

Full Length Research Paper

Differential association theory and juvenile delinquency in Ghana's capital city - Accra: The case of Ghana borstal institute

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Current sociological theories argue that, delinquency results from economic and family relational problems. Unable to have their parents meet their material needs, children turn to all sorts of activities, many of which eventually lead to delinquent acts. Other theories focus on the role of peer relationships in determining deviancy. Using Edwin Sutherland's differential association theory, this study explores the notion that, delinquency in inmates of the Ghana borstal institute is a reflection of the peer groups/friendship relations they hanged out with. Data for the study were collected from the Ghana borstal institute, a correctional institution for reforming juvenile offenders with structured questionnaire. The findings point to the presence of Differential Association at the onset of inmate's delinquent behaviours though circumspection is recommended in the attempts to validate differential association as the study was carried out on institutionalized, verified group of delinquent juveniles. The close relationship between differential association and delinquency may not be present in non-institutionalized juvenile offenders.

Key words: Differential association, juvenile, delinquency, Sutherland, borstal, Ghana.

INTRODUCTION

Deviance is widespread and endemic not only in the Ghanaian society but the world at large. From petty infraction of normative codes at the family level, through breach of legal codes at state level to penchant subversion of international conventions and charters at global level, the concept of deviance has been explored at length in the literature of criminology. Since the beginning of this century, terrorism has also come into the frail, mainly through the activities of Al Queda organisations around the world.

In Ghana, mid-year comparison of crime statistics¹ for 2005 and 2006 indicates an increase in crime occurrence. Whereas 2005 registered a total crime figure of 108,045 indicating that for every 4.9 min, a criminal act was committed, 2006 records indicate total crime of

113,541, which suggest that, for every 4.6 min, a criminal offence was committed. Crime statistics for 2005 and 2006 show an increase of 5.1% in 2006 over 2005. A comparison of absolute crime statistics figure for 2005 and 2006, shows an increase of 5.1% for 2006 over that of 2005.

Specific crime offences are worth noting. For instance, unlawful entry cases increased by 40% from 2005 to 2006, whilst counterfeiting swelled by 56% from 2005 to 2006. Other specific offences that increased over the period include abduction, by 44.2%, and issuing of false cheques by 28.4%. Rape and defilement cases also saw increases by 44.4% and 43.6%, respectively from 2005 to 2006².

The increases in offences are not limited to adult criminality. The upward surge in juvenile delinquency is a

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¹ These statistics were obtained from the Police Public Affairs Directorate, Police Headquarters of the Ghana Police Service, Accra.

² Increases in rape and defilement cases have been attributed to the creation of Women and Juvenile Unit - WAJU – within the Ghana Police Service. The argument has been that, WAJU's activities (specific campaigns against rape and defilements) have increased reportage and not necessarily incidence.

fact many well meaning Ghanaians acknowledge³. But the case becomes critical with juvenile criminality because children are the future leaders and the window of hope for the country. A passive outlook towards juvenile criminality will therefore mean a tacit preparedness for its attendant effects. What makes an emphasis on children more critical is that, stripped from the overwhelming cohesive family presence, they are exposed to more visible dynamic peer and friendship controls. Many of these result eventually in delinquency with devastating repercussions on the development efforts of the country.

Unfortunately, the bulk of literature on criminological prediction among juveniles has been concerned with factors such as family finances and family relational problems (Antwi Bosiakoh, 2005). The work of Thorlidsson and Bjarnason (1998) on the applicability of Durkheim's Anomic Theory is a good example here. This study draws attention to family-relational problems, with little or no emphasis placed on the role of peers in the etiological discourse. Merton's admonition of social structural constraints on the individual which cumulatively predispose him into criminality is another treatise worth mentioning (Merton, 1938).

Essentially, the role of peers in predisposing people into criminality has been the argument of Differential Association. Indeed, it is the core of the theory. This study is an attempt to respond to the question of whether or not the role of peers in predisposing juveniles into delinquency is significant in Ghana. In specific terms, we pose the following questions: 1) was Differential Association at the onset of the inmates' delinquent behaviours? 2) Does Differential Association vary with frequency, duration, priority and intensity in relation to the inmates of the Ghana Borstal Institute? and 3) Does juvenile delinquency among inmates of Ghana Borstal institute reflect excess of definitions favourable for the violation of laws over those unfavourable? In simple terms, the study investigates the validity or otherwise of Differential Association in the genesis of criminal behaviour among inmates of the Ghana Borstal Institute in Accra.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study examines the role of Differential Association in the genesis of criminal behaviour of inmates of Ghana Borstal Institute in Accra. The decision to study inmates of the Ghana Borstal Institute was informed by Short's earlier study (Short, 1957). Short underscores that, differential association better explains male

deviance than female deviance. Short did not study specifically inmates of the Ghana Borstal Institute but his submission that differential association better explains male deviance than female deviance underscores the sample choice of this study. The Ghana Borstal Institute is an all male correctional institute for juvenile delinquents. This study examines whether 1) delinquent behaviour among the inmates was learned through interaction with delinquent others; 2) differential association varies with frequency, duration, priority and intensity; and 3) Juvenile delinquency among inmates of Ghana Borstal institute reflects excess of definitions favourable for the violation of laws over those unfavourable (see research questions in introduction). These are encapsulated in a single hypothesis that; the involvement of inmates of the Ghana Borstal Institute in delinquent acts is a result of their association with delinquent friends.

Brief profile of the Ghana borstal institute

The Borstal system was first conceived in England by Sir Ruggles Prise⁴ towards the end of the nineteenth century. The aim was to spare unfortunate children the fate of being adult criminals in the future. In Ghana, the Borstal institute was established in 1947. It is located on one of the bases of the former British West African Royal Frontier force at Mamobi, in Accra. The general aim of the institute is to stimulate within juvenile offenders the desire to know what is good, and to equip them to do so. To achieve this, the institute has twenty-six buildings made up of an administration block, an admission block, an infirmary, thirteen dormitories and ten workshops. The institute has a structured administrative system headed by a Deputy Director of Prisons.

For a juvenile to be admitted, the Juvenile Court must have convicted and committed him as such. This occurs when the court has accepted and became satisfied with the report by the Police and probation officer concerning the conduct and previous crime records of the juvenile offender. As a requirement, inmates spend between 9 months and 3 years in the institution depending on the rehabilitation needs. Daily activities for inmates range from early morning cleaning and devotion, to workshop activities. There is strict enforcement of orderliness and cleanliness. All inmates undergo compulsory training in a vocation of interest. This is expected to lead to the acquisition of skills to work with upon completion of stay in the institute. Inmates are also taught moral principles. Inmates who express interest to continue their education are assessed and placed in school. One venerable quality of the institute is that, inmates pass through to mainstream society without bearing the stigma of an ex-convict (Antwi Bosiakoh, 2005).

Differential association theory

Several theories have been formulated to explain deviance and juvenile delinquency. One of such theories is Differential Association Theory formulated by Edwin Sutherland in 1939 and revised in 1947. This theory has received widespread popularity and acceptance in criminological circles. According to Regoli and

³ The declaration of national campaign against youth indiscipline by the Vice President attests to this assertion. In the campaign process, other well-meaning clergy men joined, comparing the situation to the early post independence era.

⁴ Sir Ruggles Prise was a British Director of Prisons. The idea for establishing a Borstal institution was inspired by protective interest and humanitarian deeds for children. The first Borstal establishment was a private philanthropic enterprise set up in 1897 in a small town in England called Borstal.

Hewitt (1997:181), 'no single idea in modern criminology has had impact on how people reflect on crime as has differential association'. In the words of Gibbons (1979), 'Sutherland's formulation has been the most popular perspective in American Criminology' (Regoli and Hewitt, 1997:183). Burgess and Akers (1966:145) also argue that, '...Sutherland's theory has had an enduring effect upon the thinking of students of criminal behaviour...'. For some scholars, differential association is the most outstanding sociological formulation of a general theory of crime causation (Cressey, 1952: 43), whilst others tout it as the most sociological of all theories accounting for the occurrence of criminal and delinquent behaviours.

This, however, is not to suggest that the theory has escaped criticism. Even admirers of the theory attest to this. Voss (1964:78) has suggested that the theory has been severely criticised and discarded by many. Short (1960) maintains that, differential association has not been translated into the language of more general sociological and learning theory. As such, the implications for the theory are not obvious and have been neglected. These notwithstanding, scholars who find in its propositions adequate answers to the problems it addresses, accept it.

Differential association theory in brief

According to Sutherland, criminal behaviour is learned in the same way as law-abiding values are learned, and that, this learning activity is accomplished, in interactions with others, through a process of communication within intimate groups. He argues that, just as one can be socialised into good behaviour, so also can one be socialised into bad behaviour. The theory of differential association consists of nine principles:

1. Criminal behaviour is learned; it is not inherited. This means that a person who is not already trained in criminal acts does not invent such acts, just as a child does not make courteous remarks unless he has had training or socialization to that effect. What Sutherland sought to communicate with this principle is accurately captured by Courtesy for Boys and Girls.
2. Criminal behaviour is learned in interaction with others through communication. This communication is verbal in many respects but includes also the communication of gestures often described as non-verbal communication.
3. The learning occurs in intimate groups: Sutherland claimed that, only small, face-to-face gatherings influence behaviour. Consequently he focused on peer or family groups as the most likely sources of initiation into delinquent values and activities. This means that, impersonal agencies of communication such as picture shows and newspapers play relatively unimportant part in the genesis of delinquent behaviour.
4. When criminal behaviour is learned, the learning includes (a) Techniques for committing it, which are sometimes complicated, and sometimes very simple; (b) the specific direction of motives and drives, rationalizations and attitude.
5. The specific direction of motives and drives are learned from definitions of legal codes as favourable or unfavourable. This means that, when one's associates define the legal codes as things to be observed, the learning of criminal acts may be impeded. The reverse is true.
6. A person becomes criminal because of excess of definitions favourable to violation of law over definitions unfavourable to violation of law. This is the core principle of differential association theory. It reinforces the belief that the definitions favourable to the

violation of law can be learned from both criminal and non-criminal people. This principle is loaded with counteracting forces of favourable and unfavourable definitions to violation of law.

7. Differential association (tendency towards criminality) varies in frequency, duration, priority and intensity. This means the longer the time, the earlier in one's life, the more intensely and more frequently people are exposed to a set of attitudes about criminality, the more likely it is that they will be caught up in the fray.

8. The process of learning criminal behaviour involves the same mechanisms involved in any other learning. This implies that, the mechanisms for learning criminal behaviours are the same as those for law abiding values and other socially relevant skills. The suggestion is that, in as much as the content of what is learned is different, the process giving rise to criminal behaviour is the same as any other law-abiding behaviour.

9. Both criminal and non-criminal behaviours are expressions of the same needs and values. Put differently, the goals of criminals and non-criminals are usually the same. What is different is the means they adopt to pursue this same goal. For instance thieves generally steal in order to secure money. Honest labourers likewise work with the monetary value in mind.

Sutherland's Differential Association theory is one of the theories that come under the umbrella of the Chicago School. In the 1920s and 1930s, the study of crime became almost like a tale of one city, Chicago. In the University of Chicago, sociologists attributed crime to external factors, a typical Durkheimian notion, encapsulated in his *social fact*. Many studies were therefore conducted to give substance to this position on crime. Sutherland's differential association later became associated with the school⁵.

Differential Association Theory has been analysed at length, the result of which has been reformulations. For instance, Burgess and Akers (1966) have provided a reformulated version of differential association with an attempt to incorporate reinforcement theory. The result has been a reduction of the nine principles of differential association theory into seven renamed as differential association-reinforcement theory of criminal behaviour (Burgess and Akers, 1966). Matthews (1968) also talks of revival interest in differential association, making allusion to new light being shed on the theory in yet another modification known as differential identification. Differential Identification is a modification of differential association developed by Glaser (1956). What Glaser points to as differential identification serves to re-conceptualise Sutherland's theory in role construction and role re-construction imageries, though it draws heavily on George Herbert Mead's mind and self.

In 1960, Glaser, while acknowledging the superiority of differential association in criminological prediction to alternative theories suggested that, differential anticipation theory would be more appropriate and adequate than differential association (Glaser, 1960). In general therefore, differential association has received a good measure of criticisms and praises, and has been reformulated in a number of ways.

In recent times, research efforts on the application of differential association have focused on specific criminal or delinquent acts such as marijuana use by the individual (Griffin and Griffin, 1973). Kim, Lo and Church (2005) have also utilized propositions of differential association theory in different social contexts to reveal that, exposure to delinquent peers is associated with higher delinquency involvement and with favorable attitude toward

⁵ Other studies undertaken at the time include Thrasher (1927) and Shaw and McKay's *Juvenile Delinquency and Urban Areas*. Indeed, Walter Miller's work on the family structure of the lower class is also part of the Chicago School's work on crime.

Table 1. Age, place of birth and religion of inmates.

Background I	Frequency	Percentage
Age: 14-15	17	28.3
16-17	22	36.7
18+	21	35.0
Total	60	100.0
Places of birth		
Urban	51	85.0
Rural	9	15.0
Total	60	100.0
Religion		
Christianity	42	70
Islamic	16	26.7
Others	2	3.3
Total	60	100.0

Source: Field survey, 2005.

delinquency of individuals in all social contexts. One of the most current applications of differential association theory is provided by Gunter in a study of internet piracy among students. Gunter assesses factors that affect internet piracy among students using differential association, general deterrence and belief theories.

Gunter's study shows applicability of differential association though other variables from multiple theories are also said to be related to internet piracy (Gunter, 2006).

METHODS

The data collection for this study was based on two methods, namely, questionnaire administration and interaction and conversation with officials of the institute and the inmates. The questionnaire was designed using both closed and open-ended questions. The close-ended element featured predominantly in the questionnaire and helped to quantify much of the data. The open-ended element on the other hand facilitated efforts to understand inmate's own mental calculations regarding their delinquent behaviours. The questionnaires were administered in face-to-face encounters with the inmates. In addition to the questionnaire, both formal and informal interaction and conversation with officials and inmates of the institute were also undertaken in ways to derive some useful data. These interactions and conversations enabled the officials know the research objectives in detail, and in the process, facilitated access to some 'unusual' but useful information, not only about the institute but also the inmates. Observations of the inmates were also done in their dormitories and in workshops and infirmary as well as during morning devotion and in their television room. All of this information constitutes the primary data. They were collected after permission had been sought from the Ghana Prisons Service for access to the inmates of the institute. These aside, the study benefited immensely from existing literature on the institute. At the time of the study, the institute had a total inmate population of eighty-seven (87). Out of this, sixty (60) inmates participated in the study representing about 70% coverage or participation rate. The 70% coverage is deemed adequate for a social scientific study of this nature and for generalization of outcome.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Some demographic characteristics of study respondents

Demographic data such as age, religion, educational level of respondents, place of birth, place of residence, and ethnic distribution are key to studies of this nature. For instance, while information on place of birth and place of residence shed light on the family backgrounds of respondents, the data on age, and ethnic distribution of respondents helped in understanding the age structure and ethnic dimensions underlining juvenile delinquency in Ghana's capital, Accra.

In 2004/2005 when the data for this paper was collected, the Ghana Borstal Institute had eighty-seven (87) inmates. Out of this number, sixty participated in the study, representing about 60% coverage. Initially, the study aimed at covering all the inmates. This however was defeated for issues of indisposition and unwillingness on the part of some inmates. Data on respondents' age, places of birth and religious orientations are presented in Table 1.

The age distribution of the inmates shows that a good majority (65%) were juveniles in the strict sense of the word. They were below the age of eighteen⁶. This picture is as a result of the institute's admission criteria which emphasizes on age. The remaining 35% fell out of the age criterion. These were essentially inmates who, haven been admitted into the institute as juveniles, had grown out of the age criterion and were yet to complete the rehabilitation process of the institute. Fourteen of these inmates were 18 years and additional seven at age 19.

Some writers (especially those in the Chicago school) have asserted that child delinquency is urban bias. The urban setting of Accra was therefore to situate this study within this assertion. The study tends to support the urban bias hypothesis. This is because, the findings show, in the case of place of birth, that 85% of the inmates were born in urban places. This is further strengthened by the findings on the usual places of residence before they were convicted. A good majority of the inmates suggested they were in urban areas - principally Accra, explanation of which goes to make stronger the conviction of the Chicago school.

In terms of religion, 70 and 26.7% of the study respondents affirmed they had Christian and Islamic affiliations respectively. And taken together, they constituted 96.7%. Going by Ross' admonition that belief system, rather than specific laws, guide people and serve to control behaviour, one would expect to find impact of Christian and Islamic belief systems on the lives of inmates. This however was not the case. Neither the fear of punishment for violating the relevant doctrines of religion, nor the desire to be beneficiary of the blessings

⁶ The Ghanaian constitution stipulates that, adulthood begins from age 18. Below this, one is considered a minor.

Table 2. Ethnic and educational backgrounds of inmates.

Backgrounds II	Frequency	Percentage
Ethnicity		
Akan	21	35
Ga-Adangbe	14	23.3
Ewe	11	18.3
Gur	8	13.3
Guan	6	10.0
Total	60	100.0
Education		
None	12	20.0
Primary	9	15.0
JHS	36	60.0
SHS	3	5.0
Total	60	100.0

Source: Field survey, 2005.

Table 3. Friendship and extra-family associations of inmates.

Questions	Yes		No	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Stayed with other people before?	55	91.7	5	8.3
Stayed with friends before?	42	70	18	30.0
Stayed with delinquent people before?	46	76.7	14	23.3
Delinquent people as friends?	44	73.3	46	26.7
Friends picked up by police?	39	65.0	21	35.0

Source: Field survey, 2005.

for conforming to the doctrines was at play. And whereas children in secular homes can hide or escape the watchful eyes of parents, those in religious homes (Christians and Moslems) can not hide or escape from God for He is omniscience. As much as 96.7% of the inmates of the Ghana Borstal institute are religious. Part of the explanation for this state of affairs perhaps may be attributed to relaxed control of religion on the inmates. Church and mosque they attend but teaching of doctrines is brushed aside.

Inmates of the Ghana Borstal institute came mainly from three ethnic groups in Ghana (Table 2). Twenty-one inmates were Akan, the largest ethnic group in Ghana. Fourteen inmates were from the Ga-Adangbe ethnic group (the ethnic group on whose land Accra is located) and Ewes eleven.

And though 80% of the inmates had had some form of formal education, a good number of them had dropped out. Only 3 had reached senior high school first year before dropping out. Twenty-eight were in junior school at the time of conviction. There were 8 who had dropped out of school at junior high level. The rest 9 were in primary

school either as drop outs or upper level (class 4 to class 6) pupils. Their offences ranged from theft (56.7%) to others relating to sex (11.7%), truancy (6.7%) and drug (6.7%) among others.

Friendship and extra-family associations of inmates

Data on inmates' friendship and extra-family associations constitute important aspect of this study. This is because the study is rooted in the old maxim of 'birds of a feather flock together'. As a result, the study sought to find out if inmates had stayed with other people before their conviction. The findings suggest that as many as 55 respondents (91.7%) had stayed with non-family members before. But when the question of 'whether inmates had stayed with friends before' was put, the response rate dropped to 42 (70.0%). Further questions sought to find out whether respondents had stayed with delinquent people before their conviction, and if so, to find out if such people were friends. These are presented in Table 3.

Table 4. Inmates' association with delinquent friends and length of time spent with them.

Have Friends with whom much time is spent?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	41	68.3
No	19	31.7
Total	60	100.0
Number of days of visit in a week		
1 – 2 days	15	25.0
3 – 4 days	5	8.3
5 – 6 days	5	8.3
7 days	35	58.3
Total	60	100.0
Number of visits in a day		
1 – 3 times	33	55.5
3 – 6 times	11	18.3
6+ times	16	26.7
Total	60	100.0

Source: Field survey, 2005.

In each case, affirmative answers were given. Forty-six (46) respondents (76.7%) had stayed with delinquent people before their conviction. But on the issue of whether such people were friends, 44 respondents (73.3%) gave affirmative response. Moreover, 35 of the respondents (65.0%) noted that they had friend who had been picked up by the police before their own conviction. In most of these cases, the friends picked up by the police are three or more, which also depicts not only the extent of the inmates' association with other delinquents, but also the intensity of such associations. These responses clearly show that majority of the inmates have had some level of association with people other than family members who are friends, who are delinquents, and who have been picked up by police before their own conviction. The following observations are also worthy of note: some respondents knew other children within their neighbourhood (not friends) who had been picked by the police before; and others had school drop out kids as friends and associates, among whom intimate relations were forged.

Differential association and delinquent behaviour among inmates

Differential Association Theory believes that, delinquency is learned in intimate relations. To assess this notion, the study aimed to understand the nature of friendships delinquents forged and found out that a great majority of respondents (68.3%) had friends as significant others with whom much of their time was spent before their conviction. Inmates were assessed on the number of days in a week they used to visit friends, the numbers of times in a day visitations took place and the length of time visitations took. These assessments suggested in general

that, multiple visitations to delinquent others (friends and other peers) accelerated the acquisition of delinquent skills. Refer to Table 4 for details on inmates' association with significant others as friends and the length of time spent with them.

The study observed direct correlation between increased visitation and acquisition of such delinquent skills. There was as much as 58.3% admission that, inmates visited friends everyday of the week. This aside, multiple visitations were recorded for each day, which further emphasizes the intensity of their association with their delinquent friends. And for each visit, 88.3% of the study respondents admitted they stayed for over thirty minutes. These observations aside, as much as 85% respondents responded in affirmative when the question was put as to whether or not friends sometimes influenced their decisions. But it took 78.3% respondents to admit that their engagement in delinquent behaviour was as a result of influences that emanated from friends and other peers. Most inmates observed that more intimate association with their friends best explains why and how they acquired delinquent skills and the related behaviour patterns. Their conviction and subsequent admission to the correctional institute therefore reflected transfer of delinquent skills through association. Sociologically, the findings here suggest there is relationship between interactions, particularly frequent ones and the likelihood to acquire attitudes of people with whom interactions are forged. When such people are good-hearted and law abiding citizens, analogous behavioural patterns are learned. The same can be said of interactions involving delinquent people.

The hypothesis for this study is that the involvement of inmates of the Ghana Borstal Institute in delinquent acts is a result of their association with delinquent friends. The observed frequencies for statistical testing of this

Table 5. Chi square (X^2) test statistics of hypothesis.

Response	Observed freq (O)	Expected freq (E)	(O – E)	(O – E) ²	(O – E) ² /E
Yes	47	30	17	287	9.63
No	13	30	-17	287	9.63
Total	60	60	0		19.26

Source: Field data.

hypothesis were derived from inmates' response to the question whether their involvement in delinquent acts is a result of their frequent interaction with other delinquent friends. Of the 60 respondents, 47 (78.9%) affirmed this and the remaining 13 (21.7%) did not. See Table 5 for testing of hypothesis using Chi Square Goodness-of-Fit testing technique.

The statistical testing of the relationship between involvement in delinquent acts and association with other delinquent friends as shown in Table 5 reveals that at a confidence interval of 0.95 (95%) and a degree of freedom (df) of 1, a X^2 - calculated value of 19.26 is derived with the X^2 formulae. On other hand, a X^2 - critical value of 3.84 was derived from the X^2 distribution Table. Since the X^2 - calculated value (19.26) is more than the X^2 - critical value (3.84), the substantive hypothesis is accepted. Thus there is sufficient evidence from the observed data to conclude that the involvement of inmates in the Ghana Borstal Institute in delinquent acts is a result of their association with other delinquent friends.

The study therefore makes strong argument for the notion that, early association with delinquent juveniles predisposes one into acts of deviance. Most of the respondents suggested that they associated with delinquent friends too early in their life. This was rightly interpreted to have contributed tremendously to their influence into delinquency. At theoretical level, this submission validates the notion that the earlier juveniles are exposed to sets of attitudes about delinquency, the more likely it is that they will be influenced to act in delinquent ways. It is very consistent with Differential Association theory. The significance of these findings is that, early association with delinquent friends *enlarges* the route to the deviant underworld.

The data also support Sutherland's principle that delinquency among juveniles is a reflection of excess definitions in favour of the violation of laws. High favourable definition for the violation of law is an impetus, call it predisposing factor, for participation in deviant acts. The study found out that most respondents had an unbridled ego (73.3%), believing they could commit delinquent acts and retreat into an anonymous city setting. This aside, 95.3% of the study respondents revealed they derived satisfaction from the delinquent acts. For Sutherland, a person becomes delinquent because of excess of definition favourable for the

violation of law. To posit Sutherland's formulation in the available evidence, the study suggests that, inmates *brushed aside* the law. They found deficiency in the ability of the law to discourage deviance. The ability of the law to provide severe punishment for breaching the law was put to question. Many respondents observed delinquency was more satisfying and that punishment by the law is inadequate in attempts to neutralize such satisfaction.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The main question for this paper was whether Differential Association was present in the etiological explanation underlying the genesis of delinquent behaviour among inmates of the Ghana Borstal Institute. Specifically, the study sought to find out whether the role of peers or friends in predisposing children into delinquency was significant in the Ghanaian context. On the basis of the findings, it can be suggested that, juveniles who associate extensively with delinquent friends *might* show high level of delinquency than those whose associations with delinquent friends is minimal. Juveniles, when left to the influence of delinquent others, are likely to be delinquent. The degree of likelihood becomes pronounced when such influences occur for a longer time. Conversations here are woven around techniques for committing crimes and other delinquent acts. Friendship choices therefore appear to be closely related with delinquency or non-delinquency.

The main conclusions of the study can be summed up that, the data provide strong support for Edwin Sutherland's differential association theory. The theory demonstrates capacity to explain delinquency among inmates of the Ghana borstal institute. The study also calls for some level of circumspection in the attempts to validate differential association. The study was carried out in an institutionalized delinquent group, the Ghana borstal institute. This is a verified group of delinquent juveniles. It may be that, as suggested by Short (1957), the close relationship between differential association and delinquency is limited to 'seriously delinquent groups' and that, data from non-institutionalized juvenile offenders may not suggest such relationship. Further studies along this line and also among non delinquent juveniles will perhaps help resolve this question.

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