provide three square meals for an individual.

Due to the abysmal nature of the feeding programme in prison, it was revealed to the researcher that some prisoners (especially the rich) prefer to register on the list of those to be fed by their families. What often happens is that the poor inmates depend to an extent on the rich ones for help and support. The downside is that the poor ones become stooges to the rich inmates.

As the findings illustrate, the prison is a heaven to some offenders and a hell to others, and it is still debatable what life after prison may mean for some ex-convicts. Life after prison was in the minds of the people interviewed. In principle, some hope to go back into society to live and behave responsibly by avoiding crime. These people believe that they would appreciate any legitimate thing they can do to earn a living. They believe their destiny will be brighter in future. Yet it is still far from certain that some may not go back to crime. For example, Uruka hints about his plans for the future:

¹⁵¹He is the current Controller General of Prisons in Nigeria.

¹⁵²The NTA programme is called "Tuesday Live" held on 09/10/2007. It was an Interactive Television Programme on 'Prison Reforms' presented by Aliu Baba Barau.

It depends on other people, but in my caucus, I don't ... cope with those area boys Every day, if it's not the thing that we are doing this morning I could have been in the church. I discuss with people that give their life to Christ, we're even discussing about our future, how we're going to live outside the world. Some people they think about how to go back to crime.

Meanwhile, here is some passionate advice from Afadi to potential armed robbers not to see crime as the quickest way to grab cash:

What advice I can give to them is that it is good for someone to have patience as a paramount thing. When you just have patience, no matter the situation you find yourself, just believe it will soon be over. Poverty or anything you've passed through in life, each and every one of us has one problem or the other; no matter the problem you past through, you just have to have confidence and just believe that God will see you through. Settle down with whatever you're doing, focus, and don't allow anything to distract your attention. Just focus on what you're doing. And know that God is going to help you.

In short, it is better not to venture into robbery because it isolates one from the rest of society. Above all, it is vanity, and if in the process the offender is apprehended by security operatives, it may ultimately lead to his death. Konashe explains it thus:

Robbery is not something you want to start doing ... when God ...[is] always blessing you. One day, one day they must surely catch you. That's the thing. That's the game ... is zero. Nothing in robbery, do you understand? Nothing For even ... in that free world they know ... you are a thief. Nobody want[s] to do anything with you ... But they always believe that anything they do with you, you will put them for [into] problem ... Why robbery is zero is that you know ... something you are doing when they catch you [it] is dead [death]. And anything dead is zero. When person die nothing again

Similar to the above, and considering his experience in prison, Aresu describes robbery as a bad game, but calls on the government for clemency.

Because before I never knew the type of life I was living and the type of game I lured myself into is a bad game. I never knew the game can leads [lead] to death or life. There are so many people that are dead in this robbery line, in this prison many have dead [died] in this robbery line, in this prison and cannot continue in this life again. When I came to this prison I saw lifer, saw condemned. I can never try it again just to use pin to shoot somebody. I can never try it again, rather to live a good life, rather to live a life that will pay me. I don't want to live a life that will not

pay me. That's why I am pleading for the government to have mercy on us, and that should find way to pardon.

Notwithstanding the religious and social influences that help prisoners stop offending, the fact remains that each individual's "resolve" to avoid crime is paramount, as Uruka stresses.

So, I believe if you believe in your heart that you will not go back to your "vomit", it's left for you. No amount of preaching that someone will preach for you that you believe God or you believe this. Unless you decide from your own heart. So that is all I know about that.

From the above responses, we can deduce that both the youths and the government have certain responsibilities in helping bring about the prevention and/or reduction of armed robbery among youths in Nigeria. Where the youths are concerned, avoiding "bad friends" company, being religious and involvement in educational and vocational skills would go a long way towards reshaping their minds and help them avoid crime. Where the government is concerned, the overall welfare of the people should be paramount in their agenda. At the same time, the criminal justice system too may have an important role to play in crime prevention and/or reduction.

6.2. The criminal justice system's response

The criminal justice system (CJS) in Nigeria is made up of the police, the courts, and the prison service. The primary duty of the CJS is to ensure that justice and fairness are meted out to all (Ehindero, 2008). Regrettably, it has been criticised as "a conveyor belt of injustice from beginning to end" (Amnesty International, 2008). This criticism is an outcome of Amnesty International's research showing that over 65 per cent of prison inmates in Nigeria have never actually been put on trial. Such "judicial neglect" has resulted in some prison inmates remaining in custody awaiting trial for up to ten years (see Amnesty International, 2008) or more.

This "judicial neglect" seems largely to be due to the inability of the relevant agencies of the CJS to work cohesively as partners in progress, and for that reason the overall output of the CJS is prison congestion (Ehindero, 2008). The normal practice seems to be that all those arrested by the police for offences such as armed robbery are

normally remanded and then deliberately abandoned in prison custody until whenever prosecution can be initiated. When the suspects are eventually convicted, most of them are normally subjected to general deterrence such as death sentence. According to 2009 Prison Service Statistics, 804 prison inmates are on death row for capital offences across the country. From that number, 22.5 per cent are for armed robbery, and they are all male offenders.¹⁵³

An unstructured interview was conducted with four stakeholders in the CJS (DIG Police, ACG Prisons, Ag.DPP, and a Criminal Defence Lawyer), and they gave their opinions on the matter of preventing and/or reducing armed robbery in the country. Although their number is small, their views are in fact representative of their various departments, for the reason that they are either heads of departments and policy makers or speaking for and on behalf of their departments or are experienced practitioners in the system.

Data gathered from these experts show that capital punishment and prolonged jail terms are not working to reduce armed robbery in the country. From this study, five armed robbers (25 per cent) are among the condemned category. Although it might be rationalised that being hard on the criminal deters him in the short term, but severe measures seem to have failed because ultimately they merely harden criminals. This callousness might be the case among potential criminals at large in the “free world”. During interview, the criminal defence lawyer said:

So if you put an armed robbery suspect to trial and you condemn him to death on account of the fact that he visited violence on another person, or caused the death of another person, the question that arises is: would the death of that armed robber atone for the life that was lost in the first place? I would say no. Likewise long period of incarceration does more harm to the society because at the end of the day it fails to achieve that corrective element which a sentence is supposed to achieve ... Because by the time you condemn a person to long term of imprisonment, he already feels alienated from society. He feels humiliated such that he takes it back on society if he has the opportunity of being released back to the society.

As Ekpenyong (1989: 25) significantly puts it, “robbers have become more vicious in response to the death penalty, believing that it is either their victims' lives or theirs. As

¹⁵³ The data was collected from the Nigeria Prison Service Headquarters Abuja.

a result, they do not hesitate to kill their victims. This has made them even more successful in their operations”. A scenario such as this begs the question whether the theory of deterrence is working or not. A statement issued by the Supreme Court of New Zealand in 1954 can provide an answer:

One of the main purposes of punishment ... is to protect the public from commission of such crimes by making it clear to the offender and to the other persons with similar impulses that, if they yield to them, they will meet with severe punishment. In all civilised countries, in all ages [deterrence] has been the main purpose of punishment and still continues so. The fact that punishment does not entirely prevent all similar crimes should not obscure the cogent fact that the fear of severe punishment does, and will, prevent the commission of many that would have been committed if it was thought that the offender could escape without punishment, or with only light punishment (Radich 1954 NZLR 86, 87 cited in Edney & Bagaric, 2007: 54).

Since 1970, armed robbery offences in Nigeria are punishable by firing squad during a military regime or by hanging under a civilian government. The Armed Robbery and Firearms (Special Provisions) Decree No. 47, of 8 August 1970 is the basis for the death sentence.¹⁵⁴ The Decree provides that any person convicted of robbery, that is, without arms [emphasis mine] shall serve a jail term of not less than 21 years. Furthermore, it specifies that:

If an offender mentioned above is armed with firearms or any offensive weapons or is in company with any person so armed, or at or immediately after the time of the robbery, the said offender wounds or uses any personal violence to any person, the offender shall be liable upon conviction under this Decree to sentence of death...The sentence of death may be executed by hanging the offender by the neck till he is dead, or the offender may suffer death by firing squad as the military governor may direct (see Nkpa, 1976: 82).

To enforce the Decree, Armed Robbery and Firearms Tribunals were set up in each state of the federation to try armed robbery suspects and pass death sentences on those found guilty. Although there was no right of appeal to superior courts, the state

¹⁵⁴The Armed Robbery and Firearms Decree has been amended by all the military regimes after 1970 to suite their pattern of governance. These amendments include: Robbery and Firearms (Special Provisions) Amendment Decree 1971. Robbery and Firearms (Special Provisions) Amendment Decree 1977. Robbery and Firearms (Special Provisions) Amendment Decree 1984. Robbery and Firearms (Special Provisions) Amendment Decree No. 28, 1986.

governors did have the power to annul, commute, or uphold such sentences (Ekpenyong, 1989). In compliance with the provisions of the Decree, one of the first armed robbers to be executed in Lagos in 1970 was Folorunsho Babatunde - the man who named lace clothes “textile for the dubiously rich” because he habitually wore them (Idowu, 1980). In 1971, another notorious robber named Ishola Oyenusi was also executed. Before his execution, he confessed to having started his robbery career in 1959, a time when people knew little about the crime. Nevertheless, there were other executions that occurred in the early 70s involving some civilians, police and military personnel, who directly or indirectly were found guilty of robbery (Nkpa, 1976). Moreover, executions were carried out in the 80s and 90s. During a six-year period following the promulgation of the Decree, over 400 armed robbers were executed (see Ekpenyong, 1989). As of the present time, Nigeria continues to abstain on the United Nations Human Rights Commission’s Resolution on the death penalty that was passed on 20 April 2005. Although the military Decrees have been abrogated since 1999, the death penalty, as noted in chapter 2, (now by hanging) is still regarded as the only deterrent measure that matches violent crimes like armed robbery. Similarly, Ghana uses the death penalty for capital offences, but South Africa has abolished that since 1995 (see chapter 2).

Nigeria’s democratic system makes progress in crime reduction if justice is tempered with mercy. It is absurd to retain the “classical punitive system” in the twenty-first century when the death sentence has become a taboo in the European Union and other parts of the world community. Nigeria should look for other alternatives to the death sentence by being tough on the push and pull factors that lure youths into robbery. That is to say, there should be government support for good public policies that should be made and implemented for the common good. This can come about by enhancing the service deliveries of the CJS and improving the cultural and socio-economic life of the people. For example, the Nigerian public have repeatedly lost confidence in the police about combating crime (Stone et al, 2005). The system has often been blamed for its corrupt and dysfunctional operation, yet they believe themselves to be equal to the task in crime prevention and/or reduction. When interviewed, the DIG defines:

... the constitutional duties of the police to include maintenance of law and order, detection of crimes, prosecution of crimes, enforcement of all laws, performing other military duties assigned to them, and the general maintenance of law and order. Primarily protection of lives and property is the basic thing.

It has become necessary to improve the activities of the NPF as a way to restore public confidence in a corrupt system. At present, the NPF has a “federal” structure with headquarters at Abuja. It comprises 12 zonal commands, 36 state commands including Federal Capital Territory Abuja, and 774 divisional stations across the country. Nigeria is far too populous a country to be protected only by a national police force. The 1999 Constitution needs to be amended so that the “federal policing” system can be abolished and replaced with a “state policing” system that is independent of both the state and federal governments. Each of the 36 states and Abuja should have equal ranks and financial allocations from the federal government to maintain itself.

Furthermore, the idea of transferring officers and men from one distant part of the country to another within a short period has not been very helpful. The community should know their police officers, as this can help to check corruption in the system. It would also encourage local communities to cooperate more effectively with the police in crime reduction strategies. Since the NPF has generally had poor training over the years, making policing independent for each state would create competitiveness for excellence in fighting crime among the different states. While localising the police should improve their monthly wages, it would also restore public confidence in the criminal justice system.

During interview, the DIG admitted that it was the right thing to do but stressed that for now a “federal policing” is better for Nigeria. His reasons were, among other things, governed by the consideration that local elites could all too easily monopolise the institution for ulterior motives. Moreover, given the systemic corruption in the country, time would be needed for a general cleansing of the system, and only then would honest people be at the helm of affairs in the police:

You know the federal government alone cannot fund the police. The states and local governments are indirectly funding the police. Our experience in Nigeria is that we don't want a situation where we factionalise the police and the police are being hijacked by the politicians ... But you see the question of the national police is to protect the interest of the weak in the society. But if you create a state police, there are every chances that money bags will hijack it. And at our level of democracy we are not yet ripe, we will be ripe in future, but for now it is not feasible ... For example, we have a head of state now who shuns corruption and he really means it. And if that can translate into every section of the organisation, ministries and parastatals, you know we are going somewhere. Then in future you can now decide if you have honest men who will really run this police at that level, but for now we have not reached that place at all, we are not even one-third kilometres to that place.

Providing for the police is still a problem for the government of the day. Recently, there was a small improvement in police salaries; but the government should do more so that the police can rank equally with other public servants in the different ministries and parastatals. Moreover, there is an urgent need for a better work environment for the police. Nevertheless, events over time have shown that using arms to fight armed robbery is not a secure option. As noted in chapter 2, it only leads to more violence and the taking of more lives and destruction of property.

From our findings, the police leadership recently made a long-term proposal to use modern information technology systems to investigate, detect, and prosecute crimes such as armed robbery. It involves using DNA sampling; the development of forensic laboratories, establishing a crime database across the country; enhancing their cooperation with other relevant government agencies locally such as the Nigeria Prison Service (NPS), National Office of Statistics (NOS), National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS), National Population Commission (NPC), and the State Security Service (SSS). Further, the NPF admits setting up links with other agencies such as the West African Police Chiefs' Organisation (WAPCO) and Interpol. This is necessary because of the globalisation of crime, so that states can tackle trans-border criminal networks through intelligence sharing.

These are of course “ideal” mechanisms for dealing seriously with crime; however, the sad likelihood is that this proposal will end up in the waste paper basket. The most difficult task is prompt and successful implementation and then, continuing

maintenance. Until that can be actualised, what is accessible is what is on hand, which fundamentally is the conventional “use of intelligence” to police crime. According to the DIG:

We have a very beautiful intelligence base gathering, an intelligence outfit, intelligence gathering system. And we also have to weigh the vulnerability assessment pack. And of course every Commissioner of Police has his own device on how to handle [crime], in addition to the patrols. We believe that information and intelligence is better for us. And we have acquired the APCs [Armoured Personnel Carrier]. Before now robbers used to be afraid because we carry armoured, but now they are not. Where for example armed robbers are attacking a bank, you don't go there with a Peugeot 504, you go with an APC.

As discussed earlier (see chapter 2), recent confrontations between the police and armed robbers have left the police suffering an ignominious defeat in the end. This is a result of the decrepit weaponry at the disposal of the police to counter the attacks of robbers. This handicap has always been the reported concern of those in the field, but it appears there is no help coming from the relevant government departments. As the DIG puts it:

Of course armed robbers know that if you start an armed robbery operation and police will come, they will go and look for something higher. We are conscious of that and we are doing something about it and we will continue to do something about it.

Successful implementation of the suggestions as enumerated by the DIG might help reduce the crime rate, though it is of course practically impossible to expunge crime from any human society. If the police were to do their part better to secure the lives and properties of the citizens, it is to be hoped that other relevant departments in the criminal justice system such as the NPS would “act their parts well”.

It is usually said that the offender is sent to prison for correction and rehabilitation, but in practice it is understood that he is being punished for the wrong he has done to society and its members. Thus, imprisonment symbolises the final stage of the criminal justice process (Bowling & Phillips, 2002; Oloruntimehin, 1991). As the ACG rightly indicated during the interview:

The Nigeria Prison Service is currently saddled with functions that are clearly spelt out in Cap 366 Laws of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1990. Everything the Nigeria Prison Service is supposed to be doing legally is included there: Safe custody of inmates, their welfare, attendance in courts, adequate feeding, [and] discharge formalities (those who have expired their terms of imprisonment). Also we have the Standing Order, which derives its authorities from Cap 366. It is for the day-to-day running of the prisons.

As said before (see chapter 5; see also Amnesty International, 2008), the majority of the occupants of the prison cells in Nigeria are those awaiting trial rather than proper prisoners (“convicts”). According to December 2007 figures, 42,030 people are in custody. Out of that number, 28,500 (68 per cent) are awaiting trial.¹⁵⁵ The remaining 13,530 (32 per cent) have been convicted of different offences (Orakwe, 2008). The congestion among those awaiting trial mirrors the low level of criminal prosecution in Nigeria. A pilot survey carried out by the NPS in five states and the federal capital territory (Lagos, Enugu, FCT, Kano, and Rivers) revealed that within a period of six months, each of the states recorded not more than 3 criminal convictions per state (Orakwe, 2008).

When interviewed, the ACG confirmed that situation called for ATMs to fill the prison places across the country because the judiciary is not keeping up with the way the police is bringing in suspects. This has led to overcrowding in prisons. As Haney (2009) argues, prison overcrowding means in fact that too many prison inmates are competing eagerly for the limited resources. In Ghana, for instance, prisons are overcrowded and under-resourced, with poor medical and sanitary facilities and insufficient bedding. Many inmates are forced to sleep in turns and on bare floors. Prisons with a capacity for about 8,000 prisoners are holding approximately 13,000, almost 30 per cent of whom are awaiting trial (Amnesty International, 2011). Similarly, in South Africa, overcrowding remains a serious problem, with 19 prisons “critically overcrowded” (Amnesty International, 2010). In the strictest sense, prisons in Nigeria are not congested, however, because the overall installed capacity of all the prisons across the country is 43,915 beds (Orakwe, 2008), and over the last seven years, the yearly prison figure has fluctuated at around 40,000 (Orakwe, 2008).

¹⁵⁵ According to Amnesty International UK (2007), three out of every five people locked up in Nigeria prisons are awaiting trial.

Therefore the problem of Nigerian prisons is not “mere congestion” but much-needed reform.

The idea of prison reform seems to have become a cliché in Nigeria. The more it is talked about, the less is being done. During an NTA programme as earlier mentioned in this chapter, (see 6.1) the Controller General of Prisons further stressed that the Government White Paper that outlined the reformation package has not yet been implemented. However, as discussed earlier (see also 6.1), the government has shown a small indication of that reform by increasing the meal allowance per inmate from N150 to N200 a day. This is still a paltry sum and it mirrors the way government regards the plight of those designated for the so-called “reform”. Prison reform should not be conceived as a one-off exercise, but rather an ongoing process in determining how best to make the institution more corrective than punitive; more humane than coercive; more skills-efficient than skills-deficient; more rehabilitative than doing nothing positive to revitalise the shattered lives of inmates; more functional in service provision and delivery than dysfunctional.

As mentioned earlier (see 6.1), the supply of medical facilities to prisoners across the country is still below expectation. Retrospectively, this has been the situation since the 1963-1964 damning report on the establishment, which says: “The extent of the medical services available in prisons is in most cases unsatisfactory. The greatest problem is that in most of the prisons it has not been possible to receive the daily visit of the medical officer or medical personnel. In addition, the supply of drugs has not been quite easy” (Ogunleye, 2007: 176). Data for this research is no less different from the above report. When interviewed, the ACG said:

It cannot be enough. An analysis was done about what we send to prisoners, it was said that a prisoner does not even get a kobo of drug [medicine].

This explains why poor health is an issue of serious concern in all the prisons across Nigeria. Of course, that adversely affects the physical well-being of the inmates, and it is doubtful if there is any political will to radically improve the system.

In another development, findings illustrate that some of the respondents were able to enhance their academic career to a General Certificate of Education (GCE) level. The researcher was duly informed that some of the respondents were transferred from Ikoyi Prison to Kirikiri Prison (all in Lagos) to study for their GCE exams. It is disappointing that not all the prisons across the country have educational facilities to help empower or rebuild the broken lives of those in custody. It could be argued that if education does not reform the prisoner, the chances of criminal behaviour after release are increasingly likely.

If crime is to be prevented or even reduced, an offender should be well schooled in either conventional education or vocational skills. It does not stop there; he should be well equipped to go into the “free world”. “Carpentry tools” are often used to empower some ex-offenders as they leave the prison to begin a new life outside. It is important, however, to consider other useful skills such as I.T. systems, popular retail trading, industrial skills, and the civil service jobs, to rehabilitate prisoners and help reduce reoffending. Some of these initiatives are practised in Britain and other developed countries, and their outputs have yielded better results. It would be worthwhile for Nigeria to emulate such ideas. As Karstedt, (2001: 300) puts it: “exploration, transfer and modelling of crime prevention strategies are important modes of cross-cultural exchange in criminal justice”. When a prisoner is reformed or rehabilitated, the benefits to the general public are enormous. As the criminal defence lawyer stresses:

When that is done ... then, society will be the ultimate beneficiary because ex-convicts will then stop seeing themselves as being enemies of society who would take it back on society.

However, the Ministry of Justice has been blamed for the undue delays in the dispensation of justice across the country. The ministry has the power to discharge and acquit offenders, but repeatedly, the habitual adjournments, backlog of cases and the issue of missing files have made their work suffer untold setbacks. When interviewed, the criminal defence lawyer criticised the slow pace of the system due to manual handling of cases instead of the use of modern I.T. systems. He hopes the so-called “fast track courts” when introduced in the criminal division of the judiciary, may help accelerate criminal proceedings:

The fast track court is a special procedure by which certain category which qualifies to be assigned to those courts are heard on a day to day basis by certain judges who are designated as fast track judges. The system is designed primarily to enhance service delivery such that justice becomes accessible to litigants in the shortest possible time.

While one might be prejudiced about the effectiveness of the fast track courts in matters concerning heinous crimes like armed robbery, the lawyer is strongly optimistic that service delivery could be better attained if such cases were fast-tracked. It would, among other things, cause a gradual reduction in waiting times for trials, so much so that those who have no case to answer would be promptly discharged and acquitted, remembering that “justice delayed is justice denied”.

Apart from that, there is a serious deficiency in the law concerning those detained in custody but later found innocent. In that regard, the law is silent about any compensatory deal, as the lawyer explains:

The appellate courts are there to right whatever wrongs that may be inherent in the proceedings at the lower court. There is still that deficiency in the system in the sense that where at the end of the day an appellate court finds that there is a miscarriage of justice in the lower court, the law does not make provisions, it does not give room or allowance to the higher courts to make a form of compensatory award to assuage the injured feelings of that person who has been wrongly put to trial.

There should be a rethink by the legislature and sentencers about what works when deciding the cases of armed robbery offenders. Even when cases have miscarried at the higher courts, their decision remains final. There ought to be a review option to explore all avenues to see that justice is done. Unfortunately, such an option does not exist in Nigeria now. Interestingly, that system does exist in Britain. When criminal cases are exhausted in the appellate courts, the aggrieved person(s) may seek redress at the Criminal Cases Review Commission (CCRC). This is not a court, but a specialized Commission with experts in the legal and other professional bodies. They review the cases of aggrieved persons to see if justice was miscarried at some point during the court proceedings. If justice was miscarried, then they will quash the particular case on its merit. If not they will uphold the court’s decision. So, the earlier their cases are disposed of, the better for the suspect, the criminal justice system and

society. Thus, justice demands that the guilty will be censured at the right time and the innocent acquitted at the right time too. As the defence lawyer suggests:

This is the reason why I am inclined to the view that the introduction of the fast track system will help to serve the ends of justice because at the end of the day it helps in determining within the shortest possible time which way the pendulum of justice will swing.

It is hoped that the current intervention by the British Department for International Development (DFID) in their “access to justice programme” may salvage the “creeping” dispensation of justice in Nigeria. When interviewed, the Ag. DPP for Lagos State said:

We are doing quite a lot ... Now we give our counsels deadline to look at our files ... One of the problems are the police who have sent people to the Magistrates' Courts without the case files being sent here [the case files are never sent to the DPP office]. We believe those days of long delays will soon be over.... This is in collaboration with DFID. They have put in place the case tracking system. It is going to take off anytime from now.

It was revealed to the researcher that the process of case tracking is a project to be enabled by modern information systems such as computers. When it becomes effective, it will be networked among the Ministry of Justice, the police, the courts and the prisons such that no one person in custody will be unaccounted for. Although it was reported that this DFID sponsored project is still being piloted in Lagos State, it is hoped it will be extended to other states of the federation soon. The advantage of this system will be to verify which agency is delaying the judicial process. It is hoped that this will indeed reduce the number of inmates awaiting trial in custody.

Findings show that an ideal but practical CJS is what Nigeria needs in the present circumstance. When interviewed, the Ag. DPP said a system is to be desired whereby cases are prosecuted to a very speedy conclusion. This would mean all the CJS members cooperating to get things done the right way, using modern information technology so that those awaiting trials are promptly accounted for. It also calls for better pay for all the CJS staff. Finally, the federal government is also called to do more in reforming prison establishments across the country. In addition, alternatives to prison are absolutely necessary if crime in the community is to be reduced.

Although alternatives to imprisonment have not received populist approval in Nigeria, they have been documented in the literature (see Ogunleye, 2007; Eze & Okafor, 2007; Amadi, 1997). Arguably, correction is directly important for the offender if recidivistic tendencies are to be forestalled. It also benefits the society where he comes from by reducing levels of insecurity and fear. Something will also be missing if “practical justice” is not done to assuage and reassure both the victim and society so that they can still have confidence in the CJS. A balance needs to be struck so that the requirements of punishment for the offender and justice for the victim and society are met. According to the lawyer:

I would say this; an opportunity of a “second chance” should be afforded the convict by the society. And that kind of opportunity could come in the form of “suspended sentence” as we have in foreign clients. If the convict is aware that he has a suspended sentence it has the effect of putting him in check in a way, because he is aware of the fact that any infraction in the law after that could make him to return to that sentence.

Caution should be observed before the idea of a suspended sentence can be accepted. The seriousness of the offence committed and public safety must be considered, otherwise a wrong decision may be made contrary to public opinion. If a wrong decision is made, proponents of the “just desert” would feel there is a mismatch in that direction, and to say the least, that “justice” was not done. Their opinion has always been that any punishment meted out to a criminal must be commensurate with the crime committed (see for example Von Hirsch, 1986, 1993; Cavadino & Dignan, 2002). It has been argued that robbery offenders are not usually considered for rehabilitative sentences because some must have had prior criminal records and their crime is measured to be serious and frightening (Desroches, 2002). As the criminal defence lawyer suggests, society must judge wisely when trying to punish an offender against the criminal law in order not to infringe on his fundamental human rights:

But in applying the “big stick”, society should be careful to draw a line between correcting that convict and dehumanising the convict.

For the abolitionists, suspending a criminal sentence is a step in the right direction. However, treating a high profile crime as if it were a misdemeanour might cause some people to still feel “let down” by the system. If an offender is treated as somebody society wants to reclaim for itself, his later attitude to that community might be

positive. So then, in creating a sort of equilibrium between the offender and the offence, the criminal defence lawyer stresses:

I will sum it that society has that duty to hold the delicate balance between protecting its own interest and protecting the rights of convicts as persons who are entitled to human dignity come what may.

To solve the problem of armed robbery is to deal directly with the attractive ingredients. For instance, since the “open cash flow” is attracting robbers to operate, the DIG argued that the system should be discouraged. Instead, the card and cheque system should be made popular. Another suggestion made by the DIG is:

the need for good governance/leadership and employment opportunities in the country.... A responsive government that can provide for the police, for the law enforcement, who is interested in the life and security of the nation....

Again, the problem of armed robbery in Nigeria largely points to maladministration and anomie in the polity. Things that should be prioritised by policy makers are ignored such that the socio-economic landscape becomes very slippery, thus occasioning crime. As Desroches (2002) has argued, sociological theories and research do remind us that, governments cannot fight crime efficiently if they do not take into account the social and economic situations that cause violence, and robbery in particular. Therefore, in preventing and or reducing armed robbery offences in Nigeria, government policy must be a right and fair one that should be acted upon to bear on the lives of every citizen in the country, especially youths who are the future of the nation. In support of that, the criminal defence lawyer concludes:

So I am inclined to the view that if our government of the various tiers (federal, state and local) wake up to their responsibilities and create an enabling environment for economic activities to thrive, our youths will be taken off the streets.

6.3. Summary

For crime prevention and/or reduction, suggestions have been made by both the offender sample and members of the CJS interviewed. Since the offender respondents believe that the group of “bad friends” is encouraging youths into becoming armed

robbers, they have equally suggested that disengaging from the group of bad friends would be a way of turning the minds of youths from criminal behaviour. In simple terms, it involves associating with “good friends” who arguably have no criminal tendencies whatsoever. Another striking point they raised was the issue of poverty in the country, which is blameable on the government for their selfish and corrupt attitude towards the socio-economic life of the people. Obviously, the teeming population of Nigerian youths require sustainable jobs as a way to overcome poverty and reduce crime. Therefore, the political leaders should place the common good as the highest of their priorities and work tirelessly to achieve it.

From the CJS, it was argued that the classical method of “death sentence” and prolonged jail terms have been ineffectual in preventing and or reducing armed robbery in Nigeria. There were debates surrounding alternatives to imprisonment, such as suspended sentence as a sort of “second chance” to correct the offender. Society and especially proponents of the just dessert may see this as unjust when dealing with serious crimes like armed robbery, but it was suggested that some sort of equilibrium be struck; to punish the offender and at the same time do justice for the victim and society as a whole. With the underperformance of the judiciary, it was suggested that speedy dispensation of justice using the DFID sponsored fast-track system would help to clear the backlog of cases so that the guilty is punished and the innocent discharged and acquitted promptly.

Another pertinent issue raised was prison reform; although this is supposedly an ongoing project, as of yet it has not achieved its desired objective in the Nigeria prison system. The inadequate feeding and unsatisfactory healthcare provisions are testimonies to the poor standards of the system. Arguably, if there is any political will to support the reform agenda, many youths locked behind bars would have their lives transformed for the better.

Policing crime was discussed as something that has gone beyond mere use of weapons to the use of modern scientific and information systems and international cooperation of police forces. All these would help ameliorate the high incidences of armed robbery in the country.

Chapter 7: New theorising from the research

The previous chapter discussed the responses from the cohort of offenders and members of the CJS interviewed on how to prevent and/or reduce armed robbery offences in Nigeria. This is the last chapter of the thesis, and it initiates new theorising from the research. The first part will be a conclusion section, which summarises the principal results from the research. It will invoke support from past criminological studies and beyond.

The next section will proffer some recommendations based on social and criminal justice policies developed in this work. It is hoped that the recommendations will be of immense help to the government, policy-makers and criminologists in crime prevention and/or reduction programmes. It might also be the vehicle for national progress and development.

7.1. Discussion and conclusions

As earlier noted, there were many problems and experiences surrounding this piece of research. The interest to do this research was hatched while working with the Nigeria Prison Service. Originally, the study was intended to be a comparative criminology of Nigeria and Britain. This ambition was stifled following the denial of access to interview youthful armed robbers in the English Prisons. However, with the granting of access in Nigeria, the study then focussed on Nigeria alone with the title “armed robbery culture and the youth subculture”. It was the researcher’s view that the study of “youth subculture” would be very important in understanding the endemic armed robbery activity in Nigeria. In that light, he thought that Anglo-American subcultural theory might help explain the youth subculture and their involvement in armed robbery, hence its initial employment as the theoretical framework. This theoretical tradition had much emphasis on the cultural identities of subcultures such as music, dress, language and so on. However, since the primary data could not reveal the cultural identities of the offender respondents, it was no longer intellectually feasible to work with the subcultural tradition.

It became necessary to replace subcultural theory with anomie-strain theory, which provided a theoretical framework to help explain the research data. Although there were specific aspects of the data which anomie-strain theory could not explain or

could not only explain, but we had to invoke control theory to explain them. Obviously, these are two different American theories that offer to explain criminal behaviour in different ways. Anomie-strain theory seems to have particular difficulty in explaining the relation between attachment to parents and delinquency, but the control theory tradition is compatible with such an explanation (Hirschi, 2002, [1969]; see also Agnew et al, 2000). While anomie-strain theory is concerned with the pressures produced by the disequilibrium between culturally-induced goals and socially-structured opportunities (Merton, 1968a); social control theory supposes that delinquency results from the lack of positive relationships with conventional others and institutions (see Agnew, 2000). Anomie-strain theory focuses on a wider range of goals than control theory. Its wide-ranging approach enables anomie-strain theory to explain many sorts of delinquent behaviours. Despite these variations, both theories are seemingly compatible in predicting that the actual or anticipated failure to achieve valued resources causes delinquency (Agnew, 2000).

Obviously, there were many things to be said in this research about youths in Nigeria; but we have had to use a Western theoretical framework to do so, but with some degree of skepticism – whether or not they fit well into the Nigerian social organisation. Although the study gives Nigerian youths a voice, it might not give them a way for their voice to be fully heard. It would have been preferable to develop an indigenous theoretical framework relevant to Nigerian society rather than import criminological theories from America. American criminological theories, on the whole, have been developed in American society and are essentially applicable within the unique political, cultural and social context of the American experience (Wills et al, 1999: 230). So, what we normally do is to “invoke” them to bear on the political, cultural and socio-economic conditions in Nigeria. Put another way, we apply these Western theories to what we think to be similar situations found elsewhere. Candidly, no two cross-cultural situations can be totally identical. Even if they are, historical contexts must necessarily be divergent. For example, the failure to achieve the American dream, which is the basis for Merton’s anomie-strain theory, has long dominated American culture and history, but that “American Dream” is *per se* alien to Nigeria. A somewhat similar pattern found in Nigeria could be the “unbridled appetite for money” as the only thing that counts, no matter the means of acquiring it. Even so, a plausible reason for employing Western criminological theories, especially

American, is because as many scholars (Willis et al, 1999; Birkbeck, 1993; Encinoza & Del Olmo, 1981; Midgley, 1977) suggest, American criminology dominates worldwide thinking about crime. Arguably, American criminologists are pathfinders in the development of many criminological theories. When crime is being studied in countries like Nigeria, we cannot but invoke Western theoretical perspectives since we do not have indigenous alternatives at our disposal. In the face of the dominance and ethnocentric bias of American criminology, the exploration for the causes of crime and criminality; and indeed the criminological enterprise is a global venture. For that reason, criminology as an academic discipline is flourishing in many countries across the world (Willis et al, 1999).

Although the development of criminology in Nigeria started in 1969 under British theoretical influence (see Willis et al, 1999), up to now there is no fully-fledged department of criminology that awards graduate degrees in the subject. In some Nigerian universities, criminology is studied mainly within sociology departments. The Nigerian Society of Criminology (NSC) was being formed at the beginning of this millennium, but it has not established an academic journal of criminology. Moreover, there is no government interest in investing and supporting academic research in criminology at the moment. Financial constraint, and the paucity and unreliability of official crime data appear to hinder the efforts of some Nigerian-based criminologists at carrying out research on a large scale, of a type that can come up with meaningful results that can help develop indigenous criminological theories. Regrettably, some Nigerian-born criminologists who have settled in Europe and America prefer the study of Western criminologies to Nigerian criminology.

Essentially, what Nigeria needs is an evidence-based criminology that is academic oriented and research driven, with full government and criminal justice support. It implies the development of an empirical research base that actually takes into account an understanding of the problem of managing crime and criminal justice in Nigeria. Such criminology will be asking questions about crime: what do the offenders think; what is the plight of the victim; how can the the CJS respond to high volume crimes; what do prison officers think, what do the police think; and what do the sentencers (Judges) think?

The proposed Nigerian criminology should also take into full account tribal differences within a more kind of urbanised Nigeria (for example, cosmopolitan Lagos where youths from different tribes converge to search for both legitimate and illegitimate means of survival) to see whether they are important in understanding criminality. Today, Lagos metropolis is close to if not already a megacity of over 10 million people. Given that a high proportion of these people are migrants from the rural areas, urban areas in Nigeria show a more than average concentration of the young and economically active group both male and female in its population (Oluwasola, 2007).

It is hoped that a Nigerian criminology will also aim at providing a more detailed explanation of the place of “juju” power and belief in “God” in the enactment of crime. This will require an exploration of the influence of such supernatural powers to see how criminals can utilise them as aids to their criminal behaviours.

A Nigerian criminology will also consider how crime is played out among the powerful elite. The corruption issue, for example, which resonates in this research, will make a good start since it is understood differently in Nigeria as against the US and other Western societies. Therefore we need an indepth understanding of the dynamics of corruption within the powerful elite in Nigeria and how they deal with it in relation to the lower class people. What all these translate to is that Nigeria’s problem has to be dealt with in a Nigerian way. Presently, talking about armed robbers in Nigeria, and the significant factors they mentioned as their motivations to commit the crime, we seem to be highlighting the shortcomings in understanding them by using Western criminological theories. Above all, criminology being an eclectic discipline should look towards developmental studies in the development of a Nigerian criminology.

Nevertheless, the present study has identified armed robbery as a problem among some Nigerian youths, occurring more in urban than rural areas (see also Ekpenyong, 1989). As findings have shown, contemporary armed robbers, who are mainly male youths coming from different parts of the country, employ high-powered firearms and lethal ammunition in their operations. They have become more sophisticated and deadly as they operate in large numbers, sometimes with the collusion of certain law

enforcement officers who provide the necessary guns and corresponding accessories in return for some financial reward, which of course undermines the system of formal control. This is a classic example of the level of normlessness prevalent in the Nigerian polity, which gives armed robbers the confidence to perpetuate their crime. By basing ourselves on the material gained from semi-structured interviews with 20 robbers in prison custody, and unstructured interview with 4 members of the criminal justice system, we were able to study the worldview of so-called “failed criminals”, that is, armed robbers in prison custody. Doing this research on armed robbery is like being alone or isolated because the research method comes from an Anglo-American tradition. It begs the question about the relevance of this research tradition in Nigeria, remembering that experiences of Nigeria are quite different from the West. Had the initial intention to study armed robbery in Nigeria and Britain been realised, the qualitative method would have been more helpful in discussing the issues of comparative criminology. To escape from their continued dependence on Western researchers, African researchers need to develop their research methodology out of their own experience (Mcdougal III, 2011).

It is important to stress again that this prison sample was drawn from the different tribes and geopolitical zones across the country, hence the divergent backgrounds of the respondents. Each respondent was unique, and so responded to the interview from his own point of view and outlook. Considering the relatively small number of the respondents, it may not be feasible to generalise or make large-scale deductions about armed robbers in Nigeria. As noted in chapter 4, this is one of the limitations that qualitative research suffers. Nevertheless, our findings have shed some light on the factors responsible for the involvement of youths in armed robbery. The arrangement and presentation of key research findings (see chapter 5) was carried out systematically to disclose those factors. The focus was on the exploration of family circumstances, economic motivations, life course engagement of offenders, and finally, the situational dynamics in enacting armed robberies. The key findings were cross-matched with previous research, and they seem to cast light to varying degrees on the connections between the involvement of youths in armed robbery and their cultural and socio-economic background factors which include: polygamy, death of parents, broken home, lack of jobs, poverty, money, craving for a better life, corruption, bad friends, drugs/alcohol, and gambling.

Apart from the issue of corruption that was co-explained by control and anomie-strain theories; control theory was able to offer explanation for polygamy, death of parents and broken home; while anomie-strain theory accounted for the many other factors. Given that some of the responses seem to overlap each other, however, we found four variables, namely: bad friends, the lure of money, poverty, and corruption, to be more significant factors being used by offenders to rationalise their involvement in armed robbery for the reason that majority (more than half) of the prison sample interviewed mentioned them as their motivations.

In essence, “bad friends” is arguably the main catalyst responsible for the involvement of Nigerian youths in armed robbery because 19 (95 per cent) respondents mentioned it. As the respondents earlier said (see chapters 5 & 6), without associating with bad friends, their criminal involvement would not have been possible. This group of criminals are “bad friends” because of the shared experiences and values among their members, which enable them to do things contrary to the conventional ways of society. They see “their world” as something born out of circumstances, hence they find loopholes to cast blame on the government. These bad friends have flourished due to the failure of the leadership at all levels in the polity to promote positive values for them, which has resulted in social disorganisation (see Adeniran, 2008) or anomie. As noted earlier, Nigeria is in a permanent state of anomie (Odumosu, 1999), hence lack of access to legitimate cash and other material things strain people to get involved in armed robbery (see for example Desroches, 1995; Baron & Hartnagel, 1998).

The “bad friends” emerged due to the anomic situation in the country and for all practical purposes, they tend to exhibit a street oriented lifestyle among their peers. Street life for them means that they commonly get involved in different sorts of illegal activities. As Baron (2006: 6) suggests, peer groups can provide a setting where the dominant meritocratic ideology is rejected, and criminal behaviour is preferred. Of course, those who decided to join the group of bad friends among our sample of respondents did so on their volition rather than peer pressure. Although the data revealed that some of the respondents were not well informed about the activities of the group, yet they wanted to join the robbery bandwagon to get quick money, which legitimate opportunity could not offer them.

Interestingly, we have come to know that “bad friends” may not compel someone to join them, but by dint of “sophistry” they are able to recruit new associates. Recruiting criminal accomplices requires the convergence of space and time of would be co-offenders, who in the absence of outside interference, and with considerable time available to hang out, size each other up, get drunk, or do any other thing that leads them into criminal cooperation (Felson, 2003). That is why the streets are the best locations for the recruitment and involvement of bad friends.

Moreover, the issue of bad friends is probably traceable to early childhood (see Katz, 1991), especially among dysfunctional families, with their attendant psychological problems (Gadd & Farrall, 2008; Farrington, 2002), and to the loose morality prevalent in society. While this group of “bad friends” did not seem to represent the worst people in Nigerian society, they had a craving for what they wanted so that they could compensate for their low self-esteem. Their hopelessness, sadness and insecurity in life may help to push them into reacting to the anomic situation prevalent in the country, *via* armed robbery.

Their idleness and lack of accessibility to legitimate opportunities have also made them to recklessly look for money, which is presumably the primary attraction behind every robbery, hence a dominant group of respondents suggested it as their motivation. The strong positive relationship between money and armed robbery is well documented in criminological literature (see Willis, 2006; Desroches, 2002; Matthews, 2002, 1996; Gill, 2000, 2001; Wright & Decker, 1997; Nugent et al, 1989; Ekpenyong, 1989; Katz, 1988; Rotimi, 1984; Conklin, 1972). On the basis of the data for this study, it seems that money is the only language the group of “bad friends” can speak, and their ambition is to get hold of it. This corroborates the argument of Rosenfeld and Messner (2000: 175) that there is a perpetual attractiveness linked with illegitimate activity, that is an inevitable corollary of the goal of monetary success.

Even when some robbers contend that money was not their main motive for armed robbery, this has to be treated with some caution, because as data earlier revealed “everybody likes to spend money”. It is not surprising though that five “bad friends” from average families joined the robbery bandwagon just to acquire immediate cash to spend lavishly among their peers. If they were to seek such money directly from

parents, it would be practically impossible to get, hence armed robbery becomes the “easy route” to solve an immediate problem. According to Katz (1988: 216), the causal link through which high spending produces economic pressures that produce stickups is lived by persistent offenders in the details of various lines of illicit activity. As strain theory consistently suggests, offenders choose the illegitimate means to achieve their economic success (Merton, 1968a, 1968b). When they do so, the end seems to justify the means, to prove the offenders right with their criminal conduct. “The end justifies the means” doctrine becomes a principle for action when the cultural structure unduly exalts the end and the social organisation unduly limits possible recourse to prescribed means (Merton, 1938: 681). For Baron (2006), youths who externalise their blame might seek or develop collective answers to help them triumph over their financial frustrations. These frustrations have been evidenced by the enactment of armed robberies by our sample of respondents to acquire cash.

In Nigeria, not every person has access to cash, even as the country runs a “money-based economy” where money has become an index for measuring how people interact, how they are socially recognised, and how successful they have become (Rotimi, 1984). The *status quo* has it that “Nigeria’s money is in the hands of government”, implying that the affluent few are politicians and a small number of the elite who are connected with those in the corridors of power. That is why the group of “bad friends” who have become armed robbers feel deprived; hence they want to get their own money in the process because they seem to believe that “doing robbery is about making money”. Accordingly, the relationship between deprivation and crime is high where there is great “cultural emphasis on monetary accumulation as a symbol of success” (see Merton, 1938: 680 cited in Rosenfeld, 1989: 453).

Among the “bad friends”, money appeared to have become a “comparable commodity”, and also a “status” enhancer. As revealed during interviews, the more money a robber has and can spend, the more respect he commands in the community, and for this reason other young people try to emulate him by becoming armed robbers. In a situation like this, the norms and values of society are deemed “irrelevant” provided one has acquired wealth like other people. A large body of strain theorists support the view that people are more likely to be strained to commit crime when they considered they were worse off money-wise than those with whom

they compared themselves (Baron, 2006; Agnew, et al, 1996; Burton & Cullen, 1992; Burton et al, 1994; Burton & Dunnaway, 1994; Passas, 2000, 1997); that is why strain is not only the failure to succeed, but also a function of the successes of those in a person's comparative reference group or groups (Burton, 2006). This urge for money could be interpreted to suggest, on the one hand, an uncontrollable youthful appetite for material things; but on other hand, it reveals the high rate of structural inequality which has plunged many Nigerian youths into poverty.

Arguably, poverty *per se* is not criminogenic, but according to Merton:

Poverty as such, and consequent limitation of opportunity, are not sufficient to induce a conspicuously high rate of criminal behaviour. Even the often-mentioned "poverty in the midst of plenty" will not necessarily lead to this result. Only in so far as poverty and associated disadvantages in competition for the culture values approved for all members of the society is linked with the assimilation of a cultural emphasis on monetary accumulation, as a symbol of success is antisocial conduct a "normal outcome" (Merton, 1938: 681).

Poverty is a complex and usually self-perpetuating issue that includes a lack of income and assets to meet the fundamental necessities of life such as food, shelter, education and healthcare (The World Bank, 1998/1999; NNPC, 2004; Omoregie, 2006). Poverty is relative to individuals and at the same time connected with money: those who are poor need money, but not every person who needs money is poor. As noted before, many Nigerians [especially youths] live in poverty situations (see Home Office, 2005; NNPC, 2004) and have hardly any legitimate opportunities available. Poverty in Nigeria, as in most developing countries of Africa, is widespread and appears to be ever on the increase (Odumosu, 1999). Potentially, Nigeria is the richest country in black Africa, given its abundant oil reserves and enormous mineral, agricultural and human resources (IRIN, 2002), but it is the twenty-ninth poorest country in the world based on the United Nations 2004 Human Poverty Index. In addition, Nigeria falls among the low human development countries, and ranks 158 out of 177 countries, scoring 0.470 per cent of Human Development Index Value¹⁵⁶ (United Nations Development Programme, (UNDP) 2007/2008).

¹⁵⁶The Human Development Index [HDI] provides a composite measure of three areas of human development namely living a long and healthy life (measured by life expectancy), being educated

Due to the prevalence of deprivation and poverty among youths, it is comprehensible that the youths in Nigerian society tend to give prominence to what might be considered as lower class tendencies (see Egbue, 2006). In that light, the Nigerian ruling class has assaulted the public with physical and psychological violence and frustrated their aspirations, particularly their escape from underdevelopment and poverty (Ake, 1982). This suggests that the poverty situation among Nigerian youths and in particular the group of “bad friends” is “man made”, and ought not to be blamed on the poor families but on the government and their cronies, who have neglected the needs of the poor youths. According to Odumosu (1999: 72), the politicians have been inclined towards non-democratic practices: the capricious redistribution of the nation's wealth has promoted poverty among the many who are the lower class, and opulence among the politicians themselves who form a small privileged class. Therefore the persistence of armed robbery in Nigeria should be understood within an economic context that concentrates the nation's wealth and resources in a few hands while subjecting the larger population to the indignities of poverty, inequality, deprivation and underemployment, which in turn aggravate the struggle for scarce resources (Igbo, 2001). The lower class individuals who scramble for such resources become strained by the social structure around them (see Rebellon et al, 2009; Merton, 1938) hence their involvement in illegal activities like armed robbery.

Crime is not something that exists in isolation; it must be analysed in the context of its relationship to the character of the entire society (Greenberg, 1981: 27). Events have shown that Nigeria is a capitalist society which has become permanently anomic. In a normless society, any crime is possible, because most citizens, especially youths no longer adhere to the rule of law. According to Alozie Ogugbuaja¹⁵⁷ “...we are running a very crude capitalist system that completely relegates our African sense of brotherhood to the background. We have created a thoroughly aggrieved faction within our society which uses its youthful disposition to threaten and to destroy us all

(measured by adult literacy and enrolment at the primary, secondary and tertiary level) and having a decent standard of living (measured by purchasing power parity, [PPP], income. The index is not a comprehensive measure of human development because it does not contain essential indicators such as gender or income inequality or indicators more difficult to measure such as respect for human rights and political freedom. Above all, it provides a broadened prism for checking human progress and the complex relationship between income and well-being (UNDP, 2007/2008).

¹⁵⁷He was a former Police Public Relations Officer.

(cited in Marenin 1987: 276)". The situation reveals that the poor [lower class] must turn to threats and guns in the open air of the streets, visible to all (Marenin, 1987: 275). Merton (1938) argues that capitalist societies are very likely to suffer from anomie, which demonstrates a strain/conflict between the goals set by society and the legitimate means of attaining such goals.¹⁵⁸ Strain is the product of an unequal social structure that has blocked the legitimate opportunities of many people to reach the goals set by society. Social structure in context is composed of patterned relationships among individuals and groups defined and organised through statuses and roles (Rosenfeld, 1989: 456).

Nigerian society bears the hallmarks of an unjust social structure that fosters crime. Apparently, there are two extremes of the class structure in Nigeria: upper class and lower class. Middle class is not easily recognisable in Nigeria, hence a person is either rich or poor. By implication, the rich becomes richer while the poor are poorer thereby creating economic differentials. A previous study has confirmed that economic differentials in Nigeria have led to a dramatic crime rise, whereby thousands of male youths are turning to armed robbery (John et al, 2007).

In short, those economic inequalities which normally arise in a capitalist society produce violent crime such as armed robbery. They do so by weakening the existing social cohesion, which further degenerates into social disorganisation (Einstadter & Henry, 2006; Blau & Blau, 1982), thus occasioning anomie. As some criminologists (Schichor, 1980; Quinney, 1977; Werkentin et al, 1974) argue, the political nature of crime is underscored as an unconscious expression of rebellion against the capitalist system. The lower class has its own values and beliefs, which are usually supportive of criminal activity, such as taking from and conquering those in the upper classes (Hall, 2007: 5). Although, crime is something committed by people from other classes, the crimes of the lower class people are well known, while those of the elite are viewed as normal and ongoing activities (Chambliss, 1975).¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁸In Merton's discourse of anomie-strain theory, he has absorbed elements of Marxist criminology.

¹⁵⁹Chambliss conducted his study in Seattle (USA) and Ibadan (Nigeria). Although the study is suggestive, caution should be exercised in making generalisations beyond these two cities, hence the need for further research (see Stephens et al, 1998: 516).

Given that the majority of Nigerians do not get involved in violent criminal activities, those who do get involved are drawn into it by “opportunities” or by their circumstances in life as they search for survival (Marenin & Reisig, 1995). According to W. Godwin, “The fruitful source of crimes consists in this circumstance; one man’s possessing in abundance that of which another man is destitute” (cited in Bonger, 1916: 20). As Desroches (2002) stresses, criminals are aware of the inequalities in society, hence their illegal behaviour is an unsophisticated endeavour to re-establish economic equilibrium. Accordingly, “inequality will only be accepted when most people have an equal chance to aspire to that inequality” (Handy, 1994: 41). Seemingly, that situation is far from being achieved in Nigeria, hence the group of “bad friends” engage in robbery as a “protest” against government insensitivity to their poverty situation. This lends credence to the opinion that “armed robbery is more than just the crime for social deviants. It now appears to be a calculated political struggle ... a class struggle ... The ‘have-nots’ want to fight the ‘haves’, but having no matching means to tackle the heavily protected big men, they descend on the other Nigerians who are easy prey...”¹⁶⁰ (Bassey 1986 cited in Marenin, 1987: 276). In this way, armed robbery has spread like wild fire across the country (see for example Dung-Gwom & Rikko, 2009; see also Ebohon, 1992). Essentially, poverty is a variable that criminologists frequently use in sourcing the aetiology of most crimes. Its impact on armed robbery in Nigeria cannot be overemphasised, as further research continues to develop in this area and as Nigerian society becomes more corrupt than ever before.

As noted earlier (see chapter 2; chapter 5), corruption in Nigeria has a colonial origin. It was first injected into the Nigerian social system by the European leaders that colonised Africa during the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885 (see Olaleye-Oruene, 2007: 233). Subsequently, the British colonisers were involved in exploitative and fraudulent practices. They went as far as making away with many of Nigeria’s economic products and brought them to Britain (see Osoba, 1996; Alemika, 1988) thereby educating the indigenous politicians and public servants on how to be corrupt. That is why corruption in Nigeria today has taken a neo-colonial pattern.

¹⁶⁰This article “Politics of Armed Robbery” was first published by Nimo Bassey in *The Guardian*, 5 October 1986.

As has been shown by the data, the corrupt behaviours of government functionaries, the political elite, and the security agencies have motivated groups of “bad friends” to get involved in armed robbery. These disenfranchised youths tend to feel that Nigerian society does not have the level of honesty required. Their feeling may not be far from reality considering also that Transparency International had earlier revealed that Nigeria is one of the most corrupt countries in the world. Moreover, the WGI had shown that Nigeria is far more corrupt than some subSaharan African countries like South Africa and Ghana (see chapter 2; chapter 5; Appendix 1). These developments are indicative of corruption as a “symbol” of Nigerian society. This is because in a situation where every aspect of society is corrupt, then anomie prevails, thus encouraging the breaking of law and order. That is to say, corruption as found among the upper class generates the normlessness of the robbers’ behaviour so that they use it to “justify” their robbery activities. It seems sensible then to argue that as some people’s insatiability (the politicians) has led to corruption, so also has other people’s deprivation (the group of bad friends) plunged them into armed robbery. Little wonder, if criminal behaviour is a manifestation of the main concerns of the lower class people (Charles & Ikoh, 2004). Whereas corruption appears to be a consequence of poverty and loss of moral rectitude, poverty seems to be the cause of corruption (Onakuse, 2004: 6). Therefore corruption has intrinsic recognition of interactions that affect the pursuit of sustainable goals, with a clear-cut persistent poverty and insecure livelihood (Onasuke, 2004: 7).

The problems facing Nigeria are not naturally caused but fabricated. Nigeria’s problems are caused by Nigerians for Nigerians (Edeh, n.d: 1). “The problem with Nigeria is leadership” (Achebe, 1984: 1) that is insensitive and inconsiderate to the plight of the Nigerian public, especially the lower class people. Armed robbers in Nigeria are encouraged by the economy of corruption, fraud, looting, and plunder to feel that there are no restrictions whatsoever (Ekpenyong, 1989: 13). We may recall that in the 1980s a corrupt society encouraged Anini and his group of bandits to get involved in many incidents of armed robbery across the country (see Marenin, 1987). This suggests that the “system” is anomic and in utter decay; there is a top-down systemic corruption, which is very hard to eradicate. As some people rob with their pens, armed robbers use their weapons to deny people the right to their property.

Thus, criminal needs are justified by reference to the bribery and corruption prevalent in the higher echelons of society (Szabo, 1978; Ekpenyong, 1989).

In Nigeria, corruption is not only a vice; it is also a way of life as earlier noted, and indeed a major inhibition to the country's political and socio-economic development. Moreover, as noted before, corruption has a causal relationship with poverty. As one Nigerian scholar puts it, "Where poverty thrives, corruption becomes difficult to tackle as people simply may become lawless and restless" (Ige, 2005: 156). Ostensibly though, angry youths who come together as "bad friends" are impatient to wait for an end to corruption in the country, and as a result, robbery answers their question quickly. Little wonder then that more than half of the respondents mentioned corruption as their motivation.

In the Western world, corruption is minute and insignificant in the population in comparison with Nigeria. Obviously, every person is being watched by each other whatever their position in society. People are more ready and willing to become "whistle blowers" when corruption is confirmed in any sector of their economy. That is what many Nigerians have not been schooled in; instead they tend to jump on to the corrupt bandwagon. As earlier noted, the governing class (past and present) in the country have failed to lead by example. Instead, they are easily identified with political corruption so that some youths have decided to fight back through involvement in armed robbery. Thus, the problem of armed robbery in Nigeria is apparently linked with the endemic corruption in all facets of the economy (see Ekpenyong, 1989), which has created an anomic situation.

One could argue that corruption may not directly lead to the involvement of bad friends in armed robbery, but the data have revealed the contradictory ways of life among the Nigerian elite, which this group of "bad friends" are averse to, hence their participation in armed robbery. The issue of corruption is indicative of the problematic relationship between the powerful (upper class) and the powerless (lower class). This creates some problem by pointing to the idea that there are no agreed societal laws and norms. Thus, deviance becomes the "behaviour consequent to the failure of personal and social controls to produce behaviour in conformity with the norms of the social system" (see Reiss, 1951: 196 cited in Meier, 1982: 46).

Therefore, a detailed research to examine the intersection of corruption and armed robbery is called for.

The group of “bad friends” we studied did not qualify to be called the “youth subculture”, owing to the lack of evidence of their cultural identities in the data, which resulted in a lack of theoretical support from the Anglo-American subcultural theory. Since that theory is no longer viable here, we have invoked anomie-strain and control theories to support the current study. As earlier noted, whereas anomie-strain theory and control theory fall short of being indigenous theories of crime, however, anomie-strain theory seems to be a consistently dominant criminological theory in this study. Although anomie-strain theory accounts for industrial communities in the West with forms of advanced capitalist economies, its usage here is largely because of its adaptability to the Nigerian social system, and its ability to explain criminal behaviour mainly from an economic stance. As Rosenfeld (1989: 456) admits, “strain theory is an analytically complete theory of social organisation and crime”, because it tries to restore the dimension of social organisation neglected or defined away by control theory. Drawing on that, it is finally suggested that the youths who get involved in armed robbery be regarded as a network of criminals strained by the unjust social structure in their native Nigeria. In spite of that, it is essential to establish a Nigerian criminological theoretical framework that will fully explain crime in a Nigerian way.

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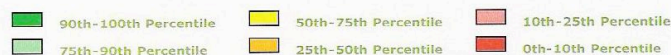
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Appendix 1: Governance indicator among selected countries

Statistical Table: Political Stability, Comparison across selected countries

Country	Sources	Year	Percentile Rank (0-100)	Governance Score (-2.5 to +2.5)	Standard Error
GHANA	8	2009	50.0	+0.16	0.22
	8	2008	49.8	+0.12	0.23
	7	2007	49.0	+0.08	0.22
	7	2006	52.4	+0.14	0.23
	7	2005	52.4	+0.14	0.24
	7	2004	41.8	-0.13	0.25
	6	2003	43.3	-0.09	0.26
	5	2002	42.3	-0.15	0.25
	5	2000	38.0	-0.19	0.26
	5	1998	42.3	-0.10	0.25
NIGERIA	4	1996	41.3	-0.06	0.33
	8	2009	4.2	-1.95	0.22
	8	2008	5.3	-1.98	0.23
	8	2007	4.8	-2.09	0.22
	8	2006	3.4	-2.06	0.22
	7	2005	4.3	-1.80	0.24
	7	2004	4.8	-1.73	0.25
	6	2003	6.7	-1.56	0.26
	6	2002	8.2	-1.63	0.25
	5	2000	9.6	-1.54	0.26
SOUTH AFRICA	5	1998	21.6	-0.79	0.25
	4	1996	8.2	-1.64	0.33
	9	2009	44.3	+0.02	0.21
	9	2008	50.7	+0.17	0.22
	9	2007	53.8	+0.28	0.22
	9	2006	52.9	+0.20	0.22
	8	2005	48.6	+0.04	0.23
	8	2004	48.1	+0.03	0.24
	7	2003	40.4	-0.19	0.25
	7	2002	39.9	-0.19	0.24
	6	2000	33.2	-0.35	0.24
	5	1998	17.8	-0.86	0.25
	4	1996	11.1	-1.34	0.33



Source: Kaufmann D. A. Kraay and M. Mastruzzi (2010). *The Worldwide Governance Indicators: Methodology and Analytical Issues*

Note: The governance indicators presented here aggregate the views on the quality of governance provided by a large number of enterprise, citizen and expert survey respondents in industrial and developing countries. These data are gathered from a number of survey institutes, think tanks, non-governmental organizations, and international organizations. The WGI do not reflect the official views of the World Bank, its Executive Directors, or the countries they represent. The WGI are not used by the World Bank Group to allocate resources.

Statistical Table: Government Effectiveness, Comparison across selected countries

Country	Sources	Year	Percentile Rank (0-100)	Governance Score (-2.5 to +2.5)	Standard Error
GHANA	12	2009	56.7	+0.06	0.17
	12	2008	58.0	+0.13	0.17
	11	2007	53.6	+0.04	0.18
	11	2006	56.8	+0.07	0.18
	10	2005	50.0	-0.19	0.15
	10	2004	48.5	-0.25	0.15
	9	2003	49.5	-0.25	0.15
	8	2002	51.0	-0.18	0.16
	6	2000	55.3	-0.03	0.19
	6	1998	48.5	-0.24	0.15
NIGERIA	3	1996	35.4	-0.49	0.29
	12	2009	8.6	-1.24	0.17
	12	2008	15.9	-0.99	0.17
	12	2007	16.9	-0.95	0.17
	12	2006	20.4	-0.90	0.16
	10	2005	23.3	-0.82	0.15
	10	2004	17.0	-0.87	0.15
	9	2003	19.4	-0.87	0.15
	9	2002	13.6	-0.98	0.15
	7	2000	13.6	-1.00	0.18
SOUTH AFRICA	6	1998	13.6	-1.06	0.15
	3	1996	9.2	-1.24	0.29
	13	2009	67.6	+0.51	0.16
	12	2008	70.5	+0.65	0.17
	12	2007	72.5	+0.69	0.17
	12	2006	71.4	+0.67	0.16
	11	2005	74.3	+0.81	0.15
	11	2004	74.8	+0.75	0.15
	10	2003	74.3	+0.67	0.14
	10	2002	71.8	+0.62	0.15
	8	2000	72.8	+0.58	0.17
	8	1998	76.7	+0.74	0.15
	5	1996	62.6	+0.27	0.26



Source: Kaufmann D., A. Kraay, and M. Mastruzzi (2010). The Worldwide Governance Indicators: Methodology and Analytical Issues

Note: The governance indicators presented here aggregate the views on the quality of governance provided by a large number of enterprise, citizen and expert survey respondents in industrial and developing countries. These data are gathered from a number of survey institutes, think tanks, non-governmental organizations, and international organizations. The WGI do not reflect the official views of the World Bank, its Executive Directors, or the countries they represent. The WGI are not used by the World Bank Group to allocate resources.

Statistical Table: Regulatory Quality, Comparison across selected countries

Country	Sources	Year	Percentile Rank (0-100)	Governance Score (-2.5 to +2.5)	Standard Error
GHANA	11	2009	54.8	+0.12	0.16
	11	2008	53.6	-0.01	0.17
	11	2007	52.9	-0.04	0.17
	11	2006	52.7	-0.06	0.17
	11	2005	51.7	-0.11	0.17
	11	2004	41.5	-0.34	0.17
	10	2003	39.5	-0.37	0.18
	9	2002	38.0	-0.43	0.20
	7	2000	50.2	-0.03	0.23
	7	1998	45.9	-0.13	0.25
NIGERIA	4	1996	47.3	+0.13	0.33
	11	2009	25.7	-0.70	0.16
	11	2008	23.7	-0.75	0.17
	12	2007	19.9	-0.88	0.16
	12	2006	17.6	-0.96	0.16
	11	2005	19.5	-0.86	0.17
	11	2004	8.3	-1.31	0.17
	10	2003	13.7	-1.16	0.18
	10	2002	11.2	-1.19	0.20
	8	2000	21.0	-0.72	0.21
SOUTH AFRICA	7	1998	15.6	-0.96	0.25
	4	1996	17.1	-1.08	0.33
	12	2009	64.3	+0.42	0.16
	11	2008	66.7	+0.51	0.17
	12	2007	66.5	+0.47	0.16
	12	2006	69.8	+0.63	0.16
	12	2005	67.3	+0.55	0.16
	12	2004	69.8	+0.58	0.17
	11	2003	68.8	+0.63	0.17
	11	2002	68.8	+0.57	0.19
	9	2000	65.4	+0.42	0.19
	9	1998	58.0	+0.21	0.22
	6	1996	44.4	+0.09	0.23

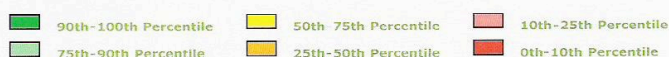


Source: Kaufmann D., A. Kraay, and M. Mastruzzi (2010). The Worldwide Governance Indicators: Methodology and Analytical Issues

Note: The governance indicators presented here aggregate the views on the quality of governance provided by a large number of enterprise, citizen and expert survey respondents in industrial and developing countries. These data are gathered from a number of survey institutes, think tanks, non-governmental organizations, and international organizations. The WGI do not reflect the official views of the World Bank, its Executive Directors, or the countries they represent. The WGI are not used by the World Bank Group to allocate resources.

Statistical Table: Control of Corruption, Comparison across selected countries

Country	Sources	Year	Percentile Rank (0-100)	Governance Score (-2.5 to +2.5)	Standard Error
GHANA	15	2009	59.5	+0.06	0.15
	14	2008	58.5	-0.02	0.15
	12	2007	58.5	+0.08	0.16
	13	2006	58.7	+0.05	0.16
	11	2005	47.1	-0.32	0.16
	10	2004	47.6	-0.27	0.16
	8	2003	47.6	-0.27	0.18
	7	2002	49.5	-0.26	0.19
	6	2000	53.4	-0.08	0.22
	6	1998	47.6	-0.25	0.22
NIGERIA	3	1996	39.8	-0.28	0.13
	15	2009	14.8	-1.07	0.15
	15	2008	21.3	-0.84	0.15
	14	2007	15.0	-0.98	0.15
	15	2006	10.7	-1.14	0.14
	12	2005	8.7	-1.28	0.16
	11	2004	6.8	-1.34	0.16
	9	2003	4.9	-1.33	0.18
	8	2002	2.4	-1.38	0.18
	7	2000	6.8	-1.21	0.20
SOUTH AFRICA	6	1998	12.6	-1.07	0.22
	3	1996	6.8	-1.09	0.13
	16	2009	60.5	+0.10	0.14
	14	2008	63.8	+0.22	0.14
	13	2007	64.3	+0.31	0.14
	14	2006	69.9	+0.45	0.13
	12	2005	69.4	+0.58	0.15
	11	2004	66.5	+0.40	0.15
	9	2003	60.7	+0.22	0.17
	9	2002	64.6	+0.29	0.17
	8	2000	68.0	+0.43	0.19
	8	1998	68.4	+0.47	0.19
	5	1996	73.8	+0.54	0.12



Source: Kaufmann D., A. Kraay, and M. Mastruzzi (2010). *The Worldwide Governance Indicators: Methodology and Analytical Issues*

Note: The governance indicators presented here aggregate the views on the quality of governance provided by a large number of enterprise, citizen and expert survey respondents in industrial and developing countries. These data are gathered from a number of survey institutes, think tanks, non-governmental organizations, and international organizations. The WGI do not reflect the official views of the World Bank, its Executive Directors, or the countries they represent. The WGI are not used by the World Bank Group to allocate resources.

Appendix 2: Informed consent form

School of Law
The University of Manchester
Oxford road
M13 9PL

10/02/2007

Informed Consent Form

I agree to take part in a research study being conducted by Joel Nwalozie; a PhD student in Criminology at the School of Law, University of Manchester, UK.

I have willingly made the decision based on the information I have been given about the purpose of the research. I have had the opportunity to ask further questions and received additional information about the research. If I have questions in future to ask about the research I can also ask.

I understand that I may withdraw from the research at any time without penalty by telling the researcher.

This project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the ethics committee of the School of Law, University of Manchester. I am aware that I am free to contact the Committee if I have any concerns or question resulting from my participation in the interview.

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Name of participant	Signature	Date
-----	-----	-----
Name of researcher	Signature	Date

Appendix 3: 2007 statistical return of convicted prisoners (armed robbers) in Nigeria.

STATE	PRISON	Male	Female	Grand Total
SOKOTO				
	Sokoto Central	13		
	TOTAL	13		
DELTA				
	Warri	1		
	Ogwuashi Uku			
	Agbor	1		
	Kwale	2		
	TOTAL	4		
CROSS RIVER				
	Calabar	6		
	TOTAL	6		
OGUN				
	Ijebu Ode	1		
	TOTAL	1		
BORNO				
	Max Sec	3		
	TOTAL	3		
JIGAWA				
	Hadejia	2		
	TOTAL	2		
TARABA				
	Jalingo	1		
	TOTAL	1		
KADUNA				
	KPC	3		
	Kafanchan	5		
	TOTAL	8		
GOMBE				
	Gombe	4		
	TOTAL	4		
JOS				
	Plateau	3		
	TOTAL	3		
EDO				
	Oko	3		
	Ozalla FC	1		
	TOTAL	4		
FCT - KUJE				
	Kuje	2		
	TOTAL	2		
KEBBI				
	kebbi	3		
	TOTAL	3		
KWARA				
	Ilorin	9		

YOBE	TOTAL	9		
	M/Fashi	8		
IMO	TOTAL	8		
	Owerri	21		
	Okigwe	17		
	Oroh FC	6		
	TOTAL	44		
ABIA				
	Umuahia	6		
	Aba	1		
LAGOS STATE	TOTAL	7		
	Medium			
	Maximum	76		
	Ikoyi			
	Badagry			
	Female		2	
	TOTAL	76	2	
	SUB TOTAL	199	2	201
