"A GENERAL THEORY OF CRIME" AND PATTERNS OF CRIME IN NIGERIA: AN EXPLORATION OF METHODOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS

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ABSTRACT

The general theory of crime proposed by Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) claims to be valid across time and space. That claim is assessed through an analysis of three categories of Nigerian crime—normal, political-economic, and riotous. Logical, empirical, and theoretical shortcomings in the theory are identified and discussed. Factually, many individuals who act imprudently (and criminally) in Nigeria do not seem to fit the low self-control characterization required under the theory. Logically and theoretically, unacknowledged value assumptions built into the theory undermine its claim to universality.

INTRODUCTION

Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) claim that their general theory of crime has universal status, that it is valid across time and space. They note that cultural imbalance theories, which they define as those theories that apply only to a particular culture, dominate traditional comparative criminology. Advocates of such theories argue that each culture has its own definitions of crime as well as historically specific root causes of criminality and deviance. Hence, a theory explaining common criminogenic factors across cultures cannot be developed. Breaking from this reasoning, Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) argue that:

cultural variability is not important in the causation of crime, that we should look for constancy rather than variability in the definition and causes of crime, and that a single theory of crime can encompass the reality of cross-cultural differences in crime rates. (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990:174–75)

The present article proposes to evaluate this argument and seeks to answer the following questions:

1. Can the general theory of crime explain the patterns of crime observed in Nigeria?
2. What can it explain and where does it fail?
3. Which of its claims are more universalistic and which reflect the contexts from which
it was developed—observations of American crime and delinquency?

4. In short, do the assumptions and logic of the general theory, when examined in the context of a developing country (Nigeria in this case), support a claim to universality?

Reliable and valid data concerning the patterns of crime and deviance in Nigeria are nonexistent. As a result, an evaluation of the general theory cannot be based on statistical analyses and tests of specific empirical claims and propositions within the theory. Rather, a general critique is offered which analyzes how well the theory's assumptions and logic fit the contexts and patterns of crime in Nigeria. This article argues that the claim to universality is unsubstantiated for two reasons: (a) the variety of crime in Nigeria makes it highly unlikely that one explanation fits all (except at a level of abstraction that cannot distinguish forms of behavior and, hence, does not have a defined dependent variable); and, more important, (b) the basic concepts employed in the theory—force, fraud, opportunities, social consensus, deviance, prudence, self-control—are saturated with culturally specific meanings. Having been expelled from the theory by fiat, cultural imbalance creeps back in, like Robert Frost's fog, on many little definitional feet through the back door. To make this argument, three general categories of crime in Nigeria (normal, political-economic, and riotous) first will be outlined. Second, the theories and explanations normally associated by researchers and pundits will be evaluated with each type of crime, and whether Gottfredson and Hirschi's (1990) theory is capable of explaining the three types of crime will be examined. Last, some underlying limitations of the general theory will be identified, and an integrated approach to the study of crime will be called for.

NIGERIAN CONTEXTS

Crime is committed within specific contexts. Nigeria is a developing country that is more fortunate than others. It has oil. At the same time, the population of the country is approximately ninety million people, which simply means that the needs of the population are greater than even the vast amounts of money generated by the oil industry can meet. Among the consequences of a large and growing populace are a small and declining per capita income, the development of massive and visible differences in wealth and lifestyles, the salience of classes in public life, and the possibilities for large-scale corruption (e.g., Anybody seen a giant?, 1993; Forrest, 1993; Ihonvbere, 1994).

Nigeria has been characterized by political instability. Military and civilian governments have rotated in power. A massive civil war during the late 1960s (Biafra) killed over two million people, left the economy in ruins, and helped enshrine a legacy of ethnic distrust at the heart of politics. There is little certainty among the public about the future, little trust in government and leadership, and little expectation that political stability will take hold (e.g., Achebe, 1983; Diamond, 1988; Falola and Ihonvbere, 1985).

The country has a history of social divisions—by regions of the country; by birthplace and "indigeneity," that is, origin and membership in a particular state of the federation; ethnic affiliations; religious beliefs; ideological dogmas, and class distinctions. Much of public and private life is consumed by the struggle to live with and overcome divisive tendencies within the country. The federal structure of the country was the colonial and is the current ideological and political solution (Oyovbaire, 1984).

Despite these many obstacles, Nigeria is on the path to development. New social, political, and economic institutions are emerging, yet older forms remain. Much of daily life is still governed by routines that find their basis and legitimacy in traditional communal arrangements. Much crime and disorder are handled informally because of a widespread distrust of formal social control institutions and the belief that informal mechanisms yield immediate and just solutions. Adeyemi (1990: 182) summarizes the impact of informal con-
trol on crime reporting and crime control by stating, "It is clear that the informal procedure of crime control is applied in most cases, except in the serious cases or in case of strangers who are in no relationship with their victim or with someone known to the victim."

In short, crime in Nigeria occurs within contexts that are characterized by conflicts, political instability, extreme differences in economic well-being, uncertainty about the courses of future events, and a shifting balance of formal and informal social control mechanisms.

CATEGORIES OF NIGERIAN CRIME

Crime in Nigeria can be divided into three categories—normal, political-economic, and riotous.

Normal Crime

Normal crime includes criminal acts such as theft, assault, and homicide. Data on these crimes are published by the Nigerian police in annual reports which appear occasionally. Because of inadequate and well-documented failures in reporting, recording, and collating procedures (e.g., Bennett and Lynch, 1990; Kick and LaFree, 1985), and periods of social turmoil, crime statistics in Nigeria, as in other developing nations, are suspect and must be treated with caution. Published data (Oloruntimehin, 1992) show the crime patterns identified in Table 1.

The magnitude of reported crime is fairly low in comparison to other countries (U.S.A., 1988). Even serious crime does not happen very often. Per capita rates are difficult to calculate since the precise size of the population is unknown. The Nigerian Police Force, using estimated population figures for 1988 that turned out to be too high, arrived at a rate of approximately 300 per 100,000 for all reported crimes. A census conducted in 1992 (the first since 1964) counted about ninety million people. A recalculated rate, when compared to previously reported offense rates, averages about 25 percent higher—about 400 per 100,000 for 1988.²

In the mix of crime, property offenses dominate; they constitute, on average, about one-half of all reported crime, with the exception of the early 1980s. Violent and person crimes constitute approximately one-quarter to one-third of all reported offenses. Sexual offenses are rarely reported. In 1977, there were a total of 2,148 rapes and indecent assaults reported (Nigeria, 1980:12).

The long-term trend shows a steady increase in all crimes, with some fluctuation from year to year. Crimes have increased nearly threefold since 1960, the year Nigeria gained independence. The sharp decline in crime between 1967 and 1969 resulted from the Biafran civil war. During that period, crime data were not a high priority, and some of the most populous regions were in the secessionist areas and did not report at all.

One crime (armed robbery), which is included in the person column, has attracted considerable attention of late. One common form is carjacking committed by gangs. Automobiles will be stopped on city and rural roads, drivers are forced to surrender all belongings and, if fortunate, are left alive while the robbers escape.³ Organized armed robbery also takes place in homes and businesses that are invaded, despite security walls and private guards; people are molested, houses are stripped of everything that can be moved, and, oftentimes, trucks are used to carry the booty away. In Nigeria, everything has value and can be resold on the black market.

Armed robbery has occurred throughout Nigerian history. It has become increasingly violent, however, following the civil war for two reasons: (a) criminals were able to buy or steal weapons from the military, and (b) some demobilized and unemployed soldiers who had few legitimate prospects after the war ended were enticed into using their military skills for illegal purposes (Ekpenyong, 1989; Nkpa, 1976). Though the actual number of robberies are few, when they occur they are dramatic and heavily reported in the national media.⁴ Armed robbery has become a sym-
TABLE 1
CRIME IN NIGERIA, 1960-1988

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Person Total</th>
<th>Property Total</th>
<th>Others Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>% of b</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>106,165</td>
<td></td>
<td>12,048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>110,019</td>
<td></td>
<td>14,780</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>118,475</td>
<td></td>
<td>15,873</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>128,981</td>
<td></td>
<td>16,423</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>130,000</td>
<td></td>
<td>16,675</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>123,243</td>
<td></td>
<td>17,186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>130,000</td>
<td></td>
<td>18,286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>142,332</td>
<td></td>
<td>20,646</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>151,850</td>
<td></td>
<td>22,513</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>155,967</td>
<td></td>
<td>24,518</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>159,433</td>
<td></td>
<td>26,354</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>164,633</td>
<td></td>
<td>28,420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>171,143</td>
<td></td>
<td>30,513</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>178,952</td>
<td></td>
<td>32,674</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>182,832</td>
<td></td>
<td>34,861</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>193,633</td>
<td></td>
<td>37,086</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Statistics are official police data, as reported in Olorunshimi (1992: Tables 1 and 2).

1Includes murder, manslaughter, attempted murder, assault, child stealing, slave dealing, attempted suicide, grievous harm and wounding, rape, and unnatural offenses (e.g., homosexuality).

During the 1960s, rapes and unnatural offenses were classified as crimes against morality, a classification derived from the legal categories in which these crimes were placed in the criminal codes (Nigeria, 1980:5).

CIncludes theft, robbery and extortion, burglary, house breaking, store breaking, false pretences and cheating, forgery, receiving stolen property, and unlawful possession.

DIncludes social disorganization offenses (counterfeiting, gambling, public order, perjury, bribery and corruption, and escape) and offenses against local acts (traffic, liquor, drugs/narcotics).

bol, an indicator of the general ills of society and personal fears and unease about one's status and fortune. Even the well-off must hide behind barred windows and instruct their drivers to vary their routes.

The military government became so concerned with this crime that it set up a special military tribunal, the Armed Robbery and Firearms Tribunal, in 1970. If one is convicted of using violence or guns during a robbery, the death penalty is mandatory. Although an appeals process to a regular court is not provided, governors of states can alter a sentence of death (Ekpenyong, 1989). The majority of executions in Nigeria are of armed robbers who are shot, sometimes in public places.

**Political and Economic Crime**

Political and economic crimes exist at all levels in Nigerian society and take a variety of forms. Odekunle (1986a:93-94) separates this category into "elite" crimes and "working-class" crimes. He divides elite crimes into white-collar (e.g., embezzlement, tax fraud), political and economic corruption (e.g., illegal patronage, vote buying and/or kickbacks), and organized crimes (e.g., hoarding, smuggling, burglary syndicates). Working-class...
crimes are committed by lower status people (e.g., car mechanics or messengers in government offices) who exploit opportunities for corrupt enrichment that come their way.

**Elite crimes.** Nigeria, as is common with most developing countries, must import many consumption and economic investment goods from developed countries. The dependence on importation opens the doors for corruption, fraud, and economic, elite white-collar crimes for both Nigerians and foreigners. Foreign companies often sell secondhand goods as new, sell shoddy goods they cannot sell at home, overstate the price of goods, and understate the profits they attain to lower the tax they must pay for doing business in Nigeria. These activities require the induced cooperation of Nigerian nationals—their signatures are needed on import permits, sales contracts, consultancy assignments, and directorship appointments. Foreign companies are willing to pay for access to profits, and find Nigerians eagerly in pursuit of personal wealth. Investigations conducted by the Nigerian government have revealed that such payoffs can be in the hundreds of millions of dollars (see Forrest, 1993:171–78). Diamond (1984) cites many instances of fraud, theft, and bribery during the 1978–1982 period, all of which were discussed and condemned in the media. He reports an estimate of $5–7 billion of “private wealth exported by top government officials” during this period (Diamond, 1984:908). Iyai (1986:Table 1), based on a content analysis of articles published in one Nigerian newspaper, estimates that approximately 6.6 billion Naira were wasted through fraud, bribes and kickbacks, direct stealing, extravagant expenditure, and general corruption during the four years (1978–1982) of President Shagari’s rule alone.

Unavoidably, the precise extent and impact of corruption is, as everywhere else, unknown and mostly discovered accidentally. Nigerians themselves speculate freely on this subject—in the media, academic publications, and private conversations—and know that elite corruption is massive. As the occasional investigations reveal, it probably is.

A second form of elite economic crime is internal and mainly involves Nigerians. The government is a large presence in the economy. Despite the recent privatization of many parastatals under the Babangida regime, the government still owns a number of enterprises and is the largest buyer of goods and services. Government contracts are extremely lucrative, competition for them is fierce, and performance standards are seldom enforced. Paying a bribe, padding contracts, taking a “mobilization” payment and not doing the work, substandard performance, arranging for kickbacks, hiring relatives, or giving gifts to the right person are ways to obtain contracts and money. A vast layer of “middlemen” and “arrangers” extracts a living from its position between the state and private enterprise (Turner, 1983).

Other economic crimes arise from the structure of the economy. Before Nigeria devalued its currency and adopted an auction system in 1986, the price of its money was artificially inflated. A flourishing black market existed where one could buy Nigerian currency at five to eight times the formal rate (in 1986). Black market currency sellers could be found in any large market, especially in cities along the borders of Nigeria, and also in front of major hotels in the larger cities. The exchanges are openly carried out, though they are illegal and the punishment for currency offenses is severe—including the death penalty (Nwabueze, 1992). Because of the openness of the exchanges, it is obvious that the police choose to tolerate the practice or are paid off.

Elite political crimes take many forms as well. A military coup, technically, is a crime, and people killed in the process are homicide victims. There is no legal basis for taking over the government by force. Of course, once the military is in power, it does not punish its members. Many Nigerians also believe that the military’s actions, despite the justificatory rhetoric it promotes over the airwaves, are done largely for economic gains—by the organization to protect its share of the budget and by individuals to gain access to corrupt opportunities.

Other forms of political crime are fraud
and violence during election campaigns and the use of state power for political ends (e.g., the use of police and other security organizations to arrest and detain critics of the government). The contest to control the government, since it is the largest source of legal and corrupt income, is intense and leads to considerable fraud, manipulation, thuggery, and violence during electoral campaigns, during the vote counting, and as the results are announced. This is true of all elections to date. In some instances (e.g., the 1965 and 1983 elections in the western states), conditions were perceived to be out of control and to maintain order was beyond the powers of state agencies.12

Government sponsored repression (i.e., state crime), despite assertions to the contrary (e.g., Ihonvbere, 1994:201), is fairly rare. (The corrupt and autonomous predations of lower level officials discussed below are much more common.) Most serious are the occasional killings carried out by the police and the military. The evidence for government involvement in a particular episode is often contested and unclear, even when widely suspected and discussed in public life. Two recent examples are the assassination in 1986 of a popular news magazine editor, Dele Giwa, by a letter bomb delivered to his home, and the suspicious death of Dr. Bala Mohammed, the senior advisor to the governor of Kano State during the riots of 1981 (Usman, 1982).13 On the other hand, the evidence for the systematic abuse of powers by the police in particular confrontations or during routine investigations is incontestable (Ajomo and Okagbue, 1991).

Elite organized crime involves smuggling, drugs, or burglary and theft rings. Much of this activity is hidden, but widely speculated upon. Repeated incidences of certain crimes do support the public notion that organized economic crime is widespread. Currency, which only the elites possess, is smuggled and illegally transferred in and out of the country in large sums. Prohibited goods (there are restrictions on what can be imported to protect local industries) can be found in abundance in every market and many stores, and only organizations could get them there. Nigeria has become a trans-shipment point for drugs from Asia to Europe and the United States. This is so well known that Nigerian nationals and planes get special attention from the customs services of the United States and England on arrival there. Armed robberies and theft of large items and in large quantities (e.g., from warehouses in Lagos harbor) require substantial investments in cars, trucks, weaponry, and manpower.

Working-Class crimes. Working-class economic crimes, both by government employees and workers in private business, are extensive and prevalent, yet they normally yield small gains. Having little power and few opportunities, working people are more limited in what they can accomplish. It is assumed by many Nigerians that every government official, including the police and judges, engages in corrupt activities. To get the forms one needs to apply for a passport, driver's license, contract, or permit of any sort requires that the official who has the forms be paid a small and illegal fee. Police at checkpoints and traffic wardens, who tend to congregate around intersections, seem more concerned with extracting money from motorists than enforcing traffic regulations.14 Common targets are taxi drivers. The police stop them, take the car papers (or “particulars”), and will not give them back until money changes hand. Taxi drivers have little choice but to pay, if they want to continue to try to earn a living.15

One can suspect that much fraud, pilfering, “fiddling,” and small-scale extortion goes on in parastatals and private enterprise, though detailed studies have not been published on this subject.16

Another illegal activity is “hawking,” which is done mostly by younger individuals. At any traffic stop or traffic jam, on every city road and even on the freeways of Lagos or Ibadan, hawkers dart in and out among the cars selling items of small value, while keeping an eye out for police, who often try to chase them out of the street. Being in the road is illegal, hazardous, and exhausting, but it is one of the only means for young unemployed individuals to make a living.

Prostitution, which is widespread since it
is one of the few economic activities available to women who find themselves in cities without any marketable skills, technically is a crime, but it is hardly ever prosecuted.

Lastly, much of elite generated crime is actually carried out by others. Stuffing a ballot box, fraudulent registration, or miscounting requires the paid cooperation of police and election officials stationed at the voting place; government repression is done by rank and file police; the drug traffic needs mules; smuggling is done by truck and camel drivers. One peculiar organized form of working-class crime is child begger rings, which are run by adults who train the children and keep most of the money (Igbinovia, 1991; Ojanuga, 1990). (Begging is illegal, though not prosecuted, and it is socially supported by Islamic beliefs in the northern areas.)

**Riotous Crime**

The last major form of crime is riotous crime. Acts are carried out during riots, which, if done at other times, would be considered crimes. People are assaulted, injured, and killed; property is destroyed; practically every order-maintaining regulation is broken. Most scholars label such events turmoil or civil unrest (e.g., Gurr and McClelland, 1971). As individual acts, however, they also are crimes.

Riots occur for many reasons, which shift over time. Armed confrontation over land claims between villages often leads to fighting, injuries, deaths, and massive police and military intervention in an attempt to restore order. Riots also occur between followers of political parties and leaders during campaigns or after elections when fraud is suspected. Occasional confrontations between the military personnel and local people can lead to large-scale fighting.17

Religious riots between Moslems and Christians have led to extensive property damage and hundreds of deaths in recent years. Mobs burn churches and mosques, destroy shops and homes owned by (suspected) adherents to the other religion, and murder those who resist. Such actions lead to retaliation by the other side. Mob action also provides a cover for opportunistic crimes. Individualistic theft, burglaries, rapes, or assaults done for profit, excitement, or revenge will be ascribed to the actions of the mob.18

Riots by students protesting conditions at their universities or in the country occur with predictable frequency and great regularity, usually in the months of April and May when students organize remembrance marches for students killed in past demonstrations. Student demonstrations attract the attention of the police, fighting and rioting ensues, students and innocent bystanders are injured and killed, and property is destroyed. A disturbance and the inevitable police reaction lead to sympathy demonstrations at other universities. Once order is restored, student leaders are expelled or “rusticated,” the universities are closed for a cooling off period, and everyone passes around blame for who caused the latest confrontation and destruction (Carter and Marenin, 1980).

In sum, the three types of crime can be described with varying degrees of precision and insight, but none completely. Understanding the general dynamics of such crimes and the patterns of their occurrence allows for speculations on what kind of theory and explanation would be factually supported and persuasive in logic and assumptions.

**EXISTING EXPLANATIONS FOR CRIME IN NIGERIA**

**Normal Crime**

What explanations have been offered for the three categories of crime in Nigeria? Explanations for normal crime tend to emphasize the social and psychological dislocation experienced by Nigerian society and individuals as development is sought and slowly achieved. Few systematic and data based studies have been conducted, however. The following studies fall into the “modernization leads to crime” school. This perspective has dominated the discussion of crime in developing countries (e.g., Neuman and Berger, 1988).
Oloruntimehin (1992) explains trends in crime rates by citing the social dislocation and economic pressures brought on by political instability, uneven economic development, high unemployment, white-collar fraud and corruption, rapid migration to the cities with a consequent lack of amenities, and high degrees of anonymity in urban areas. In short, crime, especially property crime, arises from the impact of changes in structural factors on individual life chances.

Adeyemi (1990) concludes that only a systematic and integrated effort to understand, measure, and react to the multiple problems created by uneven economic development, urban migration, inadequate and misguided education, cultural anomic, and an inefficient and nonlegitimate criminal justice system will be able to prevent crime. Crime also increases by the failures of policymakers to implement well-constructed plans that address the needs of development and the population.

Using information collected from personal interviews with convicted armed robbers, Ekpenyong (1989) attempted to assess the influence of personal factors on the commission of armed robbery. In the end, Ekpenyong (1989) argues that general (capitalist) economic conditions are the root cause. Armed robbery is “the logical outcome of differentials in access to valued goods” (Ekpenyong, 1989:33). This is reinforced by the anomic conditions of Nigeria in which “standards governing behavior have lost their influence and are ignored” (Ekpenyong, 1989:31) by all. Armed robbers aspire to the same material possessions that the rich have achieved by criminal means. They emulate on the streets, by robbing with a gun, what bureaucrats and capitalists steal with a pen.

Ebbe (1989) examined the geographic distribution of crimes and delinquencies in Lagos. He found that most were concentrated in the high and medium rent residential districts of the former capital city. Ebbe concludes that patterns of juvenile delinquency in Lagos are: products of heterogeneity of the population due to the influx of native and foreign migrants and resulting conflicts of value. . . . Under conditions of a lack of social integration created by the heterogeneity of the population and the resultant weak social control coupled with the bad economic conditions, some of the migrants and juveniles become enmeshed in crime and delinquency. (Ebbe, 1989:764)

Modernization, urbanization, and low levels of economic development create incentives and opportunities for crime.19

Odekunle (1978, 1986b), in contrast, represents a second major school of thought, which views the dynamics of underdevelopment as the major cause of crime and links all criminal acts in Nigeria to the nature of its political economy. Making and enforcing laws serves the interests of the dominant foreign and internal elites. Their crimes are ignored while those of the working and lower classes, who commit crimes in order to survive in an unequal economic and political system, are selected out and punished by the criminal justice system. The causes of crimes cannot be found in peculiarities of individual character or general normlessness. The (corrupt) norms are quite clear and enforced in favor of those in power.

Odekunle (1986b:118) argues that the most significant difference among adjudicated delinquents and their age cohort lies in “parental background with particular reference to occupation, level of education, paternal mortality, number of wives, martial stability and familial residence.” He concludes that the children of the well-to-do are protected from arrest and adjudication by their parents’ status, while the less advantaged delinquents are caught and processed through the delinquency system.

Political and Economic Crimes

Explanations of elite corruption and political-economic crimes tend to stress individual traits (e.g., greed, selfishness, lack of moral integrity), as well as the almost irresistible lure posed by quick financial gains within general conditions of poverty, uncertainty, social and political instability, a pervasive belief that everyone else is doing it, and a capitalist economic
system that values individualism, competition, acquisition, and wealth (e.g., Abba et al., 1993; Achebe, 1983; Adamolekun, 1985; Watts, 1985).

Riotous Crimes

Explanations for riotous behavior in Nigeria tend to see riots as the inevitable outcome of a competition for scarce resources within presumed zero-sum contexts and a traditionally divided society. Violent group conflicts have historical roots in traditional practices, religious conquests, colonial policies, and an emerging class structure. Group conflicts reflect the continuous salience of subnational identities and loyalties, or the nonexistence of a national culture and value system. Such divisions are consciously exploited by politicians and exacerbated by the economic and social policies pursued by the government (e.g., Lubeck, 1985; Sanda, 1992; Shettima, 1993).

With the exception of a few scientific (i.e., data driven and statistically analyzed) studies of criminality or normal crime, these explanations, especially for political, economic, and riotous crimes, reflect common sense or atheoretical interpretations and specific knowledge of cases, events, and personalities. They all stress the fundamental importance of societal and economic contexts for any understanding of criminality, opportunities, motivations, or changes in patterns of crime. Can a theoretically grounded approach—the general theory of crime—help one understand the existence and prevalence of all categories of crime in Nigeria more accurately or completely?

THE GENERAL THEORY OF CRIME

Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990:15) argue that individuals who commit crime, which they define as “acts of force or fraud undertaken in pursuit of self-interest,” are characterized by low levels of self-control—the core explanatory concept in their general theory. Following classical criminological theory, Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) accept that individuals are governed by pain and pleasure and self-interest calculations. They lack any innate conscience which extends beyond themselves and must be socialized to morality. Whether the pursuit of self-interest leads to criminal or to legal and nondeviant acts (i.e., self-interest pursued without fraud or force) is determined by levels of self-control, opportunities to experience pleasure or avoid pain, and situational constraints, for example, “the sense of immunity experienced by the offender, such things as darkness, anonymity, and vulnerability of the victim” (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1989:63). More specifically, everything else being equal, those individuals with low levels of self-control are more likely to commit self-interested acts of force or fraud than individuals possessing high levels of self-control. High self-control is a “barrier that stands between the actor and the obvious momentary benefits crime provides” (Hirschi and Gottfredson, 1993:53). Low self-control, or the propensity for deviance and criminality, leads to all forms of crime in all groups and all places and times. Levels of self-control also structure an individual’s general success in life. This propensity is, itself, a bundle of traits: aggressiveness, impulsivity, self-centeredness, low intelligence, indifference to punishment, recklessness, pleasure orientation, or physical strength.

Some researchers have operationalized self-control in complex ways. Grasmick et al. (1993) and Arneklev et al. (1993) identify six fundamental components of low self-control. Any attempt to evaluate the applicability of self-control theory, they argue, will prove more accurate using these components. First, individuals with low self-control are prone to impulsive behavior. They will act to fulfill immediate pleasures, lacking the foresight to weigh short-term gains against long-term advantages. Other components are a preference for simple tasks and easy courses of action; seeking immediate gratification over longer, more complex and fulfilling tasks; risk and thrill seeking behavior; a preference for physical activity instead of mental or cognitive activity; self-centeredness characterized by indifference or lack of sensitivity toward the needs and suf-
ferring of others; and temper, a lack of ability to resolve conflict through mature discourse, opting instead for physical confrontation.\textsuperscript{21}

Levels of self-control (as are the various components) are fixed early, during childhood. If a child does not receive proper parental supervision or is not handed out appropriate punishments for improper (or deviant) behavior, then the child will develop lower levels of self-control than if proper socialization had taken place. Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990: 177) maintain that, once established, low levels of self-control will remain intact and unaffected by other conditions throughout the individual's life. Low levels of self-control alone do not explain crime, however. Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) argue that the opportunity to commit crime must also exist. The individual must have easy access to objects, or find himself or herself in situations where crime can be committed with little perceived risk and obvious and immediate rewards. Further, Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) note the importance of age in committing crime—that is, as one ages, the propensity to commit crime declines.\textsuperscript{22} These three characteristics—propensity (or criminality), situational opportunity, and age—in concert and in conjunction, lead to crime.

The shortcomings of this general theory have been widely noted. The variables—crime and criminality—are so loosely defined that they cannot be operationalized consistently.\textsuperscript{23} Dependent and independent variables in the theory are indistinguishable, for as Hirschi and Gottfredson (1993:49) note, “The best indicators of self-control are the acts we use self-control to explain: criminal, delinquent, and reckless acts.” The theory is tautological (Akers, 1991:204). Hirschi and Gottfredson (1993:52) view this criticism as a “compliment,” for it shows that they “followed the path of logic in producing an internally consistent result.”\textsuperscript{24} Further, the theory is impossible to disprove on its own terms, for “data apparently contrary to the theory carry weight” (Hirschi and Gottfredson, 1993:51) only when supported by an alternative theory. Merely empirical falsification is not enough. Lastly, the operationalized equation of self-control with acts (the tautology or logical consistency) undermines a basic assertion of the theory. Self-control (including criminality) is an internal condition; individuals possess it to different degrees. Acts (crimes), on the other hand, result from the balance of pressures created by internal motivations, objective and perceived opportunities, and age. The conceptual or logical problem is this: if self-control is indicated by criminal acts, then opportunities and age are unnecessary for measurement of explanation. If opportunity and age matter, then internal states cannot be indicated by acts determined by the balance of external and internal forces.

Despite such conceptual critiques, much effort has been expended to operationalize the variables and test the theory's predictions. Factual support of many assertions is clearly contradictory, leading the authors to “perform wondrous mental gymnastics” (Palumbo, 1992:538) and “intellectual contortions” (Tittle, 1991:1610) to reconcile theory and reality. The most widely criticized factual assertion of the theory is that white-collar criminals have the same low levels of self-control as street criminals.\textsuperscript{25}

For example, Benson and Moore (1992) analyzed the criminal records of both white-collar and street criminals to test the notion that white-collar criminals are both criminally versatile and equally prone to engage in deviant behavior as common offenders. Although some white-collar criminals were found to engage in other deviant acts as frequently as common offenders, the majority of white-collar offenders did not.\textsuperscript{26}

The above are universal criticisms of the theory. What additional conceptual problems arise when the cross-cultural and comparative validity of the theory are examined?

THE EXPLANATORY STATUS OF THE GENERAL THEORY IN NIGERIA

Normal crime, which closely resembles western crime and delinquency (e.g., burglary and robbery), is perhaps the most appropriate category of Nigerian crime the general theory could explain. Still, the explanations
offered by researchers who have done specific studies in Nigeria do not lend much support to the lack of self-control as the major cause of crime patterns they studied; this is as true for those who commit armed robbery as it is for female offenders. Contexts are judged to be of greater importance. Since the researchers did control for the level of self-control in their studies, they may not have found its absence.

It would be difficult to disprove the theory if one assumes that there will be, among Nigerians as elsewhere, a significant number of low self-control individuals (in roughly the same proportion to the general population as elsewhere) who have opportunities to commit crimes. The main empirical problem for the theory are the low rates of crimes in Nigeria. It is obvious that numerous opportunities for crime exist in the general conditions of Nigeria, and, if modernization and underdevelopment arguments are accepted, they occur more frequently there than in developed countries. Crime rates should be high. (As noted above, it is unlikely that compensating for even massive underreporting and recording inefficiencies would raise the rates enough.)

Supposing that actual crime rates are comparatively low (though to an unknown degree), then Nigerians in general have high levels of self-control compared to citizens of other countries with vastly higher crime rates (e.g., the United States). Certainly, self-control would have to be much more prevalent in Nigeria than in the United States. One would be hard pressed to theorize why socialization patterns during periods of social change, modernization, or underdevelopment and anomic conditions would lead to a high incidence of high self-control individuals. Both the modernization and the underdevelopment theories would indicate the opposite — high numbers of low-self-control (anomic or alienated) individuals.

As noted previously, many Nigerians live in conditions of poverty and have few legitimate opportunities. Although the majority of Nigerians do not engage in serious, violent crime, many individuals are essentially induced by opportunities or forced by their life situations to commit illegal acts in order to survive, or they engage in crime as a form of social protest (e.g., Freund, 1982). One must seriously question if all of these individuals possess low levels of self-control, or whether having a self-interest in survival and few legal opportunities is not itself a countering force leading people to transgress the barrier of high self-control. This possibility creates an additional theoretical complication: similar criminal acts do not indicate similar levels of low self-control, for each individual may experience the force of circumstances differently.

Armed robbery is a good example of the complex interactions of propensity, situational opportunities, and political contexts that label the act. Even if one accepts that armed robbers have low self-control (which has not been shown), such low self-control cannot explain the fluctuations in the types and incidence of armed robbery over time, or the fact that much armed robbery is organized and planned. The condemnation of armed robbery also reflects underlying ideological perspectives and political realities. Some armed robbers acquire an almost “Robin Hood” status and are praised in the press, despite their killing and robbing of innocents and the police, as working-class revolutionaires fighting a government controlled by a comprador bourgeoisie (Marenin, 1987). To most, armed robbery is a symbol for everything that has gone wrong; to others, the armed robber is a man who struggles against an unjust fate.

The utility of the theory for political-economic crimes also is doubtful. Economic crimes, at high and low levels, are mostly opportunistic crimes, done for personal or family gain. The chance to receive a bribe, for example, depends fundamentally on opportunity — that is, being in the right position at the right time and having the proper connections and access. In such cases, risks are low and the potential for gain makes it a worthwhile gamble for all actors involved.

Depending on how seriously one takes the notion of opportunities in the general theory, economic crime by both the elites and the working class could well fit the model. The an-
swer depends on one's perception of the prevalence of economic crimes. The common consensus among Nigerians is that practically everyone engages in such acts. If that assumption is close to reality, then low levels of self-control should be extremely prevalent among Nigerians. This argument, of course, conflicts with the low incidence of normal crime, unless one can show or argue that opportunities for normal crime are far less frequent and more constrained than the economic crime. That is a possible argument. Formal social control (i.e., the police or the courts) is not considered a serious deterrent for any of the crime categories by Nigerians. There is little evidence that the police even think about deterring; they are much more concerned with their organizational and individual survival and with handing out punishment, informally and often illegally, to whoever displeases them. Informal social controls, which exist even in modern, urban settings, may be effective in limiting opportunities to normal crime and in sanctioning offenders. Informal control and its underlying social organization, however, work in two different directions. It may discourage or deter normal crime, but may actually encourage political–economic crime through communitarian and family demands to share the wealth.

Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) do not discuss political crimes in their book; however, by their definition, such acts are crimes and expressions of low self-control. On the face of it, that assertion rings false. Both electoral fraud and state repression are planned, organized, and done with a view to the future—the victory of a party and the spoils that come from capturing the state or the attempt to maintain the powers and privileges of officeholders. Such acts would not be committed unless the criminals took a long-range and considered view of their interests and the prospects of promoting them within the general contours and dynamics of their society.

Riotous crimes result from traditional patterns of social relations, whether over land ownership, military civil relations, religious antagonisms, regional divisions, political animosities, or class preferences, all reinforced by conditions of development/underdevelopment. Many riots are organized and planned and only require a specific incident, which to an observer may appear quite insignificant, to erupt.

Many student riots start over the quality of food served in the dining rooms, raids by outsiders on female students whom male students consider to be their property, or in memory of students who lost their lives in past riots. To become a university student in Nigeria requires tremendous effort and intelligence, for the ascent from primary to secondary to university education is steep and the top of the pyramid extremely small. University students are the most academically successful and rewarded members of the younger generation (Carter and Marenin, 1980). They see themselves and they are viewed by their society as the “future leaders of the country”—a widely used phrase. The pettiness of their grievances, which lead to riots, would suggest extremely low levels of self-control (or high arrogance), but their very status as students contradicts that label.10

Religious riots can start from imagined slights, such as a reference in a sermon to which offense is taken, or a rumor about a planned march by one religious organization through the territory of another. Religious or ethnic riots, which are based on strong identifications with a specific cultural and value system, are not adequately explained by the general theory for a fundamental reason.

Gottfredson and Hirschi’s (1990) general theory is a theory about (im)prudent and impulsive behavior; that prudence and what is fraud and deviance are defined by the dominant value system. Imprudent individuals have failed to incorporate the dominant values of society into their psyche and motivations and, hence, act as deviants against the dominant social consensus. In contrast, people socialized to self-control and prudence do not act in criminal and deviant ways (i.e., they avoid force and fraud) because they do not reject the controlling standards and values of their reference group.

At the core of the theory is the assumption that a dominant referential value system ex-
ists in society and that it functions as the standard of judgment for prudent, forceful, and fraudulent behavior, and that such standards are built into the legal and professional conceptions of crime enforced by the state and the community. Those who have not been properly socialized do not act within the demands of the value system and are deviant; they lack self-control. In religious and ethnic riots, two opposing value systems clash. It is precisely because individuals adhere to their dominant value system (i.e., they act as Christian against Moslem, or as Hausas against Ibos) that they engage in criminal acts as defined by the encompassing national legal system. It is because of the disjuncture between the society-wide system, which lacks support and consensus, and the subnational value system, which is salient, that riots occur. Religious affiliation and ethnic membership are more important as guidelines and motives for action than being a Nigerian citizen.

In short, the explanatory and predicting power of any theory is severely limited when its central assumption does not hold. The differential values base of riots also calls into question the cross-cultural universality of the general theory. The definition of crime, based as it is on fraud, assumes that fraud and force have universal meanings. This clearly is not the case. Force can range from forceful persuasion to a gun to the head to structural conditions. What would be considered fraud in business transactions or in gaining government contracts might be considered good business practices in another setting. These practices, themselves, are based on traditional forms of gift-giving or the obligation one feels to channel the rewards one controls (e.g., admission to a university) toward members of one's family and community. Demands from the family and the community on the "son of the soil," the "big man" who has succeeded are multiple, legitimate, and powerful in Nigeria.

Corruption, which involves force or fraud by definition, comes in many forms and is judged differently by the Nigerian public. Brownsberger (1983:221-26) distinguishes polite, nepotistic, and alienated corruption. He argues that the first two forms are close to traditional forms of gift-giving or assert social obligations and, hence, are accepted and expected, while corruption done for purely personal gain is new and condemned. Peil (1976) found that the public distinguishes different levels of corruption. Small-scale forms are understood and accepted as an almost necessary adjustment to difficult times; however, large-scale forms (that is, elite corruption) raise the anger of individuals.

Underlying the public's ambivalence about corruption are two basic attitude sets: views of the state and of family ties. The state and its offices are seen, in Joseph's (1983) well-known characterization, as "prebendal" in nature. Public and private interests and values are not kept distinct, and the use of state power for private ends is an accepted stance. The second attitude, family matters, views the family as a nested set of circles expanding to include the community and sometimes fractions of an ethnic identity. The family demands loyalty and help. When a person has reached a position of power or authority, that person is obligated to help his or her family (widely defined). Prebendalism and family ties are mutually reinforcing; acts done to serve one's groups are less corrupt than the same acts done to serve another group.

**DISCUSSION**

Only by a heroic simplification of human nature, society, and other core theoretical concepts can Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) claim that their theory is universal. In response to criticism, Hirschi and Gottfredson (1993) have argued that self-control is like gravity and the mere fact that other concepts have to be brought in to explain variations in human behavior does not disprove the cross-cultural generality or validity of the theory. There are two problems with this disclaimer: first, it is not known that self-control is like gravity, other than by the assertion of the authors (e.g., McCord, 1989); and, second, gravity cannot explain, by itself, specific events. When the apple falls, other precipitating factors (e.g., wind, worms, and decay) also are pres-
and the general literature. In the absence of differentiating (that is, culturally specific) causes, the theory does not have predictive power at all. The apple falls or it does not, but gravity is present; individuals act imprudently or not, but human nature and self-control is what it is. At best, theirs is not a causal theory, but a proposal to simplify one's thinking about criminal acts to a few logically consistent propositions. The theory is best viewed as a logical model — if one can assume that x and y and z are arranged in this manner, then one can argue that x, y, and z are linked in these causal chains. Whether the model is empirically accurate is of less concern to its authors.

The most obvious empirical problem for Gottfredson and Hirschi's (1990) general theory is the differences in levels and crimes in Nigeria. A general theory of crime in Nigeria needs to examine the contextual factors that are peculiar to the country — its developing status, political instability, economic insecurities, and group dynamics, which, together, are the structure of opportunities individuals encounter — and to delineate their interactions with personal traits. Unique and personal factors, which include self-control (but which, right now, cannot be described with precision), play out within these general contexts.

The vast majority of Nigerians, despite all temptations and pressures, live generally law-abiding lives. Why some cross the line into criminality and why some who should have (according to the theory) do not remains unknown. In sum, the general theory is of little help in understanding the structure or dynamics of criminality and crime in Nigeria, for it can be universal and cross-culturally valid only at a level of abstraction, which prevents explanation, prediction, or the development of effective crime control policies.

NOTES

1. The goal is not to completely describe each pattern (data do not exist to do this), but to sketch basic categories and some of their dynamics by reference to examples and the general literature.

2. Two points need to be made here. For one, these data and rates are basically unreliable. They bear little relation to the actual crime patterns in the country or to the perceptions of threat and safety expressed by people. At present, systematic procedures to check on the validity and reliability of these data are nonexistent. One can say they are inaccurate, but not by how much. Systematic victimization and reporting studies have not been done in Nigeria, and it is difficult to find comparable cases. The most recent United Nations' victimization survey, which included Kampala, Uganda and Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania, found reporting rates ranging from 9 percent (personal theft in Kampala) to 100 percent (car theft in Dar Es Salaam) (Zvekic and del Frate, 1995:43). These are urban area surveys; rural areas would have much lower reporting rates for the simple reason that there are few police stations in the countryside.

The second point is that even if the data are grossly inaccurate, they are still very low compared to rates in developed countries and to many other developing countries. Even multiplying rates, as an estimate, by ten would yield much lower rates than, say, the United States.

3. Armed robbery is so prevalent and feared that routine acts become risky. For example, foreigners are warned not to get into taxis in Lagos for they may be robbed by criminals and their partners who pose as drivers.

4. The exact number of armed robberies is uncertain. Ekpenyong (1989) cites numbers that are clearly inaccurate: for example, 311,961 incidents in 1983. This is the total number of all crimes reported to the police in Nigeria for that year (see Table 1).

Government statistics (Nigeria, 1980: Table 16) for armed robbery and extortion (these crimes are reported together) fluctuate between 1,000 and 2,000 crimes for the period from 1970 to 1977; these crimes constitute less than 1 percent of all reported crimes. Thus, from a larger perspective, armed robbery is “statistically nothing to worry about” (Nigeria, 1980:15).

5. Odekunle, (1986a:93) argues that “the real criminals in the country are the elites; their crimes are part of their routine and normal day-to-day business and functions; the cost of their crimes to the nation is incalculable but it is enormous, cumulative and treasonable.” Odekunle maintains that this activity does far more harm to the country and its people than normal crime and crime committed by the working class.

6. Common products are pharmaceuticals and food products that are outdated or illegal in the producing country, and are dumped on the market in developing countries rather than destroyed (Alubo, 1994).

7. Calculating the value of the Naira is difficult. The Naira is a soft currency. Before 1986, its value was artificially set by the government at a rate of roughly one to one to the dollar. After July 1986, its value was floated and declined to the black market rate and has been falling ever since. Currently, in June 1995, the exchange rate is about eighty Naira to one dollar. Hence, the costs of corruption depend upon when it occurred and what rate of ascertaining the true (that is the comparative market) value is used.

People being bribed prefer to be paid in hard currency, outside the country. That avoids the difficulty of converting or exporting Nairas (which is illegal) and guarantees a more stable income.
conducted in three stages by the Buhari and Babangida regimes in the early 1980s, after the coup that replaced the civilian government of President Shagari. The initial investigations conducted under General Buhari uncovered vast fraud and led to forfeitures (or, as the Nigerian press tends to phrase it, the “vomiting up” of assets) and (to the absolute astonishment of the public) prison sentences for convicted corrupters. These convictions and sentences were reviewed by commissions (the Uwaifo Review Panel, the Bello Judicial Tribunal, the Aguda Judicial Tribunal, each dealing with convictions under different executive decrees) established by the Babangida government (which asserted a commitment to human rights, including fair trial); some were reversed and many sentences were reduced; the government accepted most of the commissions’ recommendations.

The official reports (e.g., Nigeria, 1986a, 1986b) paint on a vast canvas; reading them leaves one with the overwhelming impression that everything was for sale and corrupt enrichment was massive. The reports do not report totals, but describe the illegal activities of hundreds of high ranking officials and private entrepreneurs.

10. The government will advance the contractor, who often does not have capital, the money necessary to get started (e.g., buy equipment, etc.) and subtracts the money from the final payment once the work is completed.

11. A common saying is that the military, as a whole, are better than the civilians; they are just as corrupt as the civilians, but they are fewer in number (at least at the top). The longer the military stays in power, the less favorable is the assessment of its probity. The Abacha regime, which overthrew President Babangida, is considered, in public and elite opinion, to be the most corrupt of the military regimes to date.

12. In the 1983 election in the Ondo and Ogun states, public violence protesting rigged elections resulted in the burning of the Elections Commission headquarters and some “policemen [were] ‘necklaced’ and burned to death” (Hart, 1993:407). Barnes (1986:152) describes the dynamics and crimes (i.e., twenty-four houses destroyed by fire and 168 persons arrested for various violations) in one suburb of Lagos during October 1965. Such events were not confined to one area and took place throughout the country.

13. The book is "dedicated to the memory of our beloved brother, friend, comrade, Bala Mohammed, who was assassinated, and his corpse burnt to ashes, by hired thugs and Killers of the National Party of Nigeria, protected by the Nigerian Police, at his house in Kano, on Friday—10th July, 1981. May his soul rest in eternal peace" (Usman, 1982: frontispiece). Dr. Usman, the editor of this collection, was the chair of the History Department at Ahmadu Bello University and an advisor to the military government. The accusation in the introduction, hence, is from a person not without status or influence in the affairs of Nigeria.

14. These activities are so well-known that newspapers routinely publish articles that list the price of getting a private car or a bus past a road checkpoint.

15. Another common form of economic activity, which straddles the border between legality and illegality, is "touting." "Touts are people who make their living by inserting themselves into economic activities and extracting a price for their services. For example, it used to be practically impossible to buy an airline ticket at the counter because one’s path was blocked by touts. To get the ticket, one had to hand money to the tout who then talked to the ticket clerk, got the ticket, and gave it to you, but also insisted on a small fee. Having a ticket used to be less important than having a boarding pass, which was hard to obtain. Touts often had arrangements with ticket clerks who would only give boarding passes to them. Passengers then bought these from the touts. Everyone suspected that more boarding passes than seats available on the plane were "sold" in this way. When the time came to board, everyone rushed to get to the plane first and secure a seat. Nigerian newspaper columnists used to have a joke: "What is the fastest 100 yard dash in the world? Nigerian passengers running for their planes."

16. In 1986, when one of the authors (Marenin) conducted research on the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), he spent much time sitting in one office which also held, sitting on one table, the computer printouts of names and assignments for the next call-up. Periodically, clerks would come in with slips of paper, compare what was written on the slips with the printouts, write the assignment down, and exit. Through observation of the clerks in the front room before and later, it was learned that the slips came from prospective “corpers” who wanted to find out where they had been posted, basically so that they could lobby for a different assignment if they didn’t like where they were being sent. The clerks collected a small fee for their illegal service. Prospective postings were considered secret by the NYSC directorate to prevent complaints and pressure from corpsers and their families.

17. In a recent event, a cab driver killed a member of the military who crossed the street carelessly. The dead soldier’s comrades, who had witnessed the accident, burst out of the barracks, attacked and killed the cab driver, and set the cab on fire. Once aroused, they started beating up other cab drivers who happened to drive by. The cab drivers called for support from their fellow drivers and local people, and the fighting spread rapidly.

18. The “Yan Tatsine” riots, named after an itinerant Islamic preacher whose followers engaged in pitched battles with other groups, including the police and the military, erupted in Kano in 1980 and spread to other northern cities during the early 1980s. In Kano alone, the police estimated that 4,177 civilians were killed during the two-week long riot in December 1980, which was finally suppressed when the Nigerian Air Force bombed the residential section to which the rioters had retreated (Albert, 1994:121–29; Forrest, 1993:113; Lubeck, 1985). A set of religious riots in Kaduna State in 1987 also led to massive loss of property and human life (Ibrahim, 1989).
19. Ebbe (1985:94), using survey data on female prisoners, concluded that female crime "can be said to have been generated by the collapse of kinship ties and poor economic conditions."

20. Such a personality trait has been discussed by others concerned with criminal behavior (see Wilson and Herrnstein, 1985; Glueck and Glueck, 1950).

21. Analyzing their data, the authors conclude that the theory is inconsistently supported and that some components of the self-control concept seem to be more important than others in predicting criminal acts.

22. Concerning this aspect of the self-control theory, others have noted that the notion of crime declining with age simply because it does leaves something to be desired as theory (see Tittle, 1991). The argument also conflicts with the assertion that levels of self-control are established early in the life cycle and remain fairly stable.

23. Of course, this is not a theory of crime, but of impulsive or risk-taking behaviors. The theory explains bungee-jumping or skydiving as much as theft or rape. Whether behavior is criminal and condemned, or simply imprudent but admired is determined by social conventions and law.

24. This tautology results from their approach to cross-cultural theorizing. They reject positivist attempts to induce theory from statistical correlations of behavior and characteristics of the actors, an approach which invariably leads to the conclusion that cultural and structural factors determine crime and criminality and that a universal theory is not possible (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1989:173). In contrast, they start from the other end. They begin by defining crime and "deduce from the nature of crime the characteristics of people likely to engage in it" (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990:175). This approach allows them to skip cultural differences, for crime (any act done by fraud or force for self-interest) can be any act that is considered deviant in a given society, but remains universal by definition. So, too, does criminality, since a "conception of criminality (low self-control) follows from a conception of crime" (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990:177). The circle is complete.

25. Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) view white-collar crime as being committed by individuals with the same characteristics as those who commit street crime—that is, they do not plan the offense, are unspecialized, and engage in impulsive behavior. It makes one wonder how these individuals can succeed in their social environment and attain positions of power from which to commit crimes without being future oriented and specialized, all of which suggest high self-control.

26. Hirschi and Gottfredson (1993:53–54) respond to Benson and Moore (1992) by arguing in an endnote that "occupational structure is in part caused by level of self-control. Thus white-collar workers should on the whole have higher levels of self-control than those outside the labor force. White-collar offenders should therefore have higher levels of self-control on the average than offenders among the unemployed."

This assertion seems a bit awkward. An individual has to have higher levels of self-control to achieve a position where white-collar crime is possible, hence, he or she has more self-control (and ability) than laborers. At the same time, individuals who commit white-collar crime have less self-control than honest laborers.

27. It has been the experience of one of the authors (Marenin) that practically all expatriates who work and live in Nigeria engage in black market currency transactions. Most of these individuals would indignantly reject having the label "criminal" attached to them or their actions. To them, not exchanging dollars or pounds at five times the official rate would be absolutely stupid; and the transaction can be done easily (one is practically besieged by people who want to buy hard currency, even if it is just a personal check) and with little risk of detection or harmful consequences.

28. One of the authors (Marenin) has informally interviewed numerous Nigerian police officers after being stopped while driving. Typically, the officer entered the car, accused him of violating the law, threatened to take him to court, and expected to receive a bribe to keep that from happening. Marenin saw this as an opportunity for research, and his response was to inquire about their jobs and lives and the difficulty of making a living on a policewoman's salary. After five or ten minutes of discussion, when the officer realized that a bribe was not forthcoming, the officer would ask for a ride back to the location where he had entered the car—presumably to wait for the next offender and victim.

29. As with all economic activity, individuals who succeed experience strong pressures to share their good fortunes with their families, villages, and groups through patron-client and communitarian networks. The greater the success, the larger the sharing circle. In short, even individual crime has a strong collective aspect—a responsibility to spread the wealth around the group. Self-centeredness, a component of low self-control, is not necessarily found among the corrupt, and if criminals refused to share (unequally as it might be), they would be vehemently attacked by their circle of clients and relatives.

30. Here, as with political and economic crimes, the six components of Arneklev et al. (1993:228) and Grasmick et al. (1993:8) are of particular interest. Considering the rigors of entrance exams and the number of A and O level "passes" one has to accumulate to enter the Nigerian university system, it does not seem likely that too many individuals with low self-control could achieve such a goal. These students would not seem to be impulsive (considering how long they have worked to be admitted), or to have a preference for simple tasks, or to prefer physical over mental activities.

31. To get around this problem, one would have to abandon the nation-state as the unit that bounds culture, values, and notions of fraud and force for purposes of comparison and go below the national level. That, of
course, raises the question of how far below and to what
and the comparability of crime data because they will, by
definition, be of different acts.

34. The argument here is not that self-control does not
matter. It is about the dominance in the causal hierarchy
assigned to self-control. It is not clear, nor is it argued,
why a generally invarying cause (i.e., self-control) is more
causal in theory and explanation than more varying inde-
pendent factors that correlate more closely with ob-
served behaviors.

35. One theory that has sought to do this is the rou-
tine activities theory (see Cohen and Felson, 1979; Kick
and Lafree, 1985). The theory argues that crime happens
because of the opportunities (e.g., valuable goods and lit-
tle guardianship) provided to people inclined to commit
crime. It is assumed that there are always some people
looking for an opportunity to commit crime. By itself,
this theory does not go far enough. Simply examining the
routines that people play out in their lives is not sufficient
to explain why the routines exist in the first place, or why
some people are inclined to commit crimes and others are
not, or why the same routines affect people differently.

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