

Urban Management and Urban Violence in Africa

Volume 2

Edited by

Isaac O. Albert

J. Adisa

T. Agbola

G. Hérault

Proceedings

*International Symposium on Urban Management
and Urban Violence in Africa*

Ibadan

7-11 November 1994

IFRA - IBADAN

CONTENTS

Volume 2

Organising Committees	vii
Acknowledgements/Remerciements	viii
Preface	ix

PART FOUR

Town Growth and Insecurity

AKINTOLA, S.O. Urbanization: Africa's Tower of Babel, the Nigerian experience	1
AYORINDE, D. Controlling development in urban fringes: A case study of Ibadan, Nigeria	9
BAKO, S. Urbanization and religious conflicts in Nigeria	19
CALAS, B. La persistance de la croissance urbaine malgre la violence: croissance démographique et dynamisme spatial à Kampala de 1966 à 1994	29
DUNG, PAM SHA The settler question and the emergence of ethnic tension and violence in Jos, Nigeria	43
IGAH, E. La marginalisation dans les métropoles nigérianes	51
METTON, A. Commerce et sécurité dans les banlieues des grandes agglomérations	59
MUKORO, S.I. Intra-urban pattern of violent crimes in African cities: Lagos, Nigeria	65

PENY, A. Sécurité publique et transport urbain: évolution en Europe et en France enseignements et propositions	75
PEROUSE DE MONTCLOS, M.A. Violence urbaine et privatisation de la sécurité en République Sud-Africaine flux de populations, milices d'autodéfense associations de voisinage et société de gardiennage	87

PART FIVE
Youth Integration and Employment

AKINYELE, I.O., ONIFADE, I.O. AND APOLABI, W.A.O. Poverty reduction and urban violence: The case for street food vendors in Nigeria	99
AKPARANTA, B. Reasons for urban violence in post-civil war Nigeria	109
BAZENGUISSA, R. Ninja, Cobra et la milice d'Aubeville: sociologies des pratiques de la violence urbaine à Brazzaville	115
BENGA, N.A. Jeunes citadins et emploi salarié à Dakar, Senegal: le programme AGETIP et l'art de la débrouille contre la galère	123
DEMBELE, O. La commune face à la gestion des jeunes dans le métropole d'Abidjan ...	131
IPATUROTI, T.O. Delinquent subculture and violence in Nigerian universities	149
MACHARIA, K. Integrating youth in the informal sector: Lessons from Nairobi and Harare	161
OBIOHA, I.K. The contribution of touts to urban violence in southern Nigeria	171
OKOJIE, C.F.E Poor housing and the integration and employment of youth in urban Nigeria	179
OLUTAYO, A.O. Youth in urban violence	191
OMITOOGUN, W. The area boys of Lagos: A study of organized street violence	201

OUEDRAOGO, J. Recomposition sociale, appartenances communautaires et strategies des jeunes citadins du quartier Dapoya à Ouagadougou	209
OWUMI, B.E. New trends and attitudes toward crime: The phenomenon of area boys in Nigeria	217
OYEKUNLE, A.A. Child labour, urban violence and environmental degradation	223

PART SIX
Public Policies and Urban Violence

ADERINTO, A. Student unrest and urban violence in Nigeria	233
ADESINA, O.C. Structural adjustment programmes in sub-Saharan Africa: From acquiescence to protest	239
ADEWUMI, F. Structural adjustment, mass poverty and urban violence in Nigeria	247
AMUWO, K. Small can be beautiful: Why urban violence is not rampant in Africa	257
BELLO-IMAM, I.B. Urban problems in Nigeria: The political impact of structural adjustment programmes on health, transportation and education	269
HAERINGER, P. Situations urbaines et criminalisation des comportements: une grille de lecture appliquée à l'Afrique Noire	279
ISAMAH, A.N. Structural adjustment, social alienation and urban violence	287
KOFFI, K. Violence spontanée et violence politique: pour une histoire de la violence urbaine à Lomé, Togo	295
NUNYABU, C.K. Les centres urbains secondaires en Afrique: Réalité et devenir	317
OKOOSI, A.T. The structural adjustment programme, urbanization and political crisis in Nigeria	325

OLUMODEJI, E.O. Social justice and crime in Nigeria: A sociological viewpoint	335
ONIBOKUN, A.G. Achieving effective cooperation among planners, politicians, entrepreneurs and citizens: The sustainable city programme approach	343
OWENS-IBIE, N. Television technology and urban violence in Nigeria	355
OYESIKU, O.K. Public transport planning and the impetus for violence in Lagos metropolis	363
ROBERTS, F.O.N. Metropolis under stress. The political sociology of structural adjustment and urban violence in Lagos, Nigeria	377
RODRIGUEZ-TORRES, D. La précarisation des conditions de vie et ses rapports avec la montée de la violence en milieu urbain africain: le cas de Nairobi	391
SUNMOLA, M.A. Public policy and urban violence: A theoretical exposition	407
WILLIAMS, P. Women and urban violence: A reflection of the structural adjustment programme on urban violence in Nigeria	419
WOLDU, S. Urban violence in Africa: A case study of Ethiopia	423
List of authors, Volume 2	435
List of contributors	436

NEW TRENDS AND ATTITUDES TOWARD CRIME: The Phenomenon of Area Boys in Nigeria

Bernard E. Owumi
Department of Sociology
University of Ibadan
Ibadan, Nigeria

1. Introduction

The rapid rate of crime and criminal activities have been a major issue of concern the world over, and especially in Nigeria since the civil war (1967-1970) (Tamuno 1985: 1991). None of the succession of various governments has been able to tackle the problem with any degree of success (Third United Nations Crime Survey 1993). While crime has been on the increase, the involvement of youth and the ferocity with which such acts have been perpetuated is both alarming and frightening. This has in turn escalated the level of fear and anxiety among the public for the security of their property and their personal safety.

Research has shown that most of these felonies are urban localized (Hassan Arif 1993; Pinheiro 1993). The preponderance of these crimes in the cities has been attributed to the large proportion of migrant youths in search of jobs under the prevailing harsh economic conditions (Guardian correspondent 1992; Paulo Pinheiro 1993) in the cities. The presence of this large pool of idle youths, who are generally unskilled and often homeless, creates a fertile ground for deviant activities (Tamuno, 1985). It also is argued that the structure of society with its unequal opportunity structure and the crumbling of traditional social norms and values in favour of Western values has consequently coloured societal perceptions of crime and criminal behaviour (Cohen 1955; Cloward and Ohlin, 1960; Sofola, 1994) and contributed to the surge in crime and criminal activities (Hasan, 1993).

In the urban centres of Nigeria there has been new trend in criminal activity which involves roving gangs of young men who inhabit a particular area and engage in various acts of deviant behaviour. A new term, *area boys*, has crept into the language to describe these young men. For instance,

Oyinlola chases *area boy* who abused his mother . . . (Tijani F., 1994).
Area boys, black marketers in bloody clash over an attempt by *area boys* to dispossess a foreign business man of his valuables (*Daily Times*, March 1, 1994).

Area boys 'cart-away' ballot box (Network News, 23rd May 1994).

In spite of the variety of acts associated with area boys, little or no attempt has been made to study the nature and implications of the label empirically. It is within this context and the rising incidence of violent crimes that this paper examines the phenomenon of area boys with a view to establishing the extent to which they constitute a social problem and the attitude of Nigerian society towards them.

2. Study Area and Methodology

The study was conducted in two major cities, Ibadan and Lagos, (Nigeria). These cities have been chosen because they are cosmopolitan in nature and cases of violent and non violent activities associated with area boys have been reported there.

The results presented in this study are the outcome of the survey conducted among the general public in Ibadan and Lagos. From each city a random sample of two hundred respondents were administered a structured questionnaire. A total of three hundred responses were obtained and analyzed by means of simple percentages and inferential statistics method.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents by Education

Educational Status	No	%
No Formal Education	23	7.7
Primary Education	59	19.7
Secondary Education	81	27.0
Post secondary Education	137	45.6
Total	300	100

Table 2. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents by Occupation

Occupation	No	%
Unemployed	18	6.0
Civil Servants	120	40.0
Traders	52	17.3
Farmers	4	1.4
Self employed	66	22.0
Students	40	13.3
Total	300	100

Table 3. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents by Age

Age	No	%
15 - 19 Years	13	4.3
20 - 29 Years	116	38.7
30 - 39 Years	118	39.3
40 and above	53	17.7
Total	300	100

3. Socio-demographic Characteristics of Respondents

A slightly greater proportion of the respondents surveyed were resident in Lagos (56.7 per cent of the total sample). This sample was fairly distributed over the entire city, though the questionnaire was mainly administered on Lagos Island. The spread covered areas such as C.M.S. Bus Stop and Idumota, Ikeja, Surulere and Agege. The remaining 43.3 per cent of the respondents were from Ibadan, taken from areas like: Bere, Mapo, Molete, Challenge, University of Ibadan, Iwo Road and Agodi Gate. These areas are major spots for commercial and business activities and consequently have high population concentrations.

As indicated on table 1, only 7.7 per cent of the sample had no formal education, while 19.7 per cent had primary education. The bulk of the sample had secondary and post secondary education, (27 per cent and 45.5 per cent respectively). The large number of respondents with secondary and post secondary education, borne out by the proportion of the civil servants on the occupational table. Twenty-two per cent of the sample (table 2) were self-employed, while 6 per cent claimed they were unemployed. Students, traders and farmers constituted 13.3 per cent, 17.3 per cent and 1.4 per cent respectively.

The majority of the survey group were between 20-39 years (table 3); 17.7 per cent were 40 years and above and only 4.3 per cent were below 19 years. The majority of the sample (86.7 per cent) stated that they could identify an area boy if they saw one; and 55 per cent of the sample reported that they had actually been victims of area boys' activities. With this background, it is hoped that the information presented would be clearly indicative of the phenomenon under investigation.

4. Findings and Discussions

The study revealed that modes of behaviour, background and activities are vital in determining the classification or label *area boys*. When the respondents were asked to define *area boys*, the majority of the sample observed that they are mostly vagrant youths, dropouts and persons whose socialization had been poor. Kilette (1988) also observed similar factors as causes for the high incidence of crime. People with from such backgrounds could easily be involved in various acts from misdemeanors to felonies. This view also agrees with the findings of

Matsueda (1993, et al.) that unemployment is not an adequate reason for deviance; but peer pressure and lack of positive social values. They also observed that the unemployed in their study rated conventional occupations higher than unconventional ones in the same manner as the general population.

In our quest to examine the true nature of area boys further, the respondents were asked to mention the acts associated with area boys. The majority of the sample (48 per cent) mentioned extortion of various items from victims, stealing (21 per cent), rape (7 per cent), and drug addiction (4.7 per cent) as well as other unwholesome acts. More interesting is the revelation that persons who mend pot holes on our roads were also classified as area boys, because they forcefully demand gratification from road-users. These boys are also known to extract *protection money* from people with undeveloped or partially developed plots of land. These different acts are aptly described with various local names such as *Omo onile* (owner of the land); *Awoo alaye* (leader of the cult); *Ekun* (as powerful as a lion); *Janduku* (tug/trouble maker); *Gbajue* (con man) amongst others.

Arising from the above findings of the different acts perpetrated, it is not correct to classify all activities of area boys as criminal. For instance, two of our respondents had this to say:

'Most [area boys] stop short of crime' while another observed that:

'They beg and *force themselves* on people' (emphasis mine)

Area boys generally operate during the day and as most members of the society willingly give aid and tend to support their *useful* activities, this makes them stop short of crime, most of the time. Again, the existence of local names to describe the acts is suggestive of societal baptism. Though this inference seems to contradict the survey findings in which 77 per cent of respondents replied that area boys were criminals.

From the evidence, it is possible to suggest that the various acts perpetrated by area boys are not new. The majority of respondents (52.3 per cent) opined that area boys' activities are not new; while 41.7 per cent of the sample affirmed that the label is a new one. The question therefore arises, is the phenomenon of area boys new, or is it merely a new label for various deviant activities which have existed and what implication does this have for society?

The study reveals that the phenomenon of area boys is traceable to the high rate of unemployment (35 per cent) that characterizes the urban area; general poverty (15 per cent) consequent upon the structural adjustment programme (SAP), family disorganization (11 per cent) and laziness (8 per cent) among others. This situation has resulted in a large number of unemployed youths who have learned to survive through unconventional means because conventional means of attaining social status are blocked (Cohen 1955). These factors and

more importantly the de facto legitimization of deviant behaviour by this group as a result of the nonchalant attitude of society toward these boys, has led to the label *area boys* and has tended to shield the anti-social nature of their activities. In other words, society in general has a rather tolerant attitude to area boys.

This passive attitude may not, however, mean that society supports the activities of area boys, but it rather reveals the faceless and transient nature of relationships that are the hallmark of 'urbanity'. It also tends to indicate the extent of social decay and values (Hassan Arif 1993; Matsueda et al. 1992). Matsueda et al. (1992) observed that behaviour whether conventional or criminal is explained by the strength of commitment of the dominant culture. This view is also supported by Tamuno's (1991) observation that Nigerians applaud those who have *made it* without asking any embarrassing questions on the means and speed of acquiring their wealth, because traditional values have collapsed. A state of normlessness is therefore sustained and anarchy reigns supreme.

It is apparent that the problem of area boys is intractable. In fact, 30 per cent of our respondents noted that area boys have not been brought to book because the government has a lukewarm attitude or is incapable of handling the situation — an observation which is sustained by the Third UN Survey of Crime. While some of our respondents observed that the police are to blame (32 per cent); the remainder simply observed that area boys have 'godfathers' who protect them. Viewed against this background and the observed lukewarm attitude of society to these activities, probably caused by the general dissatisfaction with the conditions of living which characterise city life and the attendant frustration, protest and violence (Tamuno 1991), are likely to increase at an alarming rate.

From the preceding, it is clear that area boys (who may also be girls) are involved in deviant activities. The extent to which these acts constitute a crime is obscure, primarily because of the range of acts covered and the modality of operation. Some of our respondents reported that you will find criminals among them, and others noted that they may become criminals later.

These comments are typical of the responses on the subject and suggestive of the implications of the phenomenon to the society. The findings from our study have made it clear that area boys should not be tolerated; consequently efforts should be made to stem their activities.

It is suggested that there should be a rebuilding of community life to ensure the maintenance of societal norms and values. Provision for education, employment and the restructuring of the economy would facilitate the reduction of these deviant acts and criminal activities in the city and the society at large.

5. Conclusion

The study reveals that area boys are vagrants and mostly unemployed youths involved in a variety of activities, both criminal and non criminal. Attempts

should be made to stem their activities because these actions provide the training ground for future criminal activity, for violent and non violent crime to thrive in the society.

The study also observed that the acts associated with the group are not new. The existence of 'nicknames' and local names for these acts sustains this observation. It is, however, obvious that the label (area boys) is a new tag which tends to legitimize their activities and differentiate them from criminals because the label is suggestive of persons of a given neighbourhood whose activities have been accepted by its members. This line of argument is supported by the sub-cultural theory of deviance.

The study also found that the general harsh economic situation in addition to the nature of the present government (military) do not make provision for disadvantaged groups in society (Tamuno, 1985). This, therefore may have contributed to the rapid rate of crime in the society. It is therefore, necessary for the government and the general public to ensure that the causative agents are identified and addressed if deviance and crime is to be kept at bay.

References

- Cloward, R. and Lloyd Ohlin, 1960. *Delinquency and Opportunity*. The Free Press. New York.
- Cohen, A.K. 1955. *Delinquent Boys*. Glencoe Free Press.
- Daily Times* 1994. Area boys, black marketers in bloody clash, 1st March.
- Kilette, R. 1988. Juvenile delinquency cases on the rise. *Sunday Vanguard*, July 10.
- Guardian correspondents. 1992. Protest over economic crisis. *The Guardian*, May 14th.
- Hassan Arif, 1993. Karachi and the global nature of urban violence. *The Urban Age* 1(4).
- Matsueda, R.L., R. Gartner, I. Piliavin and M. Polakowski. 1992. The prestige of criminal and conventional occupations: A subcultural model of criminal activities. *American Sociological Review* 57.
- Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) Network News 23rd April 1994.
- Pinheiro, Paulo S. 1993. Reflections on urban violence. *The Urban Age* 1(4).
- Sofola, J.A. 1994. Order and deviance in human in society. In: *Sociology Theory and Practice* O. Otiite, ed. Malthouse Social Sciences Studies, Lagos.
- Tamuno, T. 1985. The responsibility for crime control in Nigeria. Distinguished Lecture Series No.10, Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research, Ibadan.
- Tamuno, T. 1991. Peace and Violence in Nigeria — Conflict resolution in society and the state. The panel on Nigeria since Independence History Project, University of Ibadan Secretariat, Ibadan.
- Tijani, B. 1994. Oyinlola chases area boy. *Nigerian Tribune* 9th April.
- Third United Nation's Survey of Crime. 1993. *Crime Trend and Criminal Justice Operation at the Regional and International Level*, UN Office, Vienna.