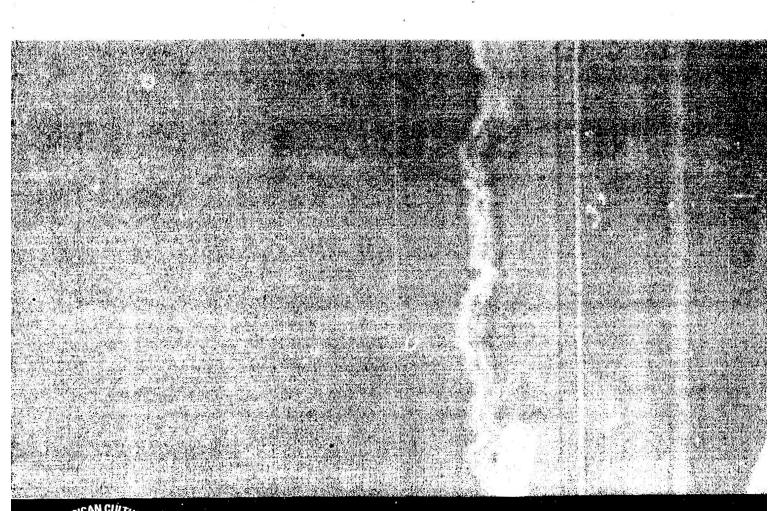
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# GENDER RELATIONS IN RURAL AND URBAN CRIME COMBAT: LESSONS FROM AKWA IBOM STATE, NIGERIA

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#### Abstract

Social activities are gendered in all ramifications and the issue of crime combat is not an exception. This work aims at underscoring the realities of gender relations in crime combat with particular reference to rural and urban differences. With the help of the Structural Crime Prevention theory, coated with feminism, the study which lasted for three months was carried out in the opinion survey tradition. Inspired by a multi-staged sampling method, the study raised three hundred and sixteen (316) respondents. Upon the administration of the Chi-Square test, emerging data confirms that women in urban centres are more involved in the crime combat process than their rural counterparts; and that in all, crime combat is basically in the domain of men in the area. The study calls for gender main-streaming as the way out.

#### Crime and Gender

Obviously crime implies much for the society. The costs, however, outweigh the gains—a situation which has compelled societies to adopt ways, means, mechanisms, strategies, institutions and agencies for combating it. It is, thus, the desire of every society to reduce crime to its barest minimum. Admittedly, societies have adopted a combination of the ways as necessitated by the inability of only one institution alone to successfully engage in crime combat. As a result, it could be safely speculated that greater collaboration between the police and the public is a welcome development.

Irrespective of the police-public collaboration, even, a cursory appraisal of the media reports, public attitudes, government responses, and dispositions of the international community would reveal that human activities are gendered. Such activities are also influenced by the quality and culture of the geographical locations. Few empirical researches have actually investigated on gender relations in fighting crime; let alone relate same to locational realities. The present study is built on the challenges of evaluating gender relations within the context of crime fighting in rural and urban centres, and anchoring same on a comparative analysis of the two types of centres. The study focuses on Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, and addresses the question: "what constitute gender relations in the management, combat and control of crime in the formal and informal sectors in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria?"

This study opines that the formal and informal sectors are more likely to genderspaced in the process of combating crime in the area. This stems from the assertion by Thomas Sankara that: Decision makers must concern themselves with women's (gender's) issues. To devise ... (crime combat) planning without the participation of women is like using four fingers when you have ten." (Sankara, March 08, 1987 in Aina and Salau, 1992:173).

This is even more significant when one considers that women constitute almost fifty percent (50%) of the total Nigerian population, which stands at about One hundred and forty-one million people with credit to the 2006 National population census figures.

It should be noted that the Feminist theory presents one of the most prominent socio-cultural perspectives on crime and crime combat (Goldthorpe & Morris, 1990). Crime and crime combat constitute a main social manifestation of patriarchy, whereby the ideology of gender relations creates and maintains male domination of women in the society (Messerschmidt, 1993). Thus, patriarchal relationships are widely—supported by stereotypical gender role attitudes about the appropriate social roles for men and more especially for women (Herzog, 2007:224). It follows that the persistence of traditional gender ideals and expectations about women serves to keep women subordinate and is a primary source of dichotomy (Haj-Yahia, 1997 & 1998).

Be that as it may, complexity and heterogeneity of gender attitudes, though largely ignored by feminist scholars, has blossomed into a trend toward egalitarianism in gender-role attitudes and in behaviour toward women in recent times (Spence and Hahn, 1992). Indeed, gender-relations is best appreciated in correlated but separate constructs. Yet it could be hastily concluded that since more male are involved in crime (Jeffery, 1993), more males should also be involved in crime combat.

Oxaal with Baden (1997) while challenging women empowerment submit that gender mainstreaming is the way out. This position raves in an area which is principally a patriarchy (Ekong, 2003; & Udo, 1983). As such, women are relegated to mere words while men are likened to deeds. This argument is collaborated by the Population Crisis Committee Report (1988) which depicts the status of women as "poor, powerless and pregnant". The system has thus imposed sexual divisions (in which women's work is accorded lower status), and curtailed women's physical and spatial mobility (Aina & Salau, 1992: 175), with regard to time and space (Golombok & Fivush, 1994).

But criminologists of Feminist ideology have lately routed for a re-appraisal of the gender question. For instance, Yoder (1991) forwarded the challenge of looking beyond mere physical and numerical strength for the rethinking of gender tokenism. And Schwartz & Zimmerman (1992) upon discovering new facts about the relationship between women and work called for a break with tradition. The said new fact is evident in the value-worthiness of some women who have excelled in their chosen professions in the service of their society. The need to break with tradition suggests that the genderization process has grown through a historical pedigree (Laslett & Brenner, 1998; Hochschild & Machung, 1998).

Gender inequality, though worst in the third world, is essentially a global thing (Peterson & Runyan, 1993) but the varieties are culturally determined. Indeed, some schorlars view genderism (feminism) as a cultural critique (Benhabib & Cornell, 1987); and added to this, culture has somewhat enunciated and attached values to gender realities (Bentel & Marini, 1995). But this evaluative attention to gender issues is a matter of differences in sex related cognitions and conjectures (Sherman, 1978); and deceptive to social order and development (Epstein, 1988). Of course the poor conjectures have truncated the productive arm of the societies. When women are not countenanced, they

 tend to have then roles subjugated. As a result, their quota is less interms of their contribution to societal crime combat efforts. The consequences of this mal-appropriation of gender are, therefore, very problematic.

The above-complicated situation readily calls for highly scientific appreciation of gender realities in the society (Bleier, 1994). With this approach, Ott (1989) found that there were effects of male-female ratio at work.

With specificity to crime committal, Col-dri (1969) argued that there are about five times as many recorded male criminals as there are females. Criminality is particularly marked more among men than among women. Yet women who work for organisations have created a revolution at home as there has been a gradual shift from female dependency on their male counterparts for economic viability to some mutuality between the male parents and their female counterparts (Hochshschild & Machung, 1998). This study will seek to ascertain the male-female relationship in the process of crime management with regard to the informal crime management organizations. Hence, gender relations as the hypothetical variable in this work.

# Area Types and Crime:

Crime has many perspectives. Irrespective of the perspective, however, crime is a law violating behaviour of an adult, which, if detected by a willing appropriate authority, would expose the actor to legally prescribed sanctions (Brown, 2006). Put differently, crime is any conduct, whether consisting of an act or an omission which the law forbids under pain of punishment imposed by way of criminal proceedings.

Urbanization studies suggest that the social status of people locate them in specific area types. It follows that while those in the rural areas are mostly poor; those in urban centres are of relative affluence (Brown, 1997). This suggests the possible types of crimes committed in the rural and urban centres. It also supports the argument that crime has always been a part of a culture, and the most popular explanations of crime have been those which somehow distinguish criminals from the rest of the society (Scarpitti, 1984). Thus, the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (1996) posit that the problems of urbanization (and may be ruralization) have significant impact on crime. In addition, Uniform Crime Reports (1989) submits that; crime increases as societies become more urbanized.

It should be noted that depending on the prevalence of crime type and the cultural realities of specific areas, the styles of policing tend to vary. To this end, Alderson (1999) opines that styles of combating crime will vary according to cultural, religious, legal and political systems. Such styles include: informal policing, passive policing, punitive policing, and preventive policing. These styles could be proactive, reactive, or repressive. There is also the case of community policing which entails the primitive communal, totalitarian communal, unofficial communal, and democratic communal approaches. Interestingly, this is the crux of this study, and Barlow (1996) submits that these variations and complexities have made comparative studies very necessary. There have, in sum, been collective reactions to crime - including genderized values. This implies that crime is a creation of the society and it is the society itself that can stop it through concerted efforts and vigilance. The process of crime combat is, therefore, arguably influenced by societal realities. While women in the rural areas invest more in folklores as expressed in Ebre traditional dance (Udo, 1983), deep-rooted socialization process, primary application of sanctions and inculcation of normative values; those in the urban area urban centres rely more on secondary crime combat facilities such as the police, law courts, and the prisons.

Granted that the concerted efforts at combating crimes are gendered, such are influenced by the community realities – rural and or urban. Expediency requires that here

acknowledgement be granted Ferdinand Tonnies' concepts of: Gemeinschaft (rural) and Gessellschaft (urban) as the threshold for considering the differences or similarities between rural and urban types of communities (Ekong, 2003).

In all, in classifying communities, one may use four interrelated criteria, including: the population size; the extent, wealth and population of the hinterland; the specialized functions of the community with the whole society and the kind of organization the community has (Davis, 1970). Expanding the argument further, Ekong(2003) identifies bases of social relationships; perception of benefits and goals in social interaction; dominant forms of group relationships; principal form of wealth; ranking of social institutions, central institutions and forms of social control; and status-role. Added to these are; size of place; population density and composition; closeness to nature; interaction; social differentiation; social stratification; social mobility; social control, as well as levels and standards of living (Ekong, 2003).

Basically, while the rural type of community is closer to nature, simpler in culture, and lower in levels and standards of living; the urban type assumes the polar opposite status. It is an interesting social fact that the world is increasingly becoming an urban one. In contemporary terms, the urban type came with regards to the process of urbanisation the process of more people concentrating in a definite geographical territory for the purpose of sufficiently enhancing life. Arguably, this process which came in the wake of the industrial revolution of the 18<sup>th</sup> century was collectively made possible by decline in death rate (owing largely to advancement in the medical sciences); the beginning of scientific management of agriculture; improved transportation and communication system; stable and well focused political governments; the development of the industrial revolution (Ekpenyong, 1999).

While details differ from society to society, the pattern is somewhat established from agricultural surplus above subsistence level – with the extra margin transferred to the manufacturing sector by entrepreneurs and governments – the result of which was urban expansion and growth fed by a demand by the burgeoning manufacturing, commercial, and service sectors for a concentrated labour force (Palen, 1993).

It is pertinent to add here that sociologically chosen characteristics of urban communities include: ecology; demographic structure; social action or organizations; and a set of values and objective perceptions. To this end, as urbanness increases, Hatt and Reiss (1988) argue that, amongst others, the following also increase: personal anonymity in interpersonal contacts, segmentalization of social roles and of role interactions, and the ratio of secondary to primary social contacts; toleration of social differences; the degree to which behaviour is controlled by indirect means, and normative deviance.

Even a cursory assessment of the above characteristics would suggest that some urban traits tend to enhance criminality (Palen, 1993:158). It should be noted that the study area is within the rural-urban continuum. These constitute an anjalgam of influences on community types with corresponding effects on gender relations in the course of crime combat.

# Theory, Data and Method

# Theory:

"If you want to make a big difference in crime, you must make fundamental changes in society" (Wilson, 1983:251).

The above suggests that the formal or informal group processes - including the educational, religious, familial, occupational and gender arrangements must be modified.

this situation puts forward the credentials of the Situational Crime Prevention (SCP) theory as the theoretical underpinning for this work.

The theory promoted by Ronald, V. Clarke & J. Eck emphasizes on the need to: reduce the opportunities for criminals to commit crime; change criminals' idea about whether they can get away with a particular crime; and make it seem harder, riskier, and less rewarding to commit crime. This is contrary to the option of: buying of weapons to protect one's self or one's crime; claiming to be able to solve it all alone; moving of crime to another place; or merely spending lots of money (Clarke, 1997; Eck, 2003).

In order to attain the goal of successfully combating crime, the theory supports: the making of changes to buildings and streets to make them safer; asking the police for help and the police providing help; using common sense to stop criminals; using neighbours to look out for crime and criminals; working with people from different agencies and organizations, and noting that it is every body's job. In sum, it takes the help of everyone to make crime combat work, irrespective of gender and community or area differences.

The major assumptions of the (SCP) theory revolve around the environment, rational choice and the routine activities. This theory departs from the mainstream criminology as it focuses on the importance of the opportunity for crime to occur, the setting for crime, the prevention of the occurrence of crime, and (though with less emphasis) detecting and punishing of offenders (Clarke & Eck, 2003). For the fact that different offences are as a result of different opportunity constellations and as such may require specific interventions, the theory opines that high specific forms of crimes should be tackled by specific intervention measures.

In sum, the (SCP) theory is an integrated one which appreciates a standard methodology based on the action paradigm (research to change practice), a set of opportunities reducing techniques, the goal to succeed and a body of evaluated practice(Clarke & Eck, 2003) including studies of gender and community types and differences.

## Data and Method

With regards to the problem in context and the objectives of this study, this work is embellished in the opinion survey design. Owing to the size of the study area, research assistants were raised and put to use upon proper orientation. The targeted population of the study from which inferences were drawn and thereafter generalized to other areas were adult (18 years and above) members of sampled communities. The sampled urban centres are Uyo and Eket; while the rural centers are Mbo and Ukanafun all local government areas of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

The study adopted a multi-staged sampling methodology (Flick, 1998). First, the comparative values of this study informed the choice of four (4) local government areas (earlier stated). These were purposively selected. The two urban centres are headquarters of Senatorial Districts in the State; while the rural areas were drawn from the list of the basically rural centres, curtesy of the state ministry of Rural Development. Furthermore, the four L.G.As were divided into ward-based clusters (four each). From each cluster, twenty (20) households were randomly (systematically) selected and a gender sensitive position adopted to select the leaders of each households for interview/questionnaires administration. A total of eighty (80) respondents were, therefore, raised from each L.G.A. for a grand total of three hundred and twenty (320) respondents for the state. However, due to lost questionnaires, only three hundred and sixteen (316) respondents were actually surveyed and their opinions countenanced for this study.

the questionnaire/interview schedules as well as quasi participant observation and group discussions (FGDs) were adopted for drawing of in-depth information. Field asserts were of immense value and tape (audio) recording was also devised.

Data so raised are first described in tabular forms using simple percentages, forcefter the chi-square (X<sup>2</sup>) test adopted to enhance drawing of inference and establishing relationships between variables. In addition, thematic analyses are adopted to buttress already established relationships.

# Study Area:

The study area is Akwa Ibom State, located in the South-eastern corner of Nigeria. The people are culturally homogenous with a common identity and linguistic heritage. The cultural commonality is also epitomized in the similarities in folklore, songs, dances, tood, beliefs and mythology.

The people are as industrious and resourceful as they are hospitable. Majority of the rural populace engage in farming. Other traditional occupations of the people are fishing, trading, hunting, woodcarving, raffia works, blacksmithing, pottery, iron works, tailoring, arts and craft creations.

The state is a reservoir of wealth and potentials, which beckon on tourists, myestors in mineral resources and agriculture, based industries. The weather is haloyon, the land of about 8,412 Sq.km is very fertile with luxuriant green forest and rich species of games, and a population of 3.92 million people spread into thirty-one (31) Local Government Areas. Bounded in the South by the Atlantic Ocean, its 129km coastline is the longest in Nigeria and is exceedingly rich in seafoods.

The State is currently a major producer of petroleum in Nigeria. Lying between latitudes 4°33¹ and 5°33¹ North and longitudes 7°35¹ and 8°25¹ East, the State falls within the tropical zone with a dominant vegetation of green foliage of trees, shrubs and oil palm tree belt which holds the highest density of eash crops in the world including rubber, cocoa, and rice. Others are coconut, citrus, cassava, yam, maize, cowpeas, plantains, banana, pineapple and Kola-nut. The state is also endowed with rich deposits of linestone, gravel, salt, silver nitrates, clay, silica sand and kaolin. Sugar cane, vegetable and hyestock are also in abundance.

Having regards to the geo-political, cultural and locational realities of the area, Eket and two Local Government Areas were sampled for the urban centres, while Mbo and Ekanafun were raised as the rural areas.

Sources: Akwa Ibom State Information Handbook (1996) and Field Experience 2009.

#### Revelations

Table 1: Percentage Distribution of Urban Respondents By Involvement of Women in Crime Combat

RESPONSE GUIDE	RESPONSE DISTRIBUTION		TOTAL (%)
	EKET	UYO	
Yes	20	28	48 (30).4)
No	38	36	74 (46.8)
Not Quite	14	12	26 (16.5)
No Idea	6	4	10 (6.3)
TOTAL	78	80	158 (100%)

Source: Field Survey, February – May, 2009

The universe of 158 on table 1 is reflective of the target group, 30.4% of the respondents opined that women are involved in the process of crime combat; 46.8% negated the earlier position; 16.5% showed ambivalence; and 6.3% were bereft of ideas to share. One can therefore argue that women seldom participate in the crime combat process in urban areas.

Table 2: Percentage Distribution of Rural Respondents by Involvement of Women in Crime Combat

RESPONSE GUIDE	RESPONSE DISTRIBUTION		TOTAL (%)
	Ukanafun	Mbo	
Yes	12	1.3	25 (15.8)
No	42	4()	82 (51.9)
Not Quite	18	17	35 (22.2)
No Idea	7	9	16(10.1)
TOTAL	79	79	158 (100%)

Source: Field Survey, February - May, 2009

Table 2 above shows that 15.8% of rural respondents agreed that women were involved in crime combat; 51.9% of them opined that women were not involved, 22.2% were indecisive; and 10.1% were of "no idea" category. It, therefore, could be argued that women are not involved in crime combat in the rural area.

This study hypothesizes that crime combat in urban and rural Akwa Ibom State is not gendered. The hypothesis is tested below:

TABLE 3: Chi-square contingency Table of the Relationship Between Urban and Rural Crime Combat Regarding Gender Relations

RESPONSE GUIDE	RESPONSE DISTRIBUTION		TOTAL (%)
	Urban	Rural	,
Yes	48 (30,4%)	25 (15.8%)	73 (23.1)
No	74 (46.8%)	82 (51.9%)	156 (49.4)
Not Quite	26 (16.5%)	35 (22.2%)	61 (19.3)
No Idea	10 (6,3%)	16 (10.1%)	26 (8.2)
TOTAL	158 (100%)	158 (100%)	316 (100%)

Source: Field Survey, February – May, 2009; N = 316  $X^2$  = 9.44; df = 3; P = 0.05; Table Value = 7.815

Findings:

The calculated value of chi at 9.44 is greater than the table value at 7.815 and so the null hypothesis is rejected. Invariably, rural and urban based crime combat process(es) are gendered. Crime combat is principally perceived as a male social responsibility and is indeed practically male—dominated. Women are involved on the fringes. This disposition is clearly presented in tables 1 and 2. The typical thematic comments raised from the survey also explain this.

Discussion of Findings

Crimes and their combat approaches are dependent on society types with gender realities in attendance. This study has revealed that compared to men in the urban areas, women seldom participate in the crime combat process. Their level of involvement is more subtle. Women undertake more of the primary socialization responsibilities. As

submitted by a community women leader in Uyo during a Focus Group Discussion session:

Ah! It is difficult for women to be actively involved in crime combat. Men could burn the night; while women stay at home and keep the kids... as mothers, teaching the children societal values and painting sordid pictures of the effects of involvement in crime. Thus, with subtlety, as they keep the kids, they grant the children the necessary initial orientation and socialization (hence, a combat against crime).

This was aired from the standpoint of community policing as epitomized by vigilante activities in the area.

In the rural settings, women are rarely physically involved, burs are socially very important in the process. Their involvement is amply evident in folklores and traditional dances as expressed in the **Ebre** dance in which they eastigate those susceptible to/and involved in crime. They sing against such crimes as prostitution, stealing, assault, absence from community programmes, etc.

Typifying the responses, a respondent in Mbo argued thus:

Women here (Mbo) are not really physically involved ... but a few women leaders in the area are saddled with the responsibility of talking women against criminal tendencies. The women leader may also be involved if a woman is caught indulging in any criminal act, Wayward young women are also reported to such women... but women are never a part of us out here in the night.

Put differently, findings hold that fewer women participate in crime combat processes in urban and rural centres. The duties of combating crime are seen as male exclusives. There is somewhat a general notion that such responsibilities should be reserved for men, while domestication should be reserved for women. Though more people in the urban than in the rural areas argued that women participate in the crime combat process, 49.4% of all respondents (both in urban and rural areas) opined to the negative. While 19.3% of them were ambivalent; 23.1% argued that women participate. The picture here is that the duty of crime combat is very demanding and as such should be undertaken by men. This is indicative of the patriarchal nature of the areas. It is, however, contended here that in the contemporary world of equalization of sex, women may have to be more tangibly involved in the process.

Again, these were considered from the standpoint of community policing.

#### Conclusion

The importance of gender considerations in the contemporary world informed the choice of this work. This, blended with the challenges of gender mainstreaming, influenced its drift. Approached from the survey perspective, the study centered on Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The study reveals that women in the urban centres are more involved in the process of crime combat than their counterparts in the rural areas. Yet, in the final analysis, the patriarchal nature of the areas' socio-cultural realities has placed crime combat on the domain of men.

The study submits that since today's world craves for gender equality, the involvement of women in the challenge of crime combat should be seriously considered.

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