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## A Study on Nigerian and U.S. College Students' Views on Justice Issues

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### **Abstract**

People's views on justice issues are often a function of their socialization, the cultural norms, values and beliefs of their society. Views on justice often vary between nations. The current study explored and compared the views of Nigerian and U.S. college students regarding justice views. Nigeria is a developing nation which has a long history of informal restorative justice practices, but also uses formal government justice agencies to deal with crime. The U.S. is a developed nation which often relies on a formal state administered punitive crime control approach. Based on multivariate analyses, there were significant differences in views between Nigerian and U.S. college students in views on shaming for control crime, seeking revenge, showing mercy, and partnerships between the police and the community.

**Keywords:** Criminal Justice Views; Nigeria; College Students; Restorative Justice

**Nigerian and U.S. College Students' Views on Justice by Elechi *et al*****Introduction**

While crime is a universal issue, how cultures respond to it vary. Some societies use an informal, restorative justice approach, and others use a formal, punitive approach. People's views on justice issues is often a function of their socialization, the cultural norms, values and beliefs of their society. As justice is a socially constructed concept, it often embodies the social and cultural views and values of a group. It follows, therefore, that people who are from communitarian societies are more likely to embrace restorative principles where the primary goal of justice is the healing of victims, the offenders, and the community. Such societies are often egalitarian, and justice-making involves all stakeholders, including the victims, offenders, and other community members. The ultimate goal of justice is the restoration of relationships and social harmony (Bazemore, 2007; Jiang, Lambert, & Jenkins, 2010). Conversely, people who are from societies predicated on individualistic and hierarchical principles seem to defer justice-making to professionals and government agencies. Criminals who violate society's norms and laws do so because they are inherently hedonistic and egoistic. Justice-making in such societies arguably emphasizes punishment intended as retribution and as a deterrent to future deviant behaviors (Bazemore, 2007; Elechi, 2006; Jiang et al., 2010).

This survey was undertaken to determine and compare the views of college students in the Federal Republic of Nigeria (henceforth, Nigeria) and college students in the United States of America (henceforth, the U.S.) regarding justice issues and practices. The goal was to determine if Nigerian students' views about justice issues and practices are consistent with the restorative justice paradigm and also if the views of American students are reflective of the retributive and deterrent justice model which are argued to exist in their respective societies. Cross-cultural research is important. Jowell (1998) pointed out that "the importance and utility to social science of rigorous cross-national measures is incontestable. They help to reveal not only intriguing differences between countries and cultures, but also aspects of one's own country and culture that would be difficult or impossible to detect from domestic data alone" (p. 168). Much of the research on views of crime control has been done using citizens of Western nations, particularly the United States, leading to a myopic world-view of insularity and ethnocentrism (Khan & Unnithan, 2009). Cross-cultural research can further the flow of information across the planet and enhance the understanding of justice views (Cao & Cullen, 2001). There are, therefore, both theoretical and practical reasons for conducting studies on justice views across different nations. Nigeria was selected because it is a large, growing, and important African nation. As Bratton (2004) rightly observed, Nigeria has a significant influence on other African nations due to its size and economic resources, yet relatively little is known about the justice views of Nigerian people. The U.S. was selected as reference nation to compare and contrast the Nigerian justice views. Because this was an exploratory study with limited financial resources, Nigerian and U.S. college students were surveyed.

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### **Literature Review**

Justice views are complex; they vary both between and within nations (Lambert, & Jiang, 2006). Students participating in the study came from two different worlds: Nigeria, a developing nation with a justice system based on British law and African social practices, and the U.S., a highly developed Western nation with a highly formal justice system. As such, the justice views of Nigerian and U.S. students were expected to vary from each other. In the current study, views on shaming for control crime, seeking revenge, showing mercy, and partnerships between the police and the community were reviewed. These are important justice views that have not been fully explored by past studies. Moreover, these views are probably influenced by the social forces in each nation. As noted Chung and Bagozzi (1997), social orientations and practices often influence individuals' views, attitudes, and perceptions, and each cultural group tends to have their own values, views, and norms.

### **Brief Overview of Nigeria and its Common Approaches to Justice**

Nigeria derives its name from the Niger River, the principal river of western Africa, which runs through the nation and other nations in the region. Nigeria is a west African nation with a population of approximately 160 million, making it the most populous country in Africa, with about one in six Africans being Nigerian (World Factbook, 2014a). Although the site of numerous ancient kingdoms, Nigeria's current circumstances are dominated by its more recent past as former British colony. In the late 1800s, the British moved into the area of Nigeria and ultimately made it a colony. Nigeria achieved its independence from Britain on October 1, 1960. Upon independence Nigeria adopted a federal constitution with three semi-autonomous regions, namely the Northern, Western and Eastern regions, which were dominated by the Hausa/Fulani, the Yoruba, and the Igbo ethnic groups, respectively (PBS Newshour, 2014). This post-independence government was short-lived. In 1966, the Nigerian military staged a coup.

The military has dominated Nigerian politics for over thirty of its forty-six years as an independent country (Elechi, Lambert, & Ventura, 2006). In 1998, Nigeria returned to a democratic civilian government (Lewis, 1999). Currently, Nigeria has a civilian government (World Factbook, 2014a). The Nigerian population is young (i.e., 40% under 20 years old) and ethnically diverse. There are more than 250 ethnic groups, but the three major ethnic groups are the Hausa/Fulani, Igbos, and Yoruba, constituting 68% of the Nigerian population (Bamgbose, 2002; PBS Newshour, 2014). Approximately, 45% of the Nigerian population is Muslim, 45% is Christian, and the remaining population practices a variety of different religions (Elechi et al., 2006; World Factbook, 2014a). Northern Nigeria is predominantly Muslim, while southern Nigeria is mainly Christian, and the middle belt of Nigeria is of mixed faiths. While the majority of Nigerians live in the rural areas, there has been a significant migration to

**Nigerian and U.S. College Students' Views on Justice by Elechi *et al***

urban areas in the past forty years (Elechi et al., 2006; World Factbook, 2014a). Nigeria is the fifth largest petroleum producer in the world, and a significant portion of Nigeria's oil is exported to the United States. Nevertheless, the majority of Nigerians remain poor. Nigeria's economic decline and political instability are often blamed on inept political leadership, corruption, mismanagement of the economy, and failure of the leadership to harness the bountiful human and natural resources in the country (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2005). Transparency International ranked Nigeria 144<sup>th</sup> out of 177 nations on its governmental corruption perceptions index, which is towards the "highly corrupt" end of the continuum (Transparency International, 2014).

The justice system of Nigeria has been influenced by the informal social control systems of its long past and the British legal system from its colonial days. In pre-colonial Nigeria, crime was considered an offense on the well-being of the group, and the entire group needed to respond to the offender in order to protect the moral codes of the group (Aja, 1997; Ebbe, 2003). The group would decide the best way to respond to a crime, and, except for serious violent crimes, the typical response was community justice involving public shaming, restitution to the victim, and reintegration of the offender back into the group (Aja, 1997; Ebbe, 2003). Often, families were held responsible for the wrongdoing of their members (Aja, 1997; Lambert, Elechi, & Jiang, 2010). Under British colonial rule, a more formalized and punitive justice system took hold (Ebbe, 2003). The British formed a formal and centralized police force, criminal courts, and penal institutions (Lambert et al., 2010). This was done by the British to control the Nigerian local population. Onyeozili (2005) contended that "with the advent of colonialism came the distortion of the traditional institutions and values which had from time immemorial sustained harmonious relationship, peace, and security of lives and property in the pre-colonial African communities" (p. 33). After becoming an independent nation, Nigeria continued to use the centralized justice system. The formal legal system was needed as urbanization accelerated. Nevertheless, community-based informal, restorative justice approaches are still used for some crimes, especially for nonviolent offenses. Even in modern times, family control (*Ezi na Uno* in Igbo), including the extended family (*Umunna* in Igbo) is important in Nigeria for crime control (Okereafoezeke, 2003). Some community justice approaches are due to rising crime problem and a lack of an effective government criminal justice response.

Crime is a serious problem in Nigeria (Elechi et al., 2006; Odumodu, 1999). In a survey of households in Lagos, the largest city in Nigeria, about 70% indicated they were worried about becoming a victim of crime (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2005). Even though crime is seen as a pressing problem, it is important to note that "the vast majority of Nigerians, despite all temptations and pressures, live generally law-abiding lives" (Marenin & Reisig, 1995, p. 514). The police are a part of the government efforts to deal with crime. Since 1972, there has only been the single national Nigeria Police Force (Alemika, 1988). This police force is modeled after the British policing system but is under-trained, under-funded, under-staffed, and under-equipped (Lambert et al., 2010; Oluwaniya, 2011). Furthermore, the Nigerian police's response to the crime problem has been described as being inadequate (Agbibo, 2013). Moreover, the police lack the community support and cooperation because of the general perception in the country

that the Nigerian police are authoritarian, corrupt, and incompetent (Elechi, 2004). For example, among surveyed Nigerian college students, the majority that the police acted too quickly, were corrupt, treated people unfairly, and used excessive force (Alemika, 1988). Due to the failure of the police to address the crime problem adequately, some Nigerian communities have formed vigilante groups to protect themselves and their property (Baker, 2002).

The government courts are based on the English court system. The Nigerian courts are not much more effective than are the police (Elechi, 2006). The Nigerian criminal courts are extremely slow and inefficient. For many, if not most, criminal cases in Nigeria, there are long delays (Elechi, 1999). The correctional institutions have problems as well. The Nigerian government's frequent use of imprisonment as a response to crime has resulted in the overcrowding of Nigerian prisons (Alemika, 1993). Furthermore, there is a high degree of recidivism among sentenced offenders released prison (Adelola, 1988; Lambert et al., 2010). Like the police, the criminal court and prison officials are viewed as inept and corrupt by many Nigerians (Elechi, 1999; Elechi et al., 2006; Lambert et al., 2010). Elechi (1999) contended the corruption and lack of concern by many criminal justice agents have led to an unfair situation where crime victims feel victimized twice, once by the offender and again by the official criminal justice system.

The problems with the Nigerian formal criminal justice system of social control have led to the distrust of the formal system (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2005). As formal control mechanisms have failed to deal with the crime problem, there has been a resurgence of use of informal crime control efforts. Many local communities still use a traditional community-based restorative justice model to deal with crime and offenders (Adeyemi, 1990). The informal system attempts to restore the harm done by criminal acts by attempting to address the harm done to the victim by using restoration as much as possible. Attempts are also made to restore the community harmony affected by the criminal acts. A major goal of the community-based justice approach is to use shaming to transform the offender to become a conforming member of the community. Simply put, the Nigerian indigenous informal justice approaches are community-based, human-centered, and employ restorative and transformative principles for conflict resolution (Elechi, 1999). In addition, the community justice approach relies more on partnerships between local citizens and the police to deal more effectively with offenders outside the formal legal system (Lambert, Wu, Elechi, & Jiang, 2012).

### **Brief Overview of the U.S. and its Common Approaches to Justice**

The U.S. is a country in North America with a population of approximately 300 million. It was a former British colony that declared its independence in 1776. The U.S. is now a federal constitutional republic comprised of 50 states and a federal government (World

**Nigerian and U.S. College Students' Views on Justice by Elechi *et al***

Factbook, 2014b). As compared to Nigeria, the political structure in the U.S. has been much more stable. It is an industrialized nation and, as compared to many nations in the world, is wealthy (International Monetary Fund, 2008). The population is 66% White, non-Hispanic; however, due to a long history of large scale immigration from many countries, the U.S. is ethnically and culturally diverse (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). The dominant religion is Christianity (76%), with many different denominations (The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 2008). The U.S. population, on average, is older than the Nigerian population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013).

Crime is seen as problem in the U.S. (Lambert et al., 2010; Scheingold, 2010). As compared to other Western industrial nations, there is a high rate of violent crimes in the U.S. (NationMaster, 2014). There is also a fair degree of fear of crime (Weitzer & Kurbin, 2004). The U.S. tends to rely on a formal, government-operated system to deal with crime. The U.S. has patterned its justice control approach after those in Europe, particularly Britain. Rojek (1996) pointed out that “Western society emphasized the fallen nature of man, the concept of original sin, and Freudian notion of an unconscious libidinal force that seemed to necessitate the need for strong, external social constraints” (p. 236). One part of this formal justice system is the police. Early policing in the U.S. was influenced by the British; however, over time, four general levels of law enforcement agencies developed, municipal/local, county/sheriff, state, and federal. There is no single centralized police force in the U.S. There are over 18,000 police agencies and just fewer than one million law enforcement officers in the U.S. (University at Albany, 2013). Thus, law enforcement in the U.S. is highly decentralized. There is less corruption in the in the U.S., which ranked 19<sup>th</sup> out of 177 nations on Transparency International’s corruption perceptions index (Transparency International, 2014). Compared to Nigerian police, U.S. police are seen as more effective (Lambert et al., 2012). In general, the literature suggests the majority of the U.S. population has a favorable view of the police (Sims, Hooper, & Peterson, 2002); however, there appears to be a degree of distrust of the police by some minority residents (Tyler, 2001; Tyler & Hou, 2002).

Formal criminal courts are another part of the justice approach in the U.S. The courts formal and operate under the guidance of the law. Criminal courts are also decentralized and are administered at the local, county, state, and federal level (Lambert et al., 2010). In recent times, there has been an increase in the number of criminal cases handled by the courts. For example, from 1994 to 2000, there was an increase of 34% in the number of criminal cases heard by the federal courts (Urban Institute Press, 2001). Correctional agencies are another part of the justice system. The U.S. relies very heavily on correctional control for dealing with crime and criminal offenders. In the U.S., almost forty billion dollars is spent annually to house approximately one and one half million prisoners (University at Albany, 2013). Overall, the U.S. tends to be viewed as a formal punitive nation in how it handles criminal offenders (Cullen, Pealer, Fisher, Applegate, & Santana, 2002). With an incarceration rate of 716 per 100,000 in 2007, the U.S. had the highest rate of people under criminal incarceration in the world. The next nearest nation was Russia with a rate of 475 per 100,000. Nigeria had a much lower rate of 32 per 100,000 (Walmsley, 2013).

Moreover, although both the U.S. and Nigeria retain the death penalty, the U.S. executes far more offenders per capita than does Nigeria. In fact, the U.S. is listed at one of the top five nations in the world for executions for the years of 2005 to 2013 (Death Penalty Information Center, 2014).

While the justice approach in the U.S. tends to rely on formal, legalistic, and punitive approaches, it would not be accurate to state that there is not a large scale push to use community-based approaches in dealing with crime and offenders (Sampson, Raudenbush, & Earls, 1997). For example, there have been initiatives for greater use of restorative justice, reintegrative shaming, community policing, and greater partnerships with the police and community-based treatment services (Braithwaite, 1989, 2002; Lambert et al., 2010; Rhine, Mathews, Sampson, & Daley, 2003; Van Ness & Strong, 1997). These alternative justice approaches, however, have not been used on a wide-scale as compared to formal, legalistic justice approaches. While justice approaches do vary across the nation and new approaches are being tried, the dominant justice approach in the U.S. appears to be the formal, legalistic retributive system. Bazemore (2007) noted that “public discourse appeared to shift to rhetoric that assumed that punishment was the equivalent of justice. On the one hand, if asked to define ‘justice,’ most Americans use words such as fairness, similar or equal treatment, lack of discrimination, due process, and equal opportunity. Yet, when asked what is meant when we hear that someone has been ‘brought to justice,’ we inevitably think first of punishment – often severe punishment” (p. 652).

### **Research Focus**

There has been limited research on justice views in Nigeria, and even less cross-national research on justice views of Nigerians and U.S. citizens. The research focus was to compare and contrast the views on shaming for control crime, seeking revenge, showing mercy, and partnerships between the police and the community between Nigerian and U.S. citizens. These justice views, while important, have not been regularly studied, particularly among Nigerian citizens. Because this was an exploratory study with limited financial resources, college students were surveyed. College students, especially Nigerian college students, are probably from more affluent families, and as such, may have different views than those in the general population. Moreover, the students surveyed were from one part of Nigeria – the two universities whose students were surveyed were from the southeastern part of the country. This affects the generalizability of the results. Nigerian college students, however, will probably have a greater say in justice issues in their nation than others with less political and economic power.

As previously noted, justice views do not form in a vacuum. They often reflect the values, economic and social conditions, and technological development of a particular

**Nigerian and U.S. College Students' Views on Justice by Elechi *et al***

society. Since both nations have been influenced to a degree by their history as former British colonies and both nations operate formal justice systems, there may be some similarities in views between Nigerian and U.S. students. Conversely, Nigeria and the U.S. have developed their own unique cultures which probably have led to difference in views. In the U.S., a formal, legalistic, and often punitive justice approach is often used. In Nigeria, there are two justice approaches, which often are in conflict with one another – the official government-run one and a traditional, informal community-run one. Okereafoezeke (2002) noted that:

Nigeria's pluralistic justice systems have caused four main problems in the country. First, social, cultural, political, and economic problems and difficulties arise from the simultaneous maintenance and attempted management of the competing justice systems. Second, the average Nigerian does not nor is he or she given an opportunity to appreciate the conflicts and interactions between the competing systems of law and justice. Third, because of the often unnecessary duplication and competition between native and foreign justice systems, each system tends to produce neutralizing effects on the alternative methods of justice processing and social control. Fourth, most Nigerians are alienated from the English justice system, which is the dominant system in Nigeria, because its origin, history, experiences, and contextual roots differ from those of most Nigerians. . . . There is significant confusion resulting from the British colonial legacy of plural justice (p. 12).

It is unclear if and how Nigerian and U.S. students may differ in their views on shaming for control crime, seeking revenge, showing mercy, and partnerships between the police and the community.

**Method**

A survey of a convenience sample of students at two Nigerian universities and one in the U.S. was undertaken. Because convenience sampling was used, the results apply only to those surveyed. The two Nigerian universities were metropolitan public universities offering undergraduate, master, and terminal degrees, had an enrollment of about 16,000 students each, and were located in the states of Ebonyi and Abia. Both these states are located in the southern part of Nigeria. The U.S. university was a public institution located in the Midwest and had an enrollment slightly below 20,000. At the two Nigerian universities, undergraduate students in social science courses were asked to complete the survey voluntarily during class time. At the U.S. university, undergraduate students in 15 courses were asked to complete the survey during class time. The courses at the three universities represented a wide array of majors and included classes required by all majors. The survey was explained, and it was emphasized both verbally and in writing, that the survey was voluntary. Students were asked not to complete the survey if they had done so in another class. It was estimated that over 95% of the students present completed the survey. For the Nigerian universities, a total of 274 usable surveys were returned. For the U.S. university, a total of 484 usable surveys were returned. A grand total of 758 surveys were used in this

study.

In terms of gender for the overall group of participants, 54% were women and 46% were men. The median age of all the respondents was 22, and the mean age was 23.14, with a standard deviation of 5.63. For the entire group, 14% were freshmen, 16% were sophomores, 33% were juniors, and 37% were seniors. There was a similar breakdown of gender and age between the two groups; however, Nigerian students were more likely to be juniors and seniors.

The participants were asked to respond to 18 Likert statements reflecting various justice views. These statements are presented in Table 1 and were answered using a five-point response scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The percentages of responses to these 18 statements were analyzed, along with bivariate tests to see if Nigerian and U.S. students differed in their justice views. Finally, multivariate analysis was conducted with each of the 18 statements as dependent variables. Because the dependent variable was measured at the ordinal level, an Ordered Ordinal regression model was estimated. Gender, age, academic level, importance of religion in a person's life, and nationality were also used in the multivariate analysis. Gender, age, academic level, and importance of religion have been linked to views on crime, criminals, punishment, and justice (Cao & Zhao, 2005; Elechi et al., 2006; Lambert et al., 2010). Gender was measured as a dichotomous variable representing whether the respondent was a woman (coded 0) or man (coded 1). Age was measured in continuous years. Academic level was measured using a dichotomous variable representing in the respondent was a lower level (first and second year, coded 0) or an upper level (third and fourth year, coded 1) student. Respondents were asked the extent that religion had played in their lives. Approximately 5% indicated not at all (coded as 1), 23% indicated not much (coded as 2), 30% indicated a fair amount (coded as 3), and 41% indicated a great deal (coded as 4). Nationality of the participant was coded as 0=U.S. and 1=Nigeria.

### **Findings**

Table 1 presents the percentage responses for 18 Likert statements reflecting various justice views. While the majority in both groups, Nigerian participants were more likely to agree that both social disapproval and helping offenders understand their wrongdoing is an effective method to reduce recidivism (60% versus 51%). Similarly, Nigerian students were more likely to agree that formal social control did not result in a sense of shame and honor among offenders (32% versus 16%). Interestingly, U.S. students were less likely to agree that stigmatization (casting the offender from the social collective because they were seen as evil) was an effective way to reduce reoffending (21% versus 49%). The vast majority of both groups disagreed that the family of the offender should be punished as well as the offender (90% for both groups). The vast majority of Nigerian and U.S. participants indicated that their behavior was

**Nigerian and U.S. College Students' Views on Justice by Elechi *et al***

strongly shaped by significant others, such as parents and friends (81% and 79% respectively). Conversely, Nigerian students were more likely to feel that crime was more shameful in stable communities, among older individuals, and among women as compared to their U.S. counterparts (44%, 65%, and 69% versus 22%, 52%, and 44% respectively). Interestingly, both groups were similar in their views rich people were more likely to fear shame than were poor people (61% Nigerian students and 60% U.S. students). Nigerian participants were higher in their agreement that society has a right to seek revenge on offenders and that showing mercy is more important than seeking revenge (70% and 61% versus 38% and 39%, respectively). There were also similarities and differences in views on the role of the police. The vast majority of Nigerian and U.S. students indicated that there should be community input in how the police operate, cooperation between the community and police prevents crime, and to prevent crime there needs to be a partnership between the community and the police (83%, 92%, and 86% versus 76%, 89%, and 80%, respectively). Likewise, the majority of both groups agreed that information from citizens to the police and from the police to citizens improves crime prevention (79% and 76% versus 69% and 65%, respectively). Nigerian students were more likely than U.S. students to agree that decision-making on crime issues rests with both community leaders and the police (61% versus 48%). Finally, Nigerian participants were more likely to disagree that the police participated at local community meetings than were U.S. students (63% versus 27%).

Table 1

*Views on Restorative Justice Items (Percentages Reported)*

Items	Nigeria (n = 274)					U.S. (n = 484)				
	SD	D	U	A	SA	SD	D	U	A	SA
The combination of disapproval of the offender's wrongful deeds and helping them understand their wrongdoing is an effective mechanism to prevent an offender from re-offending.	4	16	21	42	18	2	12	35	44	7
Controlling people by law and punishment and they will avoid wrongdoing but will have no sense of honor and shame.	8	28	32	23	9	3	28	53	14	2
Stigmatization (an ongoing process of degradation in which the offender is branded as an evil person and cast out of society) is an effective mechanism to prevent an offender from re-offending.	12	18	20	37	12	13	37	29	19	2
When a person commits a crime, not only should that person be punished but their family should be as well.	66	24	6	2	1	56	34	6	4	0
My behavior is strongly influenced by significant others such as my parents, family members, peers, and friends.	9	4	6	34	47	2	10	9	45	34
Crime is only shameful in stable communities.	16	22	18	28	16	11	47	20	21	1

May 2016

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Older people are more likely to fear shame than younger people.	4	18	13	30	35	2	28	16	44	8
Rich people are more likely to fear shame than poor people.	14	18	8	34	27	4	21	15	44	16
Women are more likely to fear shame and embarrassment than men.	6	10	15	42	27	4	25	27	39	5
Society has the right to seek revenge on criminals.	7	16	8	45	25	10	26	26	30	8
Showing mercy is more important than seeking revenge.	7	10	22	42	19	4	22	35	32	7
The community should have input on how the police operate.	3	6	8	53	30	1	9	14	60	16
Cooperation between the police and the community is important to prevent crime.	4	3	1	29	63	1	4	7	56	33
In order to prevent crime, there must be a partnership between the community and the police.	4	5	4	44	42	1	8	12	66	14
The flow of information from citizens to police about crime and criminals increases police effectiveness at crime prevention.	4	6	10	45	34	2	4	25	59	10
The flow of information about crime back to citizens from the police improves the ability of citizens to protect themselves.	2	10	13	56	20	1	6	28	62	3
Decision-making on crime issues in the community rests with community leaders and the police.	5	22	11	45	16	1	18	33	46	2
The police generally attend and participate in local community meetings.	22	41	17	16	5	3	24	46	25	2

*Note.* Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding. SD stands for strongly disagree, D stands for disagree, U stands for uncertain, A stands for agree, and SA stands for strongly agree.

For the many of the statements in Table 1, there appeared to be differences between Nigerian and U.S. participants. The Independent t-test was used to determine whether the two groups of respondents were statistically different from one another on their justice views. The results are reported in Table 2. There was a statistically significant difference between the two groups of respondents on 13 of the 18 statements. Nigerian students were more likely to agree that stigmatization was an effective method to deal with offenders, that crime was more shameful in stable communities, older people were more likely to fear shame, women were more likely to feel shame, society has a right to seek revenge, showing mercy was more important than revenge, the community should have input on the operation of the police, cooperation between the police and the community was an effective method to prevent crime, there must be a partnership between the community and the police to reduce crime, the flow of information helps the police and citizens, and decision-making on crime issues is shared between

**Nigerian and U.S. College Students' Views on Justice by Elechi *et al***

community and police leaders. Conversely, U.S. participants were more likely to indicate the police attended and participated in local community meetings.

Table 2

*Independent t-test Results*

Item	Nigeria (n = 274)		U.S. (n = 484)		t- value
	mean	SD	mean	SD	
The combination of disapproval of the offender's wrongful deeds and helping them understand their wrongdoing is an effective mechanism to prevent an offender from re-offending.	3.55	1.06	3.42	0.88	-1.73
Controlling people by law and punishment and they will avoid wrongdoing but will have no sense of honor and shame.	2.96	1.08	2.85	0.77	-1.59
Stigmatization (an ongoing process of degradation in which the offender is branded as an evil person and cast out of society) is an effective mechanism to prevent an offender from re-offending.	3.19	1.22	2.59	0.99	-7.05**
When a person commits a crime, not only should that person be punished but their family should be as well.	1.49	0.82	1.57	0.76	1.35
My behavior is strongly influenced by significant others such as my parents, family members, peers, and friends.	4.07	1.22	3.98	1.02	-1.11
Crime is only shameful in stable communities.	3.07	1.34	2.54	0.99	-6.01**
Older people are more likely to fear shame than younger people.	3.74	1.22	3.28	1.04	-5.35**
Rich people are more likely to fear shame than poor people.	3.42	1.40	3.48	1.10	0.60
Women are more likely to fear shame and embarrassment than men.	3.74	1.13	3.17	0.99	-7.06**
Society has the right to seek revenge on criminals.	3.65	1.21	2.99	1.12	-7.51**
Showing mercy is more important than seeking revenge.	3.57	1.11	3.14	0.99	-5.28**
The community should have input on how the police operate.	4.02	0.94	3.81	0.84	-3.06**
Cooperation between the police and the community is important to prevent crime.	4.44	0.96	4.16	0.77	-4.39**
In order to prevent crime, there must be a partnership between the community and the police.	4.16	1.00	3.84	0.79	-4.89**
The flow of information from citizens to police about crime and criminals increases police effectiveness at crime prevention.	4.00	1.04	3.70	0.78	-4.22**
The flow of information about crime back to citizens from the police improves the ability of citizens to protect themselves.	3.82	0.92	3.59	0.70	-3.65**
Decision-making on crime issues in the community rests with	3.46	1.16	3.30	0.84	-2.01*

May 2016

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community leaders and the police.

The police generally attend and participate in local community meetings.	2.40	1.13	2.99	0.82	7.79**
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*Note.* SD stands for standard deviation. Degrees of freedom ranged from 701 to 756.

\*  $p \leq .05$ \*\*  $p \leq .01$ 

Ordinal Ordered Regression was computed with each of the statements in Table 2 with the gender, age, academic level (i.e., lower level and upper level), religious saliency (importance religion played in their live), and nationality of the respondent as independent variables. Nationality was a statistically significant predictor for 17 of the 18 statements. Except for three statements, Nigerian students were higher in their agreement than were the U.S. participants on the statements. U.S. students were slightly more likely to feel that the police participated in local community meetings. There was no significant difference in views that both the offender and the offender's family should be punished. The vast majority of students in both groups disagreed with this statement. Religious saliency was a significant predictor for two statements. The greater the self-reported role of religion in the respondent's life, the more likely he or she felt showing mercy was more important than seeking revenge and that police attended local community meetings.

Academic level had a significant association with six of the statements. Upper level students on average reported greater support for punishing both the offender and his or her family, that rich people feared shame more than did the poor, and that information exchange helped both citizens and the police. Conversely, among upper level students, support dropped for showing mercy rather than seeking revenge and that the community should have input in how the police operate. Age was a significant predictor of seven of the statements. As age increased, so did agreement with statements that older individuals feared shame more than younger people, that the community should have input into policing, that police and community cooperation would help prevent crime, that partnerships between the community and the police were necessary to prevent crime, that information from citizens to the police reduced crime, and that police and community leaders shared in the crime control decision-making. Oppositely, increases in age were associated for reduced agreement that formal crime control would not result in a sense of honor or shame among offenders. Finally, gender had a significant relationship with eight of the statements. Men were more likely to feel that older people feared shame more than younger people, that society had a right to seek revenge on criminals, that the flow of information from citizens to police increased crime prevention, that decision-making rested with both community and police leaders, and that the police generally participated in community meetings. Women, however, were more likely to feel that showing mercy was important and that the police should

**Nigerian and U.S. College Students' Views on Justice by Elechi *et al***

have community input.

Table 3

*Ordinal Regression Results*

Item	Gender	Age	Acad	Rel Sal	Nation
The combination of disapproval of the offender's wrongful deeds and helping them understand their wrongdoing is an effective mechanism to prevent an offender from re-offending.	-0.39**	0.02	-0.24	-0.05	0.51**
Controlling people by law and punishment and they will avoid wrongdoing but will have no sense of honor and shame.	0.07	-0.03*	0.04	-0.14	0.29**
Stigmatization (an ongoing process of degradation in which the offender is branded as an evil person and cast out of society) is an effective mechanism to prevent an offender from re-offending.	0.11	0.00	0.16	0.12	1.11**
When a person commits a crime, not only should that person be punished but their family should be as well.	0.23	-0.02	0.40**	0.07	-0.27
My behavior is strongly influenced by significant others such as my parents, family members, peers, and friends.	0.13	0.00	0.17	0.06	0.58**
Crime is only shameful in stable communities.	0.18	-0.02	0.14	-0.09	0.83**
Older people are more likely to fear shame than younger people.	0.30*	0.05**	0.06	-0.03	0.85**
Rich people are more likely to fear shame than poor people.	0.21	-0.02	0.38**	0.13	0.36**
Women are more likely to fear shame and embarrassment than men.	-0.13	0.01	-0.02	0.06	1.08**
Society has the right to seek revenge on criminals.	0.64**	-.01	0.00	0.06	1.44**
Showing mercy is more important than seeking revenge.	-0.57**	0.01	-0.36*	0.22**	0.89**
The community should have input on how the police operate.	-0.66**	0.04**	-0.70**	-0.08	0.90**
Cooperation between the police and the community is important to prevent crime.	-0.01	0.05**	-0.27	0.04	1.05**
In order to prevent crime, there must be a partnership between the community and the police.	-0.10	0.06**	0.30	0.10	0.84**
The flow of information from citizens to police about crime and criminals increases police effectiveness at crime prevention.	0.49**	0.05**	0.50**	0.03	0.70**
The flow of information about crime back to citizens from the police improves the ability of citizens to protect themselves.	.04	.02	0.44*	0.03	0.62**
Decision-making on crime issues in the community rests with community leaders and the police.	0.31*	0.05**	-0.26	0.08	0.97**
The police generally attend and participate in local community meetings.	0.48**	0.00	-0.04	0.17*	-1.62**

*Note.* The independent variables are reported in the rows and the dependent variables are reported in the rows. Gender measured as 0 = female and 1 = male. Age measured in continuous years. Acad stands for academic level and was measured as 0 = lower level (freshman and sophomore) and 1 = upper level (junior and senior). Rel Sal stands for religious saliency (the importance religion played in the respondent's life and was coded as 1 = not at all, 2 = not much, 3 = a fair amount, and 4 = a great deal. Nation represented the nationality of the respondent and was coded as 0 = U.S. and 1 = Nigeria.

\*  $p \leq .05$ .      \*\*  $p \leq .01$ .

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

There are two major findings from this study. First, there are significant differences in views between Nigerian and U.S. college students in views on shaming for control crime, seeking revenge, showing mercy, and partnerships between the police and the community. Second, Nigerian respondents were mixed in their justice views. In the multivariate analysis, there was a statistically significant difference between Nigerian and U.S. participants on 17 of the 18 statements. The significant differences are probably due in part to the cultural differences between the two countries. As previously mentioned, the literature suggests that cultural orientations influence individuals' views, attitudes, and perceptions, and cultural groups have their own values, views, and norms (Yick, 2000). Differences in culture are likely to lead to difference in views dealing with crime and justice (Cao & Cullen, 2001; Elechi et al., 2006; Lambert et al., 2010). While crime is universal, justice views are not, as was the case in this study. In general, the Nigerian students were more supportive of using social shaming and informal social control to prevent crime and to curb reoffending based on the multivariate analysis. This may be due to the past and current uses of informal restorative justice interventions used in Nigeria to deal with many minor and nonviolent crimes. The view of using shaming and other informal responses to crime may also be due to frustration of government justice agencies being unable to curb a rising crime rate. Additionally, as previously indicated, many government criminal justice agencies are under-funded, under-equipped, and under-trained, which may result in less trust by the public for them to deal with crime effectively. Furthermore, because many employees are underpaid, many Nigerian criminal justice organizations are corrupt (Elechi, 1999). This may have resulted in some of the Nigerian students placing more faith in the informal methods of dealing with crime and offenders than formal ones.

In the multivariate analysis, Nigerian participants were more likely to agree that significant others influenced their behaviors. This may be in part because Nigeria is a still a collective society where family is important (Ajuwon & Brown, 2012; Lambert et al., 2010). The U.S. is a more individualistic culture (Jiang et al., 2010). In the multivariate analysis, there was no difference between the two groups of students in the view that the family of offenders should be punished for the crimes of offenders – the vast majority of all students disagreed. Nigerian students, however, might be more likely to blame the offender's family and expect them to feel ashamed by the actions of their family member than would U.S. students in their more individualistic culture. This is another area that needs to be researched.

Nigerian students also were more likely to agree that the effects of shaming differed between different types of individuals. The view that shaming differs between different groups of people probably was the result of social values. For example, Nigerian students were more likely to feel that women feared shaming more men. Nigeria is a

**Nigerian and U.S. College Students' Views on Justice by Elechi *et al***

patriarchal society (Sesay & Odebiyi, 1998). Religion is also important in Nigeria. The forms of Christianity and Islam practiced by the majority of citizens reinforce the subservient position of women in Nigerian society (Elechi et al., 2006; Lambert, Jiang, Elechi, Khondaker, Wang, & Baker, 2014; World Factbook, 2014a). These and other cultural forces may lead to a view that women would be more ashamed of offending than would men. In the same vein that expectations that women would be more conforming than men, it will also be expected that older and richer individuals should have more at stake and as such lack of conformity could be costly socially. It is arguable that older and richer individuals have invested more in their society and would do more to protect their social standing. And like in other societies, one's social standing has both political and economic consequences.

It makes sense that Nigerian students would feel that people in more stable communities would be more shamed than would be the case for offenders in unstable communities. There are communities in which the formal government criminal justice agencies and informal traditional ones are no longer in control. In these areas, crime, especially violent crime is a growing problem. As Olukoya (2003) noted, "Flipping through Nigerian newspapers, one frequently comes across headlines like: 'Police, Robbers in Bloody Gun Duel', 'Robbers on Rampage Kill Police Chief' and 'Police, Robbers in Midday War - Five Robbers Killed'" (p. 1).

Interestingly, Nigerian participants were higher in their support for revenge on criminals than were U.S. students, but Nigerian were also higher in their agreement that showing mercy is more important than seeking revenge compared to their U.S. counterparts. These contrasting views may be a reflection on the cultural forces at work in Nigeria and that Nigeria is a complex and unique country. Nigerian participants could be torn between the frustration with a growing crime problem and their past history of dealing with many nonviolent crimes in a restorative justice manner to bring the offender back into the community. In addition, the formal government approach to crime is to control and punish offenders. Okereafoezeke (2002) pointed out that these pluralistic systems cause confusion and frustration for many Nigerians, which may account for the finding here.

In the multivariate analyses, Nigerian students were more likely to desire greater partnership between the police and the community. One explanation is that the current state of the police is poor, and this resulted in Nigerian participants to feel that greater interaction between the police and citizens would result in a reduction of crime and an improvement in police services. As previously indicated, crime is rising and the police are seen as corrupt and inept. Sir Mike Mbama Okiro, a past Inspector-General of the Nigeria Police Force, noted that "our focus shall be to reverse the disdain and contempt with which Policemen are held within the Nigerian society. . . . There is no gainsaying the fact that Police public image is now at a low ebb" (Nigeria Police Force, 2007, p. 1). The Nigerian students in this study may be hoping that changes in how the police function would lead to a better and safer community. U.S. students may be less pressured to see a need for change since crime has been generally dropping in their

May 2016

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country since the middle of the 1990s and the police overall are functional and somewhat effective, at least compared to the Nigerian police.

Only on one statement were the U.S. participants significantly higher in their agreement; they were more likely to agree that the police generally attended and participated in local community meetings as compared to their Nigerian fellow students. Community policing is much more common in the U.S. than it is in Nigeria, and is more likely to lead to police attending community meetings. Part of community policing is to interact with community members to prevent crimes. An efficient way to work with community members is to attend and participate in community meetings. Unlike the Nigerian police that are nationalized, U.S. police are fractionalized and most are operated at the local level, and this could result in local pressure to participate in community meetings. It could also be that there are not many community meetings involving the police in Nigeria but there are in the U.S. Perhaps the finding is the result of the fact that the U.S. student are aware that there are community meetings and they just assume the police participate. This is another area that warrants additional future study.

The second salient finding was that neither Nigerian nor U.S. students were monolithic in their justice views. Among each group, there were significantly differing views. Thus, not only were there cross-national differences in views, but there were also intra-national differences as well. This is probably because there may be an umbrella culture for each nation, there are also sub-cultures and different groups that likely vary to some degree in their justice views. This may explain why in the multivariate analyses that the personal characteristics played a role, some more than others, as a significant predictor. While not the focus of the current study, the finding that gender was a significant predictor on 8 statements suggests that gender may be important in shaping the justice views of Nigerian and U.S. participants. This is an area that needs to be further examined in future research studies.

As with many studies, the current research had shortcomings. It was a single study of college students. As such, the results need to be interpreted with caution and cannot be generalized to the entire population or even other academic institutions. There is a need to survey not only college students at other academic institutions but also the general public in both nations to determine whether the results can be replicated. More research is required before concrete conclusions can be drawn. More detailed and a wide array of justice focused items should be used. For example, views on and level of support for restorative justice and retributive justice could be developed and studied. Some aspects of how to respond to crime may be similar among people in both nations and other aspects may significantly differ. The ethnic status of the respondent should be controlled for in the multivariate analysis in future studies. There was no measure for ethnic status (i.e., majority/minority status) in the current study. In addition, while a

**Nigerian and U.S. College Students' Views on Justice by Elechi *et al***

measure for religious saliency was included, religious denomination should be measured and included in future research. There were several explanations presented for the findings, and these explanations need to be empirically tested. Finally, future research should examine other factors that help explain the differing justice views than those used in the current study. In sum, it is clear that far more research in this area is needed.

In closing, different types of justice views are likely the result of many forces, including cultural socialization. Angel and Thoits (1987) argued that views and attitudes of different groups are windows to the salient values of the particular group. Cross-national research provides a window to exploring how various justice views differ between nations. The significant results of this study suggest that culture is important in helping shape the views of Nigerian and U.S. college students. Nigeria is a relatively new and developing country with many social problems, including a rising crime rate and a formal justice system with a myriad of problems. Moreover, there are two competing criminal justice systems in Nigeria. The formal one run by the government was forced up the Nigerian people with little input from the community during the nation's colonial past. The informal one has a longer history but has been damaged by a population shift in Nigeria and a lack of support by past Nigerian governments. This has likely lead to mixed views among Nigerian students. This is probably a reflection of the complexity and diversity found in Nigeria.

The boundaries of Nigeria were created by the British who focused more on geography than common history of the people who are now residents of Nigeria. As Okereafoezeke (2002) pointed out that "Nigeria is an enormously complex country with some 120 million citizens, over 250 nations and ethnic groups, diverse religions, cultures, social lifestyles, languages, and native justice systems, among other differences" (p. XI). Even while Nigeria is a highly fractured society with many different competing sub-cultural groups, the majority of wish the nation to remain intact (Bratton, 2004). Most Nigerians give high marks to the federal government but also express a desire for traditional local rule (Bratton, 2004). In a sense, it is paradoxical nation. Bratton (2004) wrote, "We find that Nigerians perceive pervasive social conflicts - especially along inter-communal lines - a rise from mixed cultural and economic sources. They give their current, elected government relatively high remarks for managing such conflicts, but, paradoxically, insist that they prefer informal, community-based modes of solving disputes" (p. 35). The current study is, however, far from conclusive. This study was a single exploratory study limited in its scope. It probably raised more questions than it answered. It is strongly hoped that the findings from this study will spur further research.

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May 2016

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