

**The Political Ecology of Oil in the Niger Delta:
Understanding Youth Violence from the Perspectives of
Youths**

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By

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Declaration

I, Modesta Tochi Alozie, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Abstract

The Niger Delta is an oil-producing region in Southern Nigeria. It is rich in biodiversity and has abundant petroleum resources. Increased demand for Nigeria's low sulphur oil shortly after Shell D'Arcy discovered oil in the Niger Delta in 1956 transformed Nigeria, previously an agrarian economy, into the largest oil producer in the continent of Africa. Today, oil dominates Nigeria's export and contributes significantly to its foreign exchange earnings.

With the commercialisation of oil in 1958, the federal government introduced new institutional mechanisms which set the stage for Nigeria's fiscal centralism. These include a nationalised oil company (NNPC) established in 1971 and the distributable pool account introduced in 1966, subsequently renamed the federation account in 1979. In contrast to the fiscal arrangement in pre-oil Nigeria, these institutional mechanisms gave the federal government the legitimacy to retain a large proportion of the profits generated from the oil industry. But while the federal government and oil companies accumulate enormous profits from oil, violence became a part of everyday life in the Niger Delta.

To a significant degree, the linkages between oil and violence in the Niger Delta is connected to discontent over the oil revenue distribution pattern, which has led to the emergence of violent groups in which youths, and male youths, in particular, are the main actors. These violent groups, known locally as 'militants', are resisting the oil companies, local leaders, and the federal government who they blame for their experiences of violence. The media and official discourses characterise these violent groups as criminals and problematic and blame them for violence. So far, there has been little systematic effort to give these youths a voice in discussions about violence in the Niger Delta.

Using a political ecology approach which combines Bourdieu's thinking tools-(habitus, field and capital)-with Connell's concept of hegemonic

masculinity, this thesis seeks to understand petro-violence from the perspective of youths but male youths in particular. This means an analysis that prioritises how young people perceive, explain and justify their relationship with violence. The arguments in this thesis resulted mainly from 5 events of focus groups and in-depth interview with 84 youths mostly from two ethnic groups (Ijaw and Ogoni) who have experienced oil-related violence in both direct and indirect forms. It also includes in-depth interviews with 42 institutional representatives who have relevant knowledge about youth violence in the Niger Delta.

The findings highlight the role of the political ecology of oil as well as institutional and social factors in shaping young people's experiences of violence. Based on these findings, this thesis shifts away from an explanation of youth violence which focuses on youth (mis) behaviour and moves towards an analysis which locates young people's relationship with violence within the broader social structures that contours their lives.

Impact Statement

Policy Impact

By studying the processes that lead to violence in the context of oil exploration in the Niger Delta and how this violence shapes the lives of male youths, this research shares ideas that have direct policy contribution in terms of understanding how to deliver social and environmental sustainability in the context of oil exploration. This policy impact is relevant in Nigeria but also beyond because it relates to the politics of fossil fuel exploration more generally.

Theoretical Impact

This thesis adopts political ecology as the general perspective that helps us to understand how the resource base and resource extraction contribute to shaping youth experiences of violence. In addition, the thesis also combines Bourdieu's thinking tools-habitus, field and capital-with Connell's idea of hegemonic masculinity. Bourdieu's tools help us to understand how violence becomes a part of society by highlighting how the dialectical connection between structure and agency shapes violent practices. The idea of hegemonic masculinity helps us to understand specifically, how the masculine gender structure shapes agency. Combining these theoretical insights to study youth violence is an innovative approach which enriches the political ecology literature by introducing ideas that are new within the literature.

Academic Impact

To extend the impact of this research, I plan to publish research findings in internationally recognised, peer-reviewed academic journals such as 'Antipode', 'Urban Geography', 'International Journal of Sociology' and 'Men and Masculinities'. I will also present my research to other students and academics, and while I have begun this process already, I plan to present soon in several other conferences including the 2nd International Conference on Energy Research and Social Science organised by Elsevier, and in the Energy Transitions Workshop at the Merian Institute, University of Ghana.

Dedication

To Nwokem,
Who understands everything,
Loves consistently,
And supports unconditionally.

To my mother,
Augustina Nkem Alozie
Who created early foundation for academic excellence.
Thank you so much, mum!

To my father
Bernard Munaonyenkwa Alozie
Symbol of courage, wisdom, and forthrightness.

And to all the remarkable women and men whose actions give me hope that
a violence-free world is possible.

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This study has been a stimulating journey, and I would like to thank all the incredible men and women whose guidance, reflection, participation, kindness and encouragement helped me to find my bearing in the course of this research.

In retrospect, I can trace the beginning of this research to my earlier study at the University of Manchester. During this study, I benefited immensely from the expert guidance of Carolyn Abbot who supervised my MSc dissertation on environmental justice in the Niger Delta. In our supervisory meetings, Carolyn often said that I felt the destitution in the Niger Delta too strongly and she would often complain of how my writings easily deviated to human suffering and how it shaped their lives even when it was not the focus of my dissertation. Because of that, Caroline convinced me that doing a PhD in an area I deeply cared about was worth all the effort. She also helped to review my PhD proposal and guided the application process. This early guidance created the possibility to write the kind of thesis that I quite enjoyed, and for this, I am so grateful to Carolyn.

I want to thank my primary supervisor, Professor Vanesa Castan Broto, whom I deeply admire at both professional and personal levels. Vanesa is such an intellectual genius, and her relentless hope in humanity inspires me. I was always struck by Vanesa's exceptionally insightful feedbacks and their peculiar timeliness. Vanesa introduced me to Bourdieu's idea that the social actions with the most serious consequences are often those unintended. While this idea shaped this thesis substantively, it has also stretched into my own everyday life making me very critical of social life in a way I have never been before. I also deeply appreciate Vanesa's authentic and congenial personality which ultimately shaped my supervisory experience and thought me lessons that I hope I never forget. I must admit that Vanesa's comments especially in the early days of this study strongly cautioned against poor performance and brought some slight discomfort.

In one feedback in February 2016, Vanesa wrote, ‘Dear Modesta....flowery and imprecise writings are not allowed’. Later, when I asked for more guidance with analysis in November 2018, she wrote ‘I am really sorry this is not something I can answer directly without having a new draft in front of me...you need to reflect deeply about what insights from the theory will help you to analyse your data...You can do it, Modesta. Trust your analytical capacities! As Chimamanda Ngozie Adichie would say, we must train ourselves to be comfortable with discomfort because sometimes discomfort opens us up to the truth, and to knowledge. And I would add based on my supervisory experience that discomfort can open us up to progress and teach us lessons in perseverance and stamina. Just as Vanesa was critical of poor work, she also valued and applauded my progress. When she read my revised conclusion Chapter, in March 2018, she wrote ‘very good stuff!!!..this is so amazing!!!good job Modesta! and it made me happy to hear how much my writing has improved especially coming from a woman I greatly admire.

Vanesa also made frequent, small observations about other aspects of my life and sometimes it is often the smallest things that make the biggest impact. She easily felt when I was bothered with something, she asked about my love life, asked about my father’s health, complimented my stylishness, laughed graciously at my jokes, invited me to her home, questioned why I cut my hair and pointed out that my dense, full afro threatened her tress. These observations, as small as they might appear made me feel happy because it demonstrated to me that Vanesa valued me, not just as her student but as an individual, and such congenial gesture are not always easy to come by in today’s world of academia. But more importantly, these small observations taught me confidence because to value a person is to teach them to have confidence in themselves. I hope that I take this confidence with me wherever I find myself in the future. Thank you so much, Vanesa.

I also want to thank my secondary supervisor Julian Walker for his unconditional support. Julian shared very insightful comments, asked questions that helped me to clarify my thoughts, provided insights that helped

me find connections between different theoretical ideas, and read drafts. Completing this thesis would not have been possible without this help and for this, I am very grateful.

Outside the academic circle, I want to thank many people whose support immensely facilitated this research. First, I want to thank Micheal Casey-Gillman for doing his administrative job so well, with so much ease, and always with a chortle. I would also like to thank my friend Ayo Sogunro for reading draft amid time constraints, and I hope that his vigilant eyes have eliminated my incorrigible obsession with commas. I greatly appreciate the support of my friends Chinonso Ezenwajiaku and Christopher Ogbunuzo who smiled each time I made frantic requests for technical assistance as if the high frequency of these requests unbothered him. Thank you so much for your seamless friendship, Chris. I want to thank Racheal Valbruns who listened patiently and enthusiastically while I shared ideas about my thesis and Mpigi whose Onugbu soup I relished. Mpigi, your soups had a good effect on this study because it provided me with the energy to work for longer periods especially towards the end when cooking was particularly the last thing I wanted to do. Thank you.

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Table of Contents

Declaration.....	2
Abstract	3
Impact Statement	5
Dedication	6
Acknowledgements.....	7
Table of Contents.....	10
Chapter 1 : Introduction.....	18
1.1 Introduction.....	19
1.2 Why Does (Petro) Violence Matter?.....	22
1.3 Research Question and Methodology	26
1.4 Statement of Key Arguments.....	28
1.5 Structure of the Thesis	29
Chapter 2 : Conceptual Understandings of Violence, Masculinity, Youths and Implications for Social Practice	31
2.1 Introduction.....	31
2.2 The Polysemy of Violence: Contentious Essentialism and Divergent Meanings.....	32
2.2.1 Restrictive Definitions: Violence in Physical/Direct Sense.....	33

2.2.2	Inclusive Definitions- Violence in Structural/Symbolic Sense	36
2.2.3	Definition of Violence Adopted in this Study	41
2.3	Violence as a Multidimensional Concept	41
2.3.1	Different forms of violence and challenges with measuring violence	41
2.3.2	Multi-disciplinary Categorisation of Violence	43
2.3.3	Towards a Political Ecology Perspective on Violence	46
2.4	Violence and Youths: Is Violence a Young male Syndrome?.....	49
2.4.1	Youth as a contested concept-adopting a definition that is reflective of the local context.....	49
2.4.2	(Petro) Violence, Youths and Gender-Locating the Gap.....	51
2.4.3	Bourdieu's 'Thinking Tools': Habitus, Field and Capital	58
2.5	Hegemonic Masculinity, Bourdieu's Tools and Violence: Gender Norms as Crucial Aspect of Habitus.....	67
2.6	Conclusion	78
Chapter 3	Towards a Political Ecology of Oil in Nigeria: Tracing the history of Violence in the Niger Delta	80
3.1	Introduction.....	80
3.2	Situating the Research: Nigeria, a Brief History	82
3.2.1	The Politics of Oil in Nigeria.....	87

3.3	Pre-colonial Resistance and Palm oil Trade in the Niger Delta...	90
3.3.1	King Jaja of Opobo: The Igbo Slave Boy Who Lived with Audacity.....	90
3.3.1	The Akassar You Mi- King Koko’s Resistance.....	99
3.4	Post-Colonial Resistance and Petro-Violence in the Niger Delta	101
3.4.1	Isaac Adaka Boro’ Resistance against the Petrol-complex....	103
3.4.2	Nigerian/Biafra War (1967-1970).....	104
3.4.3	After The Biafra War, Ken Saro Wiwa’s Nonviolent Resistance	106
3.5	The Rise of Youth Violence in the Niger Delta: IYC and the Kaiama Declaration	109
3.5.1	Democracy and the Monetisation of Violence.....	112
3.6	Conclusion	114
Chapter 4	Methodological Stance: Orientations and Reflections.....	115
4.1	From London to Lagos: Arriving in the Niger Delta.....	115
4.2	Discovering the Research Methods	118
4.2.1	Adopting a Social Constructivist/ Interpretivist Epistemology	119
4.2.2	Data Collection and Analysis.....	122

4.3	Limitations and Challenges.....	140
4.4	Conclusion	142
Chapter 5 : Using Bourdieu to Trace the Structural Situation of the Niger Delta: Perspectives from Institutional Actors		
5.1	Introduction.....	143
5.2	Blaming the Youths and Local Leaders: Government Officials at the Federal and Subnational Levels and Staff of Indigenous and IOCs	148
5.2.1	Perspectives from Government Officials at the Federal and Subnational Level	148
5.2.2	Perspectives from Staff of indigenous and IOCs.....	154
5.3	Blaming the State and Oil Companies: Local leaders, Experts and Practitioners, NGOs, and Staff of NDDC and PAP.....	158
5.3.1	Linking Youth Violence and Mal-development/Structural Violence	158
5.3.2	Interview with Local Leaders and Staff of NDDC and PAP .	160
5.3.3	Interview with Experts and Practitioners and NGOs.....	166
5.4	Conclusion	168
Chapter 6 ‘Why We Fight’: An Encounter with Youth Experiences of Violence		
6.1	Introduction.....	170
6.2	Young People’s Experiences of Poor Political Representation .	172

6.3	Young People’s Experiences of Economic Harm.....	187
6.4	Young People’s Experiences of Bodily Harm	197
6.5	Young People’s Experiences of Environmental Harm	203
6.6	Violence, as a Part of Everyday Life	218
6.7	Conclusion	223
Chapter 7	How Experiences of Violence Became a Problem Mostly for Male Youths: Capturing Young Men’s Justifications for Violence and Non-Violence	224
7.1	Introduction.....	224
7.2	Warriorhood Masculine Habitus: A Symbolic Capital in the Ijaw Community Field	225
7.3	Egbesu Spiritual Capital: A Symbolic Capital and a Fuel for Economic Capital in the Ijaw Community Field	237
7.4	Unemployment Undermining Manhood: Violence Recuperating Manhood by Providing Masculine Capital	247
7.4.1	Un/Underemployment and Young men as Providers and Breadwinners	248
7.4.2	Unemployment and Marriage Elevating men from Kala to Asiai pesi	252
7.4.3	Violent Militancy Provides Pathway to Manhood by Empowering Young Men with Masculine Capital	257

7.4.4	But Young Men’s Responses to Violence is More Complicated	262
7.5	Conclusion	271
Chapter 8 Conclusion: Youth, Oil, and Violence through the Lens of Political Ecology		
8.1	Major Findings.....	273
8.1.1	The Political Ecology of Oil in Nigeria Shapes Young People’s Experiences of Violence	273
8.1.2	Institutions Reinforce the Cycle of Violence.....	277
8.1.3	Social Factors Structure Young Men’s Responses to their Experiences of Violence	279
8.2	Contributions to Knowledge	282
8.2.1	Empirical Contributions.....	282
8.2.2	Redefining Violence Using Bourdieu	282
8.2.3	The Confluence of Bourdieu’s Tools and Connell’s Hegemonic Masculinity Advance Political Ecology.....	284
8.3	Implications of Findings	284

List of Tables

Table 5:1 Institutional Actors, Key Agencies, Their Roles, and Perspectives on Youth Violence	146
Table 6:1 A Summary of Young People's Experiences of Harm	171
Table 6:2 Experiences of Harm between Ogoni and Ijaw Men (%).....	172
Table 6:3: Experiences of harm, how they Manifest, Who is most affected, and Impact on Youth.....	221
Table 6:4 Masculine Identity, Impact Manhood and how Violence helps to recuperate Manhood.....	269

List of Figures

Figure 1: Linking Bourdieu's Concepts, Hegemonic Masculinity and Political Ecology	78
Figure 2 Experiences of Ijaw and Ogoni Men (%).....	172

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

MOCs	Multinational Oil Companies
JTF	Joint Task Force
RTCND	Report on the Technical Committee on Niger Delta
NDA	Niger Delta Avengers
NDGJM	Niger Delta Greenland Justice Mandate
ERA	Environmental Rights Action/Friends of the Earth Nigeria
IYC	Ijaw Youth Council
IOC	Indigenous Oil Companies
PAP	Presidential Amnesty Programme
EFCC	Economic and Financial Crimes Commission
NDDC	Niger Delta Development Commission
MNDA	Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs
MOCs	Multinational Oil Companies

IPOB	Indigenous People of Biafra
NEPA	National Electric Power Authority

Chapter 1 : Introduction

Timi's Story: The Story about the Fatal Failure of Oil Modernity and a Community Trapped in the Ugly Sludge of Petro-Capitalism

When I still dey small, we dey play in that river you dey see now. Everybody dey gather there dey wash clothes, fetch water, children dey play for the sand there. Sometimes we dey come here to wait for our girlfriend when they come to fetch water (suddenly, Timi looked away. Perhaps beguiled by his childhood memory. I found myself imagining the possibility of a childhood romance for Timi, here in this River). I used to take my small brother Leifa to have his bath in that river. We used to go around everywhere. Sometimes after playing in the river we will enter the bush, use the small road to go and stay with our mother in the market (there was a silent pause in Timi's voice before he continued again in a melancholic voice. I quickly looked into his wounded eyes, noticing his emotions. Tears gathered in his lower punctum). Now oil don destroy everything. In fact, e better if we no get oil. What is oil doing for the people? Are you not seeing with your eyes how the people are suffering? Oil is not doing anything. Trouble everywhere, no money from oil, only trouble.

My father dey alive when oyinbo (white people) people come here come find oil. He said everybody was happy in Oloibiri. He even talk say they were dancing. They told them oil is a good thing that they will get rich, that there will be light that white people will build hospital for the community they will go for free. They promised everything, everything my sister. Today, you see that river, all the fish don disappear. Shell is polluting everywhere. If the youths protest the government will say we are criminals and carry army people and come and kill everybody. That is the problem. (Timi reaches for his phone in his black trouser pocket. He finds his phone and showed me lifeless bodies of young men, with a gory gosh of what seemed to me like a bullet wound). See this pictures. You see? These boys on the floor there

they come from this village. Army people killed them in operation Crocodile Smile. Every day, there is gunshot, one person or many people are going to die. Everybody dey fear. People no even trust their brother. Nobody wants to go out sometimes especially the boys. We dey suffer. That is why the militants are fighting. They want to be happy. They are not happy. Let me tell you, the problem is a big problem oh. It is not only the federal government in Abuja and Shell that is the problem. Even all these governors you are seeing, the politicians in this place are greedy. They carry all the money. Everybody want to be the leader in Amnesty, in NDDC or a governor, even a local government chairman is big big big money. They are looking for how to steal the money. But we don't have good water to drink. If the youths are not happy, the men are doing nothing [unemployed], they will carry gun and kidnap because they have something to do with money. (Interview with Timi, 39 years old: Bodo Village, August 2016).

1.1 Introduction

What Timi in the epigraph, one of my respondents remembers from his father's story is that Oloibiri village was alive with excitement and hope when oil was first discovered in this region in 1956. Local residents including Timi's father were told that oil meant automatic access to a prosperous and better life. A modern life where there will be regular electricity supply, and where healthcare would be available and affordable. They had little (if at all) any idea of the depth of harm that oil implied. Sixty-three years down the line, oil has failed to deliver its promise of modernity. What we see in the Niger Delta instead, is that oil has heightened the sufferings of local residents. Even worse, is the consequence of oil for young men who have become worthy targets for violence, and whose identity is undermined and challenged in the context of oil. This link between oil and masculinity is central for understanding young men's relationship with violence.

Historically, the oil palm business which surged in this region in the 19th century following the increasing demand for palm oil during Britain's industrial revolution shaped social relations in the Niger Delta violently. But oil exploration has encouraged another phase of violence in this region in a scale far worse than the palm oil era.

Today in the media and to a lesser extent the academe, a mention of Niger Delta, especially in the context of oil exploration, often invokes imagery of peril. Some academics have called this ‘the resource curse’ highlighting how the abundance of natural resources slows down development (Ross, 1999 ; Sala-i-Martin & Subramanian, 2013). Others have explained this as the ‘oil paradox’ highlighting specifically how the abundance of oil resource encourages violence in the context of Nigeria (Obi, 2004; Aaron, 2015; Okaba, 2005). Whatever name one chooses to call it, the bottom line is that petroleum exploration has failed to deliver its promise of development, and youths from the oil communities are violently resisting all those who they blame for this failure.

Amid this violence, contradictory explanations of the problem have followed, as often is the case in many conflicts of this sort. On the one hand, discourses of oil as a national property is put forward by the federal government which is used to justify fiscal centralism and the deployment of security forces in the Niger Delta on the grounds of protecting ‘national assets’ and creating enabling environment for investors (Watts, 2008; Watts, 2007; Akeregha, 2018). On the part of the oil communities, contradictory claims of oil as community property, perceptions of distributional injustices, experiences of ecological and livelihood devastation have triggered violent resistance by local communities against the federal government and MOCs (Ibeanu, 2002; Okonta & Douglass, 2001). But how this resistance is happening is such that youths are at the frontline of this resistance. These youths are mostly men, and they are in this ‘struggle¹’ for a reason.

Because of the importance of oil in Nigeria’s economy², and the geopolitical relevance of Nigeria as the largest oil producer in the continent of Africa (Watts, 2004), violent resistance in the Niger Delta has received extensive media reportage, increasing scholarly attention, and of course, portrayals in

¹ When people in the Niger Delta talk about their experiences of violence and the actions-violently and otherwise-they are taking to seek redress, they use the word ‘struggle’ to express the rawness of their experiences.

² In Nigeria, oil contributes 70% of government revenue, 90% of export earnings and 10% of GDP (Niarametrics, 2018; Vanguard, 2018).

Nigeria's booming film industry-Nollywood³. But, despite the huge interest in youth violence in the Niger Delta, the accounts of violence in the Niger Delta is often not told from the perspectives of the youths themselves, who are at the frontline of this resistance. Besides, there is a shortage of critical scholarship which explains why male youths are disproportionately at the forefront of this violent resistance.

In addition, some accounts which attempts to explain the linkage between youths and violence in the Niger Delta stereotype male youths as 'restive', 'criminal', 'gangs', 'terrorist groups', hell-bent on destabilising the region, (African Confidential, 2006; United States Executive Office of the President, 1999) largely because of 'greed' and 'poor education' (Collier, 2007; Collier, 2003; Cesarz, et al., 2003; The New York Times, 2007). Framing youth violence this way obscures the crucial impact of the local and international capitalist networks, colonial legacy of exploitation and cultural factors in shaping local violence (Turcotte, 2011).

Other scholarly works that link youths and petro-violence⁴ in the Niger Delta focus on the relationship between unemployment and violence (Obi, 2006; Ukeje, 2001; Aiyedogbon & Ohwofasa, 2012). But these accounts do not provide critical analysis of the social meaning of unemployment for male youths and how this meaning (s) shapes their relationship with violence. Thus, the fundamental objective of this thesis, which I elaborate below, is to contribute towards filling these gaps in the literature on oil-related youth violence in the Niger Delta.

First, while this thesis acknowledges the role of young people as active social agents in the reproduction of violence, it eschews the uni-dimensional

³ For portrayals in Nollywood movies, see these movies, accessible on YouTube: Liquid Black Gold, Black Gold-Struggle for the Niger Delta and Blood and Oil. For portrayals in Nigerian pop music, see these songs, accessible via youtube: 'Dem Mama' by Timaya, and 'Aza' by Davido, Duncan Mighty & Peruzzi. For an academic overview see Watts (2008), Omeje (2005), Okonta and Oronto (2001).

⁴ The term 'petro-violence' was conceptualised by Micheal Watts, which he uses to specifically describe the complex interconnectedness between violence and oil resource (Watts, 2001).

narratives in which violence in the Niger Delta, starts and ends with youths, to recognise the role of structural factors in shaping young people's experiences of violence. Second, it gives attention to the complex social factors that shape young people, and in particular young men's experiences of violence. By so doing, this research aims to make policy contributions regarding how to deliver social and environmental sustainability in the context of oil exploration in Nigeria, but also in the context of fossil fuel more generally.

In an atmosphere of growing violence and insecurity perpetuated mostly by young people, a growing number of scholars are shifting discussions from youths/youth gangs as criminals and threat to social equilibrium, to understanding youth violence from the perspectives of the young men and women involved in violence⁵. Drawing mainly from a qualitative methodology in which the perspectives of youths regarding their experiences of violence, and to a lesser extent the perspectives of relevant institutional representatives this research aims to add to these growing authors, who approach youth violence through the perspectives of youths.

1.2 Why Does (Petro) Violence Matter?

The exploitation of oil causes the transformation of nature and shapes social relations often in a violent way. In particular, oil exploration has transformed the experiences of local residents in economic, political, social, cultural and environmentally informed ways⁶. The vandalisation of oil pipelines,

⁵Several authors attribute increasing violence and insecurity in the world today to a 'surging youth population' or 'youth bulge' or 'youth factor' combined with unemployment, urbanisation, and lack of education of angry deviant men, who grow up to become an uncontrollable force (Kaplan, 1994; Collier, 2007; Cincotta, et al., 2003). However, a growing number of authors are challenging this narrative. These group of authors argue that attributing youth violence to the actions of angry young men who form an out of control destabilising force is an untrue generalisation of young people, considering that some countries with high youth populations has remained stable (Hendrixson, 2003). Similarly, a growing number of scholars have focused on understanding youth violence through the point of view of youths themselves (Mendoza-Denton, 1996; Fraser, 2010; Pittman, 2000; Golden, 2012)

⁶This oversight is at the heart of the scholarship of political ecology and political economy. For examples see Peluso and Watts (2001), Le Billion (2001), Fairhead (2001).

combined with high rates of oil spills and gas flaring⁷ has transformed the Niger Delta environment into the most polluted place in the world (UNEP, 2011). Local populations have been forced to give up their livelihood, their culture, their hope, their future due to oil exploration.

In addition to environmental impact, violence significantly impacts Nigeria's economy. In 2008, Nigeria lost \$23.7 billion in oil revenues due to youth violence in the Niger Delta (RTCND, 2008). Twelve months later, youth violence further decreased Nigeria's crude oil production by 40% (Watts, 2007). This decrease in Nigeria's oil production has implications for global oil supply considering the strategic importance of Nigeria's oil.

Huge, though, the economic cost of violence is, violence also has an inherent social impact on the lives of those who experience it. The absence of basic needs or amenities necessary for wellbeing shapes the kind of life that young people are likely to have in their adulthood. Also, heightened exposure to violence can affect how young people feel, think and act in their world. Violence has encouraged displacement, resulted in deaths, and turned the Niger Delta into a region of fear and suspicion. Between 2006-2011, about 1500 deaths were recorded in connection with oil-related violence while 200,000 others were displaced (Watts, 2007).

With the introduction of the Presidential Amnesty Programme⁸, many militants dropped their arms and peace was restored relatively in the Niger Delta. But the sporadic vandalism of oil pipelines which continued after Amnesty and more disturbingly, the proliferation of new militant groups such

⁷ While Nigeria has remained a leading gas flaring country in the past, flaring about 2.5 billion cubic feet of gas daily, (ERA, 2005), Nigeria has reduced its gas flaring from 25% to 10% in 2018 (Akintayo, 2018) as a demonstration of her commitment to the 'Zero Routine Flaring by 2030' initiative. Routine gas flaring in the Niger Delta has deteriorated the Niger Delta environment and increased health concerns amongst the local populations.

⁸ As the Niger Delta violence surged, President Umaru Musa Yaradua led government, introduced the Amnesty Programme in October 2009. The Amnesty programme was some sort of a government counter insurgency programme, which granted unconditional pardon to violent youths, offered them monthly stipends in addition to skill acquisition in exchange for peace.

as the NDGJM and NDA⁹ constantly reawaken this violence and proves this peace to be intensely fragile. Also, like the other previous institutional mechanisms-NDDC, Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs- created by the federal government to respond to the development needs of the Niger Delta, Amnesty has underperformed due to issues related to corruption, poor inter-institutional coordination and political interferences (Nwajiaku-Dahou, 2010; Aduloju & Okwechime, 2016).

The defeat of ex-President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, an Ijaw man, in the 2015 presidential election has further added a new political dimension to the resurgence of this violence. Militant groups in the Niger Delta believe that Jonathan was rigged out of office. They believe that the ethnic majority political elites, especially, those from the North, rigged out Jonathan who is from the Ijaw ethnic minority in favour of the Northern incumbent President Buhari. Thus, many violent youth groups see Buhari's presidency as an affront on their political rights and as something that must be resisted by escalating youth militancy, yet again.

Youth violence in the Niger Delta affects society at large. But it affects young people, and young men, in particular, disproportionately. The prevalence of repressive security in the Niger Delta, claiming the goal of protecting oil infrastructure is central to how young men, in particular, have experienced violence in the form of corporal violation. But no less important in shaping young people's experiences of violence are social factors, connected with local notions of what it means to be a man, local history of violence, and profoundly dysfunctional institutions which have failed to deliver development in the form of a suitable environment in which young people's capabilities can function and flourish. Despite these experiences of violence that youths in the Niger Delta go through, they are stereotyped as criminals

⁹Youths in the Niger Delta continued to disrupt oil pipelines even after the Amnesty in 2010. But while the frequency of these attacks reduced significantly from 2010-2015, 2016, marked a resurgence of new militant groups, many of them more armed, and their operations more sophisticated. Notable amongst these new militant groups is the NDGJM and NDA whose leadership has claimed responsibility for over 13 incidents of pipeline vandalism in 2016 alone.

and as a social problem, and this representation adds to the injustice that youths in the Niger Delta struggle with. As such this thesis provides an account of youth violence that recognises the broader structural factors which shape young people's lives, and the choices they have to make in their world.

This thesis focuses on violence experienced by young people in relations to oil exploratory related activities. It will also highlight the explanations of youth violence put forward by young people as justifications for enacting violence. These include experiences of violence in direct forms as bodily harm or corporal violation, death, and environmental degradation. It also includes violence experienced as harm in the invisible or structural form such as economic harm, poor political participation, destruction of valued tradition and loss of hope.

I adopted this broad definition of violence because it is sensitive to the complexity of the social reality of young people's experiences of violence as evidenced in the empirical data analysed in Chapters 6 and 7. Also, because this study is situated broadly within the framework of political ecology-which explains how structural injustices at the global and national level leads to direct violence in the local context¹⁰ - a broad definition of violence which includes violence in both direct and indirect form is adopted in this thesis to reflect this intellectual tradition. Thus, based on these epistemological and methodological considerations, this research understands violence broadly as:

Practices, which cause harm to people. These harms have to be understood in a restrictive sense as direct violence, but also in an inclusive form as structural violence. In the direct form, these harms manifest as brutal acts/practices which causes bodily injury, death, displacement and destruction of the physical environment. In the indirect form, harm exists as institutional practices which impedes

¹⁰ Political ecologists account for the ways in which violence in a specific resource environment is shaped by structural factors such as the political economy, local histories of violence and social relations, and the ways in which state institutions and practices shape the experiences of social agents in a violent way often times in a manner that is invisible (Peluso & Watts, 2001, pp. 5-6; Bebbington, 2009; Jiwon, 2013). Also, political ecologists, recognise the agency (capacity to act) of indigenous people, youths and people generally, but sees this agency to be rooted deeply in the very structures that intervene to shape these actions.

wellbeing. These include exclusion, loss of hope, and destruction of revered tradition.

1.3 Research Questions and Methodology

With the overarching objective of this research being to understand youths' and in particular male youth's experiences and accounts of oil-related violence, this research asks the following three questions:

- How do institutional representatives perceive youth violence and what is the policy implication of their perspective in terms of delivering social and environmental sustainability in the context of oil exploration in Nigeria?
- What factors shape young people's experiences of violence in the Niger Delta?
- What role, if any does having a male gender identity play in shaping these experiences of violence?

To answer these questions, this research uses a qualitative methodology, including five (5) events of focus groups and 84 in-depth interviews conducted with youths who are the primary respondents in this study. I interviewed the youths to understand how they perceive their experiences of petro-violence and what these experiences mean to men in particular. I also conducted an in-depth interview with 42 institutional representatives who are directly involved in debates about youth violence in the Niger Delta. Interviews with institutional representatives were carried out to identify commonalities or differences regarding how stakeholders perceive youth violence, and how the youths see their experiences, and to consider the policy implications of these diverse perspectives in addressing youth violence.

Young people interviewed in this study came mainly from three villages in the Niger Delta. These are Odi, (in Bayelsa state) Oporoza (in Delta state),

and Bodo (in Rivers State). Odi and Oporoza are predominantly ethnically Ijaw villages while the predominant ethnic group in Bodo is Ogoni. These three villages were selected based on the following pragmatic and theoretical considerations which I explain further in Chapter 4. The first consideration is safe and timely access to research participants. Second, I considered villages with a history of experiences of violence resulting from oil exploration in the form of environmental pollution, military repression and counter youth reprisal attacks.

While the majority of the youths interviewed came from these three villages, youths from other villages in the Niger Delta participated in the two events of focus groups conducted with young men in the Amnesty head office in Abuja. Institutional representatives interviewed in this study came from six sectors relevant in the understanding of, and production of petro-violence (government officials, experts and practitioners, NGO staff, traditional rulers, and staff of international and indigenous oil companies). While in-depth interviews with youths and institutional representatives were the key primary data sources employed in this thesis, I also used the following data sources:

- Field notes documenting my observation of the life of the youths in the three villages listed above. I spent eight months in the field gathering primary data from youths and other institutional representatives. During this period, I spent six months in the Niger Delta understanding the culture, attending community meetings, listening to stories told by local residents (some of the stories were told by people who are neither youths nor institutional representatives) about how oil exploration has affected their lives. I also visited some project sites including environmentally degraded sites in Bodo. This technique involved an intensive field note taking where I wrote down my impressions about what I observed. I also documented my own experiences as a female researcher in a male-dominated setting.

- Field notes from six institutional representatives (all government officials), who did not consent to a tape-recorded interview. However, all interviews with the youths and the other 36 institutional representatives were recorded.
- Tape-recorded discussion from five events of focus groups. One focus group was conducted in each of the three villages mentioned above. Also, two additional focus groups were held with young men in the Amnesty head office in Abuja.

1.4 Statement of Key Arguments

Drawing from the fieldwork data which I contextualise within the literature review, this thesis will make the following core arguments:

- Petro-violence in the Niger Delta has attracted huge media and scholarly attention in the last two decades especially following the execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa and the Ogoni chiefs, and the international outrage that followed. In trying to explain this violence, some researchers and media publications have identified local youths as the problem. They have characterised youths as deviants, aggressive, and attribute petro-violence to greed on the part of local youths.
- However, there remains limited research focused on understanding how these ‘problematic’ young people perceive their role in this violence. In other words, scholarly works focused on understanding how young people perceive their relationship with violence has been largely lacking. This research aims to contribute to addressing this gap by providing a more complex account of young people’s agency.
- My approach to such a complex account of young people’s agency entails using a political ecology approach as the general perspective

in this study. By a political ecology approach, I mean an analysis that recognises how oil exploration leads to the transformation of nature and how the social, economic, historical and cultural context shape the way in which the profits and burdens that come from such transformation are contested.

- The theoretical insights from Bourdieu's thinking tools-habitus, field and capital-combined with Connell's idea of hegemonic masculinity help to advance the political ecology approach. Bourdieu's tools, especially habitus, help us to understand how the structural context shapes youth agency and how the youth reproduce the structure. Then the idea of hegemonic masculinity help to deepen and broaden analysis by helping us to understand specifically how cultural notions of manhood shape the forms of contention around environmental processes.
- By combining these theoretical insights, the arguments in this thesis will transcend the individual-focused approaches in which youths are blamed for violence, to one which recognises how the structural factors often silenced in the individual focused accounts contribute in shaping youth agency in profound ways.

1.5 Structure of the Thesis

The structure of this thesis is as follows. Following this introduction, Chapter two provides a conceptual understanding of violence and youths as well as the relationship between oil, gender and violence. Since political ecology emphasises how environmental processes are politically contested, Bourdieu's thinking tools and hegemonic masculinity helps us to understand the factors that shape the nature of these contestations. Habitus helps us to understand that practices such as violence occur due to the dialectic relationship between structure and agency. The literature on hegemonic masculinity helps us understand within Bourdieu, how the habitus is intensely gendered.

By approaching the literature review this way, I establish the theoretical base for making sense of Chapter 3 where I discuss the colonial history of violence in the pre-oil Niger Delta and set the stage for understanding why male youths are crucial actors in this violence. Also, Chapter 3 discusses the cosmology and value system in the Niger Delta, the governance systems in Nigeria, and the political ecology and economy of oil in Nigeria. The discussions in Chapter 3 introduces the reader to the local context and highlights the relevance of salient factors such as unjust institutional configurations and environmental degradation in shaping the landscape of youth violence in the Niger Delta. In Chapter 4, I explain the methodologies, methods and orientations which I used to operationalise this research. As the first analytical Chapter, Chapter 5 sets the stage for understanding the structural context in which young people's lives are located. As such, it highlights how the explanations of youth violence provided by institutional actors reproduce their power and thus reproduce structural violence in the field. Chapter 6 discusses young people's experiences of violence which I coded in 4 different themes; experiences of poor political participation, experiences of economic exclusion, experiences of bodily harm and experiences of environmental harm. To understand how having a male gender identity may shape young men's experiences of violence, I analyse young men's interview further through a detailed application of Bourdieu's thinking tools combined with the concept of hegemonic masculinity in Chapter 7. Chapter 8 concludes with a summary of the major findings, highlights the contributions of the research, suggests possible solutions to addressing youth violence in the Niger Delta and ends with a direction for future research.

Chapter 2 : Conceptual Understandings of Violence, Masculinity, Youths and Implications for Social Practice

2.1 Introduction

In Chapter 1, I outlined the research problem, research questions, methodology, and the structure of this thesis. I also stated that the central aim of this thesis is to provide a more elaborate explanation of youth violence which does not explain violence narrowly as deviant youth behaviour but recognises the complexity of other factors crucial for shaping youth agency. This Chapter represents a theoretical effort to interrogate the definition of violence, explain the different forms in which it can manifest, and highlight the factors that can shape the occurrence and experiences of these various forms of violence paying particular attention to youth violence, the central focus of this thesis.

Violence is a complex, multifaceted, polysemous phenomenon which can have structural dimensions even in its narrowest form (direct violence). Violence also manifests in multiple ways, and this multiplicity is evident in the diverse ways in which violence has been categorised. It is also multi-causal. As such, hardly can a single factor explain the cause of violent behaviour sufficiently. Depending on the type of violence, some factors (what some academics call risk factors) can overlap to cause violence. Violence is also highly gendered. This means that violence is often represented as a 'young male syndrome', as male youths are disproportionately the victims and perpetrators of violence.

However, since male youths do not live in isolation of their environment, the gendered experiences and practices of violence are in themselves, a reproduction of the social structures. This makes violence a social phenomenon. If violence is social, then instead of reducing violence to merely

the actions of ‘criminals’ ‘gangs’ and ‘deviants’, the silently functioning social factors that shape violent experiences have to be considered. Bourdieu’s thinking tools, particularly the concept of habitus, combined with Connell’s concept of hegemonic masculinity, serves as a useful theoretical lens for exploring the relationship between the social context and the individual- in this case, youths in the Niger Delta.

2.2 The Polysemy of Violence: Contentious Essentialism and Divergent Meanings

The importance of adopting a precise operating definition of concepts in social research cannot be overemphasised. Once a working definition of a concept is adopted, it not only simplifies communication but also informs the scope of analysis (Riggs, 1979; Bufacchi, 2005). In contrast, complicated and ambiguous concepts obscure discussion and make it difficult to set clear boundaries for analysis. Thus, this section aims to adopt a working definition of violence for this thesis. This definition of violence adopted will determine how deep this research will go in investigating young people’s experiences of violence. However, before adopting a definition of violence, this section reviews the different interpretations of violence and causes of violence as conceptualised by various schools of thought. It also discusses the strengths and weaknesses of these conceptualisations as well as their areas of overlap and divergences where such exist.

The aim of this review is not to provide an exhaustive account of the definitions of violence or its causes. Instead, what I hope to achieve with this review is to familiarise the reader with the essential arguments that make this seemingly intuitive and easily recognisable concept-violence- highly polysemous and exceptionally contested. The conceptual ideas from this section will guide the empirical analysis in Chapter 5 and to a lesser extent Chapters 6 and 7. Crucially too, the theoretical insights from this Chapter can provide a more elaborate understanding of violence which can inform violence prevention policy and programme more usefully.

2.2.1 Restrictive Definitions: Violence in Physical/Direct Sense

It is often useful to start investigating a concept by tracing its etymology which contains its reducible meaning. The word ‘violence’ has an etymological connection to the Latin word *violentia* which means ‘vehemence’- a *forceful* expression of emotion or passion. Similarly, its verbal form ‘violate’ originates from the Latin word *violare* which means infraction or infringement (Bufacchi, 2005).

Early scholarly works on violence were greatly influenced by modernisation theory¹¹ which was the predominant paradigm at that time. Authors at this time, informed by the idea that modernisation is peaceful and that modern societies are more stable¹², looked inwards into individuals to explain violence in developing countries (Arthur, 1991; Hudson, et al., 2009). Thus, these scholars defined violence mainly in its restrictive sense as the use of *force* which accommodates explanations of violence only in the physical form and limits analysis only at the individual level.

In restrictive terms, violence means the *intentional* use of *physical force* by an individual or a group to cause *harm* to a person or group (Reiss & Roth, 1994; Riedel & Welsh, 2002; Dewey, 1980). The core definitional parameters for violence here include; force, harm, intentionality and inter-subjectivity. This restrictive definition, which covers interpersonal or direct violence, has been called different things by different authors; ‘minimalist conception’ by

¹¹ Modernisation theory was the predominant development paradigm in 1940’s and 50’s. It is essentially the idea, that the non-western societies-The South-are backward and underdeveloped, and the solution to their underdevelopment lies in adopting Western economic models-capitalism- and aspiring to western values -such as religion, separation of church and state, fashion, urbanisation, education, democracy, weaker communities and more individual freedom (Rostow, 1960; Huntington, 1968).

Although modernisation theory has been seriously criticised and lost so much currency in recent development discourse, it still underlines categorisations of ‘weak/failed states’, ‘third world’ (Bilgin & Morton, 2002; Escobar, 1995). Modernisation assumptions also informs current neoliberal logics that is sold to developing countries, such as the idea that transnational capital (external inflow of capital) and aid (also money coming from outside, usually from the West, often with overt and covert negative consequences), is a necessary condition for development.

¹² For example, Huntington (1968), has argued that modernisation in itself does not produce violence. Rather, that what produces violence is the struggle to become modernised.

Bufacchi (2005), ‘observational definition’ by Grundy and Weinstein (1974), and ‘descriptive definition’ by (Platt, 1992).

Despite the etymological connection of violence and *force*, the relationship between force and violence remains one of the most contested essences of violence in the literature. For example, American philosopher John Dewey writes that violence is ‘force gone *wrong*’, and that force in its natural state is energy and not violence (Dewey, 1980, p. 246). Dewey suggests that force and violence are not synonymous but instead argues that it is the *impact* of force on an individual that transforms force into violence. Thus, force must cause *harm*, or *wrong* or have a *destructive* impact to mean violence. Dewey’s argument has been advanced lately by Ladd (1991, p. 27) who stated that ‘*destructiveness* is the essence of violence’. In addition to being destructive, some writers have argued, that force has to be used *intentionally* to inflict harm for it to count as violence (Coady, 1986; Miller, 1971), an argument some authors such as Audi (1971) disagrees with. According to Audi (1971, p. 50), unlike force which exists as a potential or ability, ‘violence is an action in itself, it is always done, and it is always done to something, typically a person, animal or piece of property’. Similarly, other authors have distinguished force and violence arguing, that unlike force, which is morally neutral, violence, is a moral concept. (Wolff, 1969; Garver, 1973).

There is also an argument about whether the intentional use of force qualifies as violence if a person *desires* it (Keane, 1996). For instance, Keane argues that for physical force to qualify as violence, it not only has to be intentional but must also be ‘*unwanted*’. The strength of this conception lies in its ability to exclude acts that entails the intentional use of force on a person who wants it, such as surgical procedures, as acts of violence. However, the danger is that such definition, risks excluding practices such as labial infibulation which entails the intentional use of physical force by a person who wants them but to whom it may bring harm as acts of violence (Bufacchi, 2005).

Some writers have argued that the *illegitimate* use of force is an essential defining character of violence (Wolff, 1969). But such definition grants the state monopoly to the legitimate use of force against the citizens even when it is unwarranted, while the same use of force by students, revolutionaries, militants or youths is considered illegal and criminalized even when such deployment of force is informed by injustice (Marcuse, 1968; Wolff, 1969; Arendt, 2006). This conceptualisation of violence is problematic because it would not consider the use of force by state security forces against the oil communities as violence since it is not illegitimate. There are also other problems associated with defining violence as the illegitimate use of force including the question of who defines legitimacy (Pearce, 2007).

At best, these arguments shed light on the universal but subjective nature of violence (De Haan, 2008; Sherman, et al., 1992). Intuitively, we all seem to know what violence means. However, once we scratch its surface trying to interpret it, it becomes difficult to reach a consensus on its essential character. What parameters should matter more when defining violence? Should it be force or intentionality? Or should it be desirability, legitimacy, destructiveness/harm, or intersubjectivity? As it is the case with many concepts, debates about the definitional power of these criteria in explaining violence continues to grow but remains unresolved in the literature.

The advantage of conceptualising violence in restrictive terms as the intentional use of physical force to cause bodily harm is that such definition sets a rigid boundary about what constitutes violence, helping us to avoid the path that may result in labelling any morally wrong act as violence (Platt, 1992; Audi, 1971). But its limitation lies in the fact that such conceptualisation does not capture other forms of violence that do not fit into this narrow interpretation and this can lead to a one-sided account of violence (Collins, 2008; Schroer, 2004).

The major problem with the restrictive definition of violence is that it focuses on the *perpetrator* and ignores how violence is *experienced* by its victims, or

what sociologists call the ‘phenomenology of violence’, meaning ‘the sense of it [violence] according to its protagonists’ (Staudigl, 2013 , p. 44) or its ‘sufferers’ (Delhom, 2000) or its *recipients* (Mensch, 2009; Dodd, 2009).

In response to the restrictive definition of violence, sociologists argue for an *inclusive* definition of violence that is subject-centric, focusing on how violence is experienced and the silent functioning property of violence. This means a definition of violence that recognises the subtle ways in which violence is embedded into aspects of social lives leading to experiences of deprivation, domination and oppression (Bourdieu, 1977; Henry, 2000; Galtung, 1969; Staudigl, 2013). Because the focus of this study is to understand young people’s experiences of violence, in other words how violence becomes a part of the society in which young people live, this thesis leans towards a sociological approach which explains violence in an inclusive way. An inclusive definition of violence recognises how violence permeates social orders and becomes part of the society, shaping young people’s experiences and informing the actions they take to respond to such experiences. The next section discusses the inclusive definition of violence.

2.2.2 Inclusive definitions- violence in structural/symbolic sense

By the 1960s, modernisation theory began to lose currency following a sustained barrage of criticism from Dependency theorists¹³. This led scholars to become critical of a restrictive conceptualisation of violence which focused on violence at the individual level. Hence, researchers began to look inwards at the structures to highlight the invisible ways in which violence can occur. Generally, authors who follow this inclusive approach retain the meaning of violence in its restrictive sense as the infliction of bodily harm but go deeper to highlight other subtle ways in which harm exists, ranging from

¹³ Dependency theory is a theoretical response to the modernisation theory led by Prebisch-CEPAL project. It repudiates the idea that capitalism is the ultimate solution to the economic prosperity of developing (the periphery) countries because capitalism encourages economic exclusion and results to social damage and consequently leads to violence. It also highlights how the capitalist exploitation of resource rich ‘peripheral’ countries has underdeveloped the South and enriched the West (core) (Potasch, 1959; Prebisch, 2016).

psychological, emotional, economic, ethical, and social harm (Henry & Milovanovic., 1996).

Instead of understanding violence to occur from the effort to pursue a modern lifestyle as modernisation theorists suggests (Huntington, 1968), scholars influenced by Dependency theory argue that violence is an outcome of development (Joas, 1999; Tiryakian, 1999; Roxborough, 1999; Giddens, 1984) highlighting the structural causes of physical violence including how past colonial practices and capitalism fosters exclusion and violent response from the excluded. Thus, inclusive definition of violence is grounded substantially in the principles of structuration theory¹⁴ which argues that social structures facilitate violence because human beings are not wholly free actors since their actions are shaped by their social, political and economic circumstances (Giddens, 1984; Landman, 2006; Stones, 2005). Such perspectives set the premise that creating a violence-free world would require targeting structural issues at the institutional level which impacts the society negatively. This would lead to creating positive structures as opposed to limiting ones, thus preventing individuals from reproducing the negative structures.

Instead of conceiving violence as the use of physical force to cause harm, proponents of an inclusive definition of violence focus on how violence is *experienced* as a *violation of human rights* and the workings of *power* that underline such violation. One of the key proponents of this approach is the Norwegian sociologist Johan Galtung who is widely regarded as the founder of peace and conflict research. Galtung defines violence as ‘when human beings are being influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realizations are below their potential realizations’ (Galtung, 1969, p. 168). In his seminal article ‘Violence, Peace, and Peace Research’, Galtung, follow a *human rights approach* to violence, distinguishing between *direct violence*

¹⁴ Anthony Giddens Structuration theory differs from its intellectual equivalences such as Althussers account of structuration, which sees human beings as ‘bearers’ of the structure. Unlike Althusser, Giddens believes that structures have dual nature; embedded in the internal composition-memory-of humans, and actors draw from these internal structures to make meaning of their social relations.

where harm manifests physically and can be traced to an individual and *structural violence or institutional violence* where harm is *latent* and cannot be easily traced to an individual.

Many critics of globalisation have followed Galtung's path, defining violence in terms of human rights. For example, Salmi, (1993, p. 17) defines violence as 'any avoidable action that constitutes a violation of human right, or which prevents the fulfilment of a basic human need'. Writing further, Salmi argues that it makes sense to say that people are *suffering* [experiencing] from violence if they are malnourished or starved and the cause of their starvation is attributable to political or social reasons beyond their control. In this sense, violence becomes experienced as a violation of human wants or needs (Garver, 1973).

Unlike direct violence, structural violence cannot be traced easily to an individual. This is because it is often embedded in social orders or policies of institutions as rules of operation, or consumed by people *indirectly* and *unconsciously* as a *culture* (Bourdieu, 2013). Because people are not aware that these rules of the social order harm them by preventing them from being completely free actors, they accept these harmful social order *unknowingly* and even aspiring towards them. This makes them *indeliberately complicit* in perpetuating their own experiences of harm. Bourdieu calls this *symbolic violence/power* (Bourdieu, 1979) or *quite/covert violence* according to Garver (1973).

Other authors such as Arendt (1969) have followed Bourdieu's footsteps by arguing for understanding violence in terms of its relationship with power. Similarly, Henry (2000, p. 3) also argued that it is useful to understand violence 'as the use of power to cause harm whatever form that harm may take'. Henry and Milovanovic (1996, p. 103) list two main forms in which power can exist as harm: 'harms of repression' and harms of reduction'. Harms of repression can occur as political repression which denies people their humanity and their hope. Harms of reduction, on the other hand, can

exist as discrimination and poor institutional practices such as corruption and exclusion which reduces economic resources available for investment in infrastructure, health, job creation, all of which have an important bearing on the quality of life that people can have.

Defining violence as the violation of rights seems analytically appealing considering that it allows us to look deeper into how human behaviour can be shaped by powers beyond their control even without their knowledge. But defining violence in an inclusive way also presents some analytical challenges. For example, if we understand violence as a violation of rights, then it makes sense to ask then what form should violation or rights take for it to mean violence? Popular answers to this question are that it has to be a violation of human rights and moral rights (Galtung, 1969; Garver, 1973; Audi, 1971). But the broader our definition of human rights, the unavoidable violence becomes based on this definition. Violation of human rights can mean many things ranging from violation of personal rights such as the right to life, right to self-ownership, and dignity of a person (Garver, 1973; Nozick, 1974), and can also extend to socioeconomic rights (Bufacchi, 2005). This broad definition makes violence almost unavoidable because rights can extend to virtually all aspects of human life such that there is hardly anything anyone can do to a person without violating their rights (Nozick, 1974; Betz, 1977). It is true that many incidents of violence include a form of violation of moral rights (Audi, 1971). But as Audi himself recognises, what constitutes as morality is largely subjective.

So far, I have explained two definitions of violence including their strengths and limitations. The first approach-the restrictive definition- understands violence in a narrow sense as the use of physical force to cause bodily harm. This definition is very concise and thus helps us to avoid labelling everything as violence. But the main limitation of this definition lies in its inability to account for how violence is experienced. On the other hand, restrictive approaches to violence recognise how violence is experienced such as a violation of human rights and morality. However, this broad definition of

violence is analytically challenging considering the subjective nature of human rights and morality.

As we have seen, these two approaches to violence have their strengths and weakness. As such, some authors have attempted to develop a more improved definition of violence by combining the two approaches. For example, Honderich (2002, p. 91), defines violence ‘as the use of physical force to injure, damage, violate or destroy people or things. Steger (2003) similarly defines violence as the use of physical force to cause harm and the violation of need. However, one of the most popular mixed approaches to violence is that of Garver (1968).

According to Garver, we cannot fully understand the violence that occurs in our everyday lives if we think of violence rigidly in physical or emotional terms. Instead, Garver lists seven characters that need to be considered when defining violence (Garver, 1973, p. 39). First ‘violence is a matter of degree’. Second, ‘it can be social or institutional as well as personal’. Third, ‘it can be psychological as well as physical’. Fourth, ‘has moral implications when it is social that are radically different from those that it has when it is personal’. Fifth ‘can be legal as well as illegal’. Sixth ‘needs when it is social to be discussed in conjunction with law and justice’. Lastly, ‘can in principle be excused however abhorrent one may find it’. Some authors applaud Garver’s combined approach to Violence for being elaborate (Litke, 1992). But others have criticised this definition arguing that it makes the concept of violence very vague (Platt, 1992).

What these previous sections demonstrate is that violence is a highly polysemous concept, susceptible to a variety of divergent, yet valid definitions. However, even though many authors diverge on their definitions of violence, many authors advocating for reductionist as well as inclusive approaches agree that *harm* is an essential character of violence, even though they disagree on how harm should be interpreted (Coady, 1986; Bufacchi, 2005; Galtung, 1969; Bourdieu, 1979).

2.2.3 Definition of Violence Adopted in this Study

While both the restrictive and inclusive approaches to violence are valid, which approach a researcher should adopt depends on the methodological, epistemological and contextual implication of such choices (Lukes, 1979). Considering that the overarching aim of this thesis is to understand young people's perspectives or experiences of oil-related violence, this research leans towards a more inclusive idea of violence. An inclusive definition of violence expands the boundaries of our analysis to include not only harms which are physical and traceable to an individual but also harms which are silent and exist as part of the society as structural factors which shape people's lives in a violent way.

Crucially, too, an inclusive definition of violence is consistent with the field of political ecology which emphasises how structures of inequality crucially shape human-nature relations without eliding the agency of people (Peluso & Watts, 2001; Allen, 2013; Bohle & Fünfgeld, 2007). Thus, this thesis understands violence broadly as:

Practices which cause harm to people (even though the focus is on youths). These harms have to be understood both in a restrictive sense as direct violence, but also in an inclusive form as structural violence. In the direct form, these harms manifest as brutal acts/practices which causes bodily harm, death, displacement and destruction of the physical environment. Harm in the indirect form occurs as invisible practices built into the structures or institutions which preclude people from meeting their basic needs and impedes their wellbeing. These include economic exclusion, corruption, loss of livelihood, political exclusion and destruction of revered tradition and hope.

2.3 Violence as a Multidimensional Concept

2.3.1 Different forms of violence and challenges with measuring violence

Because violence is a very complex concept, scholars identify three broad categories of violence to optimise communication; self-directed, interpersonal and collective violence (Fèvre, 2015; WHO, 2002). Self-

directed violence occurs when a person deliberately engages in a behaviour that harms her/his body or integrity. These include suicide and self-abuse. But when this harm is targeted at another person or group, it becomes interpersonal violence. Examples include intimate partner violence, elderly abuse, child maltreatment and youth violence. Collective violence refers to violence perpetrated by a group or an institution for political, social, and economic reasons (Tilly, 2017; Krug, et al., 2002). These include wars, armed conflict, acts of terrorism and gang violence.

While these categories help us to identify the particular type of violence under investigation, it does not resolve the complexity inherent in the concept of violence altogether. In violence, categories are often blurred and we shall see this in Chapters 6 and 7 where I analyse young people's experiences of violence. For example, while youth violence in the Niger Delta is a form of collective violence in the sense that it is linked to socio-economic and political issues, it is also connected to interpersonal violence between spouses. Thus, it is useful to provide a surface level explanation of other forms of violence even if they are not the focus of this study to help readers have a better understanding of the entire research.

The multidimensional nature of violence leads to the question of how to measure violence. Usually, violence is measured using homicide rates. But not all experiences of violence leads to death. Thus, the homicide rate does not capture experiences of violence which may not lead to death. Also, a large proportion of the violence experienced by men, women, and children is unreported and therefore not captured by the homicide rates. In developing countries, factors ranging from political interferences and technological incapacitation undermine violence data (UNODC, 2007; Rudqvist, et al., 2003). Thus, measuring violence using the homicide rate does not provide a complete picture of the problem of violence. Instead, it tends to show bias towards young men who are overwhelmingly the victims and perpetrators of violence in its direct sense (WHO, 2005; UNODC, 2011; WHO, 2002).

To deal with the unreported cases of violence also known as ‘dark figure/black figure’ (Fèvre, 2015), researchers have developed victimisation or epidemiological surveys. Victimisation surveys have considerable advantages in the sense that it provides information on the specific forms of violence experienced by people, the personal details of the victim and the location and time of such experience. Also, victimisation surveys are useful ways of collecting data for experiences of violence which are severely underreported because people are often unwilling to talk about them. These include intimate partner violence, elder abuse, emotional violence and violence against minorities.

Despite these advantages, victimisation surveys do not provide an accurate picture of the experiences of violence. This is because the experiences of violence reported in the survey will depend on the memory and willingness of participants, the quality of the questionnaire, and the interpreting skills of the researcher. Thus, research like this one which documents young people’s experiences of violence systematically can contribute towards filling this gap by improving our knowledge about the complexity of youth violence and help policymakers consider the scope of the issue when developing solutions.

2.3.2 Multi-disciplinary categorisation of violence

Violence is a multi-dimensional concept which has attracted a multidisciplinary interest. Researchers from a range of disciplines have studied the concept of violence, proposing different explanations- ranging from economic, social, biological and psychological-as its causes. While this diversity can mean richness, it also reveals the complexity of the concept of violence by showing how different disciplines diverge on their explanations for violence. Crucially, too, these multi-disciplinary approaches show the different level of analysis which different disciplines adopt to explain violence including individual, interpersonal, institutional and structural (McIlwaine, 1999). Below, I review the different disciplinary approaches to violence highlighting the primary issues and the level of analysis associated with different disciplines.

Psychological theories on violence focus on individual-level analysis which highlights the role of nurture¹⁵ in causing violent behaviour. According to this perspective, the environment in which people, especially children and adolescents grow up shape their development process and consequently their behaviour. Thus, children who are exposed to violence in their families or amongst their peers have a high tendency to engage in violent behaviour as adults (McIlwaine, 1999). *Biological* and *Neurological perspectives* consider this explanation overly simplistic, arguing instead that nature, and not nurture, shapes violent behaviour (Kerns & Prinz, 2002). For example, two people can grow up in the same family and share the same parental upbringing. However, their potentiality for violence would differ because their nervous systems may process and recall information from their childhood differently leading to different responses. Thus, biological accounts prioritise genetic, hormonal, nutritional, and neurobiological factors as causes of violent behaviour. As such, biological perspectives believe that some people are born with a natural tendency for violence more than others. *Epidemiologists* analyse violence at different levels of causality which are individual, interpersonal, community and societal. They study violence through a public health perspective using the ecological model to highlight the contiguity of violence at different levels (WHO, 2002; Londoño & Guerrero, 2000; PAHO, 2003). *Criminologists* combine a range of perspectives to explain violence, but many criminological perspectives emphasise the importance of deterrence or punishment in violence prevention (Sherman, et al., 1992). *Anthropologists* focus on how structural factors shape people's everyday experiences and the role of cultural symbols in the production of violence. In particular, anthropological explanations highlight the role of cultural determinism, traditions, identity, and the legacy of violence in shaping experiences of violence (Abbink, 2001; Accomazzo, 2012). *Political scientists* highlight how socio-political and institutional factors such as corruption, poor governance, weak judiciary systems, and access to firearms shape violent experiences (Galtung, 1969; Keane, 1996). *Geographers* focus on the spatial dynamics of violence in both

¹⁵ Nurture is connected to how genetic factors interact with the social (Anderson, et al., 2015)

urban and rural areas (Vanderschueren, 1996; Moser, 2004) highlighting the role of economic factors in contributing to the widespread of violence in the former (Caldeira, 2002; Beall & Fox, 2009; Kunkeler & Peters, 2011). Other geographical approaches to violence distinguish between violence in public and private spaces (Meertens & Segura-Escobar, 1997), and between global divisions of the North (democratic zone of peace) and the South (zone of violent anarchy) (Keane, 1996, p. 4), and in the context of development (McIlwaine, 1999; Moser, et al., 1999; Ayres, 1998). *Gender scholars* see gender inequality or gender norms as a high predictor of violent experiences. Thus, they investigate how patriarchal cultures shape violent behaviour mostly by men and experiences of violence mostly amongst women (Kimmel, 2001; Russo & Pirlott, 2006; Butler, 2004). *Sociological perspectives* consider violence not as a single kind of activity but as a social phenomenon involving a range of actors. Thus, instead of looking at perpetrators to explain violent behaviour, sociologists argue that violence is a social practice resulting from the interaction of social actors within a given context. As such, they investigate how social conditions shape people's experiences and dispose them towards the practice of violence (Bourdieu, 1997; Moser, et al., 1999; Blumenthal, et al., 1972). *Social constructionists* point to how men perpetuate patriarchal cultures in their discourses and how these discourses are understood (Blumenthal, et al., 1972). Economists who approach violence in a utilitarian lens criticise sociological perspectives on violence for focusing too much on social factors and ignoring that individuals as rational actors are capable of making choices to advance their economic interest (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004; Rachlin, 2004). But the strength of the sociological account lies in its understanding that human beings do not live in isolation of their environment, as such it is crucial to pay attention to the interactions between people and their environment to understand how these interactions can lead to violence (France & Roberts, 2015; France, et al., 2012; Staudigl, 2013). *Political ecologists* adopt a sociological approach to violence, highlighting how structural and institutional factors shape violent experiences and how such experiences are coded, understood, normalised, reproduced and contested (Peluso & Watts, 2001; Mccarthy, 2001; Le Billon, 2001; Escobar,

1999; Jasanoff, 2004). Many sociological and political ecological approaches reject economic and criminological perspective on violence because they are grounded in an individual-level analysis which focuses on individual behaviour but ignores the role of the government, global forces as well as social and historical factors in grounding such behaviour (Peluso & Watts, 2001; Salmi, 1993; Streicher, 2011).

In the next section, I discuss the political ecology perspective on violence in more detail. This a short review and by no means exhaustive. However, this review, I hope, shows how other perspectives on violence some of which I discussed in this section are co-constitutive of a political ecological approach making it a more developed framework capable of capturing the complexity of the subject matter-youth violence in the Niger Delta.

2.3.3 Towards a political ecology perspective on violence

Political ecology is a complex field which accommodates scholars with a wide range of interests ranging from environmental degradation and the politics of natural resource management (Basset & Peimer, 2015; Stahelin, 2017; Blaikie, 2016; Watts, 1983a), to the politics of environmental knowledge and urban climate change governance (Forsyth & Walker, 2008; Broto & Bulkeley, 2013), and the interactions between nature and society and how violence, including petro-sexual violence, results from such interactions (Peluso & Watts, 2001; Le Billon, 2001; Turcotte, 2011), and to the social meaning of environmental violence (Peluso & Harwell, 2001; Boal, 2001; Boamah and Overa, 2015). These diverse interests resulted from a critique of how the *nature-society relations* is analysed in dominant discourse and the solutions that such analysis has proffered. Thus, put in a simple way, political ecology interrogates the interplay between nature and society.

A political ecological approach to environmental violence stems from a critique of the Malthusian approach propagated by Homer-Dixon (1999) and Baechler (1998). The Malthusian approach argues that population growth in Africa, especially a predominately youthful population, drives violence in the

context of renewable energy resources. Such account presents an overly simple explanation which blames violence on domestic factors such as population, and such framing can justify western development interventions in Africa even when such intervention is not in the interest of the later (Hartmann, 2001).

As a critique of the Malthusian approach, political ecology argues that to understand environmental violence, it is crucial to consider local resource management practices (focus on economic and political institutions just like *political scientists*), the broader international political economy, and the cultural context (focus on cultural as with *sociologists*) (Watts, 1983b; Blaikie & Brookfield, 1987). Thus, political ecologists adopt a multi-level approach in which the attribution of blame for violence is shared between a range of actors including the national government, the international political economy and cultural institutions (Peluso & Watts, 2001). As such, instead of seeing petro-violence as a form of criminal youth behaviour as some economists such as Collier (2007) postulates, political ecologists interrogate the interplay between these multi-level factors in shaping youth violence. They believe that social relations are shaped by the interaction between human and the biophysical environment and that this interaction can inform people's identity and shape political and economic processes (Robbins, 2012; Pickering, 1992; Boyd, et al., 2001; Swyngedouw, 1999). Because human beings and the biophysical environment co-produce each other, transformations in the latter can shape social relations in a violent way.

Official discourse by the government and some media publications justify resource exploitation and military repression in the Niger Delta on the grounds of advancing the national interest. But this narrative ignores the negative impact of oil on the livelihood, health, culture, environment and dignity of local residents and how these impacts combined with the national and international networks of capitalism are connected to local violence. (Watts, 2001). Thus, a political ecology approach to violence transcends this one-sided approach to violence by highlighting how human interaction with

nature results in a situation where environmental profits and harm are not distributed equally but shaped by power relationships. In most cases, the experiences of vulnerable groups such as peasants, youths and local residents who suffer disproportionately from the harmful impacts of environmental processes are under-theorised. Political ecology gives these groups a voice by highlighting how their violent responses may arise from their harmful experiences (Basset & Peimer, 2015), and how this violence may be structured by power relations beyond their control (France and Threadgold, 2016). As such, political ecologists believe that addressing resource violence requires a democratic environmental decision making, transparency of local institutions responsible for the management of resources and implementation of cooperate practices that are sensitive to local needs (Chhatre & Saberwal, 2006; Ribot, 2007; Peluso & Watts, 2001).

Bourdieu's work complements and adds value to the political ecology approach adopted in this thesis. Because his triumvirate concepts-habitus, field and capital-provide a useful analytical framework that captures the complexity of young people's relationship with violence, highlighting how social factors and not only economic are important in shaping their relationship with violence. In the latter part of this Chapter, I explain in more detail how these Bourdieu's concept complement a political approach. But this is after I explore the link between youth, violence and masculinity followed by an introduction of the meaning of these concepts in sections 2.4 and 2.5 respectively.

Many critics have questioned the intellectual focus of political ecology considering its relationship with its cognate field-cultural ecology (Vayda & Walters, 1999; Robbins, 2004). Others have questioned how sufficiently it examines issues related to ecology, pointing out that it focuses too much on politics and the limited impact of its scholarship on policy and development (Walker, 2006; Blaikie, 2012). However, the fact that political ecology combines multiple perspectives to investigate how the actions of state agencies and international actors are connected to local violence and how this

violence interacts with the cultural context explains why it is adopted as the overarching framework in this research. A political ecology approach to violence will allow us to investigate deeper into how various actors and institutions shape young people's experiences of violence in ways that are often invisible and uncounted for in the literature, thus giving young people a voice in discussions about youth violence in the Niger Delta.

The next sections explain other concepts such as youths, gender and hegemonic masculinity. These concepts will further our understanding of the factors that shape young people's relationship with violence.

2.4 Violence and Youths: Is Violence a Young male Syndrome?

While violence affects the society at large, there is a consensus that young men are disproportionately the victims and perpetrators of violence in its direct sense as reports suggest that homicide is the primary cause of death amongst young men (WHO, 2002; UNODC, 2010; Rice, 2015; Loeber, 2017). However, despite the ubiquity of young men in violence, the relationship between gender, youth and violence remains under-theorised (France, et al., 2012). While we know that young men are predominately the perpetrators of violence, why young men or male youths, in particular, are more involved in violence is a little understood question, and this research aims to contribute towards filling this gap.

Before discussing how the relationship between gender, youth and violence has been under-theorised in the literature, I first explain the social meaning of youths in the Niger Delta, especially when used in the context of oil exploration. This local definition of youths is also the definition of youths adopted in this thesis which I elaborate in the methodology Chapter.

2.4.1 Youth as a contested concept: adopting a definition that is reflective of the local context

Like the concept of violence, youth is also a contested concept. Its definitional parameters including age range and social motives differ across societies and

policies. In the context of violence, 'youth' is often used in combination with 'gangs'-forming the phrase 'youth gangs' which is used often to describe a group of young men often operating under a group name who engage in a range of activities ranging from identity search to violent resistance, and criminalities (Moser & Winton, 2002; Imbusch, et al., 2011; Baird, 2011). At the national and international levels, youth is usually associated with an age category. In Nigeria for instance, the official definition of youth is any citizen of Nigeria between the age brackets of 18-35 years (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2009). However, this age category varies with definitions at the international level such as the United Nations where the age range of youths is 15-24 (United Nations, 2018).

Instead of understanding youths as an age category, political ecologists see youths as a space of identity. This framing allows us to pay attention to how youth is socially constructed in a particular context which connects to social factors such as gender, economy, class, religion and ethnicity (Oluwaniyi, 2010; Jike, 2004; Obi, 2004; Watts, 2007). In the Niger Delta, youth is a social category where indigenous identity, exclusion, and gender converge. To put it in another way, in the Niger Delta, women, and men especially who feel a sense of economic, political and socio-ecological grievances associated with oil gather under the collective identity of youths to take actions aimed at challenging and transforming these experiences with and without the use of violence. Thus, while the national age range for youths is 18-35, it is possible to see men and women between the ages of 18-45 identify as a youth. This is because being a youth in the context of oil exploration is more about being at the margins of society, about lacking social, political and economic power, than it is about age. This local meaning of youths in the Niger Delta is the definition of youths adopted in this thesis as provided in Chapter 4.

In the Niger Delta and to a certain extent across Nigeria, the social category of youth is associated with social and economic responsibilities which when attained, transits one successfully from youth to more aspirational adult status. Such responsibilities include marriage and financial independence,

without which transition to adulthood and the social, economic and political benefits attached to it remains indefinitely postponed (Oluwaniyi, 2010; Hollos & Leis, 1989). Conditions of unemployment, have consequences on youth, and especially on male youth's transition to adulthood because young men are socially expected to cater to the financial role of the breadwinner in the family. This can result to a feeling of hopelessness, frustration and anger, and can increase the willingness of youths to engage in violence especially when there is economic incentive attached to such behaviour (Obi, 2006; Collier & Hoeffler, 2004; Momoh, 2000). This link between social responsibilities such as marriage, gender, and economic survival is crucial for understanding the link between male youths and violence. However, despite this link, there is a dearth of critical scholarly works that investigate these links especially in the context of oil exploration in the Niger Delta. I elaborate on this in the next section.

2.4.2 (Petro) violence, youths and gender-locating the gap

This section highlights the gap in scholarly works which connects youths, violence and gender in the context of oil exploration in the Niger Delta. It also discusses the strong portrayal of male youths in official discourses and media publications as 'criminals' and how this narrative has been used to justify the deployment of repressive security forces in the region.

As at the time of writing this Chapter -August, 2018-, a search on petroleum and masculinity in the Niger Delta on google scholar revealed only one relevant research, a PhD thesis by Rebecca Golden (2012). Golden's work offers a riveting account of masculinity and petro-violence in the Niger Delta focusing on Ijaw cosmology. However, this thesis lacks a profound theoretical analysis of how masculinity can explain youth violence. In contrast, this thesis combines Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity and Bourdieu's thinking tools to explain how the social context which includes the local notions of masculinity shape young men's relationship with violence and as such contributes towards filling this gap.

The dearth in critical scholarship linking youth, gender and violence is evident in the literature. Authors in *gender, peace and conflict research* highlight the ‘gendered nature of violence’, emphasising the need for an ‘engendered’ approach to violence where the link between violence and gender receives deeper attention (Wesely & Gaarder, 2004; Moser, 2001). Such an approach focuses on understanding how the local constructions of masculinity, which includes positioning men as the protectors of the community are used to legitimise violence (Yuval-Davis, 2004; Nagel, 2007). This approach has achieved some progress in terms of proving an explanation that highlights the role of masculinity in shaping violence. However, despite this progress, there is a misleading argument from scholars in this field, where violence by men is attributed to the ‘aggressive’ nature of men as warriors, and low violence amongst women attributed to women being inherently peaceful (Goldstein, 2001; Sayer, 1997). In addition to this analytical limitation, the category of youths and its interconnectedness with gender has not received any attention at all from scholars in this field (Streicher, 2011).

Earlier works in the field of *gang research* believe that violence resulted from aberrant, deviant, and aggressive behaviour from young men (Decker & Weerman, 2005). Through such framings, academics contributed to promoting the stereotype of male youths as a social problem. In recent years, however, authors in the field of gang research have expanded their analysis, highlighting the complex motive and meanings that gang members attach to their activities, as opposed to describing them as a homogenised category of criminal young men (Venkatesh, 2003; Salo, 2006). Similarly, in the field of *subculture*, some authors attribute youth violence to hormonal changes which cause ‘storm and stress’ in adolescents and youths, predisposing them towards violence (Mead, et al., 1973; Graebner, 2010.; Harwood, 2005). Others have framed ‘youth’ reductively as a ‘magical’ avenue through which young people can escape adult hegemony and live a life that is impossible in a world co-habited with adults (Poynting, 2007; Berard, 2007). Again, this approach reduces the motivation for youth violence to a single explanation of escaping adult hegemony but fails to give in-depth attention to the impact of

adult hegemony on the lives of youths, as well as the entanglements between gender and youth violence.

Despite the shortcomings of pioneer research in the subculture field, contemporary authors have offered superior insights that go beyond a reductive account of youth violence. For example, Bohnsack (2003) found that youth can be constitutive of a cultural agency. Alexander (2000, p. 20), also opined that instead of characterising youths as ‘the ultimate symbol of crisis’, the lived realities of youths should be analysed in the context of the wider culture and economy in which their lives are located. However, despite these brilliant analysis given by contemporary scholars in this field, their works have focused heavily on youths gangs in Europe (Streicher, 2011). It then remains to be seen whether youth-focused researches in non-western context will echo or challenge their point.

Regional studies argue that instead of imposing western interpretations of youths in non-western regions, the particularities of the socio-economic, political, and colonial experiences should be considered (Dinnen, 1999). For example, Goddard (1992) finds that in contrast to popular portrayals of Melanesia men as aggressive and violent warriors which fits a colonial representation of young men from this region, many young men In Papua New Guinea engaged with violence because it enabled them to navigate the economic exclusion enabled by capitalism.

Other scholars have also contested Western characterisation of adolescent and youth as a period of ‘storm and stress’ arguing that people experience youth and adolescence differently across cultures (Côté, 2013; Arnett, 1999). However, despite the validity of this argument, research which explains how the cultural context of the Niger Delta shape petro-violence has been minimal. In fact, instead of giving attention to how local context shapes how people experience youth, official discourses and media reportage attribute violence to the actions of deviant, problematic, criminal men who are determined to cause social disequilibrium. For example, Collier (2007, pp. 30-31, emphasis

Italicised), while analysing the findings from Oyefusi (2008), a Nigerian doctoral scholar wrote:

If low income and slow growth make a country prone to civil war [*violence*]...why?...young men who are the recruits for rebel armies come pretty cheaply/ people [*youths*] with a sense of grievance were no more likely to take part in violent protest than those who were aggrieved. So what did make people [*male youths*] more likely to take part in political violence?...well, being young, being uneducated, and being without dependents....[there is] no relationship between social amenities that a district possessed and [the propensity of its youths to engage with] political violence. [Rather], the risk of violence jumps sharply if there is at least one oil well, if there are two oil wells in the district, it starts to go down. And with twenty oil wells, it is lower still.... Try as one might, it is difficult to reconcile these [findings] with the image of a vanguard of fighters of social justice...To my mind, this looks more like a story of a protection racket than outrage provoked by environmental damage...because in the absence of an oil well there was no scope for extortion and so no scope for violence. But the more oil wells, there are in district the greater the incentive for the oil company to pay up and buy peace....The dispute in the Niger Delta started out as justified environmental protests by people bearing the brunt of damage without seeing the benefits of oil revenues. But over time, [this] grievance has evolved...into greed.

A lot can be said about Collier's account of youth violence in the Niger Delta. First, it follows the same utilitarian lens through which many economists have viewed youth violence (Collier, et al., 2006), suggesting that youth violence in the Niger Delta is a criminal syndicate and not motivated by social justice at least lately. In fact, Collier had concluded in earlier research (Collier, 2003) that youths in the Niger Delta are criminals, comparing them to 'an American gangland'. The second thing about Collier's account is that it offers a unidimensional account of youth violence in the Niger Delta which ignores the local meaning of youth and how this meaning intersects with the political economy of oil. As I show in Chapter 3, in the Niger Delta, youth is a permeable category containing two main groups of people. The first group consist of youths who are on the side of the government and oil companies, serving as political thugs and getting contracts from MOCs to protect oil facilities. But there is no question that there is another group of youths, who

justify their engagement with violence with all manner of explanations, ranging from unemployment and how it stops men from performing the social role of a provider, to religious issues, and even environmental issues¹⁶ contrary to Collier's suggestion. Also, contrary to Colliers claim that grievances in the Niger Delta have now evolved into greed, analysis of young people's interviews show that, grievances can co-exist perfectly with greed and so the two are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

Similar to Collier's account, there is also a strong portrayal of youths in the Niger Delta as criminals and deviants in international media publications. For example, on the 5TH of February, 2006, The New York Times (2006) wrote:

The Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta has managed to shut down nearly a fifth of this nation's vast oil production, briefly pushing global crude oil prices up more than \$1.50 a barrel and throwing Nigeria's government into crisis over the groups demand that the oil-rich but squalid region be given greater share of the wealth it creates....militant groups here have taken more than a dozens of oil workers hostage, including some Americans, wreaking havoc on the industry that is the mainstay of Nigeria's economy...the Information Minister Frank Nweke said these are thugs and purely criminality. Youths in this restive region have used hostage taking and sabotage to extort money and prevent the authorities from stopping oil theft from pipelines. Although the attacks have been directed primarily at Royal Dutch Shell, their real target is the government.

The above excerpt from a New York Times article exemplifies the popular representation of youth violence in the mainstream media. Such representations on a media outlet with a global influence and readership, largely shape the global perception of youth violence. In this article, youth violence is explained as actions of 'thugs' and chalked down to 'criminality', with very scarce mention of other possible motivations for violence. More so, this article omits the complicated intersection of the state and the international network of capitalism in facilitating this violence. When we scratch deeper beyond the surface of the article, one can see how state violence upon the

¹⁶ See Chapters 5 and 6

communities is naturalised and discursively presented merely as an effort to ‘stop oil theft from pipelines’ with no mention of how the state and oil company security officials have facilitated this violence by their repressive practices.

Linking militant activities to the decrease in oil production justify the deployment of international security in the Niger Delta on the grounds of protecting costly oil facilities. It also promotes the implementation of other foreign policies¹⁷ of terror and immigration controls which usually follow such pronouncements. Focusing on American workers kidnapped or held hostage while completely ignoring many youths who have been killed and brutally tortured by the combined actions of the international and state security is a subtle way of showing whose body matters more in the realm of petro-violence, and from this article it is definitely the American body, the western body. Crucially, such tropes of victimhood, allow America to position herself outside the violence in the Niger Delta.

Let us also consider another New York Times article that illustrates this narrative in which youth violence in the Niger Delta is attributed to criminality. On the 9th of November (2007) the New York Times wrote:

Rosemary Douglas has no connection to the oil business that pumps more than two million barrels of crude a day from beneath the swampy Niger Delta. But the violence surrounding it pierced her home in September anyway, when a bullet shattered her upper left arm as she napped with her 2-year old daughter. The violence that has rocked the Niger Delta in recent years has been aimed largely at foreign oil companies, their expatriate workers and the police officers and soldiers whose job it is to protect them....The origins of the violence are as murky and convoluted as the mangrove swamps that snake across the delta, one of the poorest places on earth. But they lie principally in the rivalry among gangs, known locally as cults that have ties to political leaders who used them as private militias during state and federal

¹⁷ See (United States Executive Office of the President 1999-2002, Klaus (2004), Foster (2006). For further reading on how such representations conjure with the image of Black African societies being torn apart by ethnic and gang violence, justifying the need for securitisation of the region to save vulnerable group see (Crenshaw, et al., 1995; Gutierrez-Jones, 2001; Turcotte, 2011).

elections....they represent a new worrisome phase in a region that has been convulsed by conflict since oil was discovered here in 1956.

Also in this article, the role of the international capitalist network in perpetuating this conflict remains concealed. Instead, the article reduces youth militancy to the actions of a politically affiliated rivalry ‘gangs’ and calling it a ‘new worrisome phase’ appeals to the popular western image of Nigeria, and the Niger Delta in particular, as a place of perennial crisis. This configuration also suggests that violence is something ‘new ‘in this region. However, this does not coincide with the literature review in Chapter 3 which suggests that the West has facilitated historical experiences of violence in the Niger Delta since the palm oil era, allowing the socialisation of the youths into a culture of violence.

I have focused on the reportage of youth violence in the Niger Delta by Collier and The New York Times not because they are the only examples¹⁸ but because of their high visibility and influence. Taken together, what I have tried to achieve in this section is first, to show the gaps that exist in literature in terms of linking youth, gender and violence in the Niger Delta. I have also discussed how youth violence in the Niger Delta is largely represented in western media in a way that allows the west and the Nigerian government to exclude themselves from any blame for the violence. Against these gaps, part of the objective of this thesis is to go beyond this narrow portrayal of youths as criminals to a more complicated account of youth violence which recognises how a layer of factors such as gender structure and the political economy shapes local violence.

Towards this objective, the next two sections discuss Bourdieu’s thinking tools-habitus, field and capital-, and Connell’s concept of hegemonic masculinity. These two bodies of literature are closely related and engages with similar issues. Bourdieu’s tools, especially habitus helps us to

¹⁸ For other examples where youth violence is attributed to the actions of criminal, restive, young men see African Confidential (2006) and (2008), and (Cesarz, et al., 2003, p. 2)

understand how cultural and sociological factors shape what people can or cannot do. Hegemonic masculinity helps us to understand how the habitus is intensely gendered. In other words, it helps us to understand how gender and gender norms are crucial aspects of the habitus. I use these two bodies of literature to expand the theoretical and empirical connections between gender, oil and violence. Since political ecology, the overarching framework of this research is about understanding how human-environmental relationships, in this case, oil exploration, is politically contested; then any effort to understand this contestation must be sensitive to the patterns of social relations that are crucial in shaping this contestation. This literature takes us afield from narratives from people like Collier and his co-authors (2006) who see youth violence as a form of racketeering.

2.4.3 Bourdieu's 'thinking tools': habitus, field and capital

'All of my thinking started from this point: how can behaviour be regulated without being a product of obedience to rules' (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 65).

Bourdieu was very interested in understanding how society works, and this is evident not in the epigraph but across his formidable range of publications. As a sociologist with a keen interest in social change, Bourdieu was concerned with how social injustice is reproduced across generations. He argued that society reproduces injustice through structures of power relations which regulates behaviour in a subtle way where those suffering injustices contribute to their own experiences of injustice by normalising and reproducing it. Thus, Bourdieu devoted his career theorising how we can recognise and emancipate ourselves from this invisible injustices.

Bourdieu's thinking tools-habitus, field and capital- offer a way of thinking very critically about our social world and how we experience it. Below, I discuss these tools paying particular attention to habitus, to see how these tools can help us to better understand youth experiences of violence in the Niger Delta. These thinking tools are not grandiose theories per se. Instead, they are thinking tools which can help researchers to investigate the

interaction between humans and social phenomena in a way that can reveal the possibility of other subtle power relations that shape many such interactions (Thomson, 2008, p. 75).

Habitus

Habitus refers to one's way of acting, thinking, feeling and perceiving the world. These ways of thinking and acting are learned early on in life through socialisation, and they become the basis upon which we make decisions in our present and the future even though we may not always be aware of them.

Bourdieu defines habitus as 'structured and structuring structures' (Bourdieu, 1994, p. 170). It is '*structured*' by one's past experiences such as history, culture, religion, gender norms and upbringing. It is '*structuring*' because it shapes present and future practices (Grenfell, 2008, p. 50). It is a '*structure*' because it works in a systematically ordered way. As a structured system, habitus is socialised dispositions which systematically shapes our judgement, predilection, oddities, perceptions and actions (Bourdieu, 1990). For example, children raised in a family of athletes are more likely to appreciate sports or become athletes because they acquire the ability to understand and appreciate sports from childhood unlike children from an academic family (Swartz, 2002).

Disposition is a crucial word in Bourdieu's habitus for many reasons. First, because disposition suggests 'capability' and 'reliability' not 'frequency' or 'repetition', it allows Bourdieu to conceptualise practice/behaviour, not as something achieved by repetition (which is the dictionary meaning of practice), but as a potential that can be relied on to be drawn from when called upon. (ibid: 635). But the bigger function of disposition in Bourdieu's habitus is that it helps him to make a connection between structure and agency as illustrated in the quote below.

Disposition refers to the result of an organising action which has a meaning similar to that of structure; it also refers to a way of

being, a habitual state *of the body as well as the* predisposition, tendency, propensity or inclination *of the senses* (Grenfell, 2008, pp. 50, my italics).

From Grenfell's remarks, we can say that behaviour (agency) is shaped by our dispositions (internalised structure). The *dispositions* of the habitus mean that our past experiences shape our tendency to act in certain ways. These tendencies are *durable*. This is not to say that they are not *immutable*. The habitus is capable of *changing* following changes in the structure that structures it (Bourdieu, 1993). Hence, Bourdieu does not suggest that previous structural factors completely determine human behaviour or that human beings are incapable of agency as many critics (Willey, 2016; Mouzelis, 1995) have noted. Instead, Bourdieu observes that social behaviour follows a specific pattern and that habitus enables the reproduction of social patterns of conduct (Bourdieu, 1990).

Bourdieu rejects the objectivist view that human behaviour requires rationale or *conscious* consideration of material circumstance or culture. Instead, he argues that to a large degree people act *unconsciously* based on past experiences and the rules of the social context/structure where the habitus interacts. Thus, Bourdieu explains that *history* and *socialisation* are crucial determinants of human tendencies or habitus. Bourdieu rejects the idea that human actions are regulated solely by an external structure, or entirely determined by internal subjective whim (Swartz, 2002).

It may be useful to unpack Bourdieu's formulation of the habitus by comparing it against two schools of thought which Bourdieu opposes. First is Talcott Parson's theory of 'structure and social action' which attributes human action fundamentally to external culture (Parson's, 1968 [1937].) Unlike Parson, Bourdieu does not see human action (or practice) to be fundamentally shaped by culture. Instead, he argues that social behaviour is not only shaped by culture but also *adaptive* to it. The second school of thought which is inconsistent with the idea of habitus is the rational choice theory which argues that human beings are rational actors who make

conscious choices often motivated by material factors like money (Homans, 1950; Coleman & Fararo, 1992). Against the rational choice theory, Bourdieu believes that human actions are bounded unconsciously by constraints of culture or experience and believes that only a small number of human behaviour is informed by rational choice or goal-oriented (Swartz, 1997).

The internalised tendencies of the habitus mean that human beings can reproduce the structure (Broto, et al., 2010). Let's use the previous example of children raised in a family of athletes to explain how habitus ensures social reproduction. When children who are raised in an athletic family become athletes themselves, they reproduce the social world of sport. It is this reproductive capacity of the habitus that Bourdieu refers to when he describes habitus as a 'structuring structure'. Habitus also performs a justificatory function in the sense that it justifies practices (Bourdieu, 1990). Actors analyse their lives and justify their behaviours based on the values, or dispositions of their habitus. Later, in the section on hegemonic masculinity, we shall see how the gender structure or gender norms are crucial aspects of the habitus, and how masculine behaviour can be justified based on the dispositions of the masculine gender habitus.

Bourdieu used this terminology of 'structuring structure' to propose a solution to one of the classical problems in sociology which is the primacy of individual and societal factors in shaping human behaviour. Bourdieu explains that social/society structures the individual, but it is also the actions of individuals that reproduce the society (France, et al., 2012). Bourdieu also recognises the complex nature of this social-individual relationship. He points out that this relationship can be 'inherited' (emphasis on socialisation, history) as well as adaptive or transformative (emphasis on change) (Swartz, 1997; McNay, 1999; McLeod, 2005), but not deterministic (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992).

How can the concept of habitus help to provide an in-depth analysis of youth violence which transcends narrow explanation in which violence is attributed

to criminality by local youths? The concept of habitus helps us to think of violence as a form of practice or social behaviour. Understanding violence as a practice helps us to think of violence in dispositional terms as a habitus. If we see violence as disposition and a la Bourdieu dispositions are both inheritable and transposable, then the question is how to provide an analysis of youth violence that recognises this dual nature of disposition. Violence is inherited because socialised and historical experiences structure it. But it is also a transposable disposition in the sense that even when people are socialised into history or culture of violence, this socialised experiences or tendencies can be subjected to changes.

Thinking of violence in dispositional terms as a habitus helps us to put young people's past experiences or their structural context in a conversation with their violent behaviour. Thus, the concept of habitus can help us to interrogate how historical experiences and other structural factors may shape young people's experiences, and influence the way they explain their relationship with violence as opposed to seeing violence as something resulting solely from criminal calculations. This does not suggest that youths merely conform to the structural conditions of their environment without showing agency. Instead, the point is to understand this agency as constrained by structural conditions under which they are expressed.

Bourdieu also recognises the *collective* nature of the habitus. In other words, habitus does not only exist at the individual level. It also exists at the group or collective level in the sense that individuals who have similar socialised experiences can have a habitus that is characteristically related to the habitus of the group to which they belong (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 60). But what group does Bourdieu talk about? Bourdieu talks about these groups in various ways but the most popular of his discussions of group habitus is related to gender and social classes (Bourdieu, 2013; Bourdieu, 2005). Recent authors have also extended Bourdieu's analysis of group habitus to include ethnicity and race (Wallace, 2017), religion (Grusendorf, 2016; Mellor & Shilling, 2014),

generational cohorts (Swartz, 1997) and the environment (Kasper, 2009; Sastry, 2015).

Field and Capital

Bourdieu believes that practices are not shaped by habitus alone. In other words, it is not only historical experiences or our socialised past that shapes our behaviour. Instead, Bourdieu introduces two additional concepts-field and capital- to expand his conceptualisation of practices.

Bourdieu states that to understand practices or social phenomena, one must look beyond the habitus and consider how human beings interact with the *social space*. This means that the habitus does not generate practices in a vacuum but based on its interaction with the social context. This social context where the habitus interacts is called the *field* (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Some examples of a field which Bourdieu wrote about are the academic, economic and political fields.

The field can be thought of as an arena of competition and struggle where people manoeuvre to acquire capitals to improve their social position. In other words, the field is the spatial context where social agents acquire but also exchange their power, their capital. The field is a more inclusive form of 'market' in the economic sense in the sense that it describes the relations of social actors as well as their hierarchy in that field (Swartz, 1996).

I want to expound on Bourdieu's conceptualisation of the field as a social arena in which people struggle to advance their social position. This is because when not read correctly, this may suggest a leaning towards rational choice theory (RCT)-that individuals are motivated by greed or economic interest- to improve their social position which this thesis strongly oppose. Bourdieu's conceptualisation of the field as an arena of struggle differs significantly from a rational choice perspective. RCT, see violence as a strategy towards goals and it conceives this goal only in an economic sense (Collier, 2003). It gives little consideration to the structural conditions under which such goals become

desirable, or what makes this desirable goal worth pursuing in the first place. Bourdieu, on the other hand, evaluates this struggle to advance social position based on a framework of values embodied by the habitus and he does not conceive these values only in an economic sense (Bourdieu, 1991; Bourdieu, 1986; Richard, 1998)

Each field, has some distinct characteristics, style, behaviour, perception, expectation, history, and rules associated with it. Bourdieu refers to these distinct characteristics as *capital*. Capital are valued resources which confers power or status on people operating in a given social context. Thus, in addition to the habitus, practices are also motivated by the desire to acquire capital which elevates one from a powerless to a powerful position in the field in which they play.

The more an individual accumulates capital that is valuable in a given social context the more he is in a position of authority, power or dominance and vice versa (Grenfell, 2008). Thus, capital is not only a signifier of taste. It is also a signifier of status. Capital signifies values, and I interpret these values to mean an agent's capability to cope with the conditions of the field in which he or she is playing.

Bourdieu identifies different forms of capital in his work. The popular forms of capital in Bourdieu's work include *cultural capital* (distinction, knowledge, behaviour, stylistic conventions), *symbolic capital* (recognition, honourability, respectability, prestige. It is credit given to a well-formed habitus (Grenfell, 2008), 'a kind of advantage, a credence granted to those who give their best to a group's belief '(Bourdieu, 1993, p. 120)), *social capital* (contacts, networks, friendships), *scientific capital* (exposure to, and knowledge of science), *economic capital* (financial resources, material resources, assets), *religious capital* (knowledge about religious doctrines and spiritual value system). Weber's work inspired Bourdieu's conceptualisation of religious capital (Bourdieu, 1993; Bourdieu, 1990; Bourdieu, 1991). However, Bourdieu's conception of religious capital has been found not to be very analytically useful

in capturing the fluidity of today's religious world. In part, this is because Bourdieu did not discuss religious capital as something that is within reach of the laity. The agency of the laity almost does not exist in his work. He discusses religious capital as something that is almost exclusively accessible to the leaders of the church. Hence, despite the ambiguity surrounding the word 'spiritual', authors are increasingly embracing it unlike 'religion' which is associated with the 'official, the external and the institutional' (Guest, 2007, p. 1), because spiritual has the ability to capture the intimate and the experiential (Verter, 2003; Palmer & Wong, 2013; Guest, 2007; Heelas, et al., 2005) and the potential to reveal how spirituality becomes a cultural resource which can be acquired and exchanged in today's modern world (Lyon, 2000; Guest, 2007).

Individuals can embody or inherit capital based on their socialised experiences. However, capital can also be acquired over time through practice (Kitchin, 2014). Because capital reflects the interest and oddities of individuals and groups, it is often a signifier of taste (Bourdieu, 2013). However, changes in the social order or changes in the field can lead individuals to reflect on their practice and accumulate new capital which can enable them to meet the needs of the new field.

The field is constantly in flux. The change from an old field to a new one means that values or capital can be transformed completely, and new sets of values that meet the needs of the new field can become distinctive features of social life. This idea is supported by historical researchers and ethnographers who argue that modernisation can create new social divisions and transform the taste of individuals so that everything modern is labelled superior and upper class relegating traditional and old forms of capital as negative and undervalued (Gole, 2000; Kandiyoti, 1997; Golden, 2012). When the habitus is confronted with a new field, it undergoes a dialectic confrontation in which it retains the values of the old field where it was formed, yet subjected to the changes in the new field (Grenfell, 2008).

Combining these three thinking tools (habitus, field and capital) Bourdieu (1986, p. 101) proposes that practices emanate from relations between one's dispositions (habitus) and his/her position (capital), in the particular social context in which one is located (field). He summarises this with the equation:

$$[(\text{Habitus}) (\text{Capital})] + \text{Field} = \text{Practice}$$

This equation shows the relational nature of these thinking tools, and this is crucial for understanding Bourdieu's conceptualisation of practice. On the one hand, the dispositions of individuals-their habitus-, reflect the capital available in the particular field in which they are located (Webb, et al., 2002). But the field also shapes the dispositions of the habitus. Furthermore, the relationship between habitus and the field is, on the one hand, a relationship of ontological complicity (Bourdieu, 1981, p. 306). But it also a relationship with a conditioning effect (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 127). It is ontological because the dispositions of the habitus are the basis for one's understanding of him/herself and the social world. It is also a relation of conditioning because the social space serves as a repository of social knowledge which structures people's understandings of themselves, their world, their belief, their sense of identity and consequently their practices.

Before continuing with the discussions in this Chapter, I want to elaborate on an important point which is crucial to the way I use Bourdieu's practice theory as I have alluded to earlier. I am using Bourdieu's tools in this thesis to see what it offers us in terms of understanding more deeply, the complex nature of violence as a social practice. Habitus has the explanatory power of acknowledging how the social order structures the lives of youths in ways that are often not visible and therefore not foregrounded in many accounts of youth violence in the Niger Delta. This is not to suggest that these tools are perfect, or that they have the ability to sufficiently explain violence. They do not. Violence is a highly compounded concept as I have shown in the preceding sections and multiple explanations are inherent in all compounded things. In order words, many factors can shape human behaviour. Behaviour is not only

shaped by the dispositions of one's habitus or motivated by one's desire to accumulate valuable capital in the field in which one is playing. Thus, I recognise the limitations of these tools. In fact, as I stated earlier critics have pointed out a lot of weaknesses associated with Bourdieu's tools, notably that they can overcomplicate analysis (Maton, 2008) and does not give enough room for agency (Butler, 1999; Jenkins, 1982)¹⁹. However, the main functions of relevant concepts in research include to encapsulate the complexities of the social reality or problem under investigation and to help to condense, synthesise and present the overall findings of the research. Thus, I have adopted Bourdieu's tools because they prioritise a relational account of social practices and recognise that behaviours, in the case of this research youth violence, can be shaped by structural forces which may be invisible to young people themselves and even analysts.

2.5 Hegemonic Masculinity, Bourdieu's Tools and Violence: Gender Norms as Crucial Aspect of Habitus

As stated in the earlier section, Bourdieu's concept of habitus emphasises the incorporation of the social into the individual and how this incorporation shapes human behaviour. By stressing the connection between the social and the individual, Bourdieu opens a theoretical space for examining the aspects of the society that is crucial in the formulation of the habitus. By combining Connell's idea of hegemonic masculinity and Bourdieu's tools, this section sustains the discussion about the link between the individual and the social by explaining how the gender structure is a crucial aspect of the habitus. It also discusses how the masculine gender habitus positions young men closely towards experiences of violence.

The idea of hegemonic masculinity can be traced to Connell's work (1982) in which she analysed how the construction of the male identity shapes

¹⁹ Bourdieu himself counters this point, arguing that habitus though a 'structuring form of structure' (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 53), gives room for reflexivity, and agency, although this agency is influenced by one's past experiences. In fact, the agency of social actors is well recognised in Bourdieu's work. For example, he talks about an agent's 'capacity for invention and improvisation (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 13)

Australian labour politics. Today, the concept of hegemonic masculinity has become influential in gender studies as reflected in the increasing number of scholars who have adopted this concept (Hearn, 2005; Viveros Vigoya, 2001; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). The idea of hegemony originated from Gramsci's work (2005) in which he used hegemony to describe how the ruling class formulates and maintains domination of the subordinate classes. Later on, Connell adopted this term to conceptualise how the gender order establishes dominant gender roles that men in a given society, and at a given time position themselves in relations to.

Put simply, hegemonic masculinity refers to the dominant ways of being a man in a given culture and at a given time. These include patterns of thought and sets of roles which men are socially expected to conform to (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Donaldson, 1993; Hearn, 2004). Men who do not conform to these dominant patterns of behaviour are often socially pressured, judged harshly, undervalued, and dismissed by society. Conformity to these dominant gendered roles, however, brings masculine privilege such as social recognition, acceptance and power (Heartfield, 2002; Dolan, 2002; Bourdieu, 2001).

Hegemonic masculinity renders Bourdieu's tools more transparent, and this is where the connection between Bourdieu and Connell lies. While hegemonic masculinity explains how gender structure, shapes behaviour habitus helps us to grasp how this gender structure is transformed into social agency or how gender relations are reproduced. Gender relations classify the world into two main gender groups- men and women- and people will have the habitus of the gender group to which they belong (Coles, 2009).

Because young men are socialised in the *masculine field*, they acquire the habitus or internalise the dispositions associated with the masculine field which includes hegemonic gender norms. These internalised gendered dispositions become the basis upon which young men see themselves and their roles in society. The *masculine habitus* or internalised gender structure

enables the tendency to conform to the dominant ways of manhood (Bourdieu, 2001; Brown, 2006). It also shapes the desire to acquire *masculine capital*-economic prosperity, recognition, power over women- which confers value or high social position in the masculine field (Krais, 1999). Thus, the masculine habitus ensures the generative possibilities of the masculine gender structure.

Because the habitus is the basis upon which people see themselves and their roles in the society, any attempt to understand how young men explain their involvement with youth violence must be attentive to the qualities of their habitus that necessarily mediate to shape this involvement, especially those related to gender. Thus to understand young men's relationship with violence in the Niger Delta, it is crucial to pay attention to how gender shapes their agency in ways that are often not apparent to male youths themselves or analysts. The purpose of using Bourdieu and Connell's concepts is therefore to explore their analytical potential for explaining how historical processes and gendered relations shape human-nature interactions to provide an account of youth violence where the deeply inscribed elements of the society that shapes young people's relationship with violence are recognised.

The dominant ways of manhood differ across societies and can be reconfigured over time. In America and in many European cultures, for example, the dominant version of masculinity is constructed in radical opposition to femininity (Kupers, 2005; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Values that are traditionally associated with women-such as caregiving, health consciousness, and vulnerability, peace-seeking and physical weakness-are not considered the standard ways of being a man. Instead, their opposites-incompetence for domesticity, desire for respect, economic prosperity, inexpressiveness and aggression are popular standards upon which manhood is judged (Brannon, 1976). Masculinities are also constructed as roles which men are socially expected to perform including fatherhood and marriage. But it also includes the domination of women and subordinated masculinities (Bourdieu, 2001).

Bourdieu regards hegemonic masculinity or masculine domination as a form of symbolic violence in the sense that men see these relations of domination inscribed in their masculine habitus as natural making them to accept it as the everyday 'order of things', even when it harms them (Bourdieu, 2001: 8,-35). Thus many men and women contribute to the reproduction of the gender structure or their own domination by conforming to the standards of the gender structure to access the capital or privileges attached to such conformity. Nonetheless, Bourdieu makes it clear that he does not suggest that men or women choose their own domination. Such a stance leans towards victim-blaming, an approach which Bourdieu himself seriously rejects. Instead, Bourdieu explains in the quote below that it is impossible to disconnect symbolic violence from the very power relations that produce the dominated habitus itself.

Far from being the conscious, free, deliberate act of an isolated "subject," this practical construction is itself the effect of power, durably embedded in bodies of the dominated in the form of schemes of perception and dispositions (to admire, respect, love, etc.) which sensitize them to certain symbolic manifestations of power. (p. 40)reproveWhile Bourdieu talks about the generative capacity of the masculine habitus, he also recognises the possibility for social subversion or agency within the masculine habitus. Connell herself also recognises that multiple masculinities can exist in a social order when she writes that men are not bound to any particular version of masculinity, but they draw from cultural repertoires to perform culturally expected masculinity (Connell, 2005, p. xix). Such multiplicity is possible because as stated in the earlier section, the habitus has a *generative* and not *determining* capacity. Thus the masculine habitus has the potential to accommodate other forms of masculinity that may flout gender orthodoxy, especially when there are changes in the masculine field or other fields with which it interacts (Gutmann, 1996, p. 263; Hearn & Collinson, 1996). But while masculine habitus can be adaptive, young men's choices in the context of social change will depend on both the dispositions of their masculine habitus (the old field) and the masculinisation opportunities (ways of achieving manhood) available in the new field.

In the Ijaw ethnic tribe of Niger Delta, the hegemonic forms of masculinity have been reconfigured, contested, dismantled, and preserved within the

course of history and oil modernity (Hodgson, 2003). In the pre-oil era, Ijaw culture recognised an individual as either a child or an adult (Hollos & Leis, 1989, p. 71). During this time, young people and adults lived in a well-integrated gerontocratic society in which the old/elders are culturally expected to protect, lead and care for the young, and the young reciprocated by respecting elderly authorities. During this time also, young male adults were expected to demonstrate their manhood by participating in communal activities including canoe house construction where they are supposed to demonstrate their physical superiority over women through labour supply. Young men also engaged in activities such as apprenticeship, hunting, farming, fishing, gin making²⁰, all of which provided the skill and economic resources to meet the demand of adulthood one of which is economic independence and elaborate marriage.

In addition to marriage and the breadwinner role, young men are socially expected to protect their families and their communities against external threats. The preparation for the warriorhood role starts early on in life when young men are introduced to wrestling where they learn the necessary skill to fight as warriors (Golden, 2012). However, while warriorhood, marriage and breadwinner are the dominant forms of masculinity in the Niger Delta, it is crucial to caution against reductionism and oversimplifying masculinity in the Niger Delta as multiple forms of masculinity exist.

Today in the Niger Delta, oil modernity has encouraged a situation of crisis under which many young men are growing up. Many of the traditional social fabric and economic activities of the pre-oil era have been ruptured, and there is the dearth of modern ones to play their roles. Modernity has meant that traditional economic activities which used to provide young men with economic empowerment and other forms of masculine capital have become obsolete. Instead of the old avenues to livelihood, young men are looking for jobs which carry the prestige of a modern job. For many youths, this means a

²⁰ Gin is a locally brewed alcoholic beverage, served as drinks in many traditional ceremonies including marriages, burial ceremonies and even child naming ceremonies.

job in the oil industry, or at least a job with a monthly wage and we will know in the analytical Chapters to what extent these modern jobs are within the reach of young men. Also with oil exploration, the skill from wrestling which young men used in intra-community fights is now channelled into fighting the federal government, the oil companies and sometimes the elders whom the youths blame for creating the conditions for exclusion and social disintegration under which they are growing up.

In Northern Uganda, Dolan (2002) found that hegemonic masculinity constructed the male body in sharp contrast to the female body such that the male body exemplifies strength and is therefore expected to protect the weaker female body, exposing men disproportionately towards the experiences of violence. Because hegemonic masculinity positions male youths more closely towards the experiences of violence, the masculine habitus will contain high experiences of violence. In the Niger Delta community, for example, where young men are socially expected to act as community protectors, their habitus, or past experiences will show high experiences of violence. In such context where experiences of violence are high, violence can become a 'habitualised disposition' or internalised tendency (Jeganathan, 2000, p. 117), which can be reactivated in the circumstances similar to one's past experiences (Streicher, 2011). The pervasive experiences of violence can also normalise violence and make people fold in violence into various aspects of their everyday life and causing them always to anticipate its occurrence based on their past experiences (Hermez, 2012)

Many researchers have argued that we must investigate how men and women interact with structural violence or conditions of exclusion to understand the link between violence and hegemonic masculinity more deeply (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009). They argue that poverty and exclusion have a more profound impact on men as opposed to women. Economic exclusion can have an emasculating effect on men in the sense that it prevents them from living up to the hegemonic version of a breadwinner (Cleaver, 2002; Baker, 2005).

Men who are unable to live up to this dominant version of masculinity do not get the ‘rites of passage’ (Baker, 2005, p. 16; Schiff, 2003, p. 163) into adulthood or public life in some culture, and therefore remain in eternal limbo as socially immature. They are exposed to social ridicule, disrespected and considered undesirable in the mainstream eye or the people who embody the ‘dominant schemes of perception to make that judgement’ (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 40).

When the breadwinner version of hegemonic masculinity is put in crisis by unemployment, young men look for alternative means of livelihood to be able to perform the provider role and restore the loss of status and disrespect that comes with unemployment even when such livelihoods are connected with violence (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2005; Diouf, 2003; Mayeda & Pasko, 2012; Gilligan, 1996; Messerschmidt, 2005; Barker, 2005). This has been provided as the explanatory factor for increasing violence amongst young men in Kingston Jamaica (Dowdney, 2007), in Cape Town, South Africa (Jensen, 2008), in Medellin, Colombia and other parts of South America (Baird, 2011; Abbink, 2005), in USA (Hagedorn, 2008), Middle East (UNDP, 2016), the united kingdom (Fraser, 2010; France, et al., 2012) and of course the Niger Delta (Golden, 2012).

Sometimes the category of youth can serve as a ‘gendered space of experience’ where young men who have experienced masculine devaluation enabled by structural violence gather to re-enact masculinity collectively (Streicher, 2011). In this sense, ‘doing youth’ can be intrinsically linked with ‘doing gender’ in the sense that young men may seek ways of recuperating their lost manhood by doing youth (Breitenbach, 2013). But however justified the use of violence to navigate conditions of structural violence may be, the irony is that when young men react to inequality with violence, it compounds the negative stereotype of youths as ‘deviant’ social category, and ‘stake their claims to a place in a moral universe’ (Jensen, 2008, p. 19). Because it reinforces the very structures which they fight against.

What this section demonstrates is that violence by male youths is not a mindless activity or simply underlined by criminal motivation as some authors suggest. What we see instead is that, violence can have a gender function in the sense that male youths can use violence to achieve the identity associated with the dominant masculine ideal such as financial success, protector, status, respect and power especially in the context of economic exclusion (Campbell & Muncer, 1994; Archer, 1994).

2.6 Linking Bourdieu, Hegemonic Masculinity, and Political Ecology: An Analytical Framework

In the previous discussions, I stated that Bourdieu's concepts and Connells idea of hegemonic masculinity complement and add value to political ecology. In this section, I aim to make the link between Bourdieu, hegemonic masculinity and political ecology more explicit by highlighting how they fit into the broader political ecology literature. I also highlight how these concepts will be utilised in this study to provide a complex account of young people's relationship with violence.

Understanding how Bourdieu's work became important in this research requires an understanding of some of the critical debates in political ecology. As mentioned previously (see section 2.3.3) and as illustrated in Figure 1, political ecologists explain how power relations shape environmental struggles. Bourdieu uses habitus to explain how power works in the society. According to Bourdieu, the habitus exercises power on individuals through the durable internalised structures that condition agency. In other words, Bourdieu believes that power operates in the society as influence of the structures at different levels (social, cultural economic, and political). But he also recognises the operation of power at the individual level as agency, even though he asserts that this agency is constrained by the structures (Bourdieu 2006; France et al., 2012; Streicher, 2011). Since environmental struggles happen within the social milieu, then political ecologist must seek to understand how social factors mediate to shape environmental struggles. The concept of habitus can help in this light. Habitus can be used in political

ecological analysis to explain how internalised social structures/dispositions, exercise power over individuals by enabling, regulating and constraining behaviour and how individuals also exercise power by resisting the influence of the structures. Masculinities draw on habitus, and are entrenched in social lives through long-term practices of socialisation to the point that it becomes normalised in everyday life and invisibilised in public debates.

Drawing from this point, some of the idea that underpins the concept of habitus informed the discussions in Chapter 3, and the analytical approach in Chapters 5 and 7. Chapter 3 presents a historical account of violence in the Niger Delta. This historical account reveals the social life in the Niger Delta (such as masculinity) and how they became entangled with petro-capitalism. Also, the section on the political economy of oil in this Chapter shows how structural changes in economic, political, and institutional forms changed the terms of access and control of petro-dividends and consequently informed youth agency. Similarly, Chapter 5 also reveals how structural/institutional violence shapes young people's relationship with violence. The idea, that gender is a crucial aspect of the habitus, and that habitus are internalised structures that shapes behaviour guided the analysis in Chapter 7. Here, the analysis of young men's interviews through the lens of habitus reveals the role of structural factors related to gender, ethnicity, environmental identity, and religion in shaping their relationship with violence.

Another analytical value which the concept of habitus brings to the political ecology debate is that since habitus helps in the location of power, it inadvertently helps also in the location of moral responsibility regarding who should do what and what can be done to ensure environmental sustainability. This analytical usefulness is important because it is consistent with the normative ambitions of political ecology. This was particularly relevant for the conclusion Chapter where emphasis shifted from explaining youth violence to articulating its possible solutions.

Like habitus, the concepts of capital and field help us to understand how power relations shape nature-society relations. Bourdieu (2006) explains that the social arena/field is a highly differentiated arena where social agents struggle to improve their social standing by accumulating power resources/capital. In other words, capital brings meaning or value to social life. Hence, applying the concept of capital to a political ecology analysis can help us to understand the social meaning of environmental struggles. It can help us to understand why a particular group of actors (in this case, young men) may be more determined than others to drive a social context/ field in a particular direction, especially when they lack the capital to succeed or deemed socially valuable in that particular field.

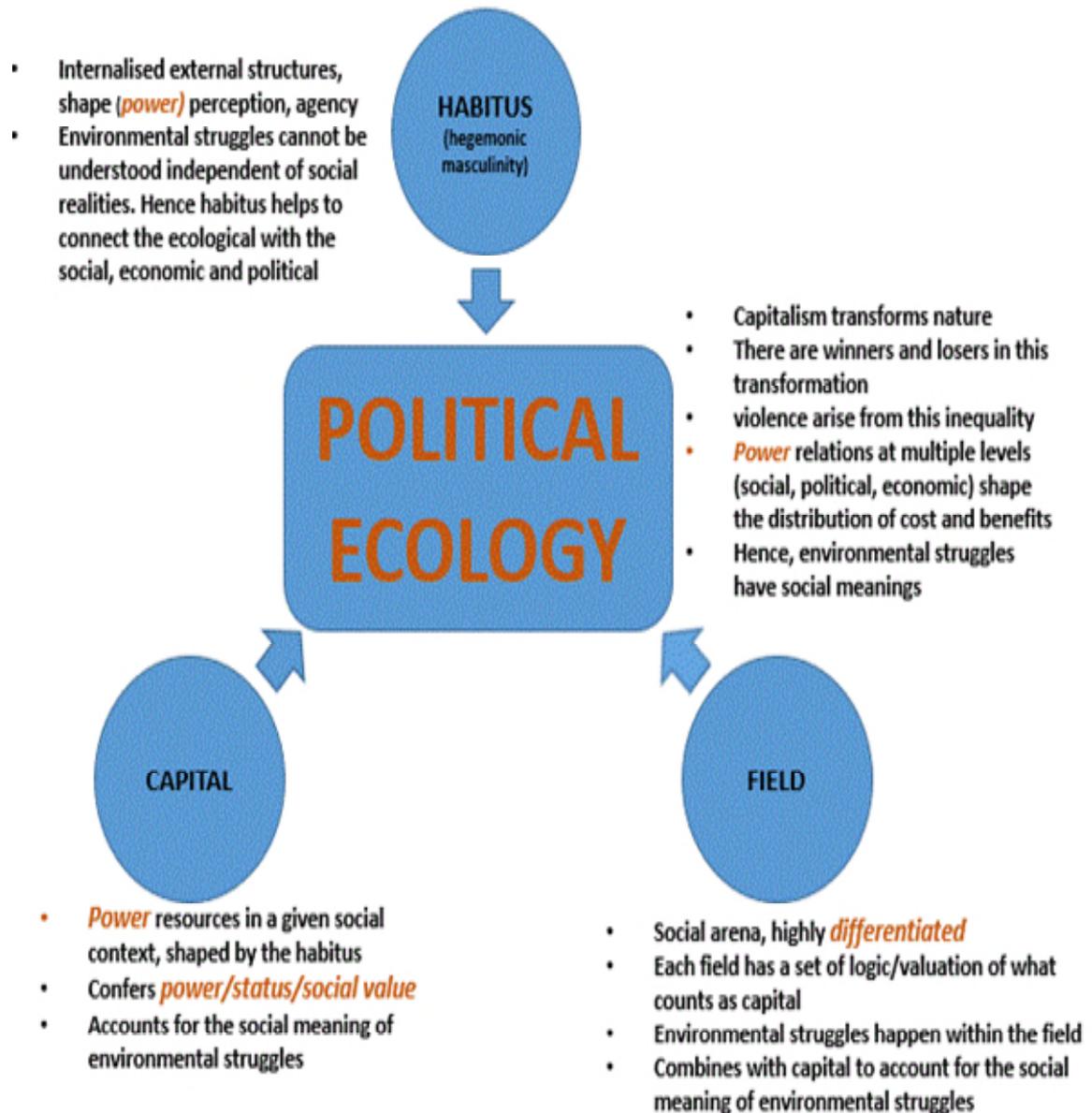
In this research, the concept of capital and field helped me to interpret state violence, and violence by transnational cooperation's against young people and vice-versa in terms of the social meaning of such violence, or the ways in which such violence is articulated by young people. We see slightly in Chapter 6, but mainly in Chapter 7, that young men articulated their experiences of harm based on the way it impacts their social value as men. They often explained how structural violence (economic and political exclusion) diminished their masculine capital, and how direct violence (military violence) put them in a situation where their ability to accrue masculine capital/social value depended on their relationship with violence. Subsequently, young men's relationship with violence was shaped largely by the need to restore the loss of power enabled by petro-capitalism.

In sum, this section has discussed how Bourdieu and hegemonic masculinity complement and broaden the intellectual reach of political ecology in examining youth violence in the context of the Niger Delta. It also highlighted how these concepts are utilised in this research.. The concept of habitus helps us to understand how power relations within and beyond young people's control shape youth violence. Hegemonic masculinity helps us to understand specifically, how gender structure shapes agency and how forms of place-based social capital are articulated within a socio-ecological conflict. Then,

the concepts of field and capital are useful for interpreting the social meaning of environmental struggles. Because they help us to make sense of actors position within a particular social field, and how the struggle to advance social position, in a particular field, may shape environmental struggles.

In Figure 1 below, I synthesise the link between Bourdieu, hegemonic masculinity and political ecology, drawing from the discussion in this section but also from the other sections in this Chapter. The italicised words in orange highlight the common theme of power that connects Bourdieu, hegemonic masculinity, and Political ecology.

Figure 1: Linking Bourdieu, Hegemonic Masculinity and Political Ecology



2.7 Conclusion

This Chapter has discussed various conceptual understandings of violence as provided by different schools of thought. It also discussed the multi-faceted nature of violence and its gendered nature. This led to the need to understand what factors can explain the gendered dimension of violence. Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity helps us to grasp how violence is an expression of the hegemonic gender structure and with Bourdieu's thinking tools especially habitus, it became possible to understand how young men can

translate the gender structure into agency leading to the reproduction of the structure. Instead of seeing violence as a mindless game or only in criminal terms, these two theoretical insights help us to understand how gender relations and historical experiences can shape practices or in this case violence. In the next Chapter, I discuss how the historical experiences of violence have shaped social relations in the Niger Delta in a violent way leading to the normalisation of violence in the habituses of local residents but especially amongst young men.

Chapter 3 :Towards a Political Ecology of Oil in Nigeria: Tracing the History of Violence in the Niger Delta.

3.1 Introduction

If, as discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, violence is a development constraint, multi-dimensional in scope, gendered in nature, and rooted in historical experiences, then the question is how to build upon this transversality to provide a nuanced account of youth violence that recognises this complexity. Political ecology, as mentioned in the previous Chapter, has the analytical scope to recognise the complexity of youth agency and thus the responsibility for violence, and this makes it a suitable framework to frame this research. The aim of this Chapter is thus, to provide a historical account of youth violence in the Niger Delta using a political ecology approach. In particular, this political ecology approach grants priority to how the political economy of access and control of petro-dividends has shaped local violence in the Niger Delta throughout history.

In order to understand the emergence of youth violence in the Niger Delta, it is important to highlight the role that not only youths but other actors such as the state and other actors in alliance with the state play in the production of youth violence. Bourdieu urges researchers to engage critically with historical issues that led to the emergence of a social problem so as not to contribute unknowingly or unwillingly to the poor construction of social problems (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, pp. 238-239). Consequently, the historical account of violence in this Chapter serves many purposes. First and very importantly, it draws our attention to the role of the federal government and their allies in the production of youth violence without diminishing the role of the youths themselves. Second, it allows us to understand what factors might have contributed to the emergence of youth violence at different points in time

and to explore whether these historical factors could have shaped contemporary violence.

This Chapter is structured as follows. Following this introduction, Section 3.2 starts by familiarising the reader with the governance system in Nigeria. Here, I provide the cultural, ethnic, economic and religious composition of Nigeria. These demographics provide the basis for understanding the politics of oil in Nigeria which I discuss later in this Chapter. The discussion here focuses on how the insertion of petro-dividend into Nigeria's economy elevated Nigeria's geopolitical significance and encouraged changes in the institutional framework for access and control of oil resources. These institutional changes are crucial for understanding the history of violence in the Niger Delta which I discuss in sections 3.3, 3.4 and 3.5.

Before I proceed, I want to provide an important caveat that is crucial to the validity of the account of youth violence that I provide in this Chapter. Like I already explained in the previous Chapter, violence is polysemous; the facts of violence is highly contested by contradictory voices and each of these voices put forward explanations that are based on their relationship to it²¹. Thus many versions of violence in this region exist. As such, what I provide here is by no means a comprehensive account of the history of violence in the Niger Delta. A full historical account of violence in the Niger Delta would require more representation of counter-narratives and that is beyond the scope of this thesis. The question then is whose account should the researcher adopt in the face of these myriads of narratives of violence?

Because the primary objective of this research is to understand youth violence from the perspectives of youths, I decided to make young people's account of the history of violence and the account of other local residents the main base of this historical analysis. This historical account of violence provided by youths reflects the reality of their lives. It underscores the values, experiences,

²¹ I explain this further in Chapter 5, using interviews with institutional representatives.

and narratives which the local leaders and youths themselves draw from to explain their relationship with violence as I show in Chapters 5, 6 and 7, respectively.

3.2 Situating the Research: Nigeria, a Brief History

Nigeria, officially the Federal Republic of Nigeria, is a former British colony located in West Africa. Bordering Nigeria to the west is the Republic of Benin, the east, Cameroon, the south, the Atlantic Ocean and in the north, Nigeria shares a boundary with Niger Republic and Chad. There are over 350 distinct ethnic groups in Nigeria, but the Igbos (anglicised as Ibo), Hausa-Fulani and Yoruba's are the major ethnic groups accounting for nearly two-thirds of the country's population (Festus, et al., 2009). With the population of 198 million people, Nigeria remains the most populous country in the continent of Africa and the seventh most populous country in the world (World Population Review, 2018; National Population Commission, 2017).

Majority of the Igbo states are located in the Eastern part of Nigeria. The Hausas dominate the Northern region, and the bulk of the Yoruba states are located in the Western part of the country. In terms of the belief system, Nigeria is a multi-religious society. The Igbos are predominantly Christians, the Hausa's mostly Muslims, and the Yoruba's, a mixture of both Christians and Muslims. Until recently, the majority of Nigerian Christians were Catholics and Orthodox. But in the early 1990s, Nigeria experienced a significant rise in Pentecostalism and today most Nigerian Christians are Protestants (PewResearchCenter, 2011).

In addition to Christianity and Islamic religion, there is also the traditional African religion practised widely in pre-colonial Nigeria. Despite the serious attack which traditional belief system has faced in Nigeria in the advent of Christianity, it has continued to thrive, forming the foundation for ethics, morality and spirituality, especially amongst the rural population. In the Niger Delta, for example, Egbesu cosmology still informs the social, economic and political life of the Ijaw people despite the increasing dominance of Christian

religion. In part, this is due to the belief in the potency of Egbesu to solve real-life problems, including those caused by oil modernity (Golden, 2012; Digifa, 2003). Recently, a growing number of Nigerians are becoming non-religious (United Nations, 2015) and there are many more who are at the border- these group of people have not left the traditional religion entirely but they also identify as Christians.

In October 1960 Nigeria gained independence from Britain, and by 1963, it became a full republic. As a federal republic, Nigeria functions under a presidential system of government modelled after the United States. In the first republic (1963-1966), Nigeria operated a federalist system of government in which governance was administered through three federating units: Western, Eastern and Northern regions. Each of these regions was semi-autonomous, operating according to the cultural ideology of its dominant ethnic group and controlling a large portion of its economic resources. By 1967, following the first coup d'état, which ushered in General Yakubu Gowon as the head of state, the regional system of government was dissolved and 12 states were created out of the three regions. Successive presidents after Gowon continued to create more states and today Nigeria is a federation of 36 states.

The governance systems in Nigeria is organised into three tiers; the federal government, the state government and the local government. The first tier of government- (the federal government) comprises of three distinct branches: the executive, the legislative and the judiciary. The legislative arm of government is a bicameral representative branch consisting of an upper (Senate) and lower (House of Representative) houses, together called the National Assembly, which works in collaboration with the judiciary, a more independent body to checkmate the executive branch.

The state government is the second tier of government. Administratively, Nigeria is divided into 36 states as already stated, in addition to Abuja, the federal capital territory. To increase the efficiency of governance, these 36

states are further organised into six geopolitical zones based on cultural similarities and geographical proximity. Each state essentially has an elected governor, a deputy governor and a state House of Assembly which ensures the correct interpretation of the law at the subnational level. The states comprise of the local governments-the third tier of government in charge of governance at the local level.

Before 1958, Nigeria's economic base was predominantly agrarian. Cash crops including cocoa, groundnut, and palm oil contributed over 50% of Nigeria's foreign export earnings (Watts, 2007). In 1956, Shell D'Arcy found their way into the creeks of Niger Delta in search of oil, and after two years of intense oil search, Shell discovered oil in Oloibiri presently in Bayelsa (then in Rivers State) in 1958. With the commercialisation of oil in the 1970s, Nigeria transited into an oil nation where petro-dividends dominated the nation's economy and agriculture was kicked to the sidelines. With a large reserve of low sulphur oil estimated at forty billion barrels and with the centrality of petroleum to modern capitalism, investment in Nigeria's oil industry was a good business idea. And so the federal government and the major international players in the oil business turned their attention to the Niger Delta and corporate investments in the oil industry soared.

From 1967-1970, Nigeria experienced a brutal civil war/ Biafra war which slowed down oil activities. But oil explorations quickly regained momentum after the war expanding into the deep offshore areas. It was no longer only Shell D'Arcy that occupied the creeks of Niger Delta. Other oil companies including Chevron, Agip, Elf, Mobil and Texaco have come to join, searching for oil too. By 1970, the oil business was doing so well that it contributed to nearly 60% of Nigeria's export earnings and by 1971, Nigeria joined the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries-OPEC (Akpabio & Akpan, 2010), a strategic nod to its place as a major player in one of the most important businesses in the world.

By 1973-1974, the first oil crisis had happened. The Organisation of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries had placed an embargo on various countries including America, responding to America's support to Israel in the Arab-Israeli conflict. This embargo came with an adverse impact on US energy security as America experienced a shortage of oil supply. The result is that oil corporations became desperate to meet America's increasing energy demand and hence the search for new oil fields intensified in oil-rich countries including Nigeria, Mexico and Venezuela. The expansion in Nigeria's oil exploration combined with the rise in the oil price- the effect of the embargo- skyrocketed Nigeria's oil revenue from 1.3 billion to 3.9 billion Naira in 1974 alone and there were more profits in the years to come. In the aftermath of the Iranian revolution which resulted in the second oil crisis six years later, Nigeria accumulated 4.9 billion Naira in oil revenue and although it would be pleasant to hope that this profit would continue, one thing that is certain in the oil business is the uncertainty of oil prices.

By 1983, Nigeria's oil revenue had dropped to 2 billion Naira for two main reasons. First, windfall profits stopped coming as the second oil crisis ended. Second, Nigeria's oil exploration was on the decline for reasons related to poor infrastructure (Oyejide, 2000). But by 1990, Nigeria's oil production stabilised again. Throughout the 1990s, Nigeria maintained oil production at 2 million barrels per day making it the largest oil producer in Africa and thirteenth globally. Within this period, Nigeria supplied more than 10% of US oil imports (Watts, 2004) and with such profile, Nigeria's position as an important player in the world of geopolitics was consolidated.

By 1999, Nigeria had become an archetypical oil nation where petro-dividends (the proceeds from oil), accounts for more than 80% of government revenue and 95% of its total export earnings (IMF, 2014). In the early 2000s, Nigeria's daily oil production peaked to 2.44 million barrels. But by 2005, violence in the oil-producing region surged, reducing oil production to an all-time low of 500,000 barrels per day as of 2008. With the Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP) introduced by the Federal government in 2009, and

government's investment in ultra-deepwater exploration Nigeria's oil production picked up again in 2010 and continued for a few more years.

By 2014, Nigeria's oil revenue increased to \$87 billion accounting for 58% of Nigeria's total revenue. But by 2015, the fall in oil prices decreased Nigeria's oil export earnings to \$52 billion. In addition to the falling oil prices, America, a former major importer of Nigeria's oil decreased oil imports from Nigeria from 10% to 3% due to huge investments in Shale oil. Currently, Nigeria accounts for 41% of European oil supply making Europe the highest regional importer of Nigeria's oil and India the highest importer by country at 20% (eia, 2016). By 2016, oil prices continued to fall and considering the predominant role of oil, Nigeria's economy contracted by 1.5% plunging the economy into recession. Following this recession, President Buhari's economic policy in 2017 emphasised diversifying Nigeria's economy away from oil to agriculture, the sector that once made the country its fortune. But more effort is needed for this to be realised as the oil sector still accounts for 53% of government's revenue and 10% of GDP (NEITI, 2018). Due to the recent fall in oil prices, the contribution of petroleum to Nigeria's economy has shrunk substantially and many oil companies and oil service companies have cut down on labour. This has contributed to increasing Nigeria's unemployment rate to 18.8% (Africa Check, 2018) making unemployment a top political priority.

Building from the discussion in this section, I move to the next section where I discuss the crucial role of oil in Nigerian politics. This entails an explanation of the centralising effect of oil rents on the Nigerian state as well as the institutional changes that accompanied Nigeria's oil economy. In short, understanding the impact of petro-dividend on Nigeria's political economy is crucial for understanding the central argument in this thesis: how youth violence implicates a range of social actors whose actions or the lack thereof shape young people's relationship with violence.

3.2.1 The politics of oil in Nigeria

As the federal government accumulated more profits from oil, new institutional mechanisms were put in place to give the federal government more access and control of petro-dividends. Watts (2004, p. 60) sums up these institutional configurations in his idea of 'oil complex' which captures four distinct but interactive mechanisms which shape oil-related violence in the Niger Delta.

The Oil complex comprises of first, the Nigerian National Petroleum Cooperation (NNPC) - the state's national oil company created in 1977 which represents the state's interest in the oil venture between the state and the oil companies. The second mechanism consists of legal instruments enacted by the state to monopolise access to oil rents. These include the Offshore Oil Revenue Decree, the Petroleum Law of 1969, Mineral Act, and the Land Use Act of 1978. Third, in addition to these legal provisions, there are two institutional mechanisms-the Federation Account and Derivation Principle-which sets out the parameters for distributing development projects and allocating monthly oil revenues to states respectively. The fourth and last mechanism of the oil complex is the synergistic interaction of the federal government and oil companies' security forces who work to protect costly oil infrastructure even if doing so means to use violence.

Oil exploration between the federal government and oil companies runs as a joint venture (JV) in which the NNPC is the major shareholder controlling between 55-60% of the shares (Watts, 2007). Besides the joint venture, there is also the production sharing contracts (PSCs), related to deep-water explorations where an investor's stake in the business rises as the sea depth increases. In 1988, calls to privatise the NNPC due to inefficiency intensified. The government responded by creating 12 sub-departments, including the Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR) in charge of ensuring compliance with environmental standards. Although many other changes have happened over the years to restructure NNPC, regulatory uncertainties and lack of

transparency have established NNPC as one of the most corrupt institutions in the country.

In 2014, the Emir of Kano, Mallam Lamido Sanusi and then the central bank governor revealed to the Senate Committee that \$ 49.8 billion unremitted funds from NNPC were ‘missing’ from the federation account. Later, Sanusi announced after some financial reconciliations that it was \$20 billion missing, as \$29 billion was said to have been paid into the Federal Inland Revenue account (Vanguard, 2014; The Nation, 2014). However, Sanusi’s tenure as the central bank governor was slowly drawing to a close because he would pay a high price for this revelation. In February 2014 Sanusi was suspended indefinitely by President Goodluck Jonathan on the grounds of financial recklessness and gross misconduct. But there was no question in the mind of many Nigerians that Sanusi’s suspension is the price for whistleblowing.

Sanusi’s case is just an obvious example of unremitted funds from NNPC, and there are many more. The result of this gross mismanagement of petro-profits is that despite being one of the wealthiest African nations, poverty continues to be significant and recently Nigeria has overtaken India to become the country with the highest concentration of people living in poverty globally (World Poverty Clock, 2019). The analysis of young people’s interviews in the later Chapters of this thesis speaks more clearly to the poor quality of life of many Nigerians and how too often experiences of poverty enabled by unemployment and exclusion have turned the Niger Delta into a region that has become notorious for violence.

After establishing NNPC in 1971, more institutional arrangements were introduced to make oil exploration smoother and advantageous to the government. In 1978, amidst severe resistance by rural populations, the federal government introduced the Land Use Decree which transferred land ownership from individuals and communities to the government, leaving the citizens with the right of occupancy only (Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, 1990). Already, the Offshore Oil Revenue Decree which was introduced in

1971 allowed the federal government to have full ownership and control of the proceeds from mineral resources which hitherto was managed by the regions.

The Petroleum Act of 1969 and the Minerals Act emphasise that all mineral resources and the proceeds from them belong to the federal government, providing vague and too often, little compensation for citizens whose land are acquired for overriding state interest (Constitutional Rights Project, 1999). With these institutional mechanisms, the federal government consolidated its control of oil resources and more importantly, the proceeds from oil. The next thing on the table was how to share these proceeds between the constituent states and the federal government, and this too was also taken care of with the law.

When the federal government receives its profits from JV or PSCs, it is channelled into the federation account from where it is distributed between the federal government and the 36 states following the derivations principle (Federation Account Allocation Committee, 2017). The derivation principles allow the oil-producing states to retain 13% of onshore oil profits while the federal government keeps 87%. However, the derivation principle does not apply to offshore profits which make up 80% of Nigeria's total oil output; the federal government keeps all proceeds from offshore exploration. But historically, the derivation principle has been subjected to the whims of politics. It seems to be that the higher the contribution of oil to government's revenue, the lower the derivation principle; decreasing money accruable to oil-producing states and increasing the petro-dividends going to the federal government.

In 1960, the derivation principle was at 50% which meant that oil profits were shared equally between the oil-producing states and the federal government. But from 1971-1975 when the first oil crisis yielded windfall profits, the derivation principle was reduced from 50% to 45%. It was further slashed by more than half when it was reduced to 20% in 1979 following the windfall

profits from the second oil crisis but this was not the worse. By 1980, the derivation principle was cut down to 5%, 1.5% in 1984 and increased slightly to 3% in 1993. After long years of agitation by the oil-producing states, there was an upward revision of the derivation principle to 13% in the year 2000, and although it has been at this rate until now, with the constant changes that have characterised the revenue distribution pattern nobody knows when the wind of politics would blow again and reshuffle things.

Having elaborated on the oil complex here, in the following sections I discuss how the oil complex has shaped the structural landscape of youth violence in the Niger Delta. However, before I explore the link between the oil complex and youth violence, I first provide a historical account of Pre-colonial Resistance and Palm oil Trade in the Niger Delta.

3.3 Pre-Colonial Resistance and Palm Oil Trade in the Niger Delta

3.3.1 King Jaja of Opobo: the Igbo slave boy who lived with audacity

For us to understand violence, especially violence caused by social change, it is crucial to pay attention to how historical experiences could have shaped the current context. Thus, to understand violent relations in the Niger Delta today, we need to situate youth violence within the broader historical experiences of violence and exploitation that has gone on in this region since 1471 when the Portuguese first made their foray in the creeks of the Niger Delta (Jones, 1963; SDN, 2019).

Local resistance in the Niger Delta dates back to the 19th century during the palm oil era. However, before the era of palm oil trade, the slave trade in this region opened the road for previous economic exchanges between the local people and the Portuguese. The Niger Delta sea networks played a crucial role in the slave trade. Before the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833, more than three million African slaves had been shipped to Europe and America through the Niger Delta coast (Dike, 1956; Tamuno, 1972). Slavery ruptured social relations in Africa. Young men especially, from the Niger Delta and various

parts of West Africa were forcibly moved from their homes and shipped to Europe and America, providing economic prosperity for both local and European slave dealers. After the abolition of slavery in 1833, Europe-Niger Delta trade relationships continued. But this time, it was no longer slave trade but palm oil trade that would rupture social relations and inspire one of the first recorded local resistance in this region.

As scholars (Chen, 1995; Couson, 2016) have observed, economic transitions often lead to power struggles because contending actors struggle to maintain hegemonic positions in the new economy. Such was the case in the Niger Delta. With the transition from slave trade to palm oil (*Elaeis guineensis*) trade, many local leaders who controlled the local economy in the slave era stepped to the sidelines while those involved in palm oil business dominated the new economy and King Jaja Anna Pepple of Opobo was one of them. In the pre-oil trade Niger Delta, very little was known of this man, Jaja. But in the later decades, Jaja's enterprising acumen and audacity would make him one of the greatest kings in this region and more.

There is a very little documented account of Jaja's childhood but local legend says that Jaja is from the Igbo tribe, precisely from the Okwara Ozurumba family in Umuduroha village in Orlu Imo state. In 1833, Jaja was sold to a slave merchant at age 12 (Davey, 2019). Jaja's Igbo name was Mbanaso which translates loosely to 'nations respect'. His father, Okwara Ozurumba was a respected head chief whose good leadership skills brought admiration and respect amongst his kin or *umunna*. But being at the centre of local political life also meant that Okwara made enemies and it was these enemies that conspired to sell Mbanaso off into slavery in revenge and out of envy for Okwara's political dominance almost immediately after his death. At first, Mbanaso was sold to Inyama, a slave trader from Arochukwu. Later, another slave dealer, Odiari, who belonged to the prominent Anna Pepple house in Bonny bought Mbanaso. Odiari later gave Mbanaso to Mgboire, a woman with no child in the Anna Pepple family.

Mgboire initiated Mbanefo into the Anna Pepple family by giving him access to her kitchen as her child. She also shaved his head and renamed him Jugbo. Jugboha shortened to Jo-Jo as these were the rituals through which slaves were absorbed as kinsmen in Bonny culture (Jones, 1963). English merchants would later call Jo-Jo 'Jaja', and he will be remembered in history as Jaja. The oil palm trade changed traditional systems of rule in the Niger Delta. During the era of slave trade, local leadership was administered through the *Ibe*, a lineage-based system of leadership. With the transition into palm oil trade, however, local leadership was no longer through the *Ibe* but through the *wari* or war houses, and the leadership of a house was no longer based on lineage but war skill, economic prosperity and hard work. This means that slaves who performed well in the palm oil business could now become the head of a house, a position unavailable to them in the past.

The house is an independent trading unit, and the head of the house controls all trade under the house. It is also the responsibility of the head of the house to provide energetic young men who are culturally expected to protect the community against any external attack. In addition, the head of the house also assists the king or *amayanabo* in making crucial political, social and economic decisions.

Jaja did very well during his early years in the palm oil trade, and so by 1862, Jaja had gathered enough wealth to become the head of the Anna Pepple canoe house after the death of, Ioli, the former head of the house. The Anna Pepple and Manilla Pepple houses were the two houses who influenced the king's decision strongly and these two houses were arch enemies who competed fiercely for political and economic control. Because King Dapo, the amanyanbo, who studied in England had adopted a modern lifestyle including Christianity, local residents did not feel he represented their interest well, and so even though Dapo was the king, Jaja and Oko Jumbo the head of the Manilla Pepple house controlled local politics.

In 1868, after an inferno that affected Anna Pepple and Manilla houses, Jaja moved his people to Minima, a new town outside Bonny. In Minima, Jaja worked hard to reconstruct new houses for the Anna Pepple people. He also rebuilt *Ikuba*, a local deity which he felt was being threatened by Christianity (Tasie, 1978). Some people believe that Jaja's decision to relocate his people was politically and economically motivated. Jaja would not be able to gain political prominence beyond the head of a house in Bonny because even though slaves could head the *war*/house now, local leadership beyond the head of a house were still lineage-based. Jaja would also be able to take full control of the palm oil proceeds in this new territory, and based on the strategic location of Minima which is closer to the Imo river, it was poised to limit trade access to the inland Bonny markets. (Okpete, 1970).

Already, social relations were deteriorating again, and war was looming. Jaja and Jumbo constantly disagreed over how to share *comey* or customs tax from palm oil sales. Trade access to Bonny also severely decreased as most merchants bought oil from Minima town nearer to the coast. King Dapo and other local leaders pleaded with Jaja to relocate back to Bonny to make their trade whole again, but after efforts to convince Jaja to return to Bonny failed, the two rival houses would fight it out in a war. In September 1869, young men from the Anna Pepple and Manilla houses engaged in a two-day brutal war. But Jaja's worse days were only just beginning.

The war ended after the two houses signed the Minima agreement in October of the same year and in this agreement the British authorities promised to recognise Minima as a sovereign territory. After the war, Jaja and his chiefs decided to leave Bonny for good, relocating from Minima to Egwanga, later renamed Opobo, where they established a new trade system independent of Bonny (Cookey, 1974; Nwokeji, 2010). Palm oil trade flourished in Opobo, and by 1871, the British government under consul Livingstone signed a treaty which recognised Opobo as a legitimate trading territory, and Jaja as its leader. However, the British-Opobo trade relations would soon deteriorate, and this time, Jaja would pay a high price for his strong headedness.

In the latter part of the 19th century, the demand for palm oil trade grew and it was a demand that the industrial revolution and the increasing demand for natural oil in Europe had inspired. Again, Europe was struggling with its future, and just as the labours of African male slaves contributed to the wealth and development of pre-modern Europe, Europe desperately needed the palm oil from West Africa to modernise (Watts, 2008). Perhaps like Timi's father in the epigraph in Chapter 1 Jaja and his kinsmen hoped that this new economic interest in the region would help establish Opobo as a modern territory. But it is also easy to imagine that given the recently fought war and the general hostility that was slowly characterising trade relations in this region Jaja and his kingsmen could have had the premonition that something sinister was underway. If this was their thought, they were right.

These were desperate times in Europe because the entire continent needed palm oil. Common economic sense demanded that if the British trade merchants who dominated the trade in the Niger Delta could keep coastal middlemen territories like Opobo as well as other middlemen out of the way, they would have direct access to the producers of palm oil in the inland market which inevitably would reduce trade time and make them more money. And so, the British merchants were determined to boycott local middlemen. But this will not be a smooth sail for them because Jaja and many others will fiercely resist this move.

Meanwhile, the historical event in Berlin in 1884 would add more tension in this already fragile region. In the Berlin Conference of 1884, the exploitation of Africa was institutionalised under the guise of international trade, humanitarianism, or simply to 'civilise' timid Africa. The result of the Berlin conference is that there was an increasing French presence in the region and the British merchants were now more anxious to capture the palm oil trade market in the Niger Delta. Consul Hewett, Livingstone's successor, embarked on the move to convince local leaders to sign a treaty of protection. Jaja, unlike other local leaders, read every sentence in the treaty carefully, questioning them, asking for clarifications, for amendments, and in fact, Jaja refused to

sign the treaty. There was no question now that something urgent needed to be done to keep Jaja out of the way of this very important trade upon which the future of Europe largely depended.

Jaja's hesitation to sign the treaty was for two crucial reasons; the treaty sanctioned free trade to meet the economic needs of the British and it also empowered the British to remove any local leader whose actions, or the lack of it undermined free trade (Bankole, et al., 2008). At last, after so much pressure from other local leaders who had already signed the treaty²², Jaja and his chiefs were forced to sign the treaty.

Due to the steady supply of palm oil over the years, palm oil price dropped between 1884-1885 (The National Archives, 1885). Moreover, the Liverpool merchants who dominated the trade had joined resources to buy a massive quantity of palm oil collectively, and they reduced the comey paid to Jaja for this sale, explaining that price had dropped in England due to oversupply. Jaja did not believe them. In fact, he suspected that they shortchanged him. Perhaps if this business had happened in today's globalised world where it is not as difficult to travel from Nigeria to England, Jaja, considering the kind of man he was could have travelled to England himself to set things straight. But the fact that he ran an international business in faraway English market where he never visited meant that there was little he could do to verify price.

Now, the question was what to do to make the business profitable, and a man like Jaja would not gamble with his comey. Soon, as a skilled businessman, Jaja hatched a retaliatory new plan; he contacted a Glasgow based company run by Andrew Miller, his friend, whom he supplied all the oil produced in Opobo. There was never much of a good relationship between Andrew Miller or Miller brothers as a company and the Liverpool merchants, so it was a simple case of 'the enemy of my enemy is my friend' as the popular allegory goes.

²² All the local chiefs signed the treaty except those from Nembe community.

The Liverpool merchants must have been struck by self-doubt when they learned that Jaja's decision to sell all the oil to the Miller brothers meant that they had been cut out of the oil business completely. Perhaps, Jaja himself had shared the story of this small victory of defeating the supposedly dubious Liverpool traders before they defeated him first with his kinsmen and it is not also hard to imagine that Jaja's kinsmen gave him a broad smile of gratification as he told his story in this shared space of disappointment. Boycotting the Liverpool traders was one of Jaja's major victories. There would more, although not for too long.

Armed with the knowledge of the free trade clause in the treaty, the Liverpool merchants responded to Jaja's actions by sending their boats to the inland markets where Jaja controlled without going through Jaja, the middle man. This boycott was done repeatedly, but each time the Liverpool merchants boycotted Jaja the news was terrible. Although Jaja respected the provisions of the treaty by not interfering in the trade directly, he did send his loyalists who convinced local oil producers against selling directly to the Liverpool merchants. Jaja, after all, was known as a skilled warrior who hardly lost his battles and it would not be a difficult task to convince the producers that money from the Liverpool merchants, however high the sum was not worth Jaja's wrath. Discord between the Liverpool merchants and Jaja soared, and after many efforts to resolve it had failed, the British authority created the post of Vice-Consul occupied by Henry Johnston to increase British control in the region. It will be Johnston whose actions would propel Jaja to his death in a manner he had never foreseen.

When Johnston arrived at the Niger Delta in 1886, he decided that if Jaja's political and economic dominance continued, soon there would be no trade prospects for the British in the region and so something very humiliating, or better still more drastic, must be done to keep Jaja and his audacity out of the way of business. As part of this effort, Consul Hewet, with the recommendation of Johnston recognised Uranta, a small town which has

seceded from nearby Opobo as a sovereign territory calling it 'the Queen's town'. But Jaja was unperturbed.

The trading environment was worsening with hostility and Jaja, thinking that war with the Liverpool merchants was imminent began war preparations (Alagoa, 1972; Crowder, 1962). But the British would adopt a different strategy. Soon, things started to go very bad for Jaja. Trade had come to a complete halt in Jaja's territory after Johnston suspended all trade relations in Opobo in response to Jaja's resistance. After waiting unsuccessfully for improvement in trade relations, Jaja sent four emissaries to England to plead his case, his son, Sunday, was one of them. But on 18th of September, 1887 when his emissaries were still in England, Jaja received a message that Johnston had invited him for peace talks in Goshawk miles away from the coast of Opobo (The National Archives, 1887). Jaja in a prelude to the tensions that already existed between himself and the British had his premonitions. And so he asked Johnston to send a British man who would be in the custody of his kinsmen and released upon his safe return. But when Johnston declined this request telling Jaja that it was only a peace talk and assuring him that he would be left to return home safely regardless of the outcome of the meeting, Jaja decided to attend.

Once Jaja was onboard the British ship headed for the talk, everything overturned quickly. The British set its cannons upon Opobo and Johnston gave Jaja two very hard options; sign an agreement to step down as the leader of Opobo and be sent to Gold Coast (now Ghana) for trial or go back to Opobo as the enemy of the British. Jaja knew that agreeing to be an enemy of the British would provide justification for the British to open fire on his territory, and without him on the ground in Opobo to lead the war, there was hardly anyone whose resistance would match the British well-prepared soldiers. In that moment too, Jaja must have thought so hard about the safety of his own family and his entire Kingdom. His entire family, except for Sunday, his son, studying in England could be killed and everything in his Kingdom could be wiped off should he declare himself an outright British enemy right there in

the custody of the British. Perhaps he also thought about his own courage in the face of all the war and hostility he had endured from both the British and his kinsmen and how he often came out triumphant. So Jaja could have imagined the possibility of another triumph when he is sent to Gold coast for trial. And so he decided to give himself in for trial in Gold coast and spare his kingdom.

Jaja, just like Okwara his father made some enemies in the course of his reign as the king of Opobo and so Johnston arranged for these men to come to Gold coast to testify against Jaja with no witness at all standing for Jaja. Perhaps, looking at his kinsmen testifying against him in court, Jaja thought about how like his father his life was. After finding him guilty of violating the treaty of 1884, Jaja was sent to see Queen Elizabeth and when his situation did not improve after meeting the Queen, he was sent in faraway Kingstown in St. Vincent where it is nearly impossible to interfere with the trade at home.

Already, Jaja's courage to challenge the British in a time where it was a very rare thing to do had made him very popular not only at home but amongst the African diaspora. And so when he arrived Kingstown many ex-slaves of African descent were excited and wanted to catch a glimpse of this African Monarch who made them proud. Suddenly, charismatic Jaja who once controlled the riches of a region at the centre of the global economy was stripped of power and retreated to a forced exile. Jaja wrote many letters to his personal allies in Glasgow, to his family, to the Foreign Office in London, asking for his son Sunday to continue his education in England, appealing his court ruling, pleading to be moved to England or closer home to the Gambia.

'My dear', Jaja wrote heartbreakingly to one of his Chiefs, Cookey Gam,

I am sorry now that I did follow Consul Johnston to Accra, if I had known that all these things would be so, I would rather die in Opobo than come away with the Consul, because Consul told me that the Queen wanted to have all palaver (troubles) settled in Accra and now dispatched me away for no just cause. And I am sorry to tell you all, that I don't know if we shall meet again once and see face to face (Cookey, 1974, p. 141).

Jaja was right. Consul Johnston had staged his death and his life was slowly drawing to a close. He also would never see Cookey face to face again. Jaja was finally allowed to travel home after medical examinations revealed that he was suicidal and his health was seriously failing. If Jaja died in a far way St. Vincent, the British knew that it could damage trade relations in the Niger Delta for good and might even attract international outrage as well. Besides, there was nothing to fear anymore. It has been a long time since Jaja left home and even if Jaja returned home to meet local political configurations the same as he left them- and there was a small chance that this would be the case because politics and life generally abhor a vacuum- infirmity must have withered his audacity and so his return is unlikely to threaten trade. Jaja's return back to Opobo began on May 11 1891. After a brief stopover in Barbados, Jaja's ship was instructed to stop again in Tenerife, Spain where people lived in great fear of an epidemic and old Jaja would not make it home, unfortunately. On July, 7th, 1891, Jaja breathed his last. He was 70.

Local legend says that Jaja drank from a poisoned tea, but other accounts attribute his death in Tenerife to severe dysentery (Davey, 2019). But these accounts are as valid as history can make them. Whatever the cause of his death may be, Jaja is remembered today in his home town of Opobo and of course across Africa as the Igbo slave boy who dared to challenge colonialism even before it was institutionalised in Africa. But ironically too, the reverberations of Jaja's death will cause many local leaders to capitulate creating a way for the imposition of British colonial rule in the Niger Delta and of course other parts of Africa.

3.3.1 The Akassar You Mi- King Koko's resistance

Now that Jaja had died, the economic future of the Niger Delta was left for other local leaders to negotiate. Local resistance decreased significantly around 1891-93 because Jaja's death was still fresh in memory, and it would be foolhardy for anyone to start any resistance this early. However, the British hostility towards the rural population continued. It became a regular occurrence for the British to force their laws on local traders, fine them for

violating the treaty and confiscate their goods at any slightest provocation (Alagoa, 1972). As tension soared, the local leaders and traders started refusing to sell oil to the British, asking them to comply with the terms of trade set by the local people. Violent resistance large and small surged again, and in one of these resistances, local residents had blocked the waterways and killed some British soldiers (Crowder, 1962).

Meanwhile, Ijaw men were not only fighting the British. They also fought each other over contacts with the British merchants and control of strategic trading territories (Alagoa, 1972; Crowder, 1962). In many of these wars, properties were destroyed and sometimes as many as 100 people died in a single battle. Ijaw land was slowly becoming a battlefield. By 1895, four years after Jaja's death, King Koko from Nembe community mobilised young Ijaw men from each house to fight the British in the famous Akassa war or Akassa You Mi. The Akassa war was fought in the context of trade relations which continued to boycott local middlemen. Violence was not King Koko's first choice, however. He had arranged to peacefully renegotiate the terms of trade with the British authority, but when the British responded by intimidating the locals with over 241 constabulary and artilleries, King Koko was forced to consider violent resistance (Flint, 1960; Cook, 1964).

After denouncing Christianity publicly, King Koko called on Ijaw war gods, *Ogidoga* and *Egbesu* and declared war against the British. In a small time frame, Koko led about six hundred Ijaw men who drove their war canoes to Akassa, the headquarters of the British Niger Delta Company and unleashed violence. Many people died in this war including 7 Ijaw men and 24 British men (Alagoa, 1964). Ijaw men also destroyed many company properties and carted off with company properties including printing equipment and two thousand pounds. When the Ijaw warriors returned home, they were welcomed warmly by Ijaw women who chanted war songs, extolling their strength and applauding their courage for acting as real Ijaw men whose duty it was to protect the community. The booty was shared unequally according to class and age because social organisation in the region at this time was

based on gerontocracy and because older people are more involved in the local economy, they also had more money.

After the war, local leaders wrote to the British authorities explaining that the war was not to usurp their authority but to register local discontent. But this was not enough to keep them away from the harm that would come their way soon. Although investigations revealed that trade monopoly by the Royal Niger Company had impoverished local people, it was difficult for the British not to consider the Akassar war as an aspersion on their authority (Alagoa, 1995; Okonta & Douglass, 2001). In a retaliatory move, the British launched a counterattack not only on Nembe but also on other nearby villages including Okpoma and Bassambiri. More than two thousand local residents lost their lives in this attack (Tassie & Wotogbe-Weneka, 2002; Alagoa, 2002).

Jaja's death and the British counter-attack was a big blow on local residents. But these experiences would not make them back down from their resistance. Instead, as the next section and the analytical Chapters reveal, these experiences guided their resistance in post-colonial Nigeria when they will find themselves at the centre of the global economy, yet again.

3.4 Post-Colonial Resistance and Petro-Violence in the Niger Delta

Nigeria's independence in 1960 should have marked the beginning of the transition into a developed Nigeria. But many factors including the colonial legacy of exploitation would not only slow down the pace of Nigeria's development but plunge the nation into a brutal civil war. By and large, the colonial enterprise was set up to serve the colonial interest. Apart from the economy or other areas connected to the economy, the British authority paid little attention to other structures of the Nigerian society (Ake, 1996; Ekeh, 1975; Ekekwe, 1986; Couson, 2016). Pre-colonial arrangement undermined the ethnic complexities of Nigeria which guides values and ethics across various ethnic groups and post-colonial Nigeria embraced these structures that the British had left behind. These structures reappear today shaping the everyday lives of many Nigerians in a violent way.

The result of not creating inclusive structures where all ethnic groups can participate meaningfully is that ethnic tensions quickly became a big issue in post-colonial Nigeria. Ethnic minorities including the Niger Delta complained of marginalisation in the national political life and from the economy. These complaints started in pre-colonial Nigeria and in response, the British authority set up the Willinks commission in 1957 to recommend a solution to this problem. The Niger Delta people who at this time were merged administratively with the ethnic majority Igbos complained of Igbo domination and demanded economic autonomy over their resources. But this request was declined. Instead, the Willinks Commission recommended establishing a development board to cater to the grievances of the ethnic minorities (Ezera, 1960; Imoh, et al., 2016). The Niger Delta region did not accept this recommendation, and they would continue with this agitation in post-colonial Nigeria.

The conditions for state creation in post-colonial Nigeria had made it difficult for the Niger Delta region to achieve its demands for political autonomy. In addition to federal approval, state creation depended on approval from the region which the potential new state seeks to withdraw from (Boro, 1982). In the Eastern regional house where the Niger Delta belonged, only four members out of one hundred and ten representatives were from the Niger Delta. Their situation wasn't any better at the federal level. The discovery of oil in the Niger Delta in 1956 meant that new economic prospects in the Niger Delta were on the horizon. And so it was not in the economic interest of regional and federal level politicians to grant the region political or economic autonomy.

By 1964, Nigeria's first oil well in Oloibiri was already producing 5,000 b/d, (Watts, 2008) and because the first refinery in Nigeria would only come a year later, oil from Nigeria was shipped for refinement in River Thames England using the coastal networks that once served as trade routes for slaves and palm oil. The oil business continued to go well, and drilling operations expanded rapidly to other parts of the Niger Delta including Ogoni. But the Niger Delta

region worried that only a little portion of the money generated from oil came to them. Besides, statutory mechanisms like the Land Use Act that was put in place to smoothen oil explorations was increasingly dispossessing the oil communities. Communal land was often taken over by the government for oil explorative purposes with little compensation for rural people. Before long, Adaka Boro, a young man from the Niger Delta in the manner that resembles the Akassar war was calling on young Ijaw men to rise and resist their enemies; the federal government and Shell.

3.4.1 Isaac Adaka Boro's Resistance against the Petrol-complex

Isaac Adaka Boro was an Ijaw nationalist and a former police officer who studied in the University of Nigeria Nsukka in Eastern Nigeria. During Boro's university days he was active in student politics and advocated for minority rights very seriously (Boro, 1982). Boro was very worried about discriminatory practices he had encountered in the University as an ethnic minority as well as the exploitation that was going on in the Niger Delta. And so Boro left his university education halfway, and like the men before him, Boro alongside Nottingham Dick and Samuel Owonaro assembled nearly 200 young Ijaw men under the Niger Delta Volunteer Force (NDVF) to violently resist the federal government and Shell.

'Today is a great day' Boro says to these young men on February 23, 1966, when he gathered them for the first violent resistance against the federal government;

Perhaps, today will be the greatest day not only in your lives but in the history of the Niger Delta. This is not because we are going to bring heavens down but because we are going to demonstrate to the world how we feel about our oppression. Remember your 70 -year-old grandmother who still farms before she eats; also remember your poverty-stricken people; remember, too, your petroleum which is being pumped out daily from your veins; and then fight for your freedom (Oriola, 2016, p. 130).

The NDVF demanded to secede from Nigeria, to control the resources of the Niger Delta, and for the annulment of all oil contracts between the federal government and Shell. In addition to the historical experiences of exploitation, several recent political events had contributed to strengthening Boro's determination for this resistance. Major General Aguiyi Ironsi, an Igbo man had emerged as the Head of State after the 1966 coup which removed Tafawa Balewa the first Prime Minister of Nigeria from office. The Niger Delta people had thought that their chance at autonomy was higher under a non-Igbo led federal government, and now that an Igbo man is in power, such hopes had been dashed.

Boro and the Other Ijaw men called on the Ijaw god of Ebgesu to protect them as King Koko had done, and after this, they launched an attack against the oil complex, specifically the security staff of shell and the federal government. But after 12 days of violent resistance, Boro and his men were captured in a counterattack by the combined security staff of the federal government and Shell. They were subsequently found guilty of treason and were sentenced to death, but some changes in national politics would soon redirect their fate.

3.4.2 Nigerian/Biafra war (1967-1970)

In the second coup that happened in Nigeria in 1966, Aguiyi Ironsi was killed and Yakubu Gowon, a Northerner, emerged as the new Head of State. Before the coup, however, the Igbos had complained of the political and economic domination of the Hausas, but ethnic tensions between these two ethnic groups heightened in the aftermath of the second coup which the Igbos saw as a Northern coup. Soon, there were reports of many Igbos killed in the North and several others moving back home in large numbers for safety. In reaction, the Igbos launched a reprisal attack in the eastern region killing many Hausas and very slowly, Nigeria was at the brink of a civil war.

When several efforts to garner peace failed, Colonel Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu, the military head of the Eastern region felt it was time to leave Nigeria for good. And so on May 27, 1967, Ojukwu declared the

Eastern region an Independent State of Biafra. Gowon reacted immediately by completely restructuring Nigeria's political configuration dissolving the regions and creating 12 states out of them. What used to be known as the Eastern region was now divided into Cross River, Rivers and East-Central states and this move would frustrate Ojukwu's secession plan for two reasons. First, by creating these states, Gowon granted the Niger Delta region their long-standing demand for a new state, and so it was easy to get them on the side of the federal government in the war. Second and most importantly, Ojukwu no longer had control of the oil in the Niger Delta as he once did when the Niger Delta was under the eastern region so he was low on financial resources to fund the war. Soon, Gowon declared a state of emergency in the eastern region, providing justification for the federal government troops to occupy the eastern region, and now Nigeria was in the middle of a brutal civil war.

Oil played a huge role in the Biafra war because it was at the centre of the economy, and as such, both the federal government and Biafra forces wanted to capture the Niger Delta. It was also expected of course, that given the strategic importance of Nigeria's oil, many countries would be interested in the Biafra war because they knew there were chances that if the camp they supported wins the war, there would be more money. Britain, the Soviet Union and Israel supplied arms to Nigerian forces while France and Portugal supported Biafra (Pierri, 2013).

When Gowon heard that the Biafra forces had occupied the Niger Delta, he quickly released Boro and his men from prison after they had promised to deploy their vast knowledge of the Niger Delta's geography to fight against the Biafra forces. True to Boro's promise, he fought against the Biafra forces until 1968 when he was killed in Okrika, Rivers state. Many Nigerians died during the war and lots of properties were destroyed. By 1970 when the war ended after the Biafra forces surrendered to Nigeria forces, about three million Nigerians had died out of which two million were Igbos (PNW, 2018; BBC, 2000). Sadly, fifty years after Nigeria fought this brutal war, there is still a

simmering ethnic animosity between the Hausa and the Igbo ethnic groups partly because many of the structural issues that resulted into the war were never adequately addressed.

3.4.3 After the Biafra war, Ken Saro Wiwa's nonviolent resistance

Even though the Niger Delta now had their own states after the Biafra war, their multi-ethnic composition complicated things. Rivers state, for example, had many ethnic groups including Ijaw, Ogoni, Ikwere-Igbo, Ekpeye and it wasn't too long after River state was created before Ogoni ethnic group protested the domination of the Ijaw ethnic group (Couson, 2016). But in addition to this internal ethnic tussle, other bigger issues would make Ogoni people stage a protest not against the Ijaw people but the oil-complex.

Nigeria quickly adopted fiscal centralism after dissolving the regional system of government and now every month, all states assembled in Abuja to share the federally collected oil revenue (Osaghae, 1998). The criteria for revenue distribution across the states had been established earlier, and population size was a very weighty criterion. Because of the smaller population size of the Niger Delta region, a large chunk of oil money went to the non-oil producing ethnic majority states based on their larger population size. For example, when Rivers state accounted for 60% of Nigeria's oil sale, they received 5% of the proceeds generated from this sale while non-oil producing states like Kano and East Central state received double this amount (Watts, 2007). Also, between 1970-80, Rivers state received one-fifth of the total profits generated from the oil fields in Ogoni while the rest went to other states (Naanen, 1995). In consequence, discontent grew in the Niger Delta because oil communities felt that the money generated from oil in their region financed the development of other regions while very little came to them.

In addition to economic issues, federal level political representation is also an important issue in the Niger Delta. Oil producing communities felt that they did not have adequate representation in important positions at the federal level and this poor political standing undermined their chances of negotiating a

favourable revenue distribution formula at the centre. Besides, in Nigeria federal political power strongly influences not only revenue patterns but the distribution of social services, and so their poor standing in national political life played a huge role in their antagonism (Festus, et al., 2009).

Meanwhile, oil-based environmental pollution was seriously devastating the Niger Delta. Gas flaring in the region at this time was the second highest in the world after Russia (Watts, 2001), although Nigeria has decreased gas flaring significantly in recent years (Chineme, 2017). The oil spill incidents are even worse. About 300 oil spill incidents occur in the Niger Delta yearly, and the Niger Delta has been described as the world pollution capital (BBC, 2010). In the 1970's alone, oil spill incidents recorded in the Niger Delta was four times the size of the infamous Exxon Valdez spill. Between 1976-1990 2,676 oil spill incidents happened in the Niger Delta and oil spill from Shell in the Niger Delta accounted for 37% of global oil spill between 1982 to 1992 (Watts, 2001; Ikein, 1990). This pollution has come at a cost to local residents. Not only has aquatic life been contaminated but farmland that supports agriculture, the primary means of livelihood for local people have become infertile.

Opinions about the cause of the oil spills in Nigeria are divided. Oil companies, on one hand, argue that most of the oil spills are caused by pipeline vandalisation or *bunkering* by youths (Shell Nigeria, 2013). On the other hand, local communities and NGOs argue that although pipeline vandalisation is a big problem, oil companies inflate the rate of oil spill from vandalisation and lower the rate of oil spills caused by operational failures and human error (Amnesty International, 2011; Opukri & Ibaba, 2008; Rainforest Action Network, 1997).

Feelings of environmental, political and economic exclusion intensified in the Niger Delta, and soon, Saro Wiwa mobilised young men to form the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP). MOSOP in their communique-the Ogoni Bill of Rights (OBR) - questioned the constitutional

basis for revenue distribution and land rights in Nigeria. It also demanded local control of all economic and political activities in Ogoni, asked Shell to end pollution and to pay compensation to local residents for many years of environmental degradation (Daminabo, 2005). Soon, it was no longer only Saro Wiwa or MOSOP who were resisting the oil complex. The Ijaw ethnic group who disentangled themselves from MOSOP for ethnic reasons also formed the Ijaw National Congress (INC) which asked the federal government to create a new state where all Ijaw people can come together.

Before his globally renowned activism, Saro Wiwa was a well-established writer and a politician, and so when MOSOP received no favourable word from Shell and the federal government, Saro Wiwa utilised his clout to give the Ogoni struggle international visibility (Naanen, 1995). By 1992, Saro Wiwa moved to present the Ogoni case at the United Nation Subcommittee on Human Rights in Geneva. Three years later, he took his campaign to the Hague, and with such international exposure, the media, NGO's and academics became interested in Ogoni, and so the Niger Delta problem quickly became a cause célèbre. Although Saro Wiwa succeeded in bringing international attention to the Niger Delta problem, he could not persuade Shell and the federal government to conform to MOSOP's demands. His next plan was to mobilise over 300,000 local people who staged a nonviolent protest against the federal government and Shell. But the reward for this resistance would be that soon, Saro Wiwa will share the fate of the men before him who had championed similar resistance.

By 1993 when Saro Wiwa led this nonviolent protest, Nigeria was under the dictatorship of General Sani Abacha whose hallmark of leadership was military brutality, and it is hard to imagine that he did not understand the danger that such resistance implied given his level of astuteness. Perhaps Saro Wiwa was so worried about the Niger Delta's problems that the morbid implications of his actions mattered very little. Shortly after leading this protest, Saro Wiwa was arrested. He was arrested many more times but later released. However, he was already on a slow journey to the end of his life.

The end drew closer for Saro Wiwa in 1995 when he was arrested and detained in connection with the murder of some Ogoni chiefs who reportedly disapproved of his activism. Popular local accounts say that Saro Wiwa was out of town when the murder happened and that even though he made efforts to enter Ogoni on the day of the murder, the military would not allow him (The Independent, 2015). But as long as the federal government was concerned, Saro Wiwa's meddlesomeness had gone on for too long, and now that there is something to implicate him, he would not be left off the hook. Ken, together with nine Ogoni chiefs were imprisoned for a year before they were finally sentenced to death by hanging having been found guilty of murder. The international community severely criticised Ken's death, and many organisations, including the Commonwealth, sanctioned Nigeria for human rights violation. The oil communities saw Saro Wiwa's death as a calculated effort by the government to repress dissidents and bring resistance to a low. But instead of Ken's death to stop resistance, armed resistance surged in this region in breadth and scale that is far worse.

3.5 The Rise of Youth Violence in the Niger Delta: IYC and the Kaiama Declaration

Very little changed in the Niger Delta after Saro Wiwa's death, except that in 1996, General Sani Abacha had created Bayelsa state which made many Ijaw people happy (Alapiki, 2005). But the core issues at the heart of the Niger Delta problem-fiscal politics, political representation, social development, ecological devastation-remained and also inter-ethnic conflict heightened. For example, by 1997, Ijaw, Itsekiri and Urhobo ethnic groups in the Niger Delta were trapped in long-lasting violence in which thousands of people were killed and 700,000 others were displaced (Watts, 2008).

Meanwhile, during this time, reports showed that poverty was higher in the Niger Delta than anywhere else in the country (UNDP, 2006) and this combined with the already existing grievances contributed to intensifying MOSOP and INC's resistance. In reaction, the Abacha led government intensified military repression and incidents of human rights violation in the

region escalated. This increased military repression led Joshua Fumudor, a former president of the INC to organise the military training of more than 600 Ijaw men who would put up a resistance that would match the military's in terms of violence (Couson, 2016). But this training was disrupted shortly because of the many tensions that INC faced.

Due to many problems including increased government surveillance, by 1998, many of the youths who previously protested under INC moved to Kiama, Bayelsa, the natal home of Isaac Boro to reorganise. This gathering in Kiama by many indications carried more momentum than any previous youth gatherings; comprising of more than 5,000 Ijaw men who came from over 500 communities and 40 clans (The Kiama Declaration, 1998). Also, unlike in the past, IYC had good ideas which promoted feelings of inclusiveness amongst Ijaw youths from different states, one of which is rotational meetings across different Ijaw villages. Soon, protest extended to other parts of the Niger Delta including Yenagoa, Odi, Bomadi and Warri. In Kiama, Ijaw youths discussed oil-related local problems and their solutions and these were captured under a communique known as The Kaima Declaration. Amongst other things, the Kiama Declaration called for the immediate demilitarisation of the Niger Delta, resource control by local people, and a sovereign national conference.

Meanwhile, before the Kiama Declaration, local youths had sought the support of their elders, but many of the elders advised against resisting the oil complex. Perhaps the elders, who at this time controlled many of the local development projects through which they accessed petro-dividends wasn't about to let these youths take over their position. Or perhaps, also, the elders having witnessed the brutal death of other men like Saro Wiwa who had staged similar resistance were genuinely concerned about the danger connected to such protest. Whatever the case may be, it was at this point that the elder-youth animosity which had simmered over the years escalated. The youths accused the elders of failing in their traditional duty of care to the young ones because they were entangled in a cash-based alliance with the oil

companies and the federal government which gagged them into silence while the youths suffered.

By 1999, to further give structure to the resistance in Kiama, Ijaw youths adopted Ijaw Youth Council (IYC) as the group's name and soon, IYC elected its executive leadership including Felix Tuodolo, IYC's pioneer president, and Asari Dokubo, the vice president who later became the president (Couson, 2016). Before long, IYC's resistance intensified, leading the federal government to summon the elders to call their young ones to order. But this did nothing to bring local resistance to a halt. If anything things worsened. Within months, a series of violent and nonviolent protests had happened, including the Ogele procession and Operation Climate Change in which youths tied local problems to global climate change concerns. In response, the federal government sent more military troops to the Niger Delta and subsequently launched Operation Salvage & Flush which led to the death and displacement of many local residents.

In the course of this operation, military men raped women, molested the aged, and burnt down proprieties. But instead of Ijaw youths to back down from resistance, they called on Egbesu, the Ijaw god of justice for protection while they continued with violence. In the context of increasing youth resistance, the federal government declared a state of emergency in Bayelsa and Ijaw youths declared war against the federal government. The Niger Delta was slowly exploding with violence in a way that is reminiscent of palm oil era. Soldiers killed more local residents and Ijaw youths steadily organised counterattacks. Pipeline vandalism became a common resistant strategy, worsening local environmental conditions. But the worse is yet to come.

In November 1999, twelve security officials deployed to the Niger Delta in the context of ongoing local violence were killed by local youths in Odi, Bayelsa. The federal government reacted immediately with full military occupation of the entire Odi village. In a counter attack, military men killed more than 2500 local residents, wounded over 500 people, and left several

others displaced (Bassey, 2006; Nwajah, 1999). All the buildings in Odi village were burnt down by the military except for a local health centre, an Anglican Church and a First Bank building. After the Odi incident, IYC remained a formidable platform for local resistance. But it has since metamorphosed into an organisation where the lines between violent and nonviolent resistance and greed-based/grievance-based resistance are blurred.

3.5.1 Democracy and the monetisation of violence

With Nigeria's transition to democratic government in 1999, local residents hoped for a democratic resolution to local problems, but when this did not happen, they were left with no option but to continue with violence. Soon, experiences of violence grew worse, and by 2003, local youths had claimed responsibility for over 400 incidents of oil pipeline vandalism (Watts, 2008). Kidnapping surged again in the region and this time, it was not only oil company staff who were kidnapped but anybody who was ransom-worthy, however little. But democracy also brought a little bit of improvement in the local economic situation; the Derivation Principle was raised to 13% which means more money in the hands of state-level government officials. It is this increased petro-dividends that would soon raise the tempo of violence in the Niger Delta into something worse.

Even though Nigeria has transitioned to a democratic government since 1999, elections are still won by intimidation and violence, and while this is the case across Nigeria, political violence is worse in the Niger Delta. With increased derivation, local politicians quickly realised that there is more money in state-level politics, and so they exploited the already existing violent situation, buying out violent youth groups and using them as machinery to oppress opponents and win elections (Human Rights Watch, 2007; Golden, 2012). Now young people's greatest enemies were not only the oil companies and the federal government but also rival youth groups whom they competed with for territorial control and political patronage.

With time, sophisticated weapons saturated the Niger Delta, and tensions between rival youth groups worsened. Between 1999-2007, violence between the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPF) led by Asari Dokubo and the Niger Delta Vigilantes (NDV) led by Ateke Tom led to the death of many people and left many others displaced. With more money in the hands of local politicians, youths were paid highly for their labour of violence, and after learning of the economic triumph of the violent militants, many youths who had low paying jobs or no jobs at all joined militancy. Finally, it seemed now that somehow young people have found a way to insert themselves into the political economy of oil through the backdoor.

As more oil revenue flowed into the states' exchequer, youths made more money from political violence, and many of them compromised on the struggle for social justice. No doubt, watching the political violence in the oil-producing states and seeing young people's role in it, some people would have been disappointed in the twist of things and would not trust that genuine grievance motivate youth violence, and others may also conclude that the youths are not incorruptible revolutionists after all. But even as the number of compromised youth groups increased, there were still some youths who held on to the struggle, refusing to compromise while they watched their colleagues get richer. The struggle was far more complicated.

Youth violence continued in the Niger Delta, and by 2009 when violence decreased Nigeria's oil production by nearly half, the federal government introduced the Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP) which offered local youths cash for peace (Watts, 2008; Nwajiaku-Dahou, 2010). PAP reduced violence in the region to a very considerable degree. But the emergence of Muhammadu Buhari as Nigeria's president since 2015 seems to have reawakened political, economic and social grievances that simmered in the post-PAP period, and as such violence has surged in the Niger Delta yet again (Opejobi, 2017; Ameh, 2018).

3.6 Conclusion

In the previous Chapters, I stated that this thesis aims to provide an account of youth violence which does not see violence narrowly as a youth problem but instead locates young people's relationship with violence within their everyday life experiences. Towards this aim, this Chapter discussed how the structural configurations of access and control of petro-dividends, political and social grievances and the historical experiences of domination which has characterised the Niger Delta since the oil palm era has shaped contemporary practices of violence. In the context of these grievances which worsened with oil exploration, local youths used violence to resist the federal government and oil companies who they blame for their suffering. But at various points in the course of this resistance, young people's character is called to question as the struggle became compromised. However, amidst this compromise, there were still some youths who did not compromise on the struggle for social justice. Taken together, the discussion in this Chapter helps us to understand that youth violence is a far more complicated phenomenon as opposed to being motivated solely by economic intentions as some writers have implied. In Chapter 5, 6 and 7, I draw upon interviews with institutional representatives and young people to further elaborate on the complexity of youth violence. However, before doing that, I first explain the methodological orientations and methods that underpin this research.

Chapter 4 : Methodological Stance: Orientations and Reflections

4.1 From London to Lagos: Arriving in the Niger Delta

It is morning, a rainy Tuesday morning. On the runway of Murtala Mohamed International Airport Lagos, a British Airways flight had just arrived from London, passengers itching to disembark. The cabin crew, smartly dressed in blue and white uniforms were doing their job, announcing the safe arrival to Lagos and reminding passengers not to leave behind any personal item. The plane emptied out quickly. Some passengers making their way to the immigration desk began to criticise the government, complaining about the poor state of public infrastructure in that familiar manner that many Nigerian returnees did.

‘Lagos is a metropolis of more than twenty million people with the busiest and biggest airport in Nigeria. Yet look how hot it is here. The escalators here are perpetually out of service. Jonathan’s administration really killed this country’ Ade, one of the passengers complained. Ade was tall and slouchy and had the superiority air of most Nigerians who had just returned from abroad. ‘Why does every blame have to go to Jonathan in this country for Christ sake, he was only in power for six years’, Collins, another passenger retorted. ‘Jonathan is a big failure, do you know how much money, was stolen under his government. I am very happy we have a new President, Buhari now. This is 2016, yet we still have ceiling fans in our airports. All the politicians are doing is steal the money and there is no money for public infrastructure for the people. Can you imagine, this wall-mounted air conditioners are permanently faulty’ Ade continued.

The airport was gradually turning into a political field. Other passengers joined the conversation and voices were rising in both criticisms and approval of politicians. ‘It is good to be hopeful, I know we Nigerians like to be

hopeful, but I think that President Buhari would not be the political Messiah Nigerians expect him to be. He is too old and out of touch with the world', Collins said. As the discussion continued, Chucks another passenger, on approaching the immigration officer asked if the airport was hot because NEPA had taken the light', a Nigeria expression for erratic power cuts. Everyone laughed. Perhaps Chuck's comment reminded them of the similarities in their life experiences, a shared disappointment in the Nigerian political system. This moment also reminded me of that Nigerian ability to laugh at life, however disappointing it may be. Such loud, collective laughter was not something I saw very often in London. Even in the face of growing socio-economic frustrations, Nigerians are generally happy people who often mask their worries with laughter and even religion.

Soon, my phone started to vibrate and it was Chinkata, the driver, who was calling. He parked outside the airport waiting for me. Outside the airport were a crowd of people, mostly young men lurking around. Some of them were moneychangers. Others sold recharge cards. Many idled away and showed exceptional friendliness to newly returned travellers and perhaps counting on their generosity for survival. But there was amongst these crowd very resilient Nigerians. Some of them were taxi drivers who worked hard, manoeuvring dangerously in the notoriously heavy Lagos traffic so as to serve more customers and make more money and Chinkata is one of these men. Apart from the taxi business, Chinkata also runs a private computer servicing business to augment his income.

Now in the taxi and heading to the hotel, not so much has changed in the streets of Lagos. That morning, the body of a man said to be a thief lay on the road beside dense garbage that reminded me so much of Aba, a commercial town in South Eastern Nigeria where I grew up. In the streets of Lagos, activities were charged with exertion, and the roof and walls of many houses had been blackened by decay. On the phone, people spoke in high-pitched voices, and it did not matter how close the person they spoke to was.

Suddenly, I realised that I had arrived Lagos, a place of organised chaos, yet booming with so many opportunities that investors find hard to resist.

‘Thank God we are going against the traffic. Look at the cars on the other side of the road’ Chinkata said. I stared out of the window, half-listening, thinking how chaotic Lagos has always been. Roads, abundant with potholes were crowded with yellow painted buses, two double black lines running horizontally at their centre. Drivers honked profusely and shouted down at other road users even when in the wrong. The wealthy blew their sirens and harassed civilians to make way for their always hurried passage. Street hawkers on the roadside, some of them under aged children, carrying a heavy load of goods on their head, chasing moving vehicles so eagerly as if to say that by looking at them one has just signed a purchasing contract.

‘Madam, madam, abeg, police are in front, I don’t want them to waste our time, please when they stop us, just use your woman voice tell them you just coming from abroad so they can let us go’ Chinkata said to me. I wanted to ask him why he could not speak to the police himself. But I remembered immediately that this is Nigeria, and this is Lagos in particular, where social status surpassed the law, and women and upper-class women, in particular, are expected to have it easier with the police. Perhaps Chinkata thought that I had the air of a female student who had just returned from abroad and so he wanted me to perform that part of my identity so the police would let us off. When the police stopped us, it surprised me how I had shifted my own identity so quickly, unintentionally. I spoke to the police with a cadenced voice in the manner of the British just as the driver had expected. When the police let us pass after I spoke, I looked at the side mirror and saw Chinkata smiling, and although I wanted to find out whether his smile was an approval of my performance, I said nothing.

Shortly, we arrived at the hotel where I would stay briefly before leaving for the Niger Delta. An elegantly dressed receptionist with a very likeable aura hurried over to take my suitcases. ‘Welcome ma’ she said to me. I checked in

and later, sitting down in my room with a plate of Uha soup and pounded yam placed on my slender laps, I turned on the flat screen TV hung on the opposite side of the wall searching for local news. On Channels TV, crawling across the TV Screen were the words *'Fulani Herdsmen had attacked Ozalla village in Enugu state... Boko Haram killed twenty people in Borno state yet again.... Another 15 missing Chibok girls have been found...Niger Delta Avengers declare fresh war on the government and oil facilities.*

After hearing the news about the Niger Delta Avengers, my confidence to start my fieldwork was shaken. Suddenly, I was full of melancholy and consumed with the many thoughts for the things I missed about London; the uninterrupted power supply, efficient transport system, fast internet connection, people holding newspapers in their hands and walking so fast in the train stations as if they always had urgent destinations. That night, before I slept, I sent a message to Udengs Eradiri, the President of Ijaw Youth Council (IYC): 'Sir, I am now in Lagos as we discussed and would be in the Niger Delta on Monday to start my fieldwork. I am counting on your kind support, thank you and see you soon'. And so that Monday, in the midst of a jumble of emotions, I travelled to the Niger Delta and my fieldwork began.

4.2 Discovering the Research Methods

It is one thing to know something theoretically but quite another to feel it emotionally. Arriving in the Niger Delta and having a first-hand experience of young people's understandings and experiences of oil-related violence which goes beyond making bold claims of injustice but understanding from direct experiences of young people how oil extraction affects their lives is my most cherished part of this research. I spent eight months interacting primarily with young people in the Niger Delta and to a lesser extent institutional representatives. Within this period, I was adrift most of the time thinking how so much poverty can pervade a place known globally as a place of abundant oil wealth.

As I continued to interact with young people, my understanding of youth violence in the Niger Delta deepened. I asked many questions, listened to people and observed their experiences of oil-related violence. In these eight months of establishing contacts, building rapport, earning trust, attending meetings and cultural events, visiting project sites, navigating the creeks and making personal observations, I found myself absorbed into the world of the young people whom I researched. In this Chapter, I describe the processes through which these young people's experiences and the opinions of other stakeholders relevant to understanding youth violence is put into practice in this research. Crucially, these methodologies and methods were designed to fit the research questions that this research tries to address.

Before I discuss the methods of data collection and analysis, I first explain the methodological stances which informed my data collection and analysis. After that, I discuss the data collection and analytical processes followed by the challenges and limitations I encountered in the field and then a conclusion. In the different sections of this Chapter and across the thesis, I try to be reflexive about my own self in this research. I remind us of the limits to the knowledge produced in this thesis, highlight the significance of context, and think critically about my own position as a female researching a male-dominated context.

4.2.1 Adopting a social constructivist/ interpretivist epistemology

I stated in the previous Chapters that in examining youth violence in the Niger Delta, I am interested in understanding young people's account of their own experiences of violence either as victims or perpetrators. This entails explaining youth violence in relation to the wider social context that contours young people's lives. Consequently, it is crucial to adopt a methodology that will allow a more nuanced account of how young people explain, interpret and justify their violent behaviour within the wider social context in which their life is located.

The advantages of adopting an interpretivist epistemology when studying human behaviour is well documented by sociologists (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012; Della Porta & Keating, 2008). These scholars highlight the ability of an interpretivist perspective to capture the subjective ways in which social actors interpret their social world, and how the social context inform this interpretation. Given that the objective of this research is to explain how young people perceive, interpret and justify their experiences of violence and not to arrive at any law-like findings, an interpretivist epistemological stance is compatible with this objective.

Researchers who adopt the interpretivist tradition try to breach the gap between qualitative and quantitative research and this is very central to the dichotomy that Bourdieu's work seeks to address. As I explained in Chapter 2, Bourdieu's habitus explains the dialectical relationship between the objective structures and subjective constructions and like Bourdieu, researchers who adopt interpretivist approach argue for combining theory with empirical reality to interpret human behaviour (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992).

In other words, an interpretivist approach combine theoretical (objectivist knowledge) knowledge and empirical (subjectivist) knowledge iteratively. Bourdieu calls this combined knowledge the 'third-order knowledge' (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 4). This means that scholars working with the interpretivist approach adopt an abductive approach which combines deductive method (theory driven research where theories are used to test empirical results) and inductive method (empirical results are used to generate theories) (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012).

This description of interpretivism aptly describes how this research was conducted. I first started this research by puzzling over how a region with an abundance of oil wealth is ironically a place of abject poverty and where various forms of harm pervade. In order to understand this puzzle, I first started by exploring different theoretical explanations of violence and what

may explain the relationship between youth and violence in the context of the Niger Delta. This was done in Chapter 2. But while these theories provided insights into what is already known as a possible motivation for violent behaviour, they provided little insights into how young people themselves explain their involvement with violence and the meaning they give to violence. And so to capture these, I travelled to the Niger Delta where I conducted the second part of the research, interviewing young people and observing their lives to understand their lay representation of their experiences of violence. In order to analyse the data, I combined both the deductive and inductive approaches to develop the empirical Chapters;5,6, and 7. The analysis in Chapter 6 is deductive in the sense that the four themes of harm presented are a lay representation of reality of young people's experiences of violence, and these themes helped to verify the direct and indirect manifestations of violence as explained in Chapter 2. Then, Chapters 5 and 7 are largely inductive, because the empirical data were used to develop theories.

If reality is subjective according to the interpretivist position, then truth is not universal. Because what is true will depend on the interpretation or the meaning that people give to their experiences in their social world and this will vary across individuals (Bryman, 2001). It is this subjective nature of interpretivism that gives it the ability to capture the complexity of human experiences and thus suitable for this research. Besides interpretivism, there are other epistemological traditions including humanistic, positivists, and post-positivist (Della Porta & Keating, 2008). Humanistic epistemology is similar to interpretivism because they both recognise that social actors have subjective experiences, and how a researcher interprets these experiences depends on the researchers own values and theoretical perspectives (Easterby-Smith, et al., 2012). In contrast, however, positivists and post-positivists believe that truth is objective and independent of social actors (Bryman, 2001).

The epistemological stance adopted in any research has implications on the data collection method suitable for a particular research question. Bourdieu objects to the idea of a rigid separation of data collection methods but insists that various methods can be combined in a single project. He encourages researchers to ‘mobilise all the techniques that are relevant and practically usable given the definition of the object and the practical conditions of data collection’ (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 227). However, Bourdieu quickly adds a caveat, explaining that although he advocates for ‘extreme liberty’, researchers must ensure that they are extremely vigilant to the ‘conditions of use of analytical techniques’ and ensure that research method selected is suitable to the research question (ibid). In this light, this research follows Bourdieu’s idea on data collection by combining different types of data collection method suitable for the research questions. I elaborate on this in the next section.

4.2.2 Data collection and analysis

4.2.2.1 Secondary Data Collection and Analysis

As already mentioned above, this research combined secondary data sources and primary data sources to increase the validity of findings and allow for triangulation of perspectives. The secondary data sources used in this study include published and unpublished books, academic journals from a range of relevant disciplines such as political ecology, international relations, gender studies and social geography. I also read newspapers from reputable media houses in Nigeria, as well as periodicals from relevant environmental and human rights organisations, including Amnesty International, Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth and Platform. Insights from these secondary data sources grounded the discussions in Chapters, 1, 2 and 3. It was also through reading these sources that I was able to identify relevant youth representatives and stakeholders with relevant knowledge about youth violence who provided subsequent primary data.

The research questions guided the process of analysing secondary data sources. Because this research seeks to understand youth violence in the

Niger Delta from the perspectives of youths, many relevant works that focused on youth violence in the Niger Delta but also beyond were identified. After identifying these works, I evaluated them to determine whether they contain quality information that responds to the topic under investigation before their actual use. To determine the quality of these secondary sources, I constantly asked myself what the main aim of the study is. Who is writing? How did the writer collect the data and when was the information collected? Once I confirmed the quality of the information, I proceeded to interpret them, paying attention to the concepts that I am working work with. After this phase, I then made judgements about how the insights from these interpreted data can be best presented to communicate ideas to the readers better.

4.2.2.2 Primary Data Collection and Analysis

In addition to the secondary data sources, I also collected primary data through semi-structured in-depth interviews and personal observations of daily life experiences of young people in the Niger Delta. Earlier on in the study, I had considered interviewing young people from all the nine Niger Delta states. However, time constraints led me to limit my research to specific communities and ethnicities. Below, I present the three communities I visited as well as the theoretical and pragmatic reasons that guided their selection.

Research site A: Odi-Ethnically Ijaw village

Odi- is a small rural oil town in Kolokuma/Opokuma Local Government Area of Bayelsa. About 60,000 people live in Odi, and their main means of subsistence is agriculture and petty trading (Ali-Dinar, 1999). The predominant ethnic group in Odi is Ijaw, and in national memory, Odi is best remembered for the infamous Odi massacre (see Chapter 3). Even after the Odi massacre, disagreement over how to share the money awarded to local residents as compensation for the Odi massacre has resurged local violence (Tide, 2014) and I chose Odi to capture these experiences of oil-related violence by local residents.

Research Site B: Oporoza-Ethnically Ijaw Village

Like Odi, Oporoza is a predominantly Ijaw village in Gbaramatu Kingdom, Warri South Local Government Area of Delta state. It is a coastal community bounded to the north and the east by Escravos-Gbarama River and the south and west by rain forest (STAND, 2018). About 5,000 people live in Oporoza, and many of them engage in farming, fishing, canoe construction and local gin production as their primary sources of livelihood. Like Odi, Oporoza is an oil community and local residents have staged violent resistance against the federal government on many occasions. For example, in May 2009, violent exchanges between Camp 5, led by Tompolo, a very popular ex-militant who is from Oporoza and the security forces of the federal government led to the death of many local residents. Also the recent deployment of military officials in Oporoza to checkmate the activities of Niger Delta Avengers, a new violent youth group believed to be operating from Oporoza has surged violence in this region recently. Again, I selected Oporoza to capture these dynamics of local violence.

Research Site C: Bodo-Ethnically Ogoni Village

Bodo- is a small rural community in Gokana local government area of Rivers state. Unlike Odi and Oporoza, Bodo people are not Ijaw. The dominant ethnic group in Bodo is Ogoni even though other ethnic groups such as Igbo and Ibibio are present. The population of Bodo is about 62, 000 and their common means of livelihood include subsistence agriculture, small scale trading and civil service (Tanen, 2005). Bodo people are indigenous people who place great value on their environment even before oil was discovered in this region (Pyagbara, 2007). Local residents also pride themselves as highly educated people having produced the first pilot and the first doctor in Ogoniland according to community lore.

Currently, there is no oil company in Bodo and in all parts of Ogoniland. Shell had started its first oil production in Ogoniland in 1958, but in 1993 increased local resistance caused Shell to stop all oil explorations and local residents have fiercely resisted recent attempts to restart oil explorations in Ogoni.

However, even though Shell stopped oil exploration in Ogoniland many decades ago, one of Shell's major oil pipeline-the Trans-Niger Pipeline (TNP) - passes through Bodo and regular spills from this pipeline have polluted the local environment and affected agriculture, the primary source of livelihood for local people. I selected Bodo to understand how local people interpret these experiences of environmental degradation and what role this experience might contribute to local violence. In addition to these theoretical considerations, I chose these three villages because IYC, the primary gatekeepers of this research assured secure access to these villages.

Even though I spent most of my time in these three villages, my research also extended to other parts of Nigeria. I quickly realised upon starting my fieldwork that the nature of violent militancy required young men to move from one town to another constantly. Many militants had homes in Abuja, Port Harcourt, Bayelsa, Warri, and Lagos and sometimes I visited them in their homes for interviews. Interviews with government officials happened mostly in Abuja because it is Nigeria's administrative capital. I also attended meetings where youths, local leaders, NGOs and government officials gathered to discuss youth violence in the region and sometimes these meetings happened outside the Niger Delta.

Youth Interviews on Perspectives of Violence

After mapping out these three villages of interest, I started the interviews with local youths. I conducted semi-structured interviews with 84 young men and women. Semi-structured interview was selected due to its flexibility and its ability to capture the subjective meanings that actors give to their actions, and as such, this method is consistent with the interpretivist position (Gray, 2009). Out of 84 young people who were interviewed, 70 were men, and 14 were women. Out of these 70 young men, 44 are ethnically Ijaw and 30 are ethnically Ogoni. Out of the 14 young women interviewed, 4 were ethnically Ijaw, and 10 were ethnically Ogoni women. I set out to interview an equal number of men from the two ethnic groups but I was unable to achieve this due to time constraints, and due to this limitation I interpret the experiences

of young men from these ethnic groups in the analytical Chapters based on percentages. I did not set out to interview an equal number of male and female youths because as mentioned earlier the focus of this research is on male youths.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the Nigerian government's age classification of youth is people between the ages of 18-35. However, in the context of oil exploration in the Niger Delta, it is common to see local residents who are up to 45 years identify as youths and based on this, the age range of the youths I interviewed is 18-45 years.

In the context of oil-related violence in the Niger Delta, local residents use words such as youths, boys, and militant interchangeably. However, these words may mean different things locally depending on who is using them and the context. In the course of the analysis, I try to unpack the different meanings attached to these words so as to improve the readers understanding of events. In this research, youths generally refer to young people who may or may not use violence to resist the petrol-complex but whose life has been affected in negative ways because of oil-related activities. Militants, on the other hand, refer to young people, mostly young men, who use violence to resist the oil complex. Boys can be used to describe male youths who are involved in armed resistance and those who are not. However, when a militant uses the term 'boys', he usually refers to a militant of a lower status.

Some of the young people interviewed were educated up to the university level. Others were not educated at all, and many made no mention of their educational status. In total, 23 young men and 7 young women said they had a university education. Out of seventy young men interviewed, 40 said they did not attend secondary school at all and 11 said they were enrolled in secondary school but dropped out due to several reasons including finance. Some of the 'generals' or high profiled militants (the opposite of 'boys'), said they were university graduates who had studied oil-related courses at various

Nigerian universities but could not find jobs. Many of the young men were unmarried. Some had wives but struggled to provide their financial needs.

For these young people, I asked two questions that are derived from the research questions mentioned in Chapter 1. I decided to refine the research question I asked the youths because I wanted to pay attention to their comprehension abilities to facilitate conversation.

The first question I asked the youths is: has oil exploration in your community affected your life experience(s) negatively? If yes, how? The responses from this question provided insights into the factors that shape young people's experiences of violence. Then, to understand how having a male gender identity may shape young men's experiences of violence, I asked only male youths the second question: are these experiences affecting you as a man and how? The responses from this question provided insights into how young men explain and justify their relationship with violence.

Interviews were conducted mainly in the English Language. However, some young people preferred to use Pidgin English- a diluted version of the English language extremely popular in Nigeria and used mainly in informal conversations. Where respondents preferred to use Pidgin English, I encouraged them to enable a more relaxed conversation since I understand Pidgin English myself. Interviews with young people lasted from 30 minutes to 2 hours. However, the majority of the interviews lasted for about 1:30 minutes. I tape recorded many of the interviews, but in some informal settings such as bars and clubs, I did not record the interviews to allow a more relaxed and honest conversation. When I did not tape record the interviews, I listened very actively and wrote down salient points in my filed work diary either as the interview progressed or as soon as it is completed.

The initial contact I had established with the President of IYC, Comrade Udengs Eradiri, when I was still in London formed the bedrock upon which other contacts with youths was established. I met Udengs for the first time at Le Meridian hotel in Uyo, Akwa Ibom state. He had asked me to join him in

a meeting with other famous Niger Delta activists who were all kind enough to grant interviews. Comrade Udengs showed a keen interest in my research and was so generous to me. He introduced me to relevant respondents, invited me for youth meetings regularly, and often insisted on handling my hotel bills and logistics no matter how hard I resisted. In fact, Udengs took care of me like a big brother, and for this, I will always be grateful.

Robert Igali, the Chief of Staff of the IYC who was asked to 'look after' me by Udengs was also extremely kind with his time. Not only did he put a call across to relevant respondents to arrange interviews he also attended interviews with me, provided useful advice on how to build rapport with local residents, and shared jokes on how to navigate the research area safely. Because Udengs and Igali are well known, respected and trusted by youths, it made them open up easily during interviews.

Most of the interviews with young people started with a phone call, a text message or an email in which I introduced myself, explained my research and requested for an audience. When they obliged me, I started the interviews by thanking them for their time and proceeded to state the objective of the interviews using an easily understandable language. Before proceeding with tape-recording or note taking, I asked respondents for permission. I did, however, assure them that their names will not be quoted directly anywhere in my research, and even if they provided personal details such as addresses, it would not be used in a way that will put their safety in jeopardy for ethical purposes. I mention some names in the analysis and these are mostly local names. However, this is to facilitate communication and to give the thesis a sense of interior authenticity. All names used in this thesis are pseudonymised.

After the interviews, I politely asked respondents if they could introduce me to other people who would be willing to grant interviews. Many of them showed incredible kindness by not only introducing me to other respondents but also taking me to meet them personally and pleading with them to assist

me in any way they can. There were also some interviewees who collected my phone number after the interviews and invited me to many social events. Such social functions allowed me to observe the social life in the Niger Delta and the culture that guide young people's actions.

To ensure that interviews were genuine and to capture the personality, mood and feelings of the respondents, I started the interviews generally with open-ended questions. I then allowed the interview to progress depending on how the conversation was going. This proved very helpful. It prevented me from introducing bias to the discussion by suggesting my own opinion to the respondents. When the conversations evolved without the respondent expressing any noticeable unwillingness to continue, I introduced more specific questions such as the dimension of gender. This was necessary to ensure that the respondent engaged voluntarily. There were sometimes when the respondent showed some unwillingness to continue. In such cases, I broadened my questions and asked more general questions about Nigeria's political and economic situation. It was both surprising and amusing, how this tactic worked. Most of the discussion about Nigeria's political and economic situation connected respondents back to discussions about oil and violence. From there, I asked a more specific question within the scope of my research. But even though these tactics worked most of the time, there were times when the respondent showed obvious signs of reluctance or unwillingness to continue and at such times, I thanked them for their time and did not push further.

At the end of each interview, I immediately made notes of my general perceptions of the interviews and reflected on how the interview has gone, the way I framed my questions and my understanding of what was happening. Based on my reflections, I wrote down some notes in my fieldwork diary from my immediate memory. My reflection helped me to think critically about how my interview skills could be improved to get the best out of the interviews. I constantly made improvements in this light as the interviews progressed.

I combined interviews with observation to strengthen the quality of the data. Observation is a common ethnographic research method used to gain comprehensive understanding of people and their social and natural world because of its ability to improve the strength and reliability of research findings, especially when used by a researcher who is sufficiently knowledgeable on how to identify characteristics of interest, relevant for investigating the topic under discussion (Adler & Adler, 1994; Powell & Connaway, 2004).

Focus Groups on Youth Perspectives on Violence

In addition to the semi-structured interviews, I also conducted focus groups where I asked youths the same question as above-how oil shaped their life experiences and how these experiences affect them as men. The rationale for using focus groups is to expand the analytical depth of the research by broadening analysis beyond what individual youths say about themselves and their experiences of violence to how young people express these experiences in groups with shared cultural, economic, and political orientations. In other words, respondents can have a particular opinion about a research question when operating independently, but they may not hold up this opinion in the company of their peers and focus groups help the researcher to capture these dynamics (Krueger, 1998; Barbour and Kitzinger, 1995).

In total, I held five events of focus groups with young people. I conducted focus groups in each of the three villages mentioned above; Odi, Bodo and Oporoza. Two other focus groups were conducted with male youths under the Amnesty Programme during their meetings at the Amnesty head office in Abuja. Focus groups lasted between 1-2 hours, and all participants consented to a tape-recorded interview. Each event of focus group comprised of 7-15 participants exclusively or predominantly young men. Out of the five events of focus groups, four were all male respondents. In the focus group interview conducted in Odi, out of 14 youths who participated, three were women.

The majority of the youths who participated in the interview were either recruited by myself or their peers who I pleaded with to help. I approached young men, asking if they would be willing to share their experiences of violence with me for my PhD research. Many of them obliged me. Especially on occasions when they had seen me with one of the staff of Amnesty who also played a role in linking me up with participants. But some were reluctant to participate based on concerns of safety and other reasons they were not able to share. As such, data collected may not represent the full perspectives held by youths registered under the Amnesty Programme.

Before the conversation commenced, all participants were given participant information and consent forms. I went through these forms carefully with the participants just like I did with the youth interviews, explaining any parts that may not be clear to them. Like the youth interviews also, I started the focus group by facilitating discussions around a series of loosely related topics such as the political situation in Nigeria. This was to have a sense of young people's articulation of their position in Nigeria concerning their economic, political and social standing. The responses from these early questions related a deep feeling of exclusion and opened participants up to talk about oil. I then asked specific questions around oil to encourage a more critical engagement with the research questions.

My aim was to allow the youths to drive the conversations in the direction of their own experiences. For example, in the focus group discussion in Odi, I started by asking the respondents 'how do you feel about Nigeria'. The immediate response from one of the participant was 'we are not happy. Look at how this place is, and I'm sure you know say na we get oil'. In this moment, the connection between oil and violence was implied instantly without my interference. I then directed the conversation so that the participants can link their experience of oil and violence to the theme of masculinity. Subsequently, the interviews were analysed systematically (see 4.2.2.3).

There were some challenges that I encountered with the focus group method. This ranged from small issues such as bickering and having more than one participant speak at a time, to more significant problems such as heated confrontations and violent exchanges between participants. I always tried to intervene in such intense situations. But I did not always know how to. However, such extreme cases were not common, and I always tried to manage the situation so that it does not affect the enthusiasm of other participants.

Some feminist researchers have criticised mixed sex focus groups arguing that a mixed-sex context might prevent the participants from performing their real identity (Klein, 1983). However, other researchers have found that a mixed focus group setting could provide opportunity for observing how sexual identity is articulated and contested in front of the opposite gender (Allen, 2005), how the opposite gender reacts to it (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999), and the power differentials and stereotypical attitudes that female researchers often experience in field relations (Gurney, 1985; Miller, 2001; Hutchinson, et al., 2002). In particular, these researchers explain that the gender identity of a researcher shapes the process of gaining access and building rapport with respondents as well as how a researcher interprets the findings. In the analytical Chapters, I weave in my own experiences as a female researching a male-dominated setting. I hope that my fieldwork experiences reflect my positionality, and inform the reader about possible challenges which could arise in a similar setting, thus prepare them to think about how to cope with these experiences in advance.

As highlighted above, it was during focus groups that strong feelings of collective identity related to gender and ethnicity were better captured. During the focus groups, young men would often approve the feelings of disappointment shared by other members of the same ethnic group or gender group by nodding or echoing 'na so' which translates to 'correct' in the English Language. When they did not approve, they said 'no be so, no be am' or no. In such interactive moments, young men not only displayed their versions of masculinity but they also endorsed, preserved and challenged

certain forms of masculinity and ethnic identity. For example, during the focus group in Odi, Bayelsa, I had offered to pay for my drink, a bottle of Malta Guinness, and a local snack, known as chin-chin which I had ordered from a local shop. When I gave the bartender money, he said there was no need that 'general' had already paid for me. When I insisted on paying, the general who is a male participant in one of the focus groups told me that 'in our culture, we take care of our women, we have to provide for them, and so since you are here, we cannot allow you to pay'. The other male participants nodded to show agreement to the general's comment.

While the generosity of the male participants is something I sincerely appreciate, it could also be that this benevolence is a way of performing gender expectations of men as providers and women as recipients of men's benevolence. Perhaps, the general and his co-male participants thought that by paying for my drink I had emasculated them. However, even though the general's gesture came from a well-meaning place, I often considered it paternalistic. I consistently had to remind male participants that to the extent that I appreciate their generosity, I preferred to pay my bills. But they always responded enthusiastically and with an impassioned tone saying 'no be so we dey here' (not our culture). But despite my ill feelings towards this act, I did not do so much to challenge this belief. In part, this was because I was very grateful to the participants who were kind enough to grant interviews despite the associated danger of doing so. And as such, I worried that declining their offer, might ruffle my relationship with them.

But I was also worried not to be a mere recipient of actions. And so as time progressed when I got more familiar with the respondents, I occasionally declined this offer and insisted that gender should not determine who should pay the bills, but who has more money should pay. These young men were always eager to listen and even joked with me anytime I switched to the feminism mode. But they hardly agreed. As long as they were concerned, to be a man is to provide for a woman and anything less than that is culturally unacceptable.

In the few occasions when I declined young men's offer to pay for my drinks, I offered to pay for them instead, and I did this just out of sheer curiosity. Their reactions were mixed. Many of them declined my offer, their reason being that it is 'not the tradition' for a woman to pay for a man. However, some young men did not mind me paying. While I could not say exactly why these men agreed for me to pay, I observed from our interactions that many of the men who did not mind me paying had socially profiled me. They often made comments like 'well you are studying abroad so your father must be rich, so you can pay' or 'you came from abroad so you have dollars' or 'see your bag, shebi na designer bag be that so you get money'. These comments pointed to my higher social status as a Nigerian student studying in England. Through such comments, it became apparent that I was dealing with two different social problems in the field; classism and sexism. It seems to me based on this observation that young men's performance of hegemonic masculinity depended to some extent on the perceived class of the woman involved. The more the men perceived me to be upper class, the more they did not mind my offer to pay.

However, while I think of myself as an individual with the capacity for reasoning, I agree with May and Perry's point (2017, p. 3) that 'reflexivity takes account of the idea that intelligence admits of error, that we have falsely identified or misrecognised an object, concept or experiences, including the apparently self-evident'. Consequently, while I will argue that my female gender could have encouraged young men to insist on paying for my drink, I recognise the possibility that had my gender been male, respondents could have still offered to pay for my drink. But the fact that some male respondents declined my offer explicitly, stating that it is 'untraditional' for a woman to pay for a man makes it more apparent that my gender shaped the way the male respondents treated me in the field.

Researchers have observed that it is not unusual for participants to request favours from female researchers in exchange for access to participants and these favours can range from informal exchanges such as running errands to

more serious request such as sexual demands and innuendos (Gurney, 1985; Trainor & Ahlgren, 2013). During my fieldwork, I did what was possible within the limits of my knowledge and ability to avoid sexist experiences. As a young female who lived in Nigeria until I was 22, I am very aware of my past sexist experiences in Nigeria, and so I can say that I am 'historically conscious' to borrow the words of May and Perry (May & Perry, 2017).

The fact that I was often introduced to male participants by someone they trusted limited my experiences of sexual advances from men. But this is not to say that male respondents did not proposition me. However, my past sexist experiences in Nigeria helped me to think of how to limit these experiences in advance. For example, I found myself constantly wearing a ring on my finger to suggest sexual unavailability because I had learned during my Industrial training in the Niger Delta that Egbesu militants would never request sexual favours from married women because it diminishes their spiritual protection and exposes them to death. When I experienced sexual advances, I took them not as a shock, but as a continuation of my old sexist experiences. It is possible that if I were a male researcher, I might not have experienced this sexual advances, and I also might not have felt the strong need to be introduced to male respondents by respected gatekeepers the way I did.

Despite these negative experiences, I would argue that being a female researcher in a male-dominated setting could be a double-edged sword. On the other hand, my female gender encouraged the participation of some male respondents. For example, when I approached a group of young men to participate in a focus group in Abuja, one of them said to me 'don't worry we will come because you are a beautiful woman and you have to give me your phone number after because I can take care of you'. 'Take care of you' he said. Again, his statement links masculinity to being a provider. His eyes were filled with desire, and it was very obvious that he sexualised me. But it is undeniable that my gender as a woman combined with my youthful

appearance which he could have considered non-threatening encouraged him to agree to an interview.

In general, I would say that my gender as a female researcher shaped my field work experiences. I tried my best to remain professional in the field; in the way I interacted with respondents, and my overall conduct in the field. But our social body is never completely detached from us in the research process. Hence, I draw from feminist literature that highlights the role of power relations and positionality in shaping the field work process, and I agree with England when she writes that ‘the researcher’s positionality and biography directly affect fieldwork and fieldwork is a dialogical process which is structured by the researcher and the participants’ (England, 1994:80). Hence, in the particular case of this research, it is undeniable that this final thesis is a reflection of this dialogical process between myself, a female research, and the people I researched, many of whom were men.

Interview with institutional representatives

Even though I have stated in this Chapter and the previous ones that my focus in this research is to understand youth violence from the perspectives of young people, I also chose to interview a fewer number of institutional representatives because I felt that interviewing them will provide a broader understanding of young people’s lives. In order words, interviews with institutional representatives provided insights into the structural context of the Niger Delta and helped me to provide a more rounded interpretation of the issue under investigation.

Institutional representatives interviewed in this study include government officials, experts and practitioners, NGO staff, traditional rulers, and staff of international and indigenous oil companies who have relevant knowledge on youth violence in the context of oil exploration in the Niger Delta. In total, I interviewed 42 institutional representatives. Not all interviews with participants in this category were recorded. Fourteen respondents were reluctant to approve a recorded interview, and so I made notes instead.

Many government organisations in Nigeria have websites which provide the contact details of their staff, including their emails and very rarely, their phone numbers. However, even though I contacted many government officials using these details, only a few responded. They were more willing to grant interviews when someone they trusted or at least know introduced me. The first government representative I interviewed was Brigadier-General Paul Toro, the Coordinator of the Presidential Amnesty Programme. I was able to schedule an interview with him through the help of a friend who knew him. During the interview with Brigadier Paul, I met some researchers from the University of Essex who had also come to interview Brig. Paul about the PAP and meeting these researchers proved helpful. Luckily for me, these researchers had scheduled an interview with two other government officials later that night, and they said I could come along if I did not mind. Of course, I did not mind, so I followed them. The government officials we had gone to see were very kind to accommodate my interview that same day without prior notice.

When there was no one to introduce me to some government officials, I showed up in their offices randomly, uninvited. As a Nigerian, I know that this is how Nigeria works sometimes; you just show up and do things. This tactic worked to an extent. When I showed up uninvited, I would introduce myself to the government representative, asking when would be a good time to arrange an interview. In the times when they were not available, I dropped a note indicating who I am and what I wanted. However, many of them never got back to me. However, one government official acknowledged my note and wrote back to organise an interview. This made me happy and encouraged me to keep on with this tactic, even though subsequent trials did not yield good results.

4.2.2.3 Primary Data Analysis

After the interviews with youths and institutional representatives, the next step was to analyse the interviews. To proceed with data analysis, I first transcribed all the interviews manually. After transcribing all the interviews,

I proceeded with the analysis. I am aware of software applications such as Nvivo which helps in data analysis. But I decided to go for manual analysis because I wanted to immerse myself in the research and pay deeper attention not only to the words but their essence and context. I was also concerned that software applications might not be able to analyse interviews conducted in Pidgin English satisfactorily. This approach, though time-consuming and herculean, enabled me to reflect on the data in an in-depth way that automated analysis might not have allowed.

The first step in the analysis was to separate youth interviews (youth interviews on perspectives on violence and focus group interview) from the interviews with institutional representatives. Then I read the transcribed interviews and field notes thoroughly. After reading the transcripts thoroughly, I started the coding process. The codes emerged from applying the concepts that I discussed in Chapter 2- hegemonic masculinity, violence, habitus, field, and capital- to the interviews. To analyse young people's experiences of violence which I present in Chapter 6, I developed codes based on the concept of violence which is relevant to the question that I asked young people. To code young people's experiences of violence, I examined how young people interpreted their experiences in relations to the definition of violence that I adopted in Chapter 2. Since the definition of violence adopted in this study includes violence as direct harm such as death and bodily injury and as indirect harm such as practices of exclusion and loss of hope, I identified interviews in which young people mentioned these experiences and assembled them in groups based on the similarity of harm. Gradually, these initial codes were condensed to form overarching themes, and it is through this process that the four themes of harm in Chapter 6 were developed.

Having identified these themes, I then proceeded to thematic analysis which entails a detailed and complex description of the information contained in each theme of harm such as how many people experienced it, the gender and ethnicity of the person who experienced it, the intensity of this experience and whom they blame for such experience. Once I identified these analytic

details, I contextualised the analysis in relation to the existing literature on youth violence, identifying consistencies in opinions, or the lack thereof. I only used thematic analysis in Chapter 6 and this is because it is suitable for investigating research questions that relate to people's experiences because it allows for flexibility in the interpretation of meanings people give to their actions (Braun & Clarke, 2006 ; Coffey, et al., 1997) and this is consistent with the epistemological position of this research.

While the codes in Chapter 6 came from applying only the concept of violence to the interviews, I did something slightly different in Chapters 5 and 7. In Chapter 7, I analysed only young men's interviews which responded to the question about the role of the male gender identity in shaping experiences of violence. I went a step further to deepen the analysis in Chapter 7 by taking some of the themes of violence that I analysed in Chapter 6 which connected young men to violence based on cultural factors and analysing these themes further using a combination of the concepts from Bourdieu and Connell and insights from young men's interviews. Essentially, what I did in this Chapter is to situate young men's experiences of violence within the theoretical contributions of Bourdieu and the concept of hegemonic masculinity. Because this analysis required weaving through multiple layers of concepts, it was the most time-consuming Chapter. However, this approach helped me not to limit myself to insights from just one school of thought regarding the relationship between men and violence but instead enabled me to excavate deeper into the complexity of violence. For example, it enabled me to understand how structural factors related to gender and ethnicity shape young men's experiences of violence.

Interviews with institutional representatives are analysed in Chapter 5. To analyse these interviews, I followed the initial steps that I used for the analysis in Chapter 6; first reading interviews thoroughly and then generating codes. The codes stemmed from the research question; how do institutional representatives explain oil related youth violence in the Niger Delta. Based on this research question, I identified a pattern in terms of how different

institutional leaders interpreted youth violence and whom they blamed for the violence. Then I assembled interviews under two main groups based on who the majority of the respondents under that group blamed for the violence. Subsequently, I further examined these two groups to further capture the nuances in terms of how the respondents under each group explain youth violence and whether there are divergences in their opinion. To deepen analysis further, I applied Bourdieu-informed discourse analysis to interrogate the explanations of youth violence and reveal meanings that otherwise would not have been accounted for.

4.3 Limitations and Challenges

Researching sensitive topics in a conflict setting often create safety risks, not only for the researcher but the research participants and sometimes these risks occur in the form that the researcher cannot foresee or control. Navigating militant networks very safely was very crucial to completing my fieldwork. This research demanded my urgent availability and high mobility. As I previously highlighted, the fact that my respondents were scattered all over Nigeria meant that I had to transport myself to different locations for interviews regularly. There were many times when I was given short notice for interviews, and I had to do my best to attend. Because the nature of petro-violence required a high level of secrecy and silence, many militants operated from secret hideouts and did not reveal their location easily. Access to Oporoza community was particularly challenging because the means of transportation to this community apart from the air (not by commercial flight by private charter) is by sea. While public transport in Nigeria, in general, can be quite horrendous, sea transport is particularly worse due to highly underdeveloped infrastructure. As such, my visit to Oporoza was a daunting task.

The road transport experiences were not good either. The poor conditions of road infrastructure and lack of suitably trained drivers made most trips to the Niger Delta utterly exhausting. Before the drivers moved from the park, a few men of God approached the passengers for motor park evangelism.

Sometimes they entered the buses, prayed and left before the driver moved and other times, they preached while standing on the moving bus and alighted a few minutes after. But always, before they left the bus, they asked for offering, often supporting their request with bible quotations. 'The Bible says give like a cheerful giver', they often said. I often wondered whether this increasing motor park evangelism is a coping mechanism in the context of increasing poverty or a genuine spiritual endeavour.

Sometimes before the driver moved, salesmen patrolled around the buses displaying various items from local snacks to books with very catchy titles; 'Seven Key Steps to Financial Success', 'How to be a Billionaire in 5 days', 'Easy Way to Get a Husband', 'How to Cure Weak Erection'. While I could not help but observe how the title of these books reflects the challenges of local people, the irony of how one sells a book on how to be a billionaire in five days yet remains poor still baffles me.

There was usually no standard journey time as road transport in Nigeria, especially by public buses, is subject to many interruptions. Drivers often stopped on the road to 'settle' the police. Sometimes, the police having collected their 'settlement' will insist on searching the buses. They would randomly choose people, usually young men and search them with some overtones of harassment. On one occasion when I was travelling from Bayelsa to Port Harcourt, the police had asked one of the passengers, a young man on dreadlocks who looked like he was under 30 to come down for searching because according to the policeman he 'looked like a yahoo boy' or a fraudster. 'the boy wearing that red shirt, and that long chain, you with *dada* hair, come here, you look like a yahoo boy. It is you boys that are causing the whole problem this place' the policeman said. The search lasted for nearly 30 minutes, and because the driver failed to provide his car documents upon request, we were delayed for even longer. There are many days like this when unexpected things happened on the road and journey time extended extensively. Cars broke down often. Road accidents were replete. Amid these experiences, there were times when I was frightened and doubted

my safety. But I decided to trust my guts, my God, and the extensive support I received from IYC networks. But it is undeniable that anxiety, fear, suspicion and even risk, clouded my fieldwork experience.

4.4 Conclusion

This Chapter has reflexively discussed the methodologies, methods and orientations, underpinning this research. It also discussed my experience as a female researcher in a male-dominated settings and the challenges inherent in researching in a conflict setting. My contact with the IYC greatly facilitated access and helped to ensure my safety in the field. However, this was by no means sufficient. Every day in the field presented a unique experience. I adjusted very quickly to the days as they came, making myself available when I was invited urgently for meetings and enjoying the public transport experience even in the days of severe delays. But, in the face of these challenges, my determination to contribute to what I considered, a very important topic helped me to overcome my fears. I desired that the voices of young people are added to the discussion on oil-related violence in Nigeria. In the end, the remarkable cooperation I received from young people gave me hope. I could not offer enough gratitude for the wide-ranging support I received not only from the IYC members but from many people in the Niger Delta. The content of my analysis in the ensuing Chapters speaks to their profound support, and for this, I am very grateful to these young men and women who so graciously offered me an opportunity to examine their lives and document their experiences sometimes in the depth that I never imagined.

Chapter 5: Using Bourdieu to Trace the Structural Situation of the Niger Delta: Perspectives from Institutional Actors

5.1 Introduction

If, as explained in Chapter 2, violence is shaped by habitus- influenced by the structural conditions of the field and reproduced through agency- then the question is how to provide analysis of youth violence that is attentive to this dual (structural and individual) nature of violence. In this Chapter, I analyse interviews with institutional representatives in which they explain their views on youth violence. With the analysis of these interviews, this Chapter aims to achieve two main things. First, the explanations of youth violence offered by institutional representatives provide insights into how the structural context of the Niger Delta impact on the quality of life that young people have, and shape their options in their world. Second, we shall also see in this Chapter, how inequality is reproduced in the field/ social context of the Niger Delta through the dominant explanations of youth violence that institutional actors, mostly government actors provide. These objectives are explored in this Chapter drawing insights from Bourdieu's thinking tools-habitus, field and capital-which I discussed extensively in Chapter 2.

Investigating how dominant explanations of social problems contribute to shaping the structural context is an approach that is very popular within Bourdieu's work (Bourdieu, et al., 1994; Bourdieu, 1996). Bourdieu cautions researchers to be critical of the definitions of social problems that state actors provide, to investigate what motivates their explanations, and interrogate how such explanations order the social structure because when it comes to the state 'things could be different from what they are made to look like' (Bourdieu, et al., 1994, p. 4). Bourdieu goes further to explain that institutions socialise social actors into its goals and interest and subsequently individuals

reproduce this structure or the views of institutions as their habitus shapes their interpretation of reality.

Before moving to the analysis, I first explain the concept of field of the *political economy of oil* which I developed following Bourdieu's idea of a field as a social arena where social actors stake claims or engage in practices that reproduce their power or positions (See Chapter 2). Similarly, I use the concept of the field of the political economy of oil to reconstruct how the explanations of youth violence provided by institutional actors are influenced by their relative positions in the field of the political economy of oil. I define the field of the political economy of oil as a social field comprising of actors whose position in relation to each other depend on the value of their capital within this given field and in this field, economic capital or petro-dividend is viewed as the most valuable capital. Institutional actors with higher economic capital occupy a position of power or what I call the 'front role' positions. On the other hand, actors with lower economic power are 'back role' actors.

As we shall see in this Chapter, the social position of institutional actors in the field of the political economy of oil shapes the kind of explanation they provide for youth violence. Ultimately, the explanations of youth violence and the attribution of blame for youth violence can provide valuable insights into the possible policy solutions for addressing the problem of youth violence as well as who to hold responsible for the implementation of such policies.

For analytical clarity, I structure the responses from these interviews into two main themes related to the attribution of responsibilities for violence; (1) Blaming the Youths and Local Leaders: Government Officials at the Federal Level, Subnational level, and Staff of Indigenous and IOCs and (2) Blaming the State and Oil Companies: Local leaders, Experts and Practitioners, NGOs, and Staff of NDDC and PAP. As their titles suggest, these themes are categories of perceptions or explanations for youth violence as shared by institutional actors.

To effectively communicate the argument in this Chapter, first I map out the institutional actors whose interviews are analysed in this Chapter, the roles of the institutions to which they belong, and their perspectives on youth violence in the table below.

Table 5.1 Institutional Actors, Key Agencies, Their Roles, and Perspectives on Youth Violence

Institutional Actors	Key Agencies/actors	Role in relations to youth violence	Perspectives on youth violence/Attribution of blame
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government officials at the federal and subnational levels (n=7) 	<p>2 Senators, two members of House of Representatives, a governor, a deputy governor and a local government chairman</p>	<p>Senator and the House of Reps make laws and approve policies that shape young people's lives. Governor, deputy governors and local government chairmen are responsible for providing basic services such as roads, educational institutions and health care using internally generated revenue and monthly allocations from the federal government.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blamed the youths (n=5); youths are 'criminals', youths 'want money without working for it', youths do violence to 'buy cars and houses'. Blamed local leaders (n=2); local leaders in NDDC and PAP are under-performing due 'corruption', they are 'stealing the money' designated for the development of the Niger Delta region Blamed the youths and local leaders (n=1); youths do violence, they don't 'ask' local leaders who steal the money for explanations about what happened to development funds Blamed the government (n=1); government have failed to create 'jobs' for youths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff of Indigenous and IOCs (n=9) 	<p>Staff of Agip, Shell, and indigenous oil companies and oil service firms</p>	<p>Oil exploration shapes local social relations in a violent way. Oil pollution devastates local environment and livelihood</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blamed the youths and local leaders (n=5); youths are 'lazy', youths use violence 'to get money', youths use violence to 'bring oil companies to their knees' 'they don't want to work' Blamed the government (n=2); the government has 'forgotten' the region, government does not create 'jobs', lack of good 'roads' and lack of 'food' is connected to local 'suffering' Blamed the govt. and IOCs (n=2); no jobs, distributive injustice, poor environmental legislations, oil companies pollute the environment

Institutional Actors	Key Agencies/actors	Role in relations to youth violence	Perspectives on youth violence/Attribution of blame
<p>Local leaders (n=8)</p>	<p>Local politicians from the oil-producing states; a governor, 2 members of Bayelsa state house of Assembly, a local government chairman</p> <p>Members of traditional institutions of governance/chiefs/elders/a member of the community development committees</p>	<p>(Roles explained above). Also, in addition to monthly allocations, governors from oil-producing states receive 13% of the proceeds from oil produced from their states. This money is supposed to be used to address local challenges arising due to oil exploration.</p> <p>Members of the traditional institution of governance are often in charge of community development projects such as the construction of schools and roads which impacts the lives of youths.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blamed the federal govt. and IOCs (n=7); youth violence is connected to political exclusion, 'distribution formula does not benefit Niger Delta people', 'resource control is the big elephant', 'pollution everywhere', 'people who have the oil are suffering' Blamed the youths (n=1); 'youths don't know anything', youths use money from militancy to chase 'women' and smoke 'weed', youths are incapable of leadership, they are destructive.
<p>Staff of PAP and NDDC(n=13)</p>	<p>8 staff of NDDC and 5 staff of PAP</p>	<p>Interacts with the funds designated by the federal government for the development of the Niger Delta</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blamed the federal govt. 'no development', federal level political interferences, underfunding.
<p>Experts and Practitioners and NGO workers(n=5)</p>	<p>University lecturers and NGO staff</p>	<p>explanations may reveal more about the structural conditions of the field and help strengthen analysis</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blamed the government (n=4); lack of integration, mismanagement of govt. funds, 'govt. is not doing what is supposed to be done' Blamed the local leaders, 'the governors are buying houses all over the world, and the youths have nothing'.

5.2 Blaming the Youths and Local Leaders: Government Officials at the Federal and Subnational Levels and Staff of Indigenous and IOCs

This section specifically analyses the interviews from government officials at the federal level and subnational level as well as interviews with the staff of indigenous and IOCs. The analysis aims to understand how these institutional actors perceive youth violence and to relate these perspectives with their relative position in the field of the political economy of oil. In this analysis, I examine how these institutional actors internalise their organisations' mandate, and how such internalisation shapes their interpretation of youth violence, eventually reproducing the field or social order.

I present the analysis in this section according to institutions: (1) government Officials at the Federal and Subnational Level and (2) Staff of Indigenous and IOC. This is to allow for analytical clarity and to make the convergences and divergences, if any, in the views of respondents from these institutions more obvious. I begin with the analysis of interviews with government officials at the federal and subnational levels.

5.2.1 Perspectives from Government Officials at the Federal and Subnational Levels

'The problem is that young people just want to make money. They don't want to work for it. See this, my driver, now, he does not come to work early, but he wants his salary complete. Even in the Niger Delta that is the problem. The government is doing its best. Buhari is trying. But these criminals want to bomb everywhere because they don't want to do anything' (Senator Mathew, Abuja, 2016).

The analysis of the interviews with respondents in this category shows that the majority of them see youth violence as a youth problem. Out of 7 participants interviewed from this group, 5, blamed the youths solely for oil-related violence in the Niger Delta. Two respondents blamed the local leaders for youth violence, and one person perceived youth violence as a shared responsibility between the youths and the federal government.

Senator Mathew in the epigraph to this section is one of these respondents who blamed the youth for violence. During an interview with Senator Mathew in his Abuja home, he explained that youths are responsible for violence in the Niger Delta and blamed them for enacting violence for criminal interest. He said youths just want to make money without working for it and that is the cause of the violence in the Niger Delta because despite the best effort from the government the youths are bombing everywhere due to criminal interest. Senator Matthew shared this view as we drove to his colleague's house, Senator Ben.

When we arrived in Senator Ben's house, I noticed his male house help looking at me as if he was sizing me up, his eyes swinging rapidly from my hair down to my shoes as we made our way to the sitting room. Perhaps, this look was to decide how much attention I, a young female visitor was worth. There had been another young male visitor who arrived after us and this young man is a personal assistant to a governor. It was his first time too in this house and his first time meeting Titus, the house help. But once this young man entered the living room, I could not help but observe how Titus curtsied towards him, greeting him with a very wide smile. 'Oga welcome' he said, reaching for his luxurious suitcase. I looked on from my seat and at this moment I wondered whether underemployment had made Titus and other Nigerian youths like the ones I saw at Murtala Muhammed Airport something of a servile. People, whose body language and gestures became so obsequious in the presence of the wealthy.

Before we arrived at Senator Ben's house, Senator Mathew showed me two houses as we drove. One in Asokoro, the other in Maitama and these two areas are upscale neighbourhoods in Abuja. He said the two houses belongs to a very popular ex-militant from Gbaramatu. He also talks about how this ex militant bought his girlfriend a G-wagon and a home in an affluent area of Abuja and how these expensive houses and cars are evidence of why youths in the Niger Delta do violence. For him, youth violence is all about the money, the good life, a life these militants are not ready to work hard for.

For me being a militant is just an avenue to become wealthy. That house you are seeing there belongs to Tompolo. This is just one of his houses oh. He has houses in London, New York, Dubai, everywhere. I know what I am telling you. President Jonathan was giving militants inflated contracts so many of them became billionaires. Even directors in government ministries who have worked for decades cannot afford houses here in Maitama. But militants are buying properties everywhere. Asokoro, Maitama, everywhere. They are carrying gun because of greed. It is just greed. (Senator Mathew)

Bearing in mind Bourdieu's remark above about state actors and how they may misrepresent social problems, it makes sense to interrogate Senator Mathew's definition of youth violence to understand what may motivate such definition.

Interpreting youth violence as a youth problem or as a fault of the local leaders removes the federal government from being responsible for creating the structural conditions for the violence and from the responsibility of poor leadership of the youths or the country in general. On the other hand, accepting responsibility for youth violence opens up conversations about specific issues and solutions revolving around the role of the state in facilitating youth violence. Accepting responsibility for violence may also open up discussions about revenue distribution arrangements and to what extent the federal government has invested sufficient petro-dividends in creating a suitable environment for young people's wellbeing. Ultimately, such conversations can lead to an unfavourable revenue distribution arrangement where the federal government's access to petro-dividends is decreased and this would move the state away from the front role position in the political economy of oil. Thus, explaining youth violence as a youth problem and blaming the local leaders for violence furthers the federal government's agenda.

Like Senator Mathew, Senator Ben and the other government officials I spoke to in Senator Ben's house put forward explanations of youth violence that is consistent with the interest of the state.

When I arrived in Senator Ben's house with Senator Mathew, an important government conference had just ended in Abuja and many government officials, unable to return to their respective states after the conference gathered in Senator Ben's house to unwind watching a football match. It was a game between Arsenal and Chelsea and their mood was so light. These government officials-a deputy governor, a governor, a local government chairman, and two members of the House of Representatives-all agreed to an interview and considering that government officials did not easily agree to an interview, this was an especially lucky day for me.

Senator Ben, the deputy governor, the governor and one member of House of Representatives shared similar views with Senator Mathew. They argued that it was in the past that militants were motivated by social injustice but now 'all these boys are saying they are militants to get money' the governor and his deputy echoed. The government is doing everything to solve the problem. They have NDDC, Amnesty. Still, they are still agitating. I don't know why they are not asking the people in NDDC what happened to their money', the governor continued.

Following the rise in militant violence in the Niger Delta and its attendant consequences on national treasury (see Chapter 3), the federal government instituted the Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP) in October 2009. PAP gave unconditional pardon to militant youths in addition to monthly stipends and skill acquisition programmes in exchange for their arms and in consequence peace was restored in this region in 2010. However, the interviews reveal that corrupt practices in PAP have meant that local leaders have syphoned a huge part of the funds allocated for human development under PAP, reducing the funds available for investment in projects that will improve young people's lives. Similar stories exist for NDDC.

NDDC-the Niger Delta Development Commission- is a development agency instituted by the federal government in the year 2000 to promote youth development and respond to the development needs of the Niger Delta.

However, the success of this agency in terms of responding to this objective has been a subject of debate. Several programmes by this agency such as scholarship and infrastructural projects have been abandoned and issues of corruption and leadership challenges have meant that so much is still desired in terms of the performance of this agency.

Like the governor, the local government Chairman also blamed the local leaders especially the governors and top government officials at NDDC and PAP for youth violence.

‘If I tell you what is happening in that NDDC eh, if I tell you how much the governors in the oil-producing states are receiving from the 13% derivation, you won’t believe it’. The local government chairman said, tapping at the newspaper that had in his front page news about ex-militants threatening violence if their stipend was not paid in a week. ‘The real problem is the leaders, the leaders in the Niger Delta. They are all stealing their money. Look my friend is a director in NDDC. So much corruption is going on there, these people just share the money and do very little things for their people. Then they start blaming the government’.

While the majority of these government representatives blamed the youths and the local leaders, one member of the House of Representatives, Dan, did not share the view that youths are solely responsible for violent militancy. In fact, the connection between the federal government violent practices and local violence is highlighted in Dan’s response:

The government is causing this problem too because we all know that many youths don’t have jobs in this country. Look on my table I have so many CVs people from my village, my mother’s village, everywhere, telling me to find jobs for them. Where do you see jobs? That’s why all these our boys are dying in Libya. So many of these militants are also taking advantage. People like all these big big, rich militants. I don’t want to call their names here. But I’m sure everybody here knows the people I am talking about. They have turned militancy to a lucrative business.

When we compare Mr. Dan's view on youth violence with the perspectives of the other government officials in Senator Ben's house, we see a shift in terms of how they explain youth violence. Unlike the other government representatives, Mr Dan shares the responsibility for violence between the state and the youths. This shift in perspectives underscores Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) argument that while habitus is durable, it is not eternal or deterministic. This makes it possible for social actors to intersubjectively include in their own habitus the perspective of others (Crossley, 2001; Robinson & Robertson, 2014). Thus, while Mr Dan retains his institutional habitus as a government official, which could have structured his tendency to put forward an explanation of youth violence that blamed the youths for violence, his habitus still allowed him to incorporate in his explanation the view of the state's inefficiency, which is not consistent with the interest of the state.

Before I proceed to the next section where I analyse interviews with Staff of indigenous and International Oil Companies (IOCs), I summarise the analysis of the interviews with government officials at the federal levels and subnational level of government.

In sum, the majority of government officials at the federal level of government blamed the youths and local leaders for violence. Such explanation could have been shaped by their institutional habitus which guided them to put forward explanations of youth violence that is consistent with the interest of the federal government. Blaming the youth and local leaders absolves the federal government from any responsibility for youth violence and helps it to retain its higher access to petro-dividend/economic capital in the field of the political economy of oil. While the majority of the respondents in this group blamed the youth for violence, one respondent shared an alternative view which recognised the role of the state in enabling youth violence. This alternative perspective could be because while the habitus guides an agent's interpretation of social problems, it also allows for the construction of alternative reality.

5.2.2 Perspectives from staff of indigenous and IOCS

Analysis of the interviews with respondents from this group shows that the majority of them joined federal and subnational level government officials in attributing youth violence as the responsibility of the youths and local leaders. Out of 9 respondents interviewed from this group, 5 blamed the youths and local leaders for youth violence in the Niger Delta. Two respondents attributed youth violence to poor governance. The remaining two respondents perceived youth violence as a shared responsibility between the state and oil companies.

Okon, a former staff of the Nigerian Agip Oil Company (Agip for short) is one of the respondents who blamed the youths and local leaders for oil-related violence in the Niger Delta and this perspective is revealed in his comment below:

I worked in Agip for ten years. That time, there is always one problem or the other. Today the youths have vandalised pipeline in Obrikom. Tomorrow, the youths are burning another house in Egbema. There is always a problem. If the company calls them [youths] for a meeting, it will not work. If they [youths] say they need any money, you must give it to them. So many of the youths in the Niger Delta are now lazy. They are using violence as a way to get money. Even their local leaders support them because if the company talk to their leaders, they will say there is nothing they can do.

We can see from Okon's comment that he attributes violence to the youth who use violence as a way to get money and the local leaders who support the youth. However, Okon is only one out of five respondents in this group whose perspectives on youth violence supports the narrative that young people and local leaders are to blame for violence in the Niger Delta. Narratives from Osa, Clement, Nduka and Obinna also serves to locate this perspective.

According to Osa, 'the main thing people should be talking about is how the local leaders are spending the money they collect from oil companies and

government. Osa argued further, that in addition to failure on the part of local leaders, youth violence 'is a way for the militants to become billionaires'. Others too:-Clement, Nduka and Obinna-while not making this connection very explicit, expressed opinions that if the leadership at the local level is not right then, it becomes difficult for young people to force the government to take actions to tackle violent militancy.

Nduka shares his experience in running an indigenous oil company in Port-Harcourt and how local youths disrupt his company's operation regularly demanding 'youth levy' and 'community settlement'. He says he has to pay these fees which usually are large amounts because not doing so means that his company's operation will be affected and this makes him to say that the youths 'use violence to bring oil companies to their knees, they are very lazy people because if you offer them a job they don't want to work. Because the salary from the job is nothing compared to what they get from protection fees'.

Nevertheless, two respondents from this group were not satisfied with the steps taken by the government to address the structural causes of youth violence. As such, they blamed the government for youth violence. One of these respondents is Oifie from Bayelsa state, who worked with Shell as a welder before moving to work in his uncle's company.

The Niger Delta people are like people the government forget. We don't have anything. We are suffering. People don't have food. But the oil is our oil. See East-West road, the contractor, they leave the work. That road is important for Niger Delta. It connects everywhere. But bad. It is bad. Everyday accident. People are dying every day. From Mbiama to down the road is bad, there is pothole. The young people are angry with the government. If the government is doing the job, they build road, young people have job, they are happy, they will not do militant because they have job. (Oifie, Bayelsa 2016).

Oifie concludes his interview by explaining that youth militancy provides a way for youths to make ends meet in the context of unemployment and urged the government to provide jobs for young people. In a similar vein, the issue

of poor governance surfaced in the interview with Victoria, where she attributed youth violence to a consequence of what she called a ‘nationwide collapse’ in which the politicians are busy stealing money as opposed to committing to good governance. She suggested the participation of young people in mainstream politics and job creation as a way to engage young people and stop them from engaging in violence.

On one Saturday afternoon ashen with the dry harmattan wind, I sat with Mr Emenike in his Port-Harcourt home where he shared his perspective on youth violence. In contrast to the perspectives of the majority of the respondents in this group, Mr Emenike questioned the attribution of youth violence as youth problem and framed youth violence as a social problem which the federal government and oil companies have created.

Before we talk about youth violence, we have to first ask what can cause people to start violence. Of course, many people can engage in violence for different reasons. But why are people blaming young people who don’t have jobs when they start to carry gun and cause problem. Why? Why are they not asking what is causing the problem? The problem is that the Niger Delta people are not happy with the money they receive from the government. That’s the number one problem. Forget about every other thing they are saying, that is the main problem. But the government don’t want to talk about it. Even the oil companies are taking advantage. They pollute the environment. Oil spill is everywhere. It is changing the environment and the youths are angry.

Similarly, the role of the state and oil companies in enabling youth violence is the central point of discussion in Boma’s interview. Boma explained that ‘youth violence is a result of youths who are not happy with the kind of environment the government has put them’. Subsequently, Boma, challenged the state to put forward better legislations, so that oil companies are held accountable for polluting the environment’. She concludes by adding that an ‘unchanged situation’ of the unemployment and brutal military presence in the Niger Delta’ will lead to more violence.

In sum, the analysis of the interviews with the staff of indigenous and IOCs show that majority of them joined the federal level and subnational level government officials in blaming the youths and local leaders for youth violence. Constructing youth violence this way helps members of this group to remove themselves from any responsibility for violence, and from articulating any economic measures to address it. Crucially, such economic measures could decrease the amount of petro-dividend accessible to oil companies, possibly shifting them away from a position of power in this field. For instance, accepting the responsibility for pollution can lead to discussions about compensation to local communities and payment of fines to the government, and this is likely to put the oil company's petro-profits in decline.

What could explain such framing is that respondents from this group are socialised into the values of the oil companies and these values form part of their habitus. Consequently, their habitus guides their interpretation of reality, making them put forward explanations of youth problem that reproduces the interest of the institution where their habitus has been socialised. Yet, the habitus also allows some degree of reflexivity, allowing respondents from this group to deviate from this position by blaming the oil companies.

Ultimately, what the analysis of the interviews with the respondents from these two institutions show is that majority of them shared definitions of youth violence that serve to maintain the status quo in which their institutions are in a position of power. As I explained in Chapter 3, the federal government and oil companies are in a joint venture oil business arrangement in which both parties benefit substantially from oil exploration. Hence, it is in the interest of these institutions to put forward explanations of youth violence which removes them from the responsibility of creating the structural conditions for youth violence, and the economic implications that such interpretation may imply.

However, as we shall see in the next section, the majority of the respondents in the other group contest the definition of youth violence put forward by the respondents in this group. There is a modernist project associated with oil-the promise of development-and many respondents in the next group say the state and oil companies have failed to deliver this project to the oil communities. As such, the explanations of youth violence offered by members of the next group reveal the link between mal-development and violence and raises questions about how to provide explanations of youth violence which locates youth agency within the broader structural conditions that shape such agency.

5.3 Blaming the State and Oil Companies: Local leaders, Experts and Practitioners, NGOs, and Staff of NDDC and PAP

5.3.1 Linking youth violence and mal-development/structural violence

The presidents in Nigeria don't do anything for the Niger Delta. Abacha, Buharia, they don't anything for us. Goodluck *seff wey come from this place no* do anything for our people. *Na so* Nigerian politics *dey* work. Somebody supposed to push for your community in Abuja. If not nothing. It is not a good place. Nigeria is not a good place for us. It is only good if you have power in Abuja. We don't have people in Abuja. After the youth talk to Shell and government to employ them and stop oil spill, to build road, the government did not do anything, so they (Youths) carry gun to help themselves (Chief Samuel, a local chief in Bayelsa).

This section analyses interviews conducted with local leaders, experts and practitioners, NGOs, staff of development agencies-NDDC and PAP. As with the previous section, the objective of this section is to understand how institutional actors in this group perceive youth violence, and how such perceptions are constituted.

In total, eight local leaders were interviewed in this study. Local leaders interviewed in this study include four members of cultural/traditional institutions and four local politicians. Respondents from traditional institutions include two traditional rulers, one local chief, and one member of

the Community Development Committee²³. Because the analysis in Chapter 3 highlights how the elders are connected to the political economy of oil, it became important to understand how they perceive youth violence.

Local politicians interviewed in this group also include one governor from one of the oil-producing states, two members of Bayelsa State House of Assembly, and a local government chairman in Rivers state. These local politicians and 13²⁴ staff of development agencies were interviewed based on their role in the political economy of oil-they interact with the funds designated for the development of the Niger Delta²⁵, the 13% derivation in addition to monthly allocations²⁶.

The experts and practitioners comprise of two lecturers from Nigerian universities. The three NGO workers interviewed came from the Oil Spills Victims Vanguard (OSVV), Partnership Initiatives in the Niger Delta (PIND), and Friends of the Earth Nigeria. The perspectives of experts and NGO workers were sought to check the integrity of the perspectives of other actors represented and to strengthen the analysis.

For purposes of analytical clarity, the interviews with members of this group are analysed in two subgroups. Interview with local leaders and staff of development agencies are analysed in the same group while interviews with experts and NGOs are analysed in the same group. Given the fact that the staff of development agencies and local leaders are all from the Niger Delta, I analyse their interview under the same group to see whether their shared experiences, history or cultural values have an impact in the way they explain youth violence.

²³ Community Development Committees (CDC) oversee community development projects and cooperate social responsibility by oil companies (Watts, 2007). Providing money for these projects means that local leaders in charge of such projects may divert funds through corrupt practices. The CDC and elders also receive payments from Memorandum of Understanding and for accessing community land (Golden, 2012).

²⁴ This consist of 8 staff of NDDC and 5 staff of PAP

²⁵ See preceding section for the role of the NDDC and PAP

²⁶ See Chapter 3

Having mapped out the members of this group and their connection with the problem of youth violence, I proceed to analyse their perspectives on youth violence and what can explain such perspectives in the next section.

5.3.2 Interview with local leaders and staff of NDDC and PAP

In contrast to the views of many institutional representatives at the federal level, sub-national level government officials and oil company workers, the majority of the respondents in this group explained that youth violence is a response to the ongoing structural violence caused by political, and socio-economic forces beyond young people's control. They blamed the state and oil companies for creating the conditions of structural violence and suggested that addressing youth violence will require tackling the structural issues which created the problem in the first place. Out of 22 respondents in this group, 17 shared this view. One of these men is Chief Samuel, a traditional Chief from Bayelsa whose comment I provided in the epigraph.

During an interview with Chief Samuel in Bayelsa, he explained that 'the presidents in Nigeria don't do anything for the Niger Delta'. He also said that 'somebody supposed to push for [a] community in the Niger Delta' in Abuja before the government can respond favourably to [their] problem. Chief Samuel subsequently attributed youth violence in the Niger Delta to poor political participation, unemployment, environmental degradation and poor road infrastructure in the region.

Chief Samuel's statement stresses presidential power in particular, and political power in general, as a significant factor fuelling local violence. To understand how political power connects to local violence, it is helpful to go back to the discussion in Chapter 3. Proponents of the Niger Delta interest believe that control of political power, especially presidential power is crucial for securing access to petro-dividends in the form of distribution of industries, schools, hospitals and deciding where major government projects will be located and who gets the contract to execute such projects. This connection between federal power and access to petro-dividends contributes to why

feelings of political marginalisation run deep amongst local residents like Chief Samuel who believe they have been relegated to the sidelines of federal level politics.

Similarly, Joseph, a local government Chairman from Bayelsa state emphasises the connection between majority representation in the rank and file of the various federal establishments and the distribution of petro-dividends, and how these connect to local violence.

There are many problems with Nigeria. Nigeria is not equal and the minority like the Niger Delta are suffering the inequality. We don't have equal voice in the National Assembly. It is difficult to get the government to do something about the distribution of oil money which is the major problem for youth violence, if the majority does not support you. The distribution formula does not benefit the Niger Delta people and that is the major reason the youths are fighting. The violence is about resource control first. People from the Niger Delta want to control their resources.

Again, the discussion about the governance system in Nigeria in Chapter 3 provides background for understanding Joseph's comment. The Senate constitutes the upper chamber of Nigeria's bicameral legislature (also known as the National Assembly) the second being the House of Representatives. The National Assembly approves bills before they become laws, including bills related to oil resource. In other words, for any changes to be made to the current revenue distribution arrangement, it must be supported by the majority of the members of the National Assembly. Hence, Joseph believes that the minority ethnic status of the Niger Delta people in the National Assembly has denied them the possibility of winning the majority votes to put into legislation, a revenue arrangement that will benefit the region more.

Responses from other participants also support Joseph's argument that structural issues related to revenue distribution are significant drivers for youth violence. For example, the concern for the governor from one of the Niger Delta states is that 'resource control is the bigger elephant in the room' which the federal government has refused to do anything about'.

Also, the interview with Mr Bony, a member of the Community Development Committee connects local violence to environmental degradation by oil companies and the centralisation of petro-dividends.

Shell is polluting everywhere. Go to the village people are drinking from polluted water. But because Shell is sending the money to Abuja, the government is not talking. They are sharing the oil money in Abuja and the people who have the oil are suffering. If they don't stop the oil pollution and talk about resource control, militancy is not going to stop. They youth will still be kidnaping and killing people.

Perhaps, given the fact that people from the Niger Delta share a similar history and thus similar dispositions, the habitus of the members of this groups is to borrow Bourdieu's (1977, p. 73) lexicon a 'structural variant' of the habitus of respondents from the first group. Because members of this group carried with them their trajectories, their past experiences in which they believe that they have been treated unfairly in Nigerian politics and its fiscal relations their habitus subsequently led them to interpret youth violence through the lens of their historical experiences.

Nevertheless, while the similarity in the explanations of youth violence provided by members of this group could be explained by their group habitus, we can also relate their explanations to their social positions. Explanations of youth violence which blame the federal government and oil companies for violence removes the local leaders from the responsibility for the violence, including the responsibility of graft which respondents from the federal government institutions accused them of. In fact, respondents from development agencies contested allegations of graft provided by respondents from the federal government. They pointed out instead that the development agencies have become, rather than institutions which advance the development of the Niger Delta, avenues to extend the interest of the federal government and political elites from majority ethnic groups who call the shots in federal level politics.

According to Emeka who works with PAP:

The youths are angry because there is no development in their region where the money comes from. But the government is investing the oil money in Abuja to make it look like Dubai. Go to the university in Bayelsa, a major oil-producing state it is like a secondary school. Do you know how much the government is making from the oil in Bayelsa? But the life for people there is not good at all. If you want to talk about Amnesty, that one is worse seff. The politicians in Abuja ask the MD's and directors of NDDC and even Amnesty to use the funds for developing the region for politics. They ask them to support them to win elections. In fact it is the people in Abuja who decide how the money in development agencies is spent. If you don't do what they ask you to do they sack you without wasting time. They don't even give us enough money for the projects. And they impose the contractors on us. So the money is still going to them [political elites from majority ethnic groups]. The government should leave the agencies alone to do their work.

Similarly, another respondent, Jacob, who works for NDDC accused the federal government of underfunding the development agencies and failing to allow them to operate independently in a way that will better ensure the development of the region. In a way, referencing the underfunding of development agencies is only a mute reference to how their lower political standing in federal level politics could have played a role in enabling such underfunding.

Just like the majority of the respondents working at the federal level of government, majority of the respondents in this group put forward explanations of youth violence which removes them from the position of responsibility for the violence and suggested transforming the field which consequently may increase their access to petro-dividend as the solution to youth violence. This brings to life Bourdieu's (1994, p. 28) comment that an agent's social position in the field shapes their view of the field.

Respondents occupying a more powerful position-the front role actors-such as government officials and staff of oil companies, were more likely to put forward explanations which serve to maintain the status quo. On the other hand, respondents in less powerful positions, such as local leaders and staff of development agencies who have little, if at all any incentives from

maintaining the status quo were more likely to put forward explanations that focus on transforming the field and the structural inequality embedded in the field.

While the majority of the respondents in this group attributed youth violence to structural issues related to distributive inequality, political disparity, and lack of development, one respondent, Chief Sam, a traditional ruler blamed the youths for violence. In his interview, Chief Sam describes the youth as unintelligent, lacking in good character, incapable of good leadership, and as people who are hell-bent on destruction.

When you are young, your body is hot. You want to fight. The elders said no to the youths when they want to start violence. The youths said no, they must fight. I was in the army in the Biafran war. My parents were killed in the war. As elders, we have seen what war can do. Blood is going to pour away. But the youths don't understand anything because they don't know anything. That's why many of us elders are scared of what will happen if these youths become governors, presidents, ministers, they will destroy everything. They will cause problem. These young people don't know anything. Many of them, all they are doing with the militant money is buy cars and pursue woman. They smoke weed. But they want to become politicians. There is one of them in my backyard here. Every day, he is changing women like wrapper. If he buy a new motor (car), he will launch it with a new woman. He says he is going for election. Who will vote for him? If you give the youth power they will destroy everything. They are saying the elders are the problem. But they are destroying everything.

Chief Sam's comment shows how Nigeria's history of violence from the Biafran war is stored in people's memory and how this memory is employed many years on to show that the idea of violence is necessarily dangerous and unacceptable. It is also interesting to see in this interview how Chief Sam views youth violence as a move towards secession rather than as something that raises questions about social injustices and citizenship. This interview also underscores the tension between the youths and the traditional gerontocratic institutions in the Niger Delta.

Describing youths as incapable of leadership puts the elders in a position for the responsibility of ‘good leadership’ of the community and this is another way of saying that the local leaders are in a better position to represent local interest in issues related to oil exploration. Such representation could mean that local leaders would be in charge of the money payable to oil communities as compensation for pollution or for community development projects and decide how such money will be spent.

By referring to young people’s youthfulness, Chief Sam can deny the elders’ responsibility in the violence, he can deny that the youths ousted traditional systems of leadership because the elders had vested interest and he can legitimise gerontocracy which in some way is a disguised access route to petro-dividends.

In sum, two important points can be made from the analysis of the interviews with respondents in this group. First, majority of the respondents in this group blamed the state and oil companies for creating the structural problems related to revenue distribution, political disparity and lack of development of which youth violence is only a response to. Second, while this perspective can be said to be an outcome of the respondents’ habitus or their history, this explanation has to be seen in relation to the empowering effect it has on the respondent’s social position. By blaming the state and oil companies, local leaders and staff of development agencies can deny responsibility for the violence. More importantly, without blaming the state and oil companies for youth violence, it is difficult to attract resources or justify the existence of development agencies.

Having analysed the interviews with local leaders and staff of development agencies in this section, I analyse the interviews with experts, practitioner and NGO staff in the next section.

5.3.3 Interview with experts, practitioners and NGO staff

Analysis of the interviews with members of this group show that all the respondents in this group identified governance as a fundamental problem working against the interest of young people and shaping their options towards violence. In other words, members of this group described youth violence as evidence of the failure of the federal government to achieve integration, equitable distribution, and to deliver the promises of modernity associated with oil. Some of this point is highlighted in the comment below made by an NGO staff, Bas.

The problem with youth violence is that there is so much money coming from oil, you know coming into the country. But nobody is giving account to anybody. There is so much mismanagement and poor governance. There is no place in the world where the government is not doing well where there is peace. So it is not about the youths. I have worked in Port-Harcourt, Ogoni, Bayelsa, many places. Let me tell you, many of the youths who are militants are doing it because the government is not doing what it is supposed to do. They have to survive.

Bas goes further to explain that the governance problem does not exist at the federal level of government alone. Instead, he adds that ‘the local chiefs, are also stealing money they get to develop their region, the governors are buying houses all over the world, and the youths have nothing. In other words, Bas’ view is that the problem of youth violence is profoundly wrapped up with poor governance of resources at all levels of government- the federal, the state, and the local. Bas, ends his interview by accrediting leaders at all levels of government with the responsibility of tackling youth violence.

Another NGO worker Anita, subscribes to this definition of youth violence, highlighting that poor governance of oil resource has meant that the potential for oil has not been realised.

If you go to the Niger Delta, the level of poverty there will shock you. Apart from a few houses here and there, probably owned by the politicians or militants, the houses are mud houses. No road, no water, no light, pollution everywhere. The people don’t have

anything, not even good air to breathe. They don't. When their youths become militants, it is because they will ask themselves, how can we have all this wealth and we are suffering. You see now, the youth have internet, they can check online to get all sorts of information about oil. The government don't care. So the youths don't care about blowing pipelines. That is how they play the game. Do me, I do you. You take my money, I stop your oil. And the current government is not doing very well to integrate that part of the country with the rest of the country. So it is like we are going back to where we started when we talk about violence in that region. Oil is supposed to bring money into the country and develop the region. You know like Dubai. But oil is dividing Nigeria.

Anita attributes youth violence to a heightened sense of exclusion amongst the youth. She explains that young people in the Niger Delta are constantly reminded of their lower economic standing in the resource economy by the shanty houses they live in which lack basic modern amenities such as electricity, good drinking water, good road networks and poor environmental quality. In this digital era, young people are highly aware of how much wealth the government and IOCs generate from oil while they remain excluded from this wealth, and this makes these two a worthy target for violence.

Crucially, too, it is also important to consider from Anita's commentary, what the few decent houses owned by a few politicians and militants may mean for the youths in the Niger Delta many of whom do not live in such homes. Perhaps, these houses may cause local youths to challenge any explanation of youth violence that excludes local leaders from playing a role in this violence. It may confirm to them that the militant leaders and the under-performing local leaders who are supposed to represent them at the national level have left them behind while integrating themselves into the global oil economy. These are challenging situations which compound young people's experiences of exclusion and forces them to find a way to bring value into their lives.

On a deeper level, Judith, a university lecturer, commented that violence results from the past frustrations of poor governance stored in the memory of young people. This, she says, has made the youths to expect very little from

the federal and state level politicians and to use violence to express this frustration.

‘You know, this violence did not start today. The youths have watched the federal government and oil companies collide to sanction detrimental policies against them. Some of them have watched or at least have been told how the federal government killed people like Saro Wiwa. They know that the oil well in their backyard is owned by somebody in Abuja who is reluctant to talk about pollution because he does not live in Bayelsa. So young people have internalised this treatment. It has been happening to them since. So they use militancy to say enough is enough. Even if the army kills this group of militants, another one will start. Before young people can stop violence, they have to see that things are not the same again, that there is a better option available for them.

Judith’s comment stresses how violent practices by the state and oil companies have become embedded and normalised in young people’s life experiences, thus forming part of their habitus. Such habituated experience of violence causes local youths to embrace violence as a strategy to respond to their experiences of violence which have become normal in their lives. Thus, Anita explains that youth violence can be addressed by creating new conditions of living for young people which will provide them with better opportunities outside violence in an environment where violence has been normalised.

5.4 Conclusion

Analysis of interviews with institutional representatives in this Chapter shows that there is not a single, coherent, narrative of youth violence independent from power positions that enable institutional actors to claim such violence as an objective fact. In an attempt to maintain a position of power, the majority of government officials at the federal and subnational levels, as well as the staff of oil companies attributed youth violence as the responsibility of the youths and local leaders. Such narrative removes the state and oil companies from the responsibility of creating the structural conditions for youth violence and ensures that structural solutions like resource

redistribution which could decrease their access to petro-dividends are avoided. On the other hand, the dominant narrative of youth violence provided by local leaders and staff of development agencies is that youth violence is a response to the structural violence created by the state and oil companies. Such a definition removes these local leaders from the responsibility of violence. Also, without blaming the federal government and oil companies for structural problems such as pollution and mal-development, it is difficult to justify the 13% revenue derivation which the oil-producing states receive as compensation for the negative impacts of oil pollution, or justify the existence of development agencies. The definition of the problem of youth violence shapes how resources are attracted to resolve it. Taken together, the arguments in this Chapter shed light on the structural conditions of young people's lives, and raises questions about how to interpret youth violence in a way that locates youth agency within the structural spheres of young people's lives. The analysis of young people's interviews in the next section helps us to understand further, how these structural factors contribute to creating the conditions for local violence.

Chapter 6: 'Why We Fight': An Encounter with Youth Experiences of Violence

6.1 Introduction

In the previous five Chapters, I outlined the introduction, conceptual framework, contextual background, methodology, and the perspectives of institutional actors regarding youth violence in the Niger Delta. In these Chapters, I highlighted the primary focus of this thesis, which is to understand young people's experiences of violence in the Niger Delta, and to analyse such experiences as not independent of the broader economic, ecological, social, and cultural factors that shape petroleum relations. This Chapter is the second of three analytical Chapters in which I develop these arguments, drawing from empirical data.

As I already explained in Chapter 4, the four themes of harm in this Chapter were developed from combining insights from the conceptual explanations of violence in Chapter 2 and the explanations of violence offered by youths. As their title suggests, each theme or category of violence highlights a particular factor identified by young people to shape their experiences of violence either as victims or perpetrators. However, these categories are not necessarily mutually exclusive as one category of experience can reinforce the experience of another category²⁷.

The first category is Young People's Experiences of Poor Political Representation. Here, I analyse the experiences of poor political participation voiced by young people and I contrast these experiences with the responses from some institutional representatives. Following this, I analyse the Experiences of Economic Harm which manifest primarily as discontent over the revenue distribution pattern and un/underemployment. The third and last

²⁷ For example, young people explained that experiences of poor political participation often reinforced experiences of economic exclusion.

sections analyse experiences of Bodily Harm and Environmental Harm respectively. In analysing these experiences of harm, I draw from the experiences of young women but mainly from young men’s experiences because they are the main focus of this study.

To provide a road map to the analysis in this Chapter, I first present table 6.1 which shows the four different categories of harm mentioned in young people’s interviews, the total number of men and women from each ethnic group who experienced them, and the total number of youths from the two groups who experienced them.

Table 6.1 A Summary of Young People's Experiences of Harm

<i>Experiences of Harm</i>	<u>Ethnically Ogoni youth</u>			<u>Ethnically Ijaw youth</u>			<u>Total (Ijaw & Ogoni youths)</u>
	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Sub-total</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Sub-total</i>	
Poor Political Representation	20	6	26	30	1	31	57
Economic exclusion	24	7	31	37	2	39	70
Bodily harm	9	0	9	39	4	43	52
Environmental harm	20	8	28	4	2	6	34

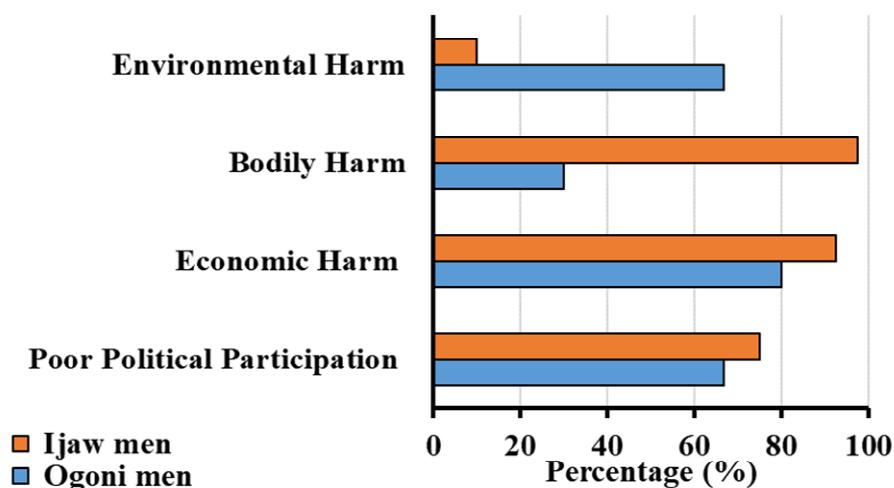
To further improve readability, I also present Table 6.2 below. Essentially, Table 6.2 draws from Table 6.1 to highlight only the experiences of young

men from the two ethnic groups covered in this study-Ijaw and Ogoni. Again, this is because as I have mentioned earlier, while this study aims to explain youth violence from the perspectives of youths generally, the focus is on how young men in particular experience this violence. Because the population size of the young men from these two ethnic groups varies, I represent their experiences in percentage in order to make comparisons. Subsequently, I represent this comparison in Figure 2 and I explain them in detail later in this Chapter and in Chapter 7.

Table 6.2 Experiences of Harm between Ogoni and Ijaw Men (%)

Ethnically Ogoni men			
Experiences of harm	Number of men affected	Total number of men interviewed	percentage (%)
Poor political participation	20	30	66.7
Economic harm	24		80
Bodily harm	9		30
Environmental harm	20		66.7
Ethnically Ijaw men			
Experiences of harm	Number of men affected	Total number of men interviewed	percentage(%)
Poor political participation	30	40	75
Economic harm	37		92.5
Bodily harm	39		97.5
Environmental harm	4		10

Figure 2 Experiences of Ijaw and Ogoni Men (%)



6.2 Young People’s Experiences of Poor Political Representation

‘Look at this place. Does it look like somewhere that has oil? The issue of the Niger Delta is about negotiation. If you don’t have somebody in Abuja to speak for you, to tell the government, listen

to this people, nothing will happen. Look at the PIB, they cannot pass it. Deziyani mentioned 10% fund to the oil communities that is why they said they will not pass the bill. Because it is the North that dominate the politics. Because we don't have powerful people to represent us in Abuja. Even the ones that are there they are just packing the money for their family, they are not talking about the people. We don't want to divide this nation but it is better we divide it so that the North can stay on their own than for them to dominate us, even our own oil (Christian, Bayelsa, 2016).

Young people expressed frustrations over their poor political participation especially at the federal level, the level of government that retains a larger part of the oil revenue. This feeling of political exclusion resonated in the experiences of young men and women. Out of a total of 84 youths interviewed in this study, 57 shared perceptions of political exclusion (Table 6.1). Experiences of political exclusion were high both amongst ethnically Ogoni men (66.7%) and ethnically Ijaw men (75%) (Table 6.2). In analysing young people's experiences of political exclusion in this section, I will consider the role of oil in shaping these perspectives, drawing from the historical account of violence provided in Chapter 3.

Christian, the young man in the epigraph to this section, is one of the young men who shared experiences of political exclusion. During an interview in his home in Bayelsa, Christian who spoke with undertones of anger attributed youth violence to the poor political representation of the Niger Delta people at the federal level. He says the federal government is unable to pass the Petroleum Industry Bill (PIB) because of their poor political voice at the federal level of government. The PIB is a petroleum industry reform law introduced in the year 2000. Amongst other things, this bill proposes to improve the governance of Nigeria's oil industry by improving transparency in the management of petro-revenues, promoting better tax regimes, and mandating oil operators to pay 10% of their profits to oil communities for environmental restitution.

However, 17 years after the PIB was introduced, it is yet to be passed into law. In January 2018, and in 2017, the House of Representatives and the

Senate respectively approved the Petroleum Industry Governance Bill (PIGB), one of the four parts of the PIB. But local residents consider the PIGB as a watered-down version of the PIB. While the National Assembly is yet to take a position on the other three parts of the PIB, President Buhari would have to give assent to the PIGB before it is passed into law. Christian and many people in the Niger Delta believe that president Buhari is reluctant to sign the PIGB because he is a Northerner and as such not very interested in the welfare of the oil communities in the Southern region.

Similarly, other female respondents like Ibiwari also connected the poor political power of the Niger Delta people to what she describes as an unjust revenue sharing formula in Nigeria. She insists that while the 'breadwinner' is supposed to 'call the shots in the family', the poor political power and ethnic minority status of the Niger Delta people have made it difficult for them to call the shots in Nigeria's politics, hence violent militancy.

The breadwinner is the head of the family. The breadwinner calls the shot. But that is not the case in the Niger Delta because we are the minority. They expect us to take whatever they give us from oil. We just want fairness in the distribution of oil. The main problem is resource control. We want self-determination. We want to control our oil money and pay rent to the federal government. That is how the other regions were doing it before the oil came. We want true federalism. That is why the IYC motto is resource control by any means. If this oil is in the North, the federal government will not support this unjust small money they are giving us because they are the one controlling the federal government. Obasanjo wrote that letter that made Jonathan to fail election. And Hausa people are saying Jonathan is giving militants money. But which president did not help his people? Babangida did it, even Obasanjo. But they are talking about Jonathan because he is minority. They are cheating us in politics. That is why the boys are entering the creek again, the Avengers are coming out. We are supporting the Biafrans because they are suffering too. Blood will flow again like 2008.

Ibiwari is the only female respondent, who made it public that she is a female militant, unashamedly. She says women are generally 'quiet', or invisible when they join violent militancy because of the stigma of militancy which has more consequences for women than men. 'If you are a woman and people

know you are militant, nobody want to come close to you, they think you are dangerous than the men, they don't want to be your friend, they don't want to marry you'. It puzzled me that Ibiwari did not mourn the things she could have had if she was not a militant, that being a militant did not shame her, that she decided to shove public acceptance and instead subsumed herself in militancy, something expected only from men culturally. I watched Ibiwari chew on a thin lobe of kolanut before continuing with the interview, telling me how she wished that many women in the Niger Delta would be interested as she is in violent militancy. Her fearlessness was very convincing.

To unpack Ibiwari's comment in the above quotation, I draw from the discussion in Chapter 3. In pre-oil Nigeria, revenue sharing formula was such that the regions controlled 50% of their revenue while the remaining half went to the federal government. Following the discovery of oil, the government introduced new statutory mechanisms which decreased revenue retained by the regions, concentrating more revenue at the centre instead. Ibiwari believes that while the current revenue arrangement is unfair to the Niger Delta, local residents do not have the political power to change it. As such, youth organisations such as the IYC are determined to control the resources of the Niger Delta similar to what it used to be in the pre-oil era using 'any means', which implies the use of violence.

Also, Ibiwari argued that politicians from Northern and Western Nigeria who control political power conspired to remove Jonathan from office. In 2013, ex-president, Olusegun Obasanjo from the West, had written a public letter titled 'Before It Is Too Late' in which he accused Jonathan of gross incompetence and incapable of good leadership. Ibiwari and other people in the Niger Delta regard Obasanjo as the spokesperson of the Northern/Western political hegemony and for them Obasanjo's letter de-marketed Jonathan and played a huge role in President Buhari's election victory. Ibiwari also countered the argument that the South benefitted disproportionately from Jonathan's presidency, arguing instead that is a normal practice for Nigerian

presidents-Babangida, Obasanjo- to use their political power to suit the needs of their ethnic groups.

Donald, another respondent, also explained that political power is crucial for accessing petro-dividends. Specifically, he makes this point, using an example of the patronage networks that dictate the allocation of oil exploration licence in Nigeria. He maintains that the sustained political dominance of the North and West since the military era has meant that many oil wells in Nigeria belong to the people from the North who acquired their oils through clientelist networks. Therefore, Donald argued that President Jonathan who is from the South lost his election because of serious concerns amongst the North/West political elites, who were bothered that Jonathan's success in the election will cost them their oil well licences.

'The reason why they (politicians from the North and the West) removed Goodluck is because by next year, the oil licences will expire and they want to award the licenses back to the North and Yoruba my sister', Donald said, calling me 'sister', in that familiar way that Africans did. Later on in our conversation, Donald moved closer to me and I noticed that his voice was sinking into asperity as if he needed a change of tone for the next thing he was about to say. 'They have been controlling this country, the Hausa people and Yoruba people are in charge since the military. You are Igbo, I'm sure you know. TY Danjuma, Indimi, all the Alhaji that have money, it's from our oil.

Donald's rhetoric suggested that since I am Igbo, the ethnic group that fought the Biafran war²⁸ against the Northern-led federal government, he had expected me to share his discontent for the Hausas and Yorubas. It seemed as if he had expected me to agree with him and even though I maintained an expressionless face all through the interview, the look on his face suggested that he believed I was on his side.

²⁸ The Nigerian/Biafra war shattered Nigeria's unity along ethnic lines. See Chapter 3.

In addition to revenue distribution, youths in the Niger Delta also believe that their poor political participation at the federal level created the impetus for the creation of the Land Use Act²⁹, an important institutional mechanism through which land and resources contained in it were transformed from a communal and individual property to federal property. As such, they see the federal government as the enemy who created hardship by changing the rules of access to petro-dividends in a way that disadvantages local residents. This leads to a collective sense of lack of inclusion within the national community which many of the youths expressed.

Let me tell you, if you look at the law like the Land Use Act, you will know that the government know what they are doing. It is because we don't have majority of the people to vote no against the law. Many of us feel we are not part of the country. The Land Use Act is a deceit under the disguise of law. The government empowered themselves with the law. So we are like the dog that bites but cannot bite. That is why we have resorted to help our self with violence. So many of us begged peacefully. Do you not know about Saro-Wiwa. Ok tell me did Saro Wiwa carry gun like us? I am from Ogoniland and there is no light [electricity] in my community. And the government is making millions and taking everything. Because the law is saying they can do that. What the government is doing is like stabbing us too, they are not stabbing us with knife but they are stabbing our opportunities to benefit the rest of Nigeria. If somebody is stabbing you every day, one day you will look for knife and stab him too. So we are stabbing the government too. We are killing the army people, we are exploding the pipeline, that there will not be oil. Go and ask everybody, before we use violence, the government did not do anything. It is only when we start to use violence that they are carrying us along small small. (Barabi).

In a context where local residents feel excluded from the national community, the youths have learnt how to use violence to get the attention of the federal government. They have learnt how important violence is in their pursuit of national integration. We see in Barabi's comment that violence is not necessarily an opportunity to wealth as some institutional representatives and Collier (2003) suggest. For Barabi and many youths in the Niger Delta, violence is a matter of last resort. Barabi explains that young people are using

²⁹ See Chapter 3 for discussion on the Land Use Act as a part of the oil complex.

violence because using peaceful approaches to draw the attention of the federal government to local concerns have yielded no good result. Instead, it is when the youths began to use violence that the government started to carry them along ‘small small’ which perhaps might not have happened without violence.

Indeed, the sense of political marginalisation has deepened in this region since 2015 when Goodluck Jonathan who is from the Niger Delta lost his second term election to President Buhari from the North. Jonathan’s defeat has made the Niger Delta region very politically fragile. The conversations between my co-British Airways passengers as we landed Lagos from London³⁰ had convinced me that Jonathan’s defeat would create a space for a politically charged response amongst the youths and this was the case during my fieldwork in the Niger Delta.

During my fieldwork in Bayelsa I attended a traditional wedding ceremony where I ran into Felix, a petty trader in the local market. I did not see Felix on my last visit to the market and since his two neighbours who I asked his way about did not seem to know, I decided to ask him why he was not in the market the other day. ‘The price of everything is increasing since Buhari entered there. Our people don’t have money again’, you will come to market nobody is buying something from you’. The more Felix talked, the more he blamed Buhari for causing the inflation and for using his political power to victimise the politicians from Niger Delta in the name of fighting corruption. Felix continued:

Look at Buhari. Buhari is appointing only people in the North. In Nigeria, appointment It’s about who do you know, and if you know the president, if you are from his place, they give you appointment, they give you contract, but others are suffering. Buhari is arresting only people from here. He is arresting Deziani. Orubebe, Kingsley Kuku, Tom Polo. Only people from this place, but nobody is saying lets arrest people from the North who are

³⁰ See Chapter 4.

stealing money since. Even Babachair, they arrest him and they released him because he is from the North.

President Buhari made it very clear during his campaign that his government will be very committed to tackling corruption which is one of the biggest governance issues facing Nigeria. To actualise this campaign promise, EFCC, Nigeria's financial crimes watchdog has announced plans to arrest government officials for corrupt practices and Dieziani Allison Madueke who is from the Niger Delta, and who was the Minister for Petroleum Resources under Jonathan's administration is a high target for arrest. The other names mentioned by Felix-Orubebe, Kingsley Kuku, Tom Polo- are also local politicians and ex-militant leaders who are under investigation for alleged corrupt dealings. Babachair Lawal is a close ally of president Buhari and a former secretary general of the federation. He was dismissed from office after official investigations revealed that he diverted funds designated for the procurement of relief materials for the victims of Boko Haram. But local residents like Felix had expected stricter punishment such as a jail term for Babachair's conduct, hence, this has made them argue that stricter punishment such as arrest is only reserved for local politicians such as Deziani.

Meanwhile, young people's complaints about poor political leadership was not reserved for the federal level politicians alone. They also accused their local leaders of receiving 'settlement' from MOCs and keeping quiet while Shell destroyed their environment. The response from Preye, 27, throws more light on this.

The problem is not only in Abuja is also the governors. Many of them distribute the money they are supposed to use to develop the Niger Delta amongst themselves. We don't even trust any of them because they are the bad people too with the elders. They don't have integrity. Before the youths took over, we start to carry gun, the elders, not all of them, but many of them were not talking for us. They just collect money for projects from shell. They keep quiet because they have the money for everybody in their bank. It is the youths that said enough is enough. We start violence before the government start to do something.

Equally, another respondent Ivory shared Preye's perception that the local leaders have also contributed to the emergence of youth violence. Ivory explains that even when local politicians find their way to the federal level of government, they still don't do enough for the Niger Delta people. But unlike Preye, Ivory showed more restraint in her comment adding that local politicians who make it to the federal level can't do so much for the Niger Delta people because the larger constitution of the federal political structure who are Northerners will not allow them to do much.

The issue about the violence is leadership issues. The federal government is not treating us right because we are the minority. We have a leadership lacunae. But it is not only the North, even our own leaders is not helping matters. Deziani is from our place. She is from my mother's village but her business tycoons were Fulani's, northerners. It was difficult to access her. When you call her she will tell you that the minister is not meant for Ijaw people. So that is why I said our leaders too have contributed. Look at PTDF the names there are Northerners. But the oil is coming from here. I know Boro (the coordinator of PAP). But he stopped picking my calls. But you will not blame him because if he does not obey the people who are controlling the power, the North, they will remove him.

Kachi also raised the point that local leaders are complicit in youth violence because they have not challenged the federal government well enough. Kachi accused local leaders of 'betraying the struggle' and allowing the federal government to criminalise artisanal refinery (locally known as bunkery), a booming business in the Niger Delta because it degrades the environment while oil pollution from Shell, a higher source of pollution remains.

The leaders are looking for young people to blame but they are keeping quiet when the government and shell is destroying the environment. Are you not seeing the spill? The oil is everywhere. Who is causing that one (oil spill)? Is it me? Now they want to arrest the youths because we are doing bunkering. Even in the North illegal mining is there. But their leaders are protecting them. But here the leaders are not talking and now the government is chasing the youth up and down. If the government is chasing us we will chase them with our gun too so there will not be peace.

Some youths accused the local leaders of manipulating the electioneering process to favour older people while excluding many youths from local politics.

‘There is no young people in government. Even if you win, the old people who have the money will rig you out. They think you will not cooperate, Isaac explained. Isaac was dressed opulently in an Ijaw attire; a derby, a sparkling white long-sleeve shirt with gold coloured buttons adorning its collar hanging above a neatly tailored black trouser. ‘Everywhere is the old people, they make the young people feel we are not good in politics but is that true? Isaac asked with a tone that suggested an expectation of agreement. I smiled dutifully and it was the sort of smile that made people say more especially if they are asked about the things they care about.

Once, during an interview with a traditional ruler in Bayelsa, I observed young peoples’ fury towards their local politicians first hand. I was in Aba when I received a very short notice that a very prominent traditional ruler I have been trying to interview was in town and was willing to have an interview with me if I could come in the afternoon of the next day. This was a few months into my fieldwork and by this time I was already very used to what Golden (2012) aptly describes as a highly ‘mobile’ life that research in the Niger Delta dictated. Before my mum could knock on my door to ask when her student’s exam score records would be ready, I was already at the park³¹ at Bata heading to Bayelsa.

Soon, I boarded a bus and was off to Bayelsa. There is no better way to observe the living conditions of many youths in the Niger Delta than the experience of public transport in Nigeria, and it is through this prism, that the nuances of youth violence can be better captured. In the Niger Delta the quality of most roads are very bad. The road situation is similar in other parts of Nigeria except perhaps in Abuja, the federal capital territory. However, in the Niger Delta I observed that when local residents shared their

³¹ Nigerians usually refer to public bus stations as parks.

disappointment in public services they often emphasised that their region is the wealthiest region in the country in terms of resource abundance yet, the quality of their roads leaves so much to be desired in terms of what can be realised with the wealth of their region.

We nearly had a road accident on this journey. A truck driver moving in the opposite direction had tried to avoid a big pothole in the middle of the highway and in the process he straddled into our lane, almost causing a collision. Everyone was jittery when our bus swerved off the road almost uncontrollably trying to dodge the truck. When this happened, some passengers clutched the knees of the persons seated next to them trying to steady themselves and no one seemed to mind. Others put their faith in a higher source shouting ‘Blood of Jesus’! ‘Holy Ghost Fire’! ‘God Forbid’! ‘Accident is not my portion’! Indeed in a split of seconds, our bus had transformed from a 14-seater Toyota Hiace commuter bus to a mobile Pentecostal Church.

Soon, after the driver steadied the bus, there was absolute silence for a few minutes. But this silence might be the most important part of this experience. Watching our bus swerve uncontrollably towards the lush mangrove forest was horrifying for many of us and perhaps in this silence, some of the passengers thought of the possibility of death, a death that a lack of a functional government could have caused. Perhaps, amid this silence also, some of the passengers thought about how their death would have added to the number of many deaths recorded daily on Nigerian roads in a context where road accidents is the third leading cause of death (Onyemaechi & Ofoma, 2016). I know, of course from my personal experience as a Nigerian, that if there were an accident, access to health emergency services would be far away and perhaps, if we had an accident some of the nearby hospitals

would have refused to treat us except where deposits or police report were provided³².

Looking through the faded blue curtain hanging down the half-opened bus window, I found myself wondering amid this silence, how my own life would have ended abruptly. The thought that my dreams, my future, could have taken a miserable direction if an accident had happened but I survived with injuries or disability engulfed me with a sense of frustration and a deep resentment for the government for failing to provide good roads. But this is what it means to be a poor Nigerian; to be blighted by frustration.

Shortly after this silence, the passengers began to complain. The man seated right behind the driver complained bitterly and for a very long time:

This is what we see every day in this road. Tell me what kind of a country is this. We get all this oil, but every day, people are dying on accident because of poor road. There is pothole everywhere. If not because of God, maybe we will be in the mortuary now. Do you know how many people that have died in this road? It is like that my niece who just finished from university died in accident last month. What caused the accident? It was bad road. What kind of country is this? Go to Abuja, this kind of thing cannot happen. Immediately you enter Abuja and come back here you will know that this people are cheating us. When they say there is militants this what is causing it oh.

Local residents often compared the road conditions in the Niger Delta to big cities like Abuja, pointing out that the wealth from their region has been used to develop Abuja roads. I interpret this young man's comment to mean that in the Niger Delta people evaluated the quality of their lives based on the quality of life that is obtainable in other parts of the country and the quality of life their oil wealth could provide but which they do not have. As such, there is a high feeling of relative deprivation in the region, a feeling many

³² In Nigeria, It used to be a common practice for hospitals to demand deposit and police report before treating road accident victims. However, the Mandatory Treatment of Gun Shot Victims Bill which became a law in 2017 illegalised this behaviour. But, the implementation of this law is still an issue.

researchers (Verme, 2012; Fajnzylber, et al., 2002) have recognised as a significant trigger for violent behaviour. Marx also recognises this idea that mismatch between expectations and realities can fuel discontent when he observed that:

"A house may be large or small; as long as the neighbouring houses are likewise small, it satisfies all social requirement for a residence. But let there arise next to the little house a palace, and the little house shrinks to a hut. The little house now makes it clear that its inmate has no social position at all to maintain' (Marx, 1848, p. 163).

Forty minutes after this near miss accident, we arrived in the park in Bayelsa, and I headed to the traditional ruler's home for the interview. In the Niger Delta, there is always a sense of opulence that one cannot fail to observe when around the house of the people benefitting from the oil industry. Whether it was the guest house of this traditional ruler or the mansions of rich militants, it was often very glaring and starkly contrasting, the opulence that surrounded the few wealthy people in this region and the dank, shanty houses in which majority of the people in the Niger Delta live in. Once I noticed the streetlights that demarcated the narrow road into equal halves, the flowers that beautified the neatly tarred road, things that were uncommon in the roads in the Niger Delta, I knew that the house of the traditional ruler was close. I was right. I arrived in his house located just three houses before the end of the tarred road.

His house was big and decently furnished with things that looked they were all produced in Africa. However, the fleet of luxurious cars parked in his garage and the interior of the detached guest house in which he received visitor's advertised his opulence. The guest house, street lights, and tarred roads, I was told, was provided by one of the oil companies in the community. Perhaps, it is this sort of opulence shaped by one's close relationship with the MOCs that contribute to the intergenerational rivalry between the elders and the youth; the later struggling to displace the former so as to access petro-privileges and the former infantilising the youths, portraying them as unfit for

leadership so as to remain in a position of leadership and retain petro-privileges.

My interview with this traditional ruler had just lasted for less than 10 minutes when a group of young men stormed his house. A local government election had just been concluded, producing a 56-year-old man, Tom, as the winner. But these youths stormed the house of this traditional ruler contesting Tom's victory, complaining that older, richer, and more influential local politicians manipulated the election in Tom's favour. The traditional ruler tried to calm the youths down. But the more he talked, the more the youths got angry. The youths accused the elders of not being the good leaders they pretend to be and said older politicians hold on tightly to positions of leadership because of greed. This traditional ruler probably could have heard the story of a traditional ruler in the neighbouring village whose house had been set on fire by angry youths two weeks before this incident. He also might have heard, of course, the story of a House of Representatives member whose wife was allegedly kidnapped by the youths a day after he challenged some frenzied youths when they stormed his house complaining about irregularities in the distribution of Shell's oil spill settlement funds. And so in this context of pervasive violence, this traditional ruler knew too well that some restraint was a good idea to keep himself off harm's way. He tried so hard to say only the things that needed to be said when the youths were there, although he later shared his disgust at the sheer audacity of the youths when they left. But before the youths left, some of them broke the windscreen of the cars parked in the compound. Others sang clobbering songs. Some pulled out matches and threatened to use it on the elders if they fail to do right by the youths by cancelling the election.

I had expected to hear more from this traditional ruler as the youths left. I had expected that perhaps this scenario would provoke him to speak about the youth's violent behaviour or that his anger would propel him into a conversation about the political situation of the Niger Delta or even Nigeria at large. But he curled up in the left corner of his throne, looked at me, and

said bleakly 'my daughter this interview is over, I think you have seen what happened'. After sitting quietly for a few minutes unsure of what to do, I chugged on the bottle of Fanta I had been served, thanked him for his time and grabbed my handbag and left.

This encounter shows how forms of community life in the Niger Delta have been undermined due to the growing demand for young people to be integrated into the local political life and secure access to petro-dividends that such integration guarantees. Contextual analysis of the Niger Delta in Chapter 3 indicates that the social roles expected from the elders and the youths were what shaped social identities and social relations in the region in the pre-oil era. The elders are expected to be protectors, carers, and leaders of the young and in return the young are expected to respect the old and not to usurp the authorities of the elders. But today, this bond between the elders and the youths have been cracked severely and there is so much disintegration in the Niger Delta in consequence. The youths believe that the elders have not lived up to their duty of care and as I have shown in the previous Chapter, the elders, on the other hand, define away their own role in this violence by blaming other actors including the youths.

Comparing young people's experiences of poor political participation against the perspectives of institutional actors in the previous Chapter reveals two major points. First, while the majority of the government officials at the federal and sub-national levels of government attribute youth violence to greed on the part of the youths, the perception of many young people in the Niger Delta is that their political interest is hardly realised within Nigeria's current political structure. Thus, they explain that violent militancy is a reaction against this experience. Second, in contrast to the local leaders who described youths as incapable of good leadership, young people explained that youth violence emerged not only because of their poor political participation at the federal level but because their local politicians have failed them by excluding them from local political life and by using leadership

positions as an avenue for personal enrichment at the expense of the development of the region. .

6.3 Young People's Experiences of Economic Harm

When I finished secondary school, there is no work for me. There is no money to go to university. But some people are graduates. Engineers, accountants, everything. But where did you see job? Every time the government is saying they will give us job. They are not doing it, there is no job. Many people want to join militant. It is because of how you will survive. If you are hungry, and you are doing nothing, and you are going to die and some body say come let's kill somebody, I will give you money, you go follow him. The only language the government is understanding is violence. If the militants start to kidnap people or blow up the pipe then government will do something. That is why they give us Amnesty because we carry gun. They are not doing anything for us except we carry gun. If you follow militants, you will get money. As a man you have money for your family, they will not be hungry (Nduka, Baylesa, 2016).

Closely related to the experiences of political harm is experiences of economic harm. Young people experienced economic harm in two main forms; in the form of unfair revenue distribution policies and in the form of un/underemployment. Amongst the four categories of harms experienced by youths, economic harm is the most salient and most severe factor which the overwhelming population of youths identified to shape their experiences of violence. Out of a total of 84 youths interviewed, 70 shared experiences of economic harm out of which 61 were men and 9 were women.

Out of these 61 young men who shared experiences of economic harm, 49 shared experiences of economic harm particularly related to un/underemployment. Crucially, there is a difference in terms of how men and women interpreted their experiences of un/underemployment. Unlike women, young men often interpreted their experiences of unemployment in terms of how they see their roles as men within their society. In this section, I analyse youth's experiences of economic harm and although I analyse the experiences of economic harm by both men and women, I focus largely on how young men interpret their experiences since they are the main focus of

this study. Because I already discussed the issue of unfair revenue distribution policies (resource control) and its contiguity with political power in the previous section, I shall focus mainly on young people's experiences of economic harm in the form of un/underemployment in this section.

Many youths shared experiences of unemployment which they explained to be a crucial precursor for violence. Young men in particular pointed out that youth militancy is a response to the problem of unemployment because the money realised from violent militancy helps them to assuage social suffering that comes from unemployment. This view is evident in Nduka's comment in the epigraph to this section in which he explains that 'there is no job', and because many youths do not have jobs, they are turning to violent militancy because 'it is about how you survive. Nduka explains further that in the context of socio-economic deprivation manifesting as hunger and unemployment, youths become susceptible to be recruited for violent militancy and they are willing to 'kill somebody' as long as it provides money needed for 'men' to provide for their family.

While Nduka's response suggests that violence is a response to the suffering that the social order (government) inflict on the youths, his comment also reveals that the way he perceives himself as a 'man' shaped his relationship with violence. This is implied when he says that 'as a man, you have money for your family' suggesting that unemployment leaves his masculine role of being a provider unfulfilled.

The link between masculine gender identity and violence is a crucial aspect of this thesis but I shall investigate this connection more deeply in the next Chapter.

Nduka's comment also highlights the point I made in the previous section about young people's awareness of the potency of violence in a context where peaceful approaches have failed to deliver the desired outcome. He explains in his comment that 'the only language the government is understanding is violence' because it is only when 'the militants start to kidnap people or blow

up the pipe then government will do something'. It seems from this statement that violence has become a potent strategy for integrating the needs of the youth into the national development agenda. For example, PAP was implemented by the federal government following increasing violence in the region which had decreased Nigeria's oil production severely (see Chapters 3 and 5). It is then as if violence helps the youths to realise their expectations of a better life associated with oil which might not be realised had violence not been used.

Despite the federal government's promise to tackle youth unemployment through PAP, respondents like Kennedy say the government is not doing enough. Kennedy explains that PAP is supposed to create jobs for youths after training them in skill acquisition and education but many youths return home after studies only to become unemployed. The consequence is that in this context of joblessness many youths are turning to violent militancy as an avenue for financial success.

Amnesty was a stop-gap measure for youth violence. It was a temporary stop-gap measure so the young men and women who are not educated and are carrying arms would go and acquire skills and then and come back and be reabsorbed into the system. But they are back and they are doing nothing. What do you want us to do if they don't want to employ us. If militancy is going to give you money, you will take it (Kennedy).

Apart from Kennedy, many other young people have returned from abroad after completing their studies or skill acquisition without employment, and Obed is one of them. When Obed returned from South Africa after completing his training as a welder he had hoped for a better life. But despite his many attempts at job hunting two years after his return Obed says 'there is nothing to do, I am still here roaming about. This country is very hard. Nobody is even calling anybody for interview so you are on your own'. Despite the high rate of unemployment in cities like Port Harcourt, Obed is pulling all the strings to migrate to Port Harcourt in search of a better life. He has contacted some old friends through Facebook whom he asked about the possibility of

temporary accommodation when he arrives in Port Harcourt. But some friends say their one-room accommodation in the city is too small for two.

With the recent inflation in Nigeria, some companies have shut down and others are downsizing. Peter 27, a former driver in an oil company has just been laid off in the company's recent downsizing. The increased hardship resulting from the loss of his job caused Peter to move back to the village where there will be no need for rent and the cost of living will be lower. But Peter worries that this relocation to the village dims his chances of having an economically successful life. 'Somebody need to stay like this and have good clothes and eat good food. At least you suppose to have a car that will take you around. But are you going to do these things without money? How will somebody get money to build a house and buy car when he is in the village' Peter asks.

The issue is not only about unemployment. It is also about underemployment, and the experiences of young men like Bob reveals how underemployment is a problem for youths.

When Bob moved from his village in Bayelsa to Port Harcourt, he thought he was close to his dream job in the oil company. But three years down the line, Bob says his circumstance has not improved a lot. A job in an oil company has not come, and it is hard for Bob to survive with the small salary he earns as a chemistry teacher in nearby Catholic school. Since Bob's salary leaves him with no savings after monthly expenditures, he decided to quit his teaching job and now Bob says he is focused on 'leaving Niger'. When I asked him half-jokingly, what country he would like to go, his response was 'anywhere is ok as long as it is not this Nigeria. Even if it is Ghana here, it is better than this nonsense Nigeria'.

Even though Bob managed to remain composed during his interview, it is hard not to see from his response that his socio-economic circumstance is driving him in the direction of hopelessness and utter desperation. Bob's plan to leave Nigeria to another country where he is willing to do anything to

survive might seem dangerous and desperate. But it is experiences like that of Oliver who was detained in the hospital over unpaid hospital bill and the loss of dignity from such experiences that fosters such desperation to move out of Nigeria.

When Oliver, 32, a former bank employee was discharged from hospital in January 2nd, he stayed in the hospital until 28th of March because he could not leave the hospital due to unpaid hospital bills. He had worked as a customer care personnel in a bank a year before his surgery. However, with a monthly salary of 75, 000 Naira (approximately \$205), Oliver says he ‘was not able to save enough money’ to pay the hospital bill because ‘by the time I pay this and that, all the money will finish’. ‘You need to see how I was feeling in the hospital, how can somebody be working very hard but you cannot pay for your hospital bill, you will feel very embarrassed’ he says. Thanks to the generosity of a wealthy church member without which Oliver probably would have still been in the hospital.

Many youths in the Niger Delta shared stories of underemployment and how it leaves them with a little more than just enough to survive. In fact, for some respondents like Charles, a 33-year-old young man is in his first year of marriage, his salary was not even enough for survival.

Charles used to be a company driver who combined his driving job with a taxi business to augment his income. But recently, stories got to Charles’ company that Charles has some links with some dangerous militant groups and Charles was dismissed from his job in consequence. He is now left only with the taxi business and with the small income he makes from there, Charles says he can only afford two rooms in a yard³³. He is anxious that when his pregnant wife gives birth in a few months his expenses will increase and there would be little money to meet the increasing needs of his family.

³³ Nigerians refer to the houses in the slum as yard. A more common Nigerian name for a slum house is ‘face me I face you’. This name reflects the lack of privacy and the everyday chaos that is inevitable in such houses.

Some respondents like Ebi explain that even though there are not enough jobs in the country, Nigeria's clientelist networks means that the regions with more political power can use their power or 'connections' to secure employment for people from their region while the regions with little political power suffer high unemployment.

'If you don't have connections in Nigeria, you will suffer before you get job'. Sometimes I put my hand in my pocket and I cannot even find 100 Naira to buy recharge card. But I am a graduate. If I am from the North or Yoruba now, somebody will make one call, just one call and next thing Shell will call me for an interview' (Ebi).

Like Ebi, Vivian also believes that 'connection' is very critical for employment in Nigeria. But Vivian adds another layer to Ebi's point, highlighting that unemployed female youths with no connections can exchange sex for jobs.

'Wait let me tell you, it is not also easy for women. If you want a job sometimes the man will want to use you, he will tell you to come and see him in the hotel or you forget about it'. Vivian spoke with a voice that was both direct and without restraint and in a culture that pointed women towards reticence especially when it comes to their sexual life, Vivian's willingness to bare herself so easily surprised me. 'If you don't have connection or your parents don't know somebody who can make things happen, and people in your family cannot even eat, maybe your father is sick there is no money to buy Paracetamol, you will go to the hotel to see the man. You will not care, because you want the job so your father will not die, he will go to the hospital when you get the job'. Vivian continued.

Vivian did not have connections and she had no family ties with people 'who makes things happen' (influential). In fact, for Vivian, it was quite the opposite. She is the eldest child of eight children. Her parents are rural farmers whose earnings were barely enough to provide three square meals for their eight children not to talk of training Vivian in the University. When

Vivian bumped into a friend in the church who told her about ‘somebody’ she would ‘connect’ her with to help with a job, Vivian said she already knew ‘what the deal was all about’. After all, she had survived in the University a few years ago through the generosity of such men, she said. Long story short, Vivian said she went to see this ‘somebody’ after which he made a few phone calls and voilà, a job was ready for Vivian in an oil company. But in a country where even the highly educated are un/underemployed, Vivian worries about the fate her other siblings who have very little education.

Sadly, Vivian’s story is the story of many young women in the Niger Delta whose hope for employment rested on their willingness to offer sex in exchange for prosperity, for a job, for good health. Only a few weeks before interviewing Vivian, I had met another young lady, Priye, who told me that ‘getting a job in Nigeria is all about man-know-man’. Priye had been without a job four years after her NYSC³⁴. When she submitted her CV for a job in NIMASA³⁵ she was told there was no vacancy. However, she met a general³⁶ who told her ‘the ball is in your court if you want to work with NIMASA’. Because the other option is to stay without a job and deal with the consequent hardship, Priye complied.

By blaming the government and people from the politically dominant groups for unemployment local youths express a feeling of unbelonging in the national community and this feeling harps back to as far back as 1958 when the Willinks report documented the feelings of alienation by the ethnic minorities (see Chapter 3). Also by blaming the northern politicians and other influential politicians from the dominant ethnic groups for unemployment, local youths highlight how political power is linked with local violence and

³⁴ NYSC-National Youth Service Corps is a mandatory one year scheme where Nigerian graduates serve the country. The scheme was implemented by the government in 1973 shortly after the Biafra war to promote national integration.

³⁵ NIMASA-Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency- is one of the few top paying federal government agencies in Nigeria. As such, many Nigerian youths dream to work there.

³⁶ In the Niger Delta, ‘general’ refers to a rich, influential, powerful, militant (see Chapter 4).

this link is often hidden in the explanations of violence offered by federal level institutional representatives.

Listening to the experiences of many young people in the Niger Delta one could see that they are starved of hope. The implication of this is experiences of economic harm is that many youths lacked the financial means to cater to their everyday needs. Since violent militancy provides an opportunity for financial success men like Nduka embraced violence. Women like Vivian and Priye exchanged their body for economic prosperity. However, other women like Ibinabo, a graduate of geology who has always dreamed of working for an oil company all her life says she will not sleep with anybody for job 'because God is a faithful God'. 'Nigeria is not a good a country, there is so much suffering, people are suffering, no job anywhere, young people are doing anything to get job, but I am managing any job I see for now. One day, I will get a job in an oil company, because since I was small I have been saying I want to work there', Ibinabo said.

In this context of high socio-economic exclusion and an increasing sense of alienation, many local youths are challenging the very existence of Nigeria. They believe that the idea of Nigeria and its claims of equitable economic investments across all regions of the country is a sham. In consequence, some youths are advocating for restructuring and self-determination where they will have more control over their resources. However, there are other youths who believe that the needs of the ethnic minorities can never be realised even in a restructured Nigeria and these group of youths are more radical in their demand. They simply want to secede.

This country Nigeria, we are not supposed to be one. Everything the government is doing is not benefitting us. Look at the oil companies. They have their head office in Lagos in Abuja. How can you come and extract oil from our land and pollute our environment and then you go and build headquarters another place instead of you to build it here and pay tax, and also employ some of us. Are we not employable, are we only good for exploitation and not for investment. That is why we want resource control. They are giving us 13%. But before when there

is no oil it was not like that. Because the people here don't have people in Abuja who is going to use power and change the things for us. We want the Ogoni Bill of Rights because it all about self-determination. So we can use the money from oil to improve our life and develop our region (Emeka).

Emeka's comment shows a lack of belonging in Nigeria. This is evident when he talks about how the region does not benefit from the proceeds from oil coming either as taxes or in the form of employment in the oil companies. Such feelings make him to question the very unity of Nigeria and the idea of integrating different ethnic regions to aspire towards a national project.

To have a say in the location of important projects such as the location of headquarters of oil companies, and to benefit from the possible economic benefits that such projects may bring, Emeka advocates for the OBR. Because he believes the OBR would give Ogoni people more political and economic power to run their economic affairs with minimum interferences from the ethnic-majority dominated federal government. However, people like Jacob believe that the demands of the Niger Delta cannot be achieved through the OBR and that secession is the ultimate solution.

'The best thing is to leave Nigeria, we just have to be on our own, people cannot eat, there is no job, but they have oil in their backyard. That is why the boys are talking about resource control. What kind of country is that' Jacob says during an interview in his house in Lagos. His niece in the other room was playing her music a little too loud so that we had to raise our voices as we spoke. 'I hope the music is not disturbing you. It is my niece who just finished her masters. You know the life there in London is very boring so she is happy now that she is back to Nigeria where she can enjoy with her friends. So I don't want to disturb them'. I gave him a nod, even though I preferred if he had asked whether we could move to another location, a quieter part of the house. 'You know my sister before this president came in, we have been agitating for self-determination since the days of Saro-Wiwa. But the way Nigeria is, we know that even if they give us self-determination another problem will start'. By this time, the music in the other room had gone off.

His niece came out from the other room informing Jacob that she was going to Churrasco³⁷ at Ozumba Mbadiwe with her friends. She wore a warm, open, smile as she spoke and it was the kind of smile that many Nigerian returnees wore before the inefficiencies of the government subdued them. ‘My dear this provocation has been going on for a long time, and the only way to solve it is to leave this country and have our own country, and if violence is the only way to get it, we are ready for it’ Jacob ended.

While some youths like Jacob advocate secession as the solution to the Niger Delta problems, others like Ejyke from Bodo says that secession is too dangerous. ‘I don’t want us to fight a war or to go out of Nigeria. People are going to die’ Ejyke said. Instead of secession, Ejyke prefers ‘an honest constitutional conference in which all regions will come together and have a discussion about how to coexist peacefully.

Many Nigerians believe that most of the structural issues facing the country such as the concentration of power at the centre, and resource control are embedded in the 1999 constitution. As such, calls for national dialogues through sovereign national conferences where every region will come together to discuss how to address these aspects of the constitution have always been part of Nigeria’s political history. But the National Assembly on many occasions³⁸ has interpreted this call as a secessionist move as opposed to a discussion about citizenship. Nevertheless, calls for national dialogue have continued and under Buhari’s presidency, secessionists groups have multiplied not only in the Niger Delta but in other regions of the country such

³⁷ Churrasco is a popular restaurant in Lagos known for their vibrant ambiance and good food.

³⁸ In 2005, civil society groups such as Patriot under the leadership of Professor Ben Nwabueze and Rotimi Williams called for a sovereign conference to discuss the needs of different regions. But the National Assembly declined this call replacing it instead with the National Political Reform Conference (NPRC). However, the delegates of this conference were handpicked by the president as opposed to the people appointing their representatives at the conference themselves. Also, the conference did not respond to the contentious issues in the country including resource distribution (Obiagwu, 2005; Basiru, et al., 2016). In 2014 also, President Goodluck’s administration tried to organise another national conference. However this conference also failed to meet the demands of many Nigerians like many other before it.

as the East where the Independent People of Biafra (IPOB) are calling for secession.

These young people's interviews analysed in this section can be summarised as follows. First, many young people in the Niger Delta stressed their experiences of economic harm in the form of unemployment and underemployment and attributed such experiences to why they engage with violence. Un/underemployment implies that young people lack the financial ability to meet their everyday needs such as food, rent, hospital bills, and even recharge cards. Since violent militancy provides an opportunity for economic success, many young men embraced violence as a means of survival. Young women are not left out of these experiences of un/underemployment either as some of them had to exchange sex for jobs in order to fulfil employment aspirations. Young people blame the federal government and the elites from politically influential ethnic groups for these experiences. By blaming the federal government and politicians, young people express a feeling of disenfranchisement because they feel that they do not belong to the broader national community. Hence, young people see violence as the ultimate strategy which forces the federal government to take actions to integrate the youths into the national economy.

6.4 Young People's Experiences of Bodily Harm

I have carried gun since I was 16 years, I was in school in Port Harcourt. You know that time, we were in cult. So that time politicians used to invite us during elections to cause problem [with the use of violence] so they will win. It's not only in Bayelsa everywhere in Nigeria, we go and deliver [secure victory] politicians. You know this is a big problem. The Niger Delta people, the boys are good people. But every day the government is using the military to kill our people. We don't want to fight. But as *a man*, it's not good to do nothing if army people are killing your people every day. Let me show you something. Many of us militants don't want to fight, but as a man, how can you watch the government kill our people. Look at this place, this place [He raises his sleeves, pointing to his elbow, eyes dimming into sadness], this is a bullet, army people shot me in 2008 during an operation in Port Harcourt. it is not only this bullet oh, I have another bullet again on my leg, [now, he raised his trousers, this

time his hands palpated around the skin of his knees, tears had gathered in his eyes and had begun to run down his cheek shortly].....Do you think I want to be a militant? Me I don't want to be a militant. I am a father. I have a wife as you see me here. I don't want to die. But if we don't fight back, the army will continue to harass us and kill our people [Ayebatari, Bayelsa, 2016).

This section analyses young people's experiences of bodily harm resulting from oil exploratory activities. Experiences of bodily harm occur as social suffering in the form of bodily injury and death. Based on the analysis of young people's interviews, the majority of the respondents who voiced experiences of bodily harm are men and these experiences are disproportionately higher amongst ethnically Ijaw men (97.5%) as opposed to ethnically Ogoni men (30%). This suggests that cultural factors could shape young men's experiences of violence and I examine this point further in the next Chapter.

During my fieldwork in the Niger Delta I observed that Timaya's³⁹ song 'Dem Mama' was very popular amongst the youths. In this song, Timaya voices his anger about oil related injustice in the Niger Delta such as the poverty in the Niger Delta and the constant harassment of male youths by the security forces. The lived experiences of male respondents like Ayebatari in the epigraph brings this point to light.

As I interviewed Ayebatari in his home in Yenagoa, he tells me how violence has become part of his everyday life and how petro-relations extends violence into other regions of the country. Ayebatari, 38, has been carrying a gun since he was 16 and he understands the risk of militancy. He understands that militancy calls for constant fear of death and he worries about what may happen to his family if he dies. In fact, that rainy morning when we had this interview, Ayebatari looked excited receiving visitors who had come to

³⁹ Timaya is a popular Afro-hip hop Nigerian musician from Odi Bayelsa. His popularity in Nigeria, and in Niger Delta in particular can be traced to the success of his Dubut album-True Story-in 2005, in which he sings about the Odi massacre and the injustices of petro-capitalism on his community, Odi. I discussed this massacre in Chapter 3. For access to this sing see: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kqC-6YdZVL8>.

congratulate him on the birth of his two-weeks old new-born. The sound of Timaya's music which entertained the guest in his sitting room had reverberated towards the nearby veranda as a young girl entered the sitting room. The slit of her skirt was a little too close to her upper thigh more than tradition would care for, and as she walked pass the elders, they gave her a disapproving look.

Even though Ayebatari is aware of the inevitable danger associated with militancy, he asserts the need to 'fight back' because 'as a man,' it is not good 'to do nothing' if army people are killing your people every day'. It was this need 'to do something' about military violence, this perception that young men must protect the community against violence that contributed to draw men closely towards the experiences of bodily harm.

Another male respondent, Eby, also narrates his experiences of bodily harm explaining how the police tortured him and killed his friends and how young men in the region join violent militancy to protect their community in a context where military brutality has made life unliveable.

If you come here in 2007 you will know what I'm talking. That time, everywhere was hot. The army people are shooting the youths. Even though we are poor they are shooting us. We ask the government to give us our oil money. They are shooting the youths. I am Ateke's boy. I am proud of myself. I am a true Ijaw son. Army people kill two of my friends in operation near escavos. We shoot them too. We kill many of them. It is good. They shoot me many times. Everywhere in my body is wound. The other day the police arrest me and take me to police station in Mile 4. They beat me until my master, Chief Ateke come to the police and they release me. Immediately I come out of the prison I hear say army people are fighting with the village people again. We organise our self to fight again. Na so e be every time [that is our everyday experience]. Nobody is protecting our people. The government is killing the men because we are fighting to protect our people and the oil. The men are standing up in their face that is why they want to kill us.

Eby concludes the interview saying that 'the problem is better now because there is Amnesty'. But even with Amnesty, young people's experiences of

bodily harm isn't all that gone away and the interview with Nengimote reveals this. Nengimote couldn't contain his grief when he narrated how his friend, Jimmy, died two weeks ago during an incident that nearly claimed his own life.

'Since Buhari came in, everything is changing again. The army people came in the midnight to look for Tom Polo. Some people told them my friend Jimmy is Tom Polo's boss man [friend]. The police go my friend house. When he see the security people, he try to run away and they shoot him. Two days after they shoot him, he died in the general hospital. I was in his house too but I dey upstairs. When I hear the noise in the compound, I jump from up [upstairs] and see my leg. I break my leg. But my own better pass my friend who dey mortuary now.

Listening to Nengimote speak, the sadness in his voice is very revealing. As he ended the interview, he lowered his voice into silence and folded both arms across his chest, and looking at him in this posture, I thought this posture magnified his tragedy. I interpreted this posture as an act of defensiveness against the security operatives whom many youths have watched in agony kill their peers, their mothers, their relatives.

Nengimote's grief did not dim with time. Instead, it made him verbally aggressive as I watched him scold his house help with what I can only describe as congealed despondence for merely serving him water with the wrong cup. When the house help left to get his preferred cup, he looked at the wall clock, complaining that time is running fast. Then he looked at me, and as he slipped his leg into his slippers, he apologised for his anger outbursts as if I was the one who needed the apology. I wondered at this moment if perhaps this frustration about the system often channelled out as aggression towards others contributes to the 'aggressive' stereotype often used to describe male youths in the Niger Delta. I wondered also if this aggression rooted in the politics of exclusion is what the American psychologist Leonard Berkowitz (1965) meant when he observed that even though frustration does not always cause aggression, it does encourage a predisposition towards it.

The reality of bodily harm resonates through the experiences of other youths such as Tari, Comrade Sharp Sharp, and Felix. During a focus group interview, these men narrated how military men and officials from Joint Task Force (JTF) who parade their villages to repress dissidents have in many occasions arrested them, tortured them, and flogged them with Koboko,⁴⁰ sometimes without explaining what they have done to deserve such brutality. They described the youths in the Niger Delta ‘as peace-loving people’ who joined militancy in response to their experiences of military repression, and poverty. This portrayal contrasts with the views of many institutional representatives working at the federal and subnational levels of government who characterised youths as inherently violent and criminal.

For other respondents like Pere-Owei, Awongo, Jimi, Ekiyor, and Shooter, who spoke during a focus group, it is a similar story. The defining aspect of the responses from these men is that their maleness makes them a special target for police violence.

We were drinking in one bar near the market, army people just entered the bar and said all boys lie down, face down and hands up, and then they began to search us. Luckily, none of us carry gun or anything bad. Still they beat many of us, hit gun on our head, slapped us, Ekiyor, was trying to run away, so he jumped a very high fence and broke his bone with this wound on his face. As a man you are always a problem for the police because they think you are coming to fight them even if you are good person. The woman is not the problem, is the man that the army is looking for.

Young men who had experienced severe bodily injury or death of a loved one showed more willingness to join militancy. For example, Oiffie from Odi, who had lost his teenage son in the Odi massacre said ‘I will spend all my life fighting the government to protect my community, even if I die as militant’. Similarly, another respondent, Tombra, 33, who also lost his entire family

⁴⁰ Koboko is a flexible whip, sometimes made of cow skin, often used by security officials in Nigeria to whip offenders and also non-offenders of the law.

apart from his youngest sibling during the Odi massacre says he is determined to retaliate the death of his family members through militant violence.

While the majority of the male youths shared experiences of their encounter with bodily harm (68.7%), this was not the case for female youths. Out of 14 female youths interviewed in this study, only 4 (28.5%) shared experiences of bodily harm (Table 6.1). Moreover, the experiences of three of these four women were rooted in the experiences of other male youths, confirming that violence is an inevitable part of young men's lives.

Nengi, one of these three women says she was coming out from The Promise Restaurant in Port Harcourt with her boyfriend when some group of JTF officials arrested him in connection to the alleged kidnapping of a government official. She had confronted one of the officials, asking them to leave her boyfriend alone when this official slapped her, called her ashawo, a prostitute, and pushed her into a deep gutter undergoing some construction works. By the time she was let out of the gutter by passer-byes, she had sustained severe injuries for which she was admitted in the hospital for weeks.

Similar experience exists for Maria who narrated how a military official knocked out her incisors after she opposed the arrest of her brother two days before her 25th birthday. She said the gap in her teeth shamed her but what frustrated her the more is that her brother was innocent like many young men in the region who have been arrested because they were suspected to be militants.

A few points can be made to sum up the analysis in this section. First, experiences of bodily harm in the form of bodily injury and death was higher amongst young men (68.7%) as opposed to young women (28.5%) and these experiences were disproportionately higher amongst Ijaw men (97.5%) as opposed to Ogoni men (30%). Young men explained that the oil communities and male youths, in particular, were targeted unfairly by the security forces and this regular encounter with violence means that young men have to use violence to protect themselves and their communities against violence. This

shows that violence is a part of the everyday life of young men in the Niger Delta. Again, this points to the need to deconstruct young men's interviews further to better understand how gender and ethnic identities may shape their experiences of bodily harm.

6.5 Young People's Experiences of Environmental Harm

So far in this Chapter, I have analysed how young people's experiences of poor political participation, as well as economic harm and bodily harm, shape their relationship with violence. This section adds another layer to this discussion by analysing how experiences of environmental harm shape young people's relationship with violence. By experiences of environmental harm I mean the degradation of the biophysical environment of the Niger Delta as a result of oil-related activities and the negative impact this degradation has on the lives of local residents.

There are other sources of environmental degradation in the Niger Delta including seismic surveys and canalisation. However, the analysis in this section focuses on environmental degradation from oil spills and gas flaring because they are the primary pollution sources that young people reported to have transformed their environment and depleted their livelihood consequently shaping their encounter with violence.

As Fig. 1 illustrates, experiences of environmental harm were disproportionately higher amongst ethnically Ijaw Ogoni men (66.7%) as opposed to ethnically Ijaw men (10%). Hence, the analysis in this section came predominantly from interviews with Ogoni youths. This suggests that ethnic identity shapes young people's interaction with violence and I develop this argument through the analysis of young people's interviews that follows.

Many youths explained that while they are excluded from the economic benefits of oil exploration, their only experience of oil is the degradation of their environment and the impoverishment of their land resources and the livelihood tied to it. On one humid Tuesday afternoon, I sat with Mr Pango,

a 43-year-old farmer from Bodo, in Ogoni community. Pango had just returned from his farm located 3 miles away carrying with him a raffia basket full of vegetables and farm tools. After taking the vegetables to his wife in the Kitchen, Pango joins me under the plantain tree shade for an interview.

I dey come back now from farm. E don tey, wey I for don come back if na before. Before wey our farm dey the other side. If you walk down the road, turn after the market there you go see the farm. But we no dey farm there again because since the spill in 2008 nothing dey grow for the land again. Na so our life dey. We dey suffer no be small my sister. Shell is polluting the land and na we dey suffer am. We are poor. See all of us dey still farm with small tools. We no even get money make we buy big equipment, make e help us with our farm. When you come back to the house your back will pain you because you are bending too much in the farm because of the hoe. But Shell and the government is taking the money from the oil.

Pango explains in his interview that he used to farm in a nearby farm before the oil spill happened in Bodo in 2008. Farming in this nearby farm meant that Pango could have returned home earlier for the interview. However, with the oil spill rendering the nearby farmland inarable, Pango is forced to travel far away to farm in a pollution-free land and this means more time. Pango also worries about his poor economic state. He uses crude farm tools like wooden hoe and machete which does not only lower his back twice as he farms but lowers his productivity also. Because of his financial background, Pango is unable to afford better farm equipment or machines for mechanised farming. Yet, oil wealth is abundant in his community.

Pango is not the only one who has been forced to travel far away to farm on pollution-free farmland. Edina's father's farm was also affected by oil spills and now she is travelling just as far.

'I have never seen something like that before. The oil is everywhere we cannot enter the farm. We are farming in the other farm close to the river, far, far far' Edina says. Edna is a 27 year old single mother who depends on subsistence farming to survive herself and her son. For Edna, the impact of

farming on faraway farmland is that there is not enough time to spend with her young son. Also, there is not enough time for Edna to return from the farm and clean up before going to the market to sell perishable farm produce like vegetables. To manage this situation, Edna says she has to go directly from the farm to the market because when it comes to perishable farm produce time is of the essence, and time is money and money means survival.

Before, when we have the other farm, you can go to the farm, come back to house and baffle, and go to market to sell vegetable the same day. Because if you don't sell the vegetables early, they spoil. But now, if you want to go to market and come to house to prepare before you go to the market, night will come. Because the farm is far. So sometimes we finish from the farm and go to market from the farm. Your body will scratch you. You will feel like you are smelling. But what will you do. You don't want your vegetables to spoil. You want money for your family. Even there is no time for my son because the farm is far.

On my second day in Bodo I visited Frank, an ex-member of the Ogoni Youth Council. Frank lives in an unfinished, unfurnished bungalow and the unplastered walls of his house had been covered by dense moss. Standing outside his house, I could see big stones and sticks pressing down his zinc roof, perhaps to secure it against the wind. But Frank's house is better than the surrounding shanty houses many of which were built from mud and their roofs from thatch. Inside, Frank's sitting room, he spoke with a histrionic tone, narrating how the 2008 oil spill affected Bodo community and what Shell has done so far to compensate local residents.

'When the spill happened the people in the village was calling Shell to come but Shell said they are not coming because the people in the village is causing the spill. It is not us. The pipeline is very old, when something is old, that thing is tired' Frank explains. 'Sometimes the youth burst the pipe to take oil and go and sell. But Shell is blaming us every time. Frank spent a few minutes trying to adjust the battery of his remote control to turn on the television before he resumed the interview again. By this time, I noticed tiny lines of sunrays penetrating the house from the holes in the roof and I imagined that perhaps during raining season Frank would place a plastic bucket at this

particular spot to collect rainwater dripping down from the roof. I thought in this moment also, what a mass of contradiction Ogoni really is. Here I am in Frank's house, who could not even afford a good quality roofing like the majority of the local residents. Yet, the oil pipelines laying under the ground in this territory for more than half a century has brought prosperity to Shell, the government, and the local elites.

Following sustained calls from the community and civil rights groups, Shell accepted responsibility for this spill, attributing it to equipment failure. Shell also promised to clean up the spill and agreed to pay \$83.4 million to the Bodo community as compensation. Even though local residents initially demanded \$371.5 million, this little compensation made many of them happy.

People like Frank have been able to build houses from this money. 'I used my own money to build this house. Before there was no cement house in this compound. Everywhere is mud house so at least it is something' Frank says. However, Shell is yet to clean up this 2008 spill nearly a decade later despite promises to do so.

While people like Frank are happy that the oil spill compensation money enabled him to build a house, the fact that there was pollution at all was a huge concern for Inemo who says no amount of compensation is good enough.

It is not the money that Shell is paying us that is the problem. The people are happy because they have not seen that kind of money so they are jumping up and down. But after the money, we are still suffering. They are killing the environment, destroying everything. If they give you one million, you can enter the market and finish today. But if you have your environment, and your soil is good, you can continue to farm for many years. You will not touch one million at once, but you will see food and make little money every day. That one is better. So I don't want the money. One day all the farm is going to be covered with spill and Shell is going to pack their things and go if the oil is finish and we are going to suffer. The money is a bad money. I want shell to stop spilling on the soil. I don't want Shell to be in this community at all at all (Inemo).

Inemo explains in the interview that he is uninterested in the one-off oil spill compensation fund from Shell and that some of local residents are happy with the compensation money because a life of poverty in the village has meant that many of them have never owned such money. Instead of the money, Frank would rather have pollution-free land fertile enough to support farming for many years. The money realised from farming in such land may not be as big as the compensation money, but unlike the compensation money it has longevity and it is this longevity of livelihood possible in a pollution free land that Frank cares about. Frank is also worried that should there be no more oil in the Niger Delta, Shell would leave but the oil spill and its impact remain with local residents.

It is not only agricultural farmlands that have been impacted by the oil spill. Local residents are also concerned that oil spill is degrading aquatic life and diminishing the livelihood attached to it.

‘E better if we no get oil’, we are better off without oil, Fred says. Fred is a local fisherman who prides himself as the best local orthopaedic in Ogoniland. ‘When we were small, e no dey hard to catch fish. You go just carry your boat go small you don see plenty fish. Now you no go see fish if you no go inside the river’. The oil is chasing the fish inside’. Fred explains that the impact of the oil spill is that fishes are moving farther way to the deeper part of the river where there is lesser or no pollution. The consequence is that now it requires more effort and more time to catch fish and fishing had not always required this effort and time. When Fred was younger, oil spills was not the norm and fishing was a lot easier.

In a focus group interview in Bodo, respondents emphasised that the oil spill has not only decreased the size of the fish, but it has also diminished the total supply of fish available for local consumption and the quantity of fish for local fishermen to sell. The locals have been forced to augment this shortage with ice fish imported mostly from Norway and Iceland. The economic consequence is that local fishermen no longer make as much money as they

used to make before the oil spills, and the price of imported fish is so high that local residents cannot easily afford it.

Before, nobody need to buy ice fish, because ice fish is not the main fish. They import it. It's not like the same taste like our own fish. Before, when you go the river, you put your net, sharp sharp, there is fish. Big fish. You have enough to eat and you can go and sell in Port Harcourt. Now you can stay in the river from morning till night, there is only small fish coming. The one you can eat, not the one you can sell. So you don't have money to support your family. If you give your wife fish, you need to give her money to buy other ingredients for the soup (Fred).

Some respondents were also concerned, that while pollution is seriously decreasing fish harvest and degrading farmlands, the government and MOCs have not provided the local community with alternative livelihood opportunities in the form of paid employment which can help them to cope with the experiences of environmental harm.

We are seeing every day that the fish is small. Even the people who are selling imported fish they are very expensive. One for one hundred Naira, two hundred Naira. We don't have money to buy. Nothing is working. If you go to the farm there is oil. If you go to the river there is no fish. If the government is giving the youth's job at least it is better. We can say ok at least we have money to buy the ice fish. But this one, there is no job and everything in the environment the oil is spoiling it.

Other respondents like Alera explained that the lack of alternative sources of livelihood to cope with a degraded livelihood means that the quality of life in the community is very poor. It means that the villagers do not have enough money to send their children to school, they don't have enough money to buy clothes and they can't even afford a Panadol to self-medicate themselves.

When there is no money from the farm or there is no fish, how are you going to survive? How are you going to buy the dress to cover yourself? If your child is sick how are you going to buy him Panadol? I am not saying let's take him to the hospital because we know it is going to be like asking for too much. Because the government is not doing anything for us. But at least, somebody is supposed to have money so that you can rush to the chemist to

buy Panadol for your daughter if she is sick. If there is money to even buy drug that one will be good. But as you see me here if they tell me that my child is sick, I cannot even buy him Panadol. I don't have even one naira as you are looking at me.

It is so sad to see in the Niger Delta how many years of injustice have normalised suffering in the region and forced local residents to become satisfied with the smallness of their lives. After several years of injustice, failed promises, unrealised dreams of having modern and accessible health care, it no longer makes sense for people like Alera to continue to hope for one. Quite simply, it is unrealistic to expect better from the government because to hope for better is to have no hope at all. And so in this space of hopelessness, local residents like Alera have learnt to manage their expectations by making mild, little demands. She just wants to have a source of livelihood which would provide her with the money to afford Panadol to self-medicate a sick child even though the better option would be to take a sick child to the hospital so that drugs can be prescribed accordingly after diagnosis.

I had laughed the first day Mike promised to take me on a boat ride because the excessively casual tone with which he spoke made me think he was unserious. Besides, most of the local boats are poorly constructed with minimal provisions for safety. Life jackets are handed to the passengers in local boats but everyone knew that those life jackets did very little if at all anything to protect passengers in the unfortunate event of a boat mishap. Stories of boats capsizing after a choppy ride abound in the community and since I am a landlubber, I tried to stay away from the sea. However, Mike's ebullient personality combined with the ethnocentric zeal with which he spoke on our second meeting made me consider this offer. He promised this boat ride was going to be a cultural tour; he would take me to meet a famous elder considered by many to be a prominent custodian of Ogoni culture, show me varieties of fish found in the Ogoni rivers as well as the oil spill pollution sites. And so we agreed to start the journey the next day, at 10 am.

By 9.45 am the following day, I was already at the river bank waiting for Mike to arrive. Before Mike's arrival, I decided to walk around the river bank to look around. I saw some fishermen burnishing their boats and preparing fishing tools. Others were having incomprehensible conversations and a barefoot girl hawking peppered snail held on a skewer sang loudly as she passed. Abandoned wooden boats littered around and a few young men walked around the river bank, many of them looking like people who did not have so much to do. There was something about the dressing of the locals here that revealed the strip-down quality of their lives and something about their dressing raised concerns for their dignity. Their dressing was the style of the peasants, and it showed lower standing in social status. I would later observe in the night clubs in Port Harcourt that militancy afforded young men the money to dress in a completely different fashion; an upper-class modern fashion which gave them social distinctions.

Mike arrived shortly, and we set out for our journey. The peace and quiet that came as Mike paddled the boat was calming and satisfying. It was such a very beautiful scenery, especially when compared to the shanty houses on the other side of the village. The view of our boat in the middle of the river, the intertwined roots of *Rhizophora racemosa* sprouting randomly from the brackish mud, the light blue sky above the lush mangrove trees, the strong wind that steadily blew my afro backwards, all combined to make this experience one of the highlights of my fieldwork. But there is a darker side to this beautiful experience and this is the side that many fishermen like Mike know too well; the oil spill that has degraded this environment.

'You dey see wetin I dey talk abi' Mike said to me. He pointed to the roots of the *Rhizophora* tree and showed me the sludge of crude oil that had blackened the soil.

'This na oil spill, the one wey happen since 2008. Nobody don come clean am. They say Shell go send people make dem come prepare to clean am. But we never see anything since that time. You see as the place black. If I carry you go forward you go see say the other area no black. If you even match there you go fall

down because of the oil. Na here we dey fish before. We go pack our boat around the other side. From where we come from to this place na around 30 minutes. So e no far. But now we have to go far far inside the River for many hours. If not you no go get fish. Wetin we go do. This na the only thing we I dey do. I no get another thing to do. So abeg, if you go, tell dem say we need help. We dey suffer.

Mike showed me the oil spill that has blackened the roots of the mangrove trees and expressed worries that the polluted land has not been remediated despite Shell's promises to clean it. The oil-polluted part of the river and the area surrounding it was covered by a glossy haze. Inside the river, glossy, insoluble filaments floated like oily snakes. He also expressed worries that prior to the spill, fishing could happen at this particular part of the river only 30 minutes away from where we came from. Since the oil spill, however, fishermen have to travel farther into the river before they would be able to fish. Because fishing is the only source of livelihood for Mike, he has no option than to accept this extra time required to fish and this means that he has lesser time to tend to other things.

We arrived at the deeper part of the river where fishing currently takes place. It was about 2hours away from our departure venue. Shortly, Mike introduced me to the other local fishermen with a warm smile showing an imperfect triangle between his upper central incisors. 'This is our sister Modest from London. She wants to see how we are suffering because of the oil so I bring her' Mike would say. I had told Mike during our first meeting that my name is Modesta but he said jokingly 'that one na Oyibo name', that is white people's name, 'I will call you Modest instead' as if to say that Modest is an African name.

Mike showed me the different types of local fish; Baga is Catfish, Atuu is periwinkle, he said. He raised the fishes from the plastic basin holding their tails, pointing out their smallness and saying they would have been bigger had they not been affected by the oil spill. He did the same with the periwinkles adding that sometimes local residents sucked periwinkles contaminated with oil and this often left a very bitter taste in their mouth.

‘You can see what is happening here Modest, please tell them to come and help us, we are suffering, we need help’ he says.

On our way back, Mike told me more about himself; a 44 year old man with two wives, one mistress, 8 children, a Christian, and a man who feels Ogoni people have been left out of the benefits of oil despite the negative impact of oil on the local environment, and a man who rarely ate ‘balanced diet’ as often as he would love to because the money he gave to his wife for feeding is barely enough for such meal. Mike says he would want to eat things like ‘salad and fried rice’ like the one he ate in a very recent wedding in Port Harcourt anytime he wanted. But his wife bought tomatoes that were crummy because the tomatoes in that condition were bigger and quantity, not quality was what his very large but low-income family could afford. ‘You know that kind of food is not balanced diet’ Mike said, ‘but what am I going to do since I don’t have money’? ‘We are managing life’.

Mike said goodbye wearing a broad smile and even joked about finding me an Ogoni husband before I am ‘too old for marriage’. It is true that Mike has a lively personality. But that night in the silence of my hotel room as I reflected on our journey, I thought about Mike’s smile and wondered whether perhaps despite its lightness and its warmth this smile was just an armour and I imagined the possibility that underneath this smile there was a deep longing for the better things of life.

Meanwhile, fishermen are not the only ones who suffer the impact of the oil spill. Fisherwomen are even impacted more by the oil spill.

Like the fishermen, fisherwomen also have to travel farther away to pick periwinkles. But unlike the men, many women do not have the energy to paddle their boat that long. I met Irene, a fisherwoman, in one of the local meetings I attended in Bodo. Irene told me that ‘as a woman, the spill is bad for us because the woman don’t have the power like the man to go far with the boat’. Irene is a 37-year-old widow who combines fishing with petty trading to take care of her two children and with the little money she makes

from both businesses, Irene feared that she would not be able to afford the quality of life that her children deserves, the kind of life she wanted for herself but did not have. 'The money I get is small, I did not go to school because my parents, they don't have money, but I want[wanted] to go to school, it is not good if my children will not go to school like me because I want them to find better job in Abuja'.

I spoke with Phillip, a local fisherman after he returned from Church, a Redeemed Christian Church of God nearby. Phillip is one of the men who received the 600, 000 Naira oil spill compensation offered by Shell. He was able to open a provision store in a nearby market with this money and the extra money that came from the store has improved his economic circumstance. However, while Philip is better off economically, he believes that there could have been better environmental quality in Bodo without oil exploration. He explains that what the communities want is not one or other; a poor environmental quality or improved economic condition, but a blend of the two.

You see my dear. All the bad things the oil is doing to our environment is not going to bring back the fish the oil is killing. Even the 60000 Naira I get, I used my own to open a store in the market. I open the store in the night after I sell my fish in the afternoon, and the money I am making is helping because people are buying my things fast. I am the only one selling good price in the area. But the money is not the only problem. The environment is the problem too. It is not because I have a provision store from the money, then Shell will be polluting the creek, and the gas from their company is heating the village. Because if pollution is making me sick, I will go the hospital. And the hospital they are charging big money. The money from the store, and the fish, if I bring it together I will not pay the doctor. It is better the environment is good, so that people are happy and the money is coming. As a man you need the money but is good if the environment is ok. You are breathing the air and it not black.

Other respondents worried that the magnitude of health risks associated with environmental pollution is something the oil communities can never know about because they do not have the expertise to investigate this. They believe that drinking from polluted water increases the chances of stillbirth in

pregnant women. Although Shell and the government have failed to link environmental degradation to health problems, the historical legacy of injustice by Shell and the government has taught men like Oliver, that there is something about the ways of these two that can never be trusted.

‘The women who are pregnant, when they drink from the water in the river, it is not good for them, so some of them are dying, or something bad is happening to the baby in their stomach. The rain is black and we have to drink it because it is even better if you drink it than if you drink from stream. There is oil in all the stream. The government is saying the water is not affecting the pregnant woman. Even Shell is saying the water is good. But we don’t trust them. All they are looking for is the oil. Even if something is bad with the water, they will lie, we know them. They are lying to us since. So we don’t believe them (Oliver).

Like Oliver, the historical legacy of pollution and human rights violation in the Niger Delta has turned local youths to cynics. During the focus group interview in Abuja, young people explained that they have learned to expect a different reality behind any public facade by the oil companies and the government. They found it unsurprising, that the recommendations of UNEP assessment of Ogoni land in 2012 are yet to be implemented and that local residents still drank from polluted water despite UNEP's recommendations to provide them with good drinking water. They accused the federal government of politicising the contract for the UNEP project, for not funding the contract, and for excluding local youths from participating in the Ogoni clean-up process.

The government is pretending as if they have started cleaning up after The UNEP people came. But they are not doing anything. They are politicising it. They are giving the contract to their friend and not the local community, and they are not bringing money for the project. The UNEP report says before clean up, put shelter. Put shelter where people can go away from the pollution because it is not good for their health. They also said give the community good water because the pollution in the water is not good for them. But they are saying they are launching the pollution but they are deceiving the people. Now people are fighting over who will get the contract but there is no money. They think we are surprised but we are not surprised. We know that the government

is just saying that so that people will think they are changing from their bad habit, but we know that they are not changing.

For some people in Bodo community, it was not the poor environmental quality, the loss livelihood, or the possibilities of health risk from the pollution that worried them. It was instead, the sense of identity connected to the environment and the other aspects of their social lives connected to the environment which has been threatened by pollution that was their primary concern.

For example, Lah from Bodo explained that some of the herbs that are going into extinction due to oil spills have some medicinal values. Swimming in the local river is also a memorable part of Lah's childhood because the river was where she bonded with her friends. She also explains that the Ogoni environment is intrinsically linked with their culture because Ogoni people believe in the god of the river and god of the land, and as such polluting the land or the river is considered an attack on the traditional belief system. Even though with Christianity many people have abandoned the traditional forms of belief, there are still local residents in Bodo who still practice the traditional African religion.

We use the plant in the river to treat ourselves if we are not well. Even when we were small we used to play in the river. There is no problem that time. You will swim with your friends and play in the water. Even the water is one of the best place where you can play with your friends. The environment is part of the culture. The people worship the god in the river, so if you pollute the river the people believe you are disrespecting the god. Before the white people came everybody in the village used to worship the god in the river and land. Some people still believe in that god even up till now. As Ogoni people, we respect the god of the land. Before we drink wine or celebrate with the wine we pour it three times on the ground so we can honour the god of the land. But everything is destroyed by the oil (Lah).

Respondents from Ogoni, and Ijaw ethnic groups framed their experiences of environmental harm differently. Out of six respondents from Ijaw ethnicity who shared their experiences of environmental harm (Table 6.1), five framed

their experiences of harm only in terms of the degradation of the environment and the consequent loss of livelihood. During a focus group interview with 5 Ijaw men, they commented that ‘there is no fish again in the river, so the people are not getting money to buy what they need for their life’. Duri’s interview also went in a similar direction when he explained that ‘the oil from the pipe is killing the plant in the farm and the people are suffering because of it’.

However, unlike ethnically Ijaw youths, many youths from Bodo framed their experiences of environmental harm in a way that suggested a superior attachment with the environment and one of the ways they did this was through the use of the term ‘indigenous’. Ogoni youths used this term regularly when they spoke about their experiences of environmental harm. When I probed further in the interviews, asking them to explain what they mean exactly by this term, their responses suggested that ‘indigenous’ was used to explain a more intimate relationship with nature. Let us consider this point in Lera’s interview.

Ogoni people are indigenous people, I was born in this village, we know about the trees, the land, and water. People from this village know about the environment even more than people from other parts of the Niger Delta, because we are indigenous people, the environment has been important to us more than any other thing (Lera). That is why all spill is affecting us too much.

Lera used the word indigenous to explain the superior attachment with nature which he believes Ogoni people have and people from other parts of the Niger Delta do not have. He believes that Ogoni people are more environmentally aware- that they know about the environment more than people from other parts of the Niger Delta-and consequently transformation in the environment in the form of oil spill affects them the most.

Also, some respondents like Mene from Bodo used the term indigenous to explain the intimate relationship Ogoni people have with the environment. This is evident in his interview when he explained that Ogoni people are

‘indigenous people’ and that the environment is part of ‘them’, implying that the environment is not part of other people. Mene points further to this deep relationship with the environment when he commented that ‘land’ in Ogoni is not like land in ‘Abuja’ because unlike in Abuja or Lagos, Ogoni people see their land and their rivers as sites of spiritual experience.

It is difficult to live with oil spill. Ogoni people are indigenous people. The environment is part of the people. If you go to Nsisiokogene village, people there put new-born baby in the river. We believe that our ancestors talk to us through the water and land. Land to us is not like ordinary land in Lagos or Abuja. Ogoni people worship the land and the river (Mene).

Local youths also play a role in the degradation of their environment through oil theft (bunkering) or artisanal refinery. For example, Mene also admits to cutting oil pipeline with a sophisticated saw to steal oil. But he says he was forced to consider bunkering despite his awareness of the high risk of such business because ‘there is no work to do’. He did not care so much about the environmental impact of artisanal refinery because according to him ‘you have to eat first before you talk about polluting the environment’.

Like Mene, Maxwell has also turned to artisanal refinery as a means of livelihood in the absence of a better job. Unlike Mene however, Maxwell worries about the environment as well as the condition of his health which he says has deteriorated since he started artisanal refinery. ‘if you look at the ground where we are cooking the oil it is black and I know it is not good for the environment, even I look up, I see the smoke and it black. If I cough now there is something black in my nose all the time so this thing is not good for my body’. However, in the absence of a better job, Maxwell says this is the only means of providing for his family.

Young people are responding differently to their experiences of environmental harm.

Steve from Bodo says he is not going anywhere because ‘the village and the town is not the same’. He says he will not consider going to Port Harcourt like many young people because the bond he has with the environment is something he will never be able to experience in the city. Even for Nubari, the connection and the sense of belonging he feels with his environment remain despite the pollution. Nubari says that ‘even if many of us are complaining about the oil in the water we cannot live in another place because no place is like your own place, your body will not welcome another place if you say let me travel’. Other men like Lah are embracing activism and Mike is devoting his time to show researchers the local experiences of oil-related violence, asking them to share this experience with whoever can help. However, for other youths like Kelvin and Deb from Oporoza, there is nothing more left in the Niger Delta environment. The fishes are dying, the farmlands are polluted and the only option left is to travel to the city in search of a brighter future.

6.6 Violence, as a Part of Everyday Life

To sum up, we see from the analysis of young people’s interviews that their experiences of violence in the form of poor political participation, economic exclusion, bodily harm and environmental harm shaped their relationship with violence. Young men, in particular, felt that they were unfairly targeted by the security officials whose brutality often inflicted physical injuries on their bodies and in severe cases caused death. Consequently, they resorted to using violence to defend themselves and protect their communities. Young people also felt that their voice did not count in political decision making- at the federal and local levels. At the federal level, the ethnic minority status of the Niger Delta gives them little power to influence important decisions and policies. Such decisions include but not only limited to the award of oil well licence, the location of industries and the approval of oil policies which may have local impacts. At the local levels, young people accused their elders of failing in their traditional duty of care and excluding them in local politics. The consequences of these experiences of poor political participation are two folds. First, excluding young people from national and local political life

means that they are not integrated into the political economy of oil because access to political power shapes access to petro-dividends. But it is also important to acknowledge the impact of these experience on young people's sense of belonging- within the Niger Delta community and the larger Nigerian society. Because young people feel that their voices do not count in politics at all levels, feelings of exclusion reign supreme amongst the youths in this region.

There is also the problem of economic exclusion experienced as resource control and un/underemployment. This was not just a minority experience. Out of 84 youths interviewed 70 shared experiences of economic exclusion and these experiences were high amongst young men from the two ethnic groups. Even though unemployment is a nationwide problem, there was a sense of relative deprivation in the way local youths interpreted their experiences of unemployment. They evaluated their experiences of unemployment based on what is obtainable in their own lives, and what is obtainable for other youths from politically influential ethnic regions. They believe that the high political influence of the ethnic majorities gives them more power to influence employment opportunities unlike them without such power. Closely related to the experiences of economic harm is the experiences of environmental harm which has further diminished local livelihood, worsened environmental quality and raised health concerns amongst local people.

Taken together, what these experiences of harm demonstrate is that violence- in its direct and structural sense- is a normal part of young people's lives. The deployment of military brutality and its somatic impact on young men is a manifestation of violence in its direct or restrictive sense (Reiss & Roth, 1994; Riedel & Welsh, 2002; Dewey, 1980). On the hand, young people's experiences of political and economic exclusion as well as environmental harm,⁴¹ are manifestations of structural violence. They are structural violence

⁴¹ The impact of environmental pollution such as oil spill and gas flaring is visible and this visibility qualifies it as a direct violence. But environmental harm also has

because they are relationships of power which creates challenging conditions for young people's survival, limits the development of their capabilities, and consequently undermines their future. Yet, as we have seen in some scholarly works and some media publications (Collier, et al., 2006; Collier, 2003; The New York Times, 2006), and even from some institutional representatives, young people are blamed for violence with limited attention given to how structural factors might contribute in shaping youth violence.

In a context where violence is normalised and young people's future is bleak how do young people negotiate a better future for themselves? Do cultural factors related to gender and ethnicity shape how young men in particular react to their experiences of violence as alluded to in this Chapter? The next Chapter explores these questions.

Before concluding this Chapter, I synthesise the core arguments in this Chapter in Fig 6.3 to facilitate readability. Essentially, the table shows the four categories of harm experienced by local youths, who is impacted by it, how these impact manifest and how these experiences shapes young people's lives.

structural dimensions because there are webs of institutional mechanisms such as the Land Use Act which play a crucial roles in the way environmental harm is experienced.

Table 6.3: Experiences of harm, how they Manifest, Who is most affected, and Impact on Youth

Forms of Violence	Manifestations of Violence	Who is mostly Impacted?	Impact of Violence on those affected
Experiences of bodily harm	Bodily injuries, Death	Young men	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using violence to protect self/ community • Questioning the role of government in protecting their lives • Lack of a sense of belonging within the national community • aggression
Experiences of poor political participation	Poor political influence at the federal and local levels, clientelism	Young men and women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor access to petro-dividends • Lack of a sense of belonging within the national/ local community • Ideas of a new national project, secession • aggression
Experiences of economic harm	Unfair revenue distribution pattern, un/underemployment	Young men and women (unlike young women, men link experiences to manhood)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor access to petro-dividends (discontent over revenue distribution pattern; resource control) • Lack of means to afford basic needs • Loss of dignity, and hope • Lack of a sense of belonging within the national community. • Aggression • Exposes women to the risk of Sexual exploitation • Rural-urban migration

Experiences of environmental harm	Oil spills (equipment failure, bunkering)	Young men and women are impacted but impact is severe for fisherwomen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of livelihood ,fishes, crabs and periwinkles are decreasing, loss of farmland • Lack of means to afford basic needs • Deterioration of environmental quality • Deterioration human-nature interactions/local life disrupted • Deterioration of sense of identity (in Bodo) • Health concerns • Aggression • Rural-urban migration • Lack of a sense of belonging in the national community
	Gas flaring	Young men and women are impacted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of livelihood • Deterioration of environmental quality • Health concerns • Aggression • Lack of a sense of belonging in the national community

6.7 Conclusion

This Chapter has analysed four categories of harm that are manifestations of young people's experiences of oil-related violence. These include experiences of poor political participation, economic exclusion, bodily harm and environmental harm. Young people explain in their interviews that these experiences of harm have undermined their sense of inclusion within the Niger Delta community and the wider Nigerian society as well as their ability to negotiate a better future for themselves. Young people's encounter with security officials was always negative. Young men, in particular, felt targeted unfairly by the security staff of the government and MOCs simply because they are men. They argued that in order to protect themselves from the constant harassment and bodily harm that often resulted from this encounter they had to protect themselves with violence. Young people also shared experiences of economic and political exclusion at both federal and local levels. They felt that the politics of revenue distribution and employment favour the politically influential regions but disadvantages them. In addition to these experiences, environmental degradation has further exacerbated local experiences of violence by diminishing livelihood, increasing health concerns, and disrupting human-nature relations. Living with these experiences of harm means that violence is a normal part of young people's lives. The next Chapter further analyses young people's interviews to see what these experiences of violence mean for young men in particular.

Chapter 7: How Experiences of Violence Became a Problem Mostly for Male Youths: Capturing Young Men's Justifications for Violence and Non-Violence

7.1 Introduction

In the previous Chapter, I highlighted how the everyday experiences of violence in the Niger Delta create a context of disempowerment for young people and shape their relationship with violence. I also hinted in that Chapter that young men's understanding of their role in society shapes how they interpret these experiences of violence. In this second analytical Chapter, I aim to move this discussion forward by examining how the broader structures of gender, ethnic identity and religion shape how young men in particular explain and respond to their experiences of violence. In understanding young men's relationship with violence, the analysis in this Chapter highlights how violence helps young men to build capital and bring value into their social life in the context of disempowerment. However, there are also some young men who embraced other non-violent pathways to living a meaningful life and the analysis here also reveals this.

By analysing the role of gender in shaping men's responses to their experiences of violence, this Chapter responds to the research question; what role, if any, does having a male gender identity play in shaping young men's relationship with violence. To answer this question, this Chapter analyses young men's interview using a discourse analysis that is grounded in Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity and Bourdieu's tools. As explained in Chapter 2, Bourdieu's tools, especially habitus, helps us to understand how the structural context shapes agency and how the structure becomes reproduced through agency. Then, Connell's idea of hegemonic masculinity helps us to understand within Bourdieu, how gender is a crucial aspect of the structure that shapes agency. Because Bourdieu recognises the dialectic connection between structure and agency his tools can also help us to understand how social identities related to religion and ethnic identity may

shape violence and by linking Connell to Bourdieu, we can examine how gender identity in particular shapes youth violence.

To make this Chapter easily readable to those less familiar with Bourdieu and Connell's work I provide a brief recap of their concepts which I discuss extensively in Chapter 2. Habitus is a set of durable socialised dispositions that guide but does not determine behaviour. The dispositions of the habitus reflect the structural context in which the habitus has been socialised. Since men are socialised in the masculine field/social context, they would have masculine dispositions or masculine habitus and this dispositions guides how they perceive and respond to their experiences and justify their behaviour (Bourdieu, 1997).

The field is the social space where the habitus interacts and it is not static but subjected to changes. Each field has its unique set of rules or desirable qualities that confers power or social positions to those playing in the field and these are called capitals. Because the accumulation of desirable capital confers higher social status, the lack of it also means lower social standing, and social actors strive to accumulate relevant capital to remain in positions of power (Hilgers & Mangez, 2014; Jenkins, 1992). Having recapped these concepts, I now apply them to examine how having a male gender identity shapes how young men respond to their experiences of violence as well as how religion and ethnicity shapes such responses.

7.2 Warriorhood Masculine Habitus: A Symbolic Capital in the Ijaw Community Field

An Ijaw man is a fighter. That is who we are. That is what our ancestors have been doing. We believe that we have to fight to get what we want. We have been fighting since the days of our ancestors. You cannot make an Ijaw man to be afraid of you. He will not fear you. Even when the white people came here, we fight them. If you are a true Ijaw son, you cannot allow somebody to intimidate you, we no dey fear. We are warriors. Any Ijaw man na warrior. You cannot be a warrior and watch your people are dying. You have to fight for your land, you have to protect the community. If the government is killing the people you have to

say no I am an Ijaw man, I will protect my people. If you are not doing that you are not an Ijaw man (Daddy-O, Bayelsa, 2016).

In Chapter 3, I provided a historical account of violence in the Niger Delta and highlighted how some aspects of the Ijaw culture such as the warriorhood culture shape local violence. Here, I combine this warriorhood culture with the concept of masculine habitus to develop the concept of warriorhood masculine habitus. Warriorhood masculine habitus refers to the warriorhood identity that is embedded in young Ijaw men's sense of self which positions them to protect the community against external threats. This gender positioning shapes young Ijaw men's relationship with violence as we shall see later in the section. In addition to the warriorhood masculine habitus, I also develop the concept of Ijaw Community Field drawing from Bourdieu's idea of field as a specific arena of social practice. Hence, the Ijaw community field is the local social space where young Ijaw men's warriorhood habitus is formed and where cultural, political, economic, and environmental factors interact to shape their habitus.

The warriorhood masculine habitus and the Ijaw community field have a symbiotic relationship in the sense that the Ijaw community field rewards young men who conform to the gender role expected of the warriorhood masculine habitus with symbolic capital-honour, prestige, influence-which elevates them to a position of power in this field. Accordingly, young men who do not conform to the gender role associated with warriorhood are shamed, their manhood is diminished, and they lose respect and power in the Ijaw community field. Having explained these concepts, I now apply them to analyse youth interviews to see how they may help us to understand how cultural specificities shapes Ijaw men's relationship with, and justification for violence.

We can see from Daddy-O's comment above that warriorhood is an integral part of Ijaw men's sense of self or their identity. This is evident in the first two sentences, in which he says that 'an Ijaw man is a fighter that is who we are'. Daddy-O traces the warriorhood identity to Ijaw men's past experiences

when he says that Ijaw people ‘fight’ ‘the white people’. With this comment, he points to the pre-oil Niger Delta when the Ijaw communities violently resisted the European palm oil merchants as the historical account of violence in the Niger Delta in Chapter 2 reveals. However, what is of more importance in Daddy-O’s response is the expectation of protection that this warriorhood ethos carries and what this means for his relationship with violence. Because Daddy-O sees himself as a warrior, he sees himself as ‘somebody’ who cannot ‘watch’ his people ‘dying’. He sees himself as somebody who must protect his people, albeit with violence, against any attack from the government. In this sense, Ijaw culture sanctions violence for young men as long as it is on the basis of protecting the community. As such, Daddy-O justifies violent behaviour as an important part of being an Ijaw man.

It is this gender structure which positions young Ijaw men as community protectors (which entails the enactment of violence) that structures their close relationship with violence. To unpack this point, the cultural expectation that Ijaw men are expected to protect the community means that the experiences of violence explained in Chapter 6 are not mere experiences. Instead, they are experiences that carried with them the burden of cultural obligation. They are experiences that required Ijaw men to assert their manhood defined traditionally as defending the community against external threats- the government and MOCs. This required Ijaw men to use violence to resist the revenue distribution pattern, resist their experiences of political exclusion, resist the oil companies for destroying their environment, and defend their communities against the brutality of the combined forces of the state and MOCs security. In my view, even if an Ijaw man and Ogoni man experience the forms of violence explained in the previous Chapter in equal measure, the Ijaw man is more likely to respond to these experience with violence more than an Ijaw woman partly due to the forces of gender structure.

This definition of manhood in relations to warriorhood or a protector runs deep in the responses from other young Ijaw men such as Tari.

Tari is a 38-year-old Ijaw man from Oporoza village in Delta state. He speaks of his mother with so much adulation; a kind, hardworking woman who raised him and his two siblings single-handedly after she was widowed at 29. Tari is very generous, compassionate and cheerful. Although he easily slips into resentment and cheerlessness when speaking about his experiences of violence, especially when emphasising the role of the Hausa ethnic majority in creating the conditions of structural violence. When asked about his experiences of violence and how it affects him as a man, Tari's response was similar to that of Daddy-O. Essentially, Tari explains that as warriors, Ijaw men are expected to fight and protect the community against military brutality, as opposed to pretending not to know about the violence. Again, this means that Ijaw men have a cultural obligation to defend their communities against the brutality of the state's military making them highly vulnerable to experiences of bodily harm, both as victims and as perpetrators.

It is our duty as Ijaw men to protect our community. As a man, it is a shame if I let the military people kill my brothers and I am doing nothing. We cannot close our eyes or fold our hand like that as if we are not seeing it. An Ijaw man is supposed to be strong, he is not a coward, he is a warrior, and he has to protect the community. An Ijaw man is a strong man (Tari).

After the interview, Tari took me to a local plantain seller tending to her *bole*—a popular local delicacy of roasted plantain and fish served with a mix of local vegetables, pepper, and palm oil. 'I will pay for you don't worry, I have to care of you as a man' he said. This was a generous gesture from Tari. But with this gesture also, Tari was performing his masculine role of a provider. I will leave the interpretation of this provider role and how it is connected to young men's relationship with violence till later. Let us first get to know what other young Ijaw men have to say about the warriorhood culture and what it means for their relationship with violence.

'I hope you will come back to Nigeria, all of you people that are schooling abroad you people have to come back to Nigeria o, so you people will change this country'. Comrade made this comment as we sat for an interview in his

house. It has always amazed me the ease with which many concerned Nigerians advise young Nigerians schooling abroad to return home to rebuild Nigeria after their studies. What even amazes me more is how they often omit in their advice the challenges that life in Nigeria presents despite the many opportunities. As I reached for the tape recorder in my bag, I wondered in this moment if the experiences of the youths I have interviewed would become my own experience if I return to Nigeria after my doctorate; discharged from hospital but unable to go home because I have no money to settle hospital bills, unable to pay my rent because with the national minimum wage currently at 18,000 Naira, the quality of life is severely poor, looking for how to establish links with men with 'connection' because I have been unemployed for years, and with a well 'connected' man, my dream job is only a phone call away. 'Look at these three pictures'. Comrade showed me two photographs from his album. The image in one of the pictures printed in black and white colour had been blurred out by moist.

This is me when I was 19, I took the picture after I finished wrestling. I won, you see the thing in the neck, and they give it to me because I won. All the time I won oh that time. My friends, they respect me because they know I am a champion. Even in this community they respect me, go and ask them, they know that I am a strong warrior. If something bad is happening in this village now, it is strong warrior like us that fight for the community (Comrade).

Comrade had been wrestling as a teenager as one of his pictures show. He sees himself as a 'strong warrior' who is supposed to protect the community if something bad happens. This means that he has to thrust himself, he has to offer his body in the struggle of which the consequence is a high exposure to experiences of bodily harm both as a victim and as a perpetrator. However, we cannot understand Comrade's relationship with violence in terms of his masculine habitus alone. The interaction between his warriorhood masculine habitus and the Ijaw community field is equally as important.

Comrade is rewarded in the Ijaw community field for conforming to this gendered role of a protector. He was decorated with medals, respected by his

friends, and honoured in the community. Respect, honour, and recognition are all forms of values that men are socialised to aspire to (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005), and having such values give them power or symbolic capital in the Ijaw community. In a context where men are infantilised and deemed unrespectable by local leaders, violence empowered young men. It improved their social position by serving as a source through which they can get respect, honour, and recognition to recover their manhood.

Other Ijaw men like Allen and Ayebuna also explained that performing the role of a warrior, a fighter, a community protector, brought them respect and honour.

After waiting patiently in his house for more than two hours, Allen finally arrives with his group of body gourds. Allen was the leader of a popular militant group who claimed responsibility for many kidnappings and killings during the pre-PAP era. In this interview, Allen tells me that he is well respected in the community because some of the policy responses to the Niger Delta problems such as PAP only came because young men like him violently resisted the government.

Go around and ask about me they know me. The government is calling us criminals but the people who we are fighting to emancipate, respect us. All of them know that the small things the government is doing for us like Amnesty is because people like us said enough is enough and carry gun.

Similarly, when I spoke with Ayebuna in his car, a fussily maintained white G wagon, he also stated that ‘‘when I pass on the road, people hail me, chairman, chairman, general, everywhere I go, they are respecting me because they know that I am fighting for the community’. Looking at Ayebuna as he made this statement, his eyes were filled with pride. Crucially, not all Ijaw men justify their violent behaviour as a necessary way of being a man in the Ijaw culture because in the context of oil modernity the warriorhood culture is being threatened.

During a focus group interview in Abuja, many of the Ijaw youths I spoke to justified their violent behaviour as a way of performing their duty as protectors of the community. But it was surprising, however, that one of the young men, Ata, disagreed with the justification of violence provided by other members of the group. We shall see what Ata has to say about the Ijaw warriorhood ethos later but first, let us see what the rest of the members of the group said.

We joined militancy because it became unbearable to watch the government kill our people. When the government was killing our people, the people looked at the men and said, are there not warriors in this community, are you going to stay here and watch the government wipe out the people in your community. So we said enough is enough. We will show the government that the Ijaw people have men too, that they have warrior who are going to protect them. Then all the Ijaw people came together and that is how militancy started. The men are doing what they are supposed to be doing for their people.

We can see from this quote that these young men justified violent militancy as a necessary part of being a man in Ijaw culture. They explained that they joined militancy because the government's brutality on the community challenged their manhood in the Ijaw community field. As Ijaw warriors, the community called on them in the face of external threat and challenged them to demonstrate their manhood by rising to the defence of the community. This required them to engage with violence; taking up arms to resist an equally armed state's military through violent militancy.

On the contrary, however, Ata was quite emphatic in his disagreement with the group's justification of violence as a necessary part of Ijaw men's role as community protectors.

Me, I am not among them. I am not among the people who are saying they are fighting because they are warrior. Look, let me tell you what happened. The thing is that before, there is the warrior culture. If you are a man, the community expect you to be a warrior. But now the people are not doing that again. Nobody is forcing you. If you want to call yourself a warrior you call yourself but nobody is pushing you. In the past they use to say

they will give you a virgin and the community will respect you but not now. Like me now I don't call myself a warrior. I am not joining militants because I am a warrior. If I have a job in a company now, a good job that many people will respect me like a job in Shell I will not be saying I am a warrior and I want to protect the community. It is because I don't have a job and everything is hard that is why I joined. If you get a job, a nice house, it not just the community that will respect you, but the whole world will be hearing your name. Somebody like Kachikwu now the world is hearing his name. The community, they are respecting him. But they are not respecting the militant like that (Atah).

To interpret the dissonance between Ata's comment and the rest of the group, I refer to Bourdieu's (2005, p. 46) idea that when the habitus encounters a new field, there is a 'dialectical confrontation' between the habitus and the new field. This means that when the habitus encounters a new field, it still retains its past tendencies and values as shaped by the old field. Yet, if the values of the old field no longer make sense in the new field, the habitus has 'the potential to be subjected to modification' (Webb, et al., 2002, p. 41 emphasis added).

While the warriorhood masculine habitus (the old field) ensures that cultural practices such as warriorhood is maintained and reproduced, oil modernity (the new field) is threatening the continuity of this culture. In today's modern world, men like Ata no longer see huge value in the warriorhood culture. The reward of a virgin and community respect accorded to warriors has become undervalued in today's modern Niger Delta where to be a modern man means to have a modern job, and preferably a job in the oil companies. Hence, it makes more sense to aim for a modern job than to be a warrior because a well-paying modern job offers the opportunity to be respected and recognised globally like Nigeria's petroleum minister, Ibe Kachikwu, as opposed to being a warrior which only brings local-level recognition.

Crucially, too, while warriorhood might be an old and undervalued version of masculinity, oil exploration is certainly playing a crucial role in the re-emergence of this violent identity. Out of eight young men who participated

in this focus group, 7 still identified with the warriorhood masculine identity. This means that in the current modern Ijaw community field, it still makes much sense to retain this warriorhood masculine identity. Many young Ijaw men are drawing from these violent identities of their past to resist the injustices of the federal government and MOCs and to empower themselves in this context of disempowerment.

Sometimes, Ijaw men were coerced to comply with this warriorhood protector role in a more subtle way through cultural discourses by their fellow Ijaw men. When they did not comply, they were shamed and humiliated, and their manhood was diminished.

Specifically, in the interview with Doubra, he explains that he had no intention to engage with violence when he joined one of the local youth groups. He had told the group that he did not want to 'carry gun' since he did not want to be killed or kill. But the group members shamed him and degraded his manhood by calling him *kala tobou*, a little child. By calling him *kala tobou* and by saying that Doubra does not 'behave like a true son of the soil' his peers indirectly imposed warriorhood as the true and valid way of being an Ijaw man, negating many other ways through which manhood can be realised.

I was a militant before Amnesty. That time we used to carry gun, shoot anyhow, when I join the group, I did not like to carry gun, because I told them that I will support the fight but I don't want to kill anybody and I don't want to die, but they will call me *Kala tobou* (a child), which is an insult to a man like me. Some people will say I am stupid, call me fear fear boy, and some will say that I am not behaving like a true son of the soil. One day I said I am a man. I am going to do it. I am warrior, I am going to protect my people (Doubra).

Doubra further explained as the interview progressed, that the burden of blood-guilt from the people he killed as a militant overwhelmed his conscience with regrets and sadness. He says 'when I stay sometimes, maybe before I sleep, I will be thinking about what we did that time as

militants. Sometimes you have to shoot anybody not only the army people and you are a human being. You are taking their life away, their blood is going to be on your head. So you are not going to be happy. Sometimes something bad will happen to you and you think may be its because of the blood of the people that I have killed’.

Doubra’s interview illustrates the operation of symbolic violence, and how it operates invisibly, to reproduce the cultural arbitrary with the complicity of social agents even when they are disadvantaged by it (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Here, Doubra’s friends accepted the warriorhood role, as the ‘true’ way of being a ‘son of the soil’ even when doing so subjected them disproportionately to the experiences of bodily harm. By using a cultural discourse in which warriorhood is normalised as the culturally accepted way of being an Ijaw man, Doubra’s friends were able to elicit Doubra’s consent, and he consequently joined in this collective reproduction of the gender structure despite the blood guilt and bodily harm that came with violence.

Similar to Doubra’s experience, when Baratuipere refused to join violent militancy, his friends said ‘you dey do as if you holy pass (pretentiously holy), you are not holy. We know your girlfriends and all the bad things you do with small small girls (under-aged girls), so don’t talk as if this one na worse. All sin na sin (all sins are equal)’. By bringing up his transgressive sexual behaviour, Baratuipere’s friends tried to shame him and order him to cooperate in the reproduction of violence.

The pressure to conform to the warriorhood gender role also came from family members.

During a mixed-sex focus group interview in Odi, one of the respondents, Emy, explained that ‘women sometimes push men to fight with their mouth’, which means through language. He added that when there are fights between two families, the mothers would be unhappy if their male sons did not fight back the other family. ‘She will think you are weak man or that you are not doing what warriors are supposed to do and she will not respect you’ he said.

Emy's comment illustrates Bourdieu's point that the habitus is formed in the family and tested through social interaction with peers (Bourdieu, 1977).

In the Ijaw communities, I observed how young male children are thought by their families and through group interactions that the culturally accepted way of solidifying one's status as a man is to exert physical strength. Young boys are constantly reminded of their gendered bodies through injunctions such as 'beat him back you are a man' 'don't stay there and cry like a woman you are a man'. In such injunctions, the lines between play and violence are blurred. In fact, in most cases, these injunctions sanction violence outrightly. Young Ijaw men are reminded through such injunctions that physicality gives men recognition and status in the Ijaw community and they are thought to position themselves in relation to this identity. The field note below elaborates on this point.

Today, I was in a local restaurant which was highly recommended by the Chief of Staff of the Ijaw Youth Council. The windows of the restaurant were so low that one could see and hear clearly what was happening outside. My food order did not arrive on time and after several minutes of waiting, I decided to do other things; deleting some redundant pictures from my phone, burnishing the lens of my eye glasses. Then all of a sudden, I looked down through the window and saw some children playing. In my eyes, this play looked like a wrestling. One person, who looked like the umpire would lift up another person who looked like his opponent. Another person, would stamp a rubber slippers on the floor, counting 1, 2, 3. He decided the winner after the count of 3. The other boys cheered when the winner was announced. Trouble started very shortly. The umpire had declared the winner and the loser contested his defeat, accusing the umpire of being partial. This young man who lost the game started to fight the umpire. He had squared up to him asking him to cancel the game and call for a rerun. Now, the other young man, who won the game came closer to say that he would not accept a rerun since according to him he clearly defeated his opponent. As the boys continued to argue, another young man who I later learnt was the brother of the defeated boy joined the argument. He told his defeated brother to beat the referee with a big stick he had handed to him because as a man he is not supposed to allow another man to defeat him. Otherwise he would tell their parents when they go home that he allowed his opponent, his fellow boy, to defeat him (Personal field note, July 2016).

To sum up, the analysis of Ijaw men's interview in this section sheds light on how the experiences of different forms of violence explained in the previous Chapter, became a problem mostly for Ijaw men. Specifically, it discusses how the warriorhood culture shapes Ijaw men's responses to their experiences of harm in a violent way and how such violent responses are justified. Ijaw men justified violent militancy as a necessary way of being a man in the Ijaw community. According to the Ijaw warriorhood tradition, young Ijaw men have the cultural obligation to protect the community against external threats. This warriorhood culture traces its roots to the palm oil trade era when young men were mobilised as warriors to resist European traders violently and to fight intra-community battles. This means that Ijaw men have collectively experienced violence in their habitus through their involvement in past violent resistance. It is unclear whether these young Ijaw men had participated in this past violent resistance and are today reproducing their experiences. But what is clear is that in the current Ijaw community field where violence is a part of everyday life it makes sense for young men to revoke this violent aspect of their identity to resist the government and MOCs. The fact that Ijaw men see themselves as people who must use violence to protect their community against external threats could explain why experiences of bodily harm was significantly higher amongst ethnically Ijaw men with 39 out of 40 (97.5%) who were interviewed experiencing bodily harm while 9 out of 30 Ogoni men interviewed (30%) reported experiences of bodily harm.

In a contrasting way also, a few young men no longer find value in this warriorhood identity. The responses from men like Atah indicate that the warriorhood culture no longer makes much sense in the context of oil modernity. Oil has introduced modern masculine models; one in which to be a man is to have a well-paying modern job. The benefits of marrying a virgin and respect that comes with being a strong warrior now make little sense in a context where a well-paying job can provide young men with respect and recognition, not only in the community but globally. In this sense, violence can be viewed as a source of symbolic capital which offers young Ijaw men

honour and respect and consequently improves their social position in the community. In a context where young men are infantilised and disrespected by local leaders, violence empowered young Ijaw men. It gave them value in life. By performing the warriorhood role, Ijaw men could find some belonging in the community. However, this empowering role of violence was also one of ambiguities; it came with a blend of guilt and sadness. Young men are sad for their bodies that are disproportionately exposed to the bodily harm that comes with violent militancy, and the blood-guilt of the people they killed overwhelmed them.

Two crucial points can be made drawing from this summary. First, and of course in a contradictory sense, instead of seeing youths as deviant from the society, youth violence can be seen as one of the many ways through which the society expresses itself. We see in the analysis in this section that violence is an expression of a gender structure which has positioned men as the people who are supposed to use violence to protect the community; otherwise, they are deemed not man enough. Second, this is not to say that Ijaw men are complete victims of a violent gender structure. They are not. Through their involvement in violent militancy and by using cultural discourses to coerce their peers, Ijaw men also participate directly and indirectly in reproducing the gender structure.

7.3 Egbesu Spiritual Capital: A Symbolic Capital and a Vehicle for Economic Capital in the Ijaw Community Field

Every day in this place, it is one problem or the other. Since they found oil there is one problem or the other. The army are shooting the people anyhow. Sometimes you will hear gun shot in your room and you will know that this is what happens every day, you will just say another one again today. We have oil but the government take everything and the people are suffering because of the injustice of the government. The government, they think we are animals so they kill our people anyhow. Ijaw men are fighting to protect the people. But before we go to fight, we go to Egbesu. Egbesu is our god. She does not support suffering. She is the god of justice. She supports warriors to fight for justice. If you are using her name for something bad Egbesu will not answer you. We go to her to ask for protection, to say look oh, your

people are suffering, are you going to allow the government to kill all of us. Give us power so we can fight for justice. Because that is what Egbesu wants us to do she wants us to fight for injustice and that is why we the Ijaw man is fighting (Enai).

So far, I have shown in the previous section how ethnically Ijaw men justify violence as a necessary way of being a man in the Ijaw community and how the warriorhood identity contributes in shaping their experiences of violence. This section takes this discussion a step further by analysing how Egbesu-the Ijaw god of warrior-is intertwined in this warriorhood justification process. Before going into the analysis, I first provide a brief recap of Egbesu and how it relates to youth violence. This will be followed by an explanation of what Egbesu spiritual capital means as used in this thesis. Already, I have explained the meaning of the Ijaw community field in the previous section.

In Chapter 3, I discussed the belief systems in the Niger Delta and highlighted that Christianity, especially Pentecostal-Christianity, is supplanting traditional systems of belief in Nigeria. Perhaps not accidentally, Egbesu has remained as one of the traditional systems of belief which have thrived in the Niger Delta despite the huge religious shift towards Pentecostalism. Local residents describe Egbesu as the Ijaw god of warrior and justice. Egbesu hates to see her devotees suffer from injustice and when there is injustice Egbesu directs young Ijaw men to use violence to resist injustice and promises to protect them against bodily harm in the process of this resistance.

As highlighted in Chapter 2 the concept of spiritual capital is associated with the spiritual values and spiritual rewards connected to a particular religion and how such values mediate social relations (Palmer & Wong, 2013). Hence the concept of spiritual capital has the analytical potential to investigate different spiritual value systems and how such values shape social, economic and political relations. I have chosen the concept of spiritual capital as opposed to religious capital-which is what Bourdieu is linked with- because unlike Bourdieu, my focus is not on the institutional configuration of religion which is the focus of religious capital. Rather, my interest is to understand

how the spiritual values associated with Egbesu religion mediate to shape young people's responses to their experiences of violence.

Drawing from the above definition of spiritual capital, I define Egbesu spiritual capital as the spiritual values that are associated with Egbesu which when adhered to, offers spiritual reward in the form of protection and courage. These values include dietary restrictions, abstinence from sex and any form of intimate contact with women during war preparations, honesty, and initiation marked by scarring. In return, Egbesu possesses the body of each initiate who conform to these values and offers them protection and courage to resist injustice, violence for violence.

As we see in Enai's comment in the epigraph, Ijaw men justified violent militancy as a necessary reaction to their experiences of injustice as sanctioned by Egbesu. Enai, explains that violence-gun shots, deaths, suffering, injustice- has become a part of life in the Niger Delta since the discovery of oil in the region. In this context of continued suffering and injustice, Enai explains that Egbesu, the Ijaw god of justice expects young men to fight and protect the community with the promises of protection. As such, violence becomes for Enai, a matter of 'doing what Egbesu wants us [men] to do'.

Like Enai, another young man, Inemo, justified violence as a necessary reaction to the injustices of the government as sanctioned by Egbesu.

Inemo was born on the 25th December 1981 in Oporoza. Even though the hospital where Inemo was born is known to be the best in his village, Inemo recalls how his mum nearly died from labour complications due to the absence of basic modern health care infrastructure in this hospital and this incident has remained an especially notable moment which reminds him of the region's experiences of social injustices. He would say intermittently during the interview, 'that is how we are all suffering here, if not for the grace of God, somebody like me would not be alive today'. Even now as an adult, life hasn't become any less difficult for Inemo. He narrates the hardship he

had to endure during his many years of unemployment. Financial relief only came when he joined 'the boys'- militancy. When I asked Inemo how his experiences of violence is affecting him as a man, he explained that what he is doing does not deviate from what Egbesu wants Ijaw men to do given their experiences of injustice in the form of military brutality.

'Look at what happened in Odi, I am sure you know Odi in Bayelsa. The government came there and they kill everybody in that place. Even old women who don't know anything about oil, they shoot them. It's not only in Odi, everywhere in the Niger Delta. So as the warriors, Egbesu wants us to rise up and fight this injustice.

Perhaps it is not a coincidence that in this context where the Christian religion is now the dominant religion young Ijaw men still identified with Egbesu traditional religion. What could explain this is that even in this modern Niger Delta field, Egbesu, a traditional system of belief still made sense. Egbesu acknowledges injustice and sanctions violence. Thus, she reflects the world of violence in which young Ijaw men who seek her protection inhabit. Her emphasis on justice and physicality is certainly important in this context of injustice where young men have to face the brute force of the security operatives. Egbesu acknowledges young people's experiences of violence in all forms because she abhors all forms of injustices and she feels the pain in young men's body in the form of bodily harm hence she offers them protection against bodily harm. By offering Ijaw men protection, Egbesu restores their sense of safety in a world where they question the role of government to protect their lives.

Kleinman and Kleinman (1994, pp. 717-718 my emphasis italicised) aptly summarise the point above when they wrote that:

'when individuals and small groups go through traumatising experiences of violence, there is a tendency for them to participate in ritual activities or become absorbed in traditional culture...or in a god in which supplicants experiencing supplication look up to gods, ghosts or ancestors to provide a safer place'

In the interview with Ebiwei, he explains more clearly, how Egbesu did not differentiate herself from the pain of Ijaw men. She made their pain her pain like a mother, Ebiwei says.

‘When the government is killing us, especially the boys that are protecting the community, Egbesu is seeing all these things. She knows that these military are shooting the boys even when we don’t do anything [innocent]. So Egbesu is seeing our suffering, and like a mother, she is suffering with us. That is why she is giving the men protection.

However, there is an ironic twist to Egbesu cosmology. The power to protect, and the power to destroy are both regarded as the ambiguous nature of Egbesu cosmology. In many cases, Egbesu is said to have withheld her protection and allowed young men to be killed by the security forces because their sinful acts disqualified them from her protection. In the case of the Odi massacre for instance, it was rumoured that Egbesu withheld her protection and allowed the male youths to be killed by the security forces because they had been entangled in sinful acts including armed robbery which Egbesu does not approve.

The protective capacity of Egbesu is dependent upon one’s ability to follow the prescriptions of Egbesu and honesty and forthrightness are some of them. But young Ijaw men live in an especially unlucky moment. Perhaps in the pre-oil era, it might have been easier to be honest and forthright. But in this current Niger Delta community field marked by oil modernity, some Ijaw youth themselves are equally linked in the exploitative relations of oil. Young men are involved in kidnapping. Even worse, the money realised from kidnapping is personal and not collective wealth and this matters because Egbesu is said to occasionally overlook the arbitrariness of some actions if it benefits the collective. Some youths have also commodified the struggle by aligning themselves with the politicians, the elders and the oil companies and benefiting from the very struggle they claim to resist. These acts are thought not to propitiate Egbesu and as such young men are increasingly unable to secure Egbesu’s spiritual capital in the form of protection.

Given the socio-economic context of the Niger Delta today, many young men like Deri, find themselves in an impossible, conflicting circumstance of living an honest life according to the tenets of Egbesu. But he invokes Egbesu's protection anyway, hoping that somehow Egbesu would understand the impossibility of living a holy life in the Niger today.

'It is not easy to fight with the name of Egbesu because Egbesu will not protect you if you are using his name to do bad thing like oil bunkering, killing people, kidnapping but how can you get money to eat and take care of your family when there is no job anywhere'. So yes we do somethings Egbesu say we should not do. But we call oh her to understand that we are not kidnapping because we want to kidnap but because we don't even have money to eat (Deri).

In one of the focus group interviews, I had asked the respondents how they reconcile random kidnapping of normal people and Egbesu considering that Egbesu is said to provide protection only when it is used to resist injustice. Their response was that kidnapping is a potent resistant strategy which built the momentum for the policy directions to address the underdevelopment of the region. 'kidnapping is bad but we are kidnapping the people who are causing the problem so it is a way of pushing them to do what is right, if not that the boys started to kidnap the white people who are causing the problem too, the government will not give us Amnesty' they responded.

By constructing kidnapping as a resistance strategy, Ijaw men saw their actions not as criminal, but as resistance to injustice and this they believed qualified them for the protection of Egbesu. However, it was not true that only government officials or western expatriates were the victims of kidnapping. As discussed in Chapter 3, violent militants also kidnapped normal people who were neither government officials nor oil company staff and the fact that people who have no connection with the production of the injustice are victims of kidnapping have fuelled local scepticism about the ability of militants to attract the protection of Egbesu with such unseemly practices.

In addition to providing Ijaw youths with a sense of safety, Egbesu spiritual capital also shapes the material and symbolic dimensions of Ijaw men's lives.

On the material level, Egbesu helped Ijaw men regain control of their economic future. In one of the interviews at the Amnesty office in Abuja, I spoke with Siegha, an Egbesu devotee. Siegha began his interview by explaining how terrible his economic situation was before he joined violent militancy. He attributed his current improved economic status to Egbesu who fuelled their courage to confront the oil complex. According to Siegha, 'if not that Egbesu give us the power to fight the government and the oil companies without fear, Amnesty will not come and this salary every month that Amnesty is paying us we will not be talking about it'. In this sense, Egbesu fuelled Ijaw men's courage to confront the oil complex violence for violence which consequently improved their economic situation. With the monthly salary from Amnesty, Siegha says he has become a good husband and a good father and sends money occasionally to relatives in dire need of economic assistance.

In a symbolic sense however, Egbesu boys are very popular in their communities for courageously confronting the petro-complex. As such, they are highly respected by the local residents some of who believe that the youths are fighting for the collective good of the community.

It still startles me the way Pere spoke openly and without hesitation about Egbesu rituals. He even offered to take me to an Egbesu priest where I can hold some of the initiation objects like palm fronts and red clothes in my hand. But time did not allow, unfortunately. In the Ijaw communities, Egbesu's is a well-known cosmology. But there is often a simmering cultural hesitancy to discuss Egbesu. People did not often speak of Egbesu publicly. Rarely when they did, it was often with a voice low enough to suggest even to a stranger the profound mysticism of this god. But here I am with Pere, who was

speaking to me about this god even in public transport, his voice loud enough to attract a stare.

Pere's interpretation of violent militancy is that the youths were fighting on behalf of the community who 'look up to them for protection'. As such Pere emphasised that the youths were 'well respected' in the communities because 'Egbesu gave them the power to fight for everybody'. In this sense, Egbesu provided Ijaw men with symbolic capital in the form of respect and status in a local context where they are stifled and not recognised.

In one of the traditional wedding ceremonies I attended in the Niger Delta, I observed the kind of respect that Egbesu worshipers commanded in this region. The compère upon noticing the arrival of these group of well-known militants announced that 'we welcome our boys who are fighting for us. Egbesu, the god of Egbesu has asked them to fight for us and we have to respect them because if not for these boys many of us *for don* suffer. This road leading to this place we wey dey celebrate today will not be constructed by NDDC if not because of what they are doing, so let's respect these boys because they are trying for us'. These group of young men were subsequently ushered to the front role high table as chairmen of the ceremony.

Being a chairman of a ceremony is also symbolic in the sense that it demonstrates recognition. This recognition is highly valued especially in the context of Nigeria where chairmen of ceremonies is almost the exclusive preserve of older rich men and very rarely, older rich women. With more money acquired through violent militancy, Egbesu boys could trade their economic capital for symbolic capital and compete with older men for chairmanship and honour, and this enabled them to integrate themselves in the social life in this local context where gerontocracy has excluded them from participating meaningfully in community life.

However, as much as Egbesu worshippers were often respected and recognised in the communities, this was not always the case.

It was also in this particular ceremony in which Egbesu boys were celebrated and respected that I also observed that there is a darker side, a kind of the stigma that Egbesu worshippers faced. Egbesu devotees were feared to be part of a very dangerous divine. Common stories that circulated in the villages was that Egbesu worshippers had secret meetings in dingy places in which they propitiated the spirit of Egbesu for protection. In those meetings also, local legend tells how Egbesu worshippers did not arrive nor left the meeting with their physical bodies. They would transform from a human form into a spirit form leaving their human body at home while their spirits attended night meetings. Their spirits were thought to disappear after the meeting back to join the physical body. They were also thought to disappear during violent clashes when they feel they may lose their lives. There is no evidence that this rumours about Egbesu are true. It might have been a confused sense of the mystique that surrounds this Egbesu god. But these stories might as well be true.

Now in the new/modern Niger Delta community field, Christianity has changed the way the villagers think about Egbesu and the role of Ijaw men in it. To be an Egbesu worshipper is seen by many as to be evil, and backward. In the churches on Sundays, pastors well-versed in the bible spoke of Egbesu and her devotees pejoratively. 'The second commandment of the Lord our personal saviour says thou shall not bow thyself to any graven image or worship them. So my brethren, we have to tell our brothers who is still following all these Egbesu, to come back to the Lord when it is not too late for salvation' a pastor once preached.

As the sermon progressed, this pastor added further 'all these power they [Egbesu boys] have comes from the devil. It is only the Lord Jesus that gives power. The bible says that all power belongs to God. Amen'. 'Amen', the congregation responded. Perhaps, this pastor nursed secretly in his mind, the possibility that one of the men who would come forward to give offering with palms glued together, suggesting holiness could be an Egbesu devotee. Perhaps also, this pastor even received tithes from rich Egbesu boys. Egbesu

boys could have even invited this pastor to dedicate their magnificent homes or to anoint their luxurious cars as this is a very common Christian practice in Nigeria. Thus, Egbesu worshippers easily straddled between the two religions- Christianity and Egbesu- and this was common local knowledge.

Because Egbesu worshippers faced a high degree of social disapproval, they explored all sorts of strategies to find acceptance in the community. One of that strategy was to spread money lavishly in ceremonies so that news spread very quickly about their generosity, consequently increasing their likeability. Another strategy is that some Egbesu devotees thought it unwise to make their relationship with Egbesu public. On Sundays, they went to church, and if the local legend is true, they attended secret meetings in the night. They straddled between the new Ijaw community field and the old Ijaw community field; perching at the edge of Christianity and Egbesu and it was difficult to denounce the other since they both had their advantages in the new field. Egbesu brought protection and Christianity brought social acceptance. Perhaps Egbesu devotees understood the remarkably violent environment in which they are and the need to protect themselves in such context. In the pre-Amnesty era, violence was not just unlikely but certain and even though the Amnesty programme has restored peace largely in the region, there are still sporadic clashes between local youths and security forces and Egbesu boys might have thought it wise not to give up their spiritual protection completely in this violent climate.

Egbesu restored Ijaw men's sense of safety, brought them symbolic capital in the form of respect and recognition, and facilitated their integration in the local community life. But it took away social acceptance from them. Ijaw men go to the church to find belonging and acceptance only to find out that they have become a compelling target for sermon topic and that they were the classical examples of what the commandment of God does not approve. And so their lives were unsteady. They gained in one front but lost on the other.

Taken together, the analysis of Ijaw men's interview in this section reveals that Ijaw men justified violent militancy as a necessary reaction to their experiences of injustice as sanctioned by Egbesu. The revitalisation of Egbesu traditional religion in a context where Christianity is increasingly the dominant religion is tied to the fact that Egbesu provides devotees with protection and courage to violently resist the injustices of the petro-complex. Egbesu acknowledges the sufferings of her devotees and facilitates a process of resistance that helps young Ijaw men to negotiate a better future for themselves. She offers protection to Ijaw men, providing a sense of safety in a context where young men risk an encounter with bodily harm in their everyday social interaction. Yet, Egbesu's cosmology is a contradictory one. While her devotees are respected and recognised in the local context, they are not accepted in the Christian community. In this sense, Egbesu does not completely resolve young men's desire for social integration. However, Ijaw men must still live with the experiences of violence that pervades their everyday life and Egbesu provides the courage and the protection to engage with this violence.

7.4 Unemployment Undermining Manhood: Violence Recuperating Manhood by Providing Masculine Capital

In the previous Chapter, we saw in Nduka's comment that his understanding of himself and his role in society shaped his relationship with violence. This section extends this analysis by examining more deeply how young men interpret their experiences of economic harm in relations to their masculine identity and how these interpretations shaped their relationship with violence. In other words, this Chapter goes beyond a simplistic causal link connecting unemployment and violence to recognise the complex ways in which young men's perception of themselves embedded in their masculine habitus become crucial in shaping their relationship with violence.

The idea of masculine habitus helps us to understand how the gender identity of young men embedded in their habitus shape how they perceive and respond to experiences of economic harm and provides a 'masculine logic'

(Hagedorn, 2008) to violent practices. Thus, to understand how having a male gender identity shapes young people's relationship with violence we need to pay attention to young men's masculine habitus/dispositions and the masculine capital that constitutes these dispositions.

The primary argument in the first three subsections in this section is that unemployment weakens young men's ability to live up to their social roles as providers and undermines their financial preparedness for marriage and violence provides a pathway for young men to recuperate their lost manhood by providing them with masculine capital in the form of money. However, not all young men embraced violence as a means to recuperate lost manhood and I discuss this in the fourth section.

Before going into the analysis, I would like to mention that in the course of my fieldwork in the Niger Delta, no young man stated expressly 'I became a militant because I am trying to be a man'. But it was always implied in their responses that unemployment undermined their manhood and violence provided a pathway to recuperate this lost manhood. This could be explained by Bourdieu's point that habitus guides social action at the unconscious level (Bourdieu, 2005). As such, even though young men were striving to be men according to the dispositions of their masculine habitus, they did not always know that this is what they were doing.

7.4.1 Un/Underemployment and Young men as Providers and Breadwinners

Out of 61 young men who shared experiences of economic harm, 49 stressed their roles as breadwinners and providers and how they are unable to live up to this role due to un/underemployment. This role of a breadwinner is a crucial part of young men's understanding of themselves in relations to others in their societies. During a focus group interview with young men in Abuja, I asked them how their experiences of violence affect them as men. They replied:

There is no job for us in our community. If you go to the oil company they say there is no chance for you. If you are a man

and you don't have a job how can you provide for your family? You will wake up in the morning looking at everybody in the face. Your wife will say there is no food, you will say there is no money. Before you know it, there will be trouble in the family. She will hold your shirt and you may be just be angry and you beat her. Sometimes she will start to insult you and two of you will begin to fight. You are not going to feel like a real man. You are not doing what a real man is supposed to do.

Like young men, young women also experienced economic harm in the form of unemployment. But the experiences of unemployment is more extreme for young men in the sense that unemployment undermines young men's ability to perform their social role as breadwinners. The consequence is that young men who are unable to live up to this provider role are not able to garner 'respect'-a highly valued masculine capital- from their wives. What they get instead is 'insult', which further diminishes their manhood and makes them feel less than 'a real man'.

In addition to undermining young men's ability to perform the role of a provider, we can see from this focus group that unemployment can also erode cooperation and peace in the family, leading to interpersonal violence between spouses. However, this focus group interview is but one of the many interviews in which young men narrated their experiences of unemployment and how it undermines their ability to perform the role of a provider.

When I spoke with Perekeme, he told me how the economic barriers caused by unemployment made him unable to provide for his family. He also explained how this experience undermined peace in his home and diminished his self-esteem as a man. 'Every day, I quarrel with my wife because she is saying that everything is expensive in the market and I am not giving her enough money. It makes me feel bad about myself as a man', Perekeme said.

In Tombra's interview, the loss of self-esteem and respect due to his inability to provide for his family is also evident. 'Sometimes I feel useless as a man, how can you stay from Monday to Sunday and you cannot even bring money home to your family. If you tell them to do something they are not going to

do it because they will say this one is not even taking care of his family and he is talking to us'. Tombra explains that family members are unlikely to take instructions from a man who does not provide for his family and this affects young men's perception of their ability for leadership in the family. Tombra, also explained in the interview that 'doing nothing' or being unemployed makes him feel ashamed of himself as a man and makes him reluctant to go out with his wife because he fears that his wife may be discussing his unemployment with her friends and this may make them not to respect him as a man.

When you cannot even give your wife money to buy common Maggi (a seasoning sauce), how can she respect you as a man? She will start to beg people for money. Sometimes I don't like to go out with her because I don't know, maybe she is telling her friends that I am doing nothing and it make me ashamed of myself as man you know. (Tombra).

While young men such as Tombra and Perekeme were unable to get respect due to their poor economic status, those who had economic capital were highly respected. Mathew's story exemplifies how young men with economic capital are deemed respectable in the church community because their wives dressed expensively and this brought them respect and admiration. Mathew also points out the honour that comes with financial independence and performing the provider role in the sense that men who can pay their children's school fees without seeking financial assistance from relatives are well respected.

In this Nigeria, nobody will respect you as a man if you don't have money. Maybe it is not like this abroad but here, I'm telling u, it is only if u get money that people, everybody will be respecting you. Your family people will respect you because you are not going to beg them to give you money to pay your children's school fees. You have your money. You buy food for your family. Look at now in the church, the big men give their wives money to look beautiful. When she stand up in the church to go and give offering, everybody is looking and saying that man is a good man, he is taking care of his wife and the family and they will respect him.

Mathew's comment shows how the church can become an arena where masculinity can be displayed and this brings to light Hearn and Collison (1996) point that men will strive to achieve manhood in a range of places which in this case includes the church. Also, Mathew's interview shows how masculinity can be validated or expressed through femininity, in this case through a woman's appearance illustrating Connell's (2005) point, that masculinity is often constructed in relation to femininity.

The idea of doing masculinity in the church and through femininity is also evident in Temple's interview. Temple explains how his wife's pastor takes care of his wife and consequently this earned him respect and admiration amongst the congregation. Temple remembers the Sunday he followed his wife to church, how he had felt lacking watching the pastor's wife and the other women who dressed expensively and he wished that he, too, could afford such luxury for his wife.

'I go to Catholic Church. But my wife goes to Redeemed Christian Church. If you follow my wife to the church, you will see the pastor's wife. She is too fine. Fine like yellow paw-paw, her bag, her shoes, everything is beautiful, you will know her husband is taking care of her. People are seeing that and they respect her man. A man must provide for his family if not you are not a real man my dear. If I can provide for my wife like that, my dear will I not be happy?

Profound, indeed is this role of a provider for Peter, a 32-year old man from Bodo who explained that he 'will rather carry gun than let a woman feed' him. Peter says 'over my dead body will a woman feed me' because 'when a woman is feeding a man she will not respect him'. Peter tells a story of how his uncle, Nnamdi, an engineer, had lost his job a few years ago and consequently, Nnamdi had to depend on his wife, a nurse in a teaching hospital to support the family financially. But this led Nnamdi to lose respect from his wife as his wife shouted 'anyhow' at him even when Nnamdi made forgivable mistakes. Peter explained that this high degree of intolerance from Nnamdi's wife was due to Nnamdi's joblessness which meant that he lost 'dominance' and 'leadership' over his own wife who was supposed to

‘respect’ and even ‘fear’ him as the man in the family. He said the man became ‘boy boy’ for the woman. Boy boy is a Nigerian expression for a servant, a lowly, someone who is instructed rather than instruct.

Being without a job means that many men are unable to perform other fatherly responsibilities including paying their children’s tuition fees and offsetting household utility bills such as rent, electricity bills (NEPA bill) and even sanitation bills. When Fun-ebi spoke to me about his children’s recent dismissal from school due to late tuition payment, I sensed in his voice a feeling of weariness, sadness, and defeat.

‘Yesterday I followed my children to school to beg the teachers to give me some time so I can pay their school fees when I get little money. Even the light bill is there on the table. We have not paid NEPA since three months. As I am talking to you now, very soon now NEPA will come and they will cut the light. if I have money or at least a good job now things will be moving. I will be doing what I am supposed to be doing as a father’. You know all these things, if you are not able to do them, you will feel ashamed as a man. You are going to be saying these children I bring to the world I am not doing my best for them. (Fun-ebi).

Fun-ebi, lived in a face-me-I face-you house where people waited in a queue to use the shared bathroom in the morning. Perhaps in one of those mornings, as Fun-ebi waited in the queue he watched his neighbour’s children get ready for school while his’ stayed at home and this could have confirmed to him a huge personal failure, a kind of emasculation. This experience shamed Fun-ebi as a man and it made him feel that he has failed his children by failing to be a good provider.

7.4.2 Unemployment and Marriage Elevating men from Kala to Asiai pesi

In addition to the provider role, another common element of manhood according to the cultural context of the Niger Delta is marriage. The social role of men as providers presupposes the idea of marriage in the sense that unmarried men are usually aspiring providers. Traditionally in the Niger

Delta, marriage is an important institution for young men because it elevates them from the less powerful social position of junior men (*Kala*) to a more powerful social position of senior manhood (*asiai pesi*) in Ijaw dialect. Youths who have transited from young men to senior men have a stronger voice in the family. Also, young men who have transited to senior manhood can play meaningful roles that are traditionally reserved for elders like participating in important community meetings, and such participation provides an opportunity for the voices of young men to be recognised within the collectives of family and community.

But the problem is that marriage is usually a long and elaborate process. Grooms are required to pay the bride price and to provide numerous gifts to their prospective in-laws. In the context of unemployment, many young men are unable to afford the financial demands of marriage, and this means that the masculine capital in the form of honour and recognition that comes with marriage and senior manhood elude them. In the following interviews with young men, they explained what marriage means to them and how they have to grapple with their experiences of unemployment which limits their financial capacity for marriage.

Tonye is the first child of six children and the only son of his mother. He was taken to Calabar at age 12 to live with his aunt after family members concluded that his mother was mentally unfit to care for her children. In Calabar, life was extraordinarily difficult for Tonye. Because his aunt was between low paying jobs and her husband who was, for the most part, unemployed doubled as a compulsive gambler and gave away the limited financial resources that were available for the household. Now as an adult, Tonye's economic condition has barely improved. When I asked him how his experiences of violence affect him as a man, Tonye responded:

As I am talking to you now I am the only son for my mother. As the only son I am supposed to get married quick. In the meeting the family is asking if I am not going to marry a woman. Everybody is asking when you are going to bring the woman. But how can you be chasing a woman you don't even have a job. If I

don't have money I cannot get married because you are going to pay bride price, buy many things. You are going to buy yam, rice, drinks, and sow clothe. You know aso-ebi? You have not sowed aso-ebi. You need money.

Tonye speaks of how his economic status stops him from getting married despite the pressure from family members as the only son. It is a customary practice for the man to provide things like yam, rice, drinks, and more importantly bride price during traditional marriage. However, aso-ebi- a uniformed attire worn mainly by women to show solidarity and friendship is not a requirement for marriage. But many people in Nigeria today have embraced the aso-ebi culture because it brings the glam commonly associated with white weddings to the traditional wedding. The quality of the aso-ebi worn in one's wedding, the social status of the people who wear them, the styles in which the aso-ebi are sown can elevate traditional weddings from a mere traditional ceremony to the talk of the town. With many expensive aso-ebi weddings celebrated in popular Nigerian blogs like BellaNaija and Instablog9ja, non-aso-ebi weddings are often left out of social media celebrations and perhaps, Tonye, too, wished that his traditional marriage could make it to BellaNaija weddings.

Samuel's story is similar to Tonye's in the sense that a family meeting has been convened for both men regarding marriage. Samuel is a 39-year-old young man with a very attractive curiosity. When the President of the Ijaw Youth Council introduced me to Samuel, he asked many questions and expected answers for all of them; what are you studying in school, what are you going to do with what I am going to tell you now, are you going to give my answer to your teacher or what? When Samuel received a phone call from his highly revered uncle, he knew already what the call was about since his uncle rarely called and when he did, it was not for frivolities. His uncle had called to invite him for a meeting. When the date of the meeting came, Samuel travelled to the village and true to his feelings it was what he thought. The meeting was an intense family meeting attended by close relatives, and in the meeting, Samuel was reminded that he is supposed to be married now at 40.

But Samuel explained that he is waiting to have his own house and to get a better job so he can provide for his future family.

The pressure to marry also came through in the interview with Frank. Frank spends most Saturday mornings hanging out with his friends in a local bar which has the local reputation of a meeting point for sex workers and their clients. He enjoys sharing intimate jokes with women and many of them gave him a disapproving look when he joked. He also shows a keen interest in politics and sports, and he spoke about the two in elevated, flowery English. 'This Nigeria, one must say that everything is highly political and that is a well-known certitude that Obasanjo is a political lord' Frank chimed in when his friends brought up the discussion that ex-president Olusegun Obasanjo had hugely influenced the political appointment of one of their kinsmen and that Obasanjo's letter contributed largely to Buhari's election success. When his friend, Tari, turned towards him to say that Nigeria failed to qualify for the 2015 Africa Cup of Nations after losing to South Africa, Frank said that 'in saner climes, sportsmen are highly motivated for performance, but it is easily comprehensible that super eagles are malnourished of patriotism'. It was always as if Frank was determined to speak in exalted English. Perhaps, speaking in this manner allowed him to distinguish himself as a more educated man amongst his peers, and perhaps also, it was a way to communicate his exceptionality so as to be respected amongst his peers.

Frank has a girlfriend, Nneka, an Igbo girl from Enugu state. But anytime he follows Nneka home her parents asked with a tone heavy with expectations '*Nna* when are we expecting you to come? When are you coming to see us? When are you coming to knock on our door? Coming to knock on the door is an Igbo expression which describes when a man comes with his relatives to show interest to marry a woman, and usually, the main traditional wedding happens shortly after this. But Samuel who says he is 'doing nothing' at the moment often responded very vaguely to that question, saying 'very soon' and how soon he meant nobody knew. He said he did not explain in details to Nneka's parents what delayed him from coming to marry Nneka because he

expected that Nneka should have told her parents that he is unemployed and he expected Nneka's parents to understand what unemployment means for young men's financial preparedness for marriage.

An important concern for many unmarried men is that they were often disrespected in their families and their communities.

When I interviewed Nengi, 40, from Odi, he explained how he has been disrespected on many occasions because of his unmarried status. In the University of Port Harcourt where Nengi graduated from, he was one of the oldest students, but he wasn't always the most respected despite that reverence for elders is part of the culture. Nengi recalls that during his University days, men who were married were often accorded more respect than himself even though he was older. Now at 40, Nengi tells stories of how he travelled to the village during the Christmas holidays and how people would make disparaging remarks about his singlehood.

Once, Nengi's close friend had said to him 'even if you don't have money just give one girl belle [impregnate a girl] or are you saying that you cannot impregnate a woman too'. Nengi interpreted this to mean a double attack on his manhood; an insult due to his inability to get married and an attack on his virility, and the fact that this attack came from a close friend made him sad. 'Na my own homeboy, my own person wey suppose dey my side wey talk am' he said. Yet, even though Nengi was full of eagerness to get married, he is forced to reconsider his eagerness until his economic situation improves.

Today in the modern Niger Delta where many people have embraced Christianity, the issue of marriage has become even more complicated for young men. Young men are not only required to take on the financial responsibilities of traditional marriage. They also required to have a white wedding, and the more elaborate the two, the better. Like many traditional marriages, there is no better place where the unmistakable opulence of Nigerian culture can be seen, and men are culturally expected to fund this opulence. But many young men are unemployed, and money is scarce. Young

men want to have both traditional marriage and white wedding so that their marriage is recognised in both the new and the old Niger Delta community fields. But many young men do not have enough money for the two as Ebiarede explains in his interview.

‘...it’s not only traditional marriage oh. You have to do church wedding with the woman. Nowadays, many girls, if you say you are not ready to do white wedding they are not going to marry you. If you don’t do white wedding the church people will not respect you. Like now before you can register in Christian Fathers Association, you have to be married in the church. If they are doing something in the church, some people will not want you to do it if they know you are not married in the church. But where do you see money for the wedding? You have to buy this and buy that. My friend have wedding but since last year after the wedding he is paying people the money he borrowed for the wedding. He did not have money he went and borrowed because the girl said they must do wedding. He collected money up and down. Things are hard my sister. Wedding na big money.

7.4.3 Violent Militancy Provides Pathway to Manhood by Empowering Young Men with Masculine Capital

Out of 49 young men who stressed their role as providers and how this role is undermined by un/underemployment, 32 explored masculinisation pathway through violent militancy. Because young men’s masculine habitus disposes them to aspire to the role of a provider and to marry, they strived to live up to these expectations of manhood. Striving to live up these dispositions contributed to making some of these young men turn to violent militancy in the context where legitimate sources of employment are limited. In other words, violent militancy provided young men with a potent avenue to achieve manhood giving them masculine capital in the form of access to petro-dividends, honour, and even sexual access to women and this empowered young men in the field of masculinity. I develop this argument below drawing from young men’s interviews.

One Saturday morning, a few months into my fieldwork, I met Timi who very kindly, offered to take me around for sightseeing. ‘This is your first time in Bayelsa’ (?) This was not a statement. It was a question. Sometimes

Nigerians asked questions like a statement and it is only Nigerians or a non-Nigerian with an acquired Nigerian habitus that can understand this. ‘You have not even seen anything in this Bayelsa. I will come this night to take you out’. And so, that night after showing me many places including the Peace Park around Mbiama road known to be where militants laid their arms and accepted the Amnesty deal, we arrived in Aridolf hotel to hang out with some of Timi’s friends. The following field note was written later that night.

Today, Timi took me on a sightseeing after which we came to join his friends who were hanging out in Aridolf hotel. I requested for *paper soup* and water, after which I asked the waiter for my bill. Surprisingly, the waiter told me that Timi and his friends had settled my bill. I turned to Timi, and before I could even ask him any question, he explained. He told me that it was their culture for men to provide for the woman and since I was a female visitor, they considered it a responsibility to care for me. During this meeting, Timi and his friends who identified as ex-militants narrated their struggles as men. Ola one of Timi’s friends narrated how difficult life was before he joined militancy. He explained that when he was jobless and without money, women showed no romantic interest in him, ‘all the girls no send me that time because I no get money’ he said’. He explained further that when he joined militancy, not only did he get money, but he also attracted the kind of women he desired. He even joked that if he wanted to make me his girlfriend, all he needed to do was splash his cash on me, buy me designer bag like the one I had and I will just ‘follow him’. He spoke calmly with a deep voice. But his bearing suggested extravagant masculine confidence (Fieldnote, August 2016).

Similarly, when I interviewed Tonye he told me how his life had gone through ups and downs and how he found it difficult to provide for his family before he joined militancy. ‘If not that we started militancy many of us will not do anything for our families. No money, the children are there nothing to buy food for them until we use violence’. This statement suggests that violent militancy restored Tonye’s manhood by providing him with money to perform his provider role, something he was unable to do before militancy when he had little or no money.

As discussed in the previous Chapter, there is a consensus amongst many youths in the Niger Delta that violent militancy was the only way they could get the attention of the federal government since many peaceful approaches failed to deliver desirable results. This was echoed in Deri's interview in which he explained that it was only when the youths started militancy that the government implemented the Amnesty. Now with the monthly salary from Amnesty at around 50,000 Naira, Deri explains that while this money does not solve all his financial problems, it has improved his economic condition significantly. 'At least I get money to give three square meal for my family' he says.

If not the militant carry gun, the government will not shake body. When we use peace to say ok, see oh, the government, this is the problem, no one is listen to us. At least now they bring Amnesty the boys are getting money. People like me now, I get money to give three square meals to my family. Even their body is changing. Not when the children will sleep and they are hungry. Is that one good, as a man you are watching? At least the salary now is something. I want to build a house and this money they paying us is not good to build a house. But at least at all at all worse pass (half bread is better than none).

If masculinity is marked by economic power, respect and recognition then many militants were getting it and nowhere is this truer than in night clubs all over Nigeria but especially in the Niger Delta. Night clubs like House 99, Liquid Lounge and Ediz Wine bar are popular places where militants unwind and flaunt their membership in the wealthy club. The atmosphere in these clubs is saturated with music, often a mixture of American hip-hop as well as Nigerian and Ghana music. Girls, usually university students danced to this music with a sexual suggestion oozing from their dance steps. Militants are usually in the VIP section. When they wanted to observe the non-VIP part of the club an ad-hoc VIP table was created for them in the non-VIP Session instantly. After all, the essence of business is profits and militants had the cash to spend.

In the clubs, militants ordered Crystal Champagne and Hennessey very easily as if they ordered water, and they were the dream customers of many club

owners because business thrived with their presence. In fact, not only the club owners wanted militants, many girls desired them, and other young men deemed them very fortunate in a context where many of them could not even afford a VIP gate fee not to mention the bold designer belts adorning the waist of the militants. Unlike the peasant dressing of the men I had observed on my boat ride with Mike in Bodo, Militants dressed in expensive western designer outfits and perhaps such outfits were doing for them what they wished modern employment did; it brought them recognition and elevated their social status in the masculine field. In this sense, fashion offered these young men an alternative route to a modern lifestyle.

Once, in the club, a very popular militant had said to me that ‘now militants get money pass oyibo sef, all the girls wan follow them go’. He said that militant now had dollar power, and as such many girls would rather follow them home rather than foreign expatriates. I could not help but observe in the night club how militants were greeted rather than greet, and how they often had in their bearing the self-assured aura of people who knew how much they were wanted. Their follow men came to say ‘I am loyal Chairman, I just say make I come greet you’. Others said ‘senior man, I hail oh’. The money, respect and social recognition they could not get as unemployed men, they got as militants.

In the clubs, militants did not only receive social recognition from their fellow men. They were also recognised in Nigeria’s vibrant popular culture. Popular indigenous musicians like Duncan Mighty sang about wealthy politicians and about rich militants, and to being recognised in pop music makes being a rich man a fact. In fact, the way the militants behaved when the music in which they are recognised played is a proof that they are highly aware of how much validation such music brought. Militants danced to such music in ellublilent spirits and with pride, and they enjoyed the attention of the people in the club who looked towards them with admiration. But as I looked towards the non-VIP section of the club, I saw some of the young men who had come to greet

the militants, and I imagined that they longed for a life, where they too would be rich enough to be recognised in popular culture.

Outside the clubs, young men, in a very theatrical way, directed militants to park in special corners reserved only for the highest bidders. If the sex workers wanted dollar men, and the club owners wanted Champagne men, then the security guards also wanted a taste of the oil money. Militants often treated the security guards and waiters nicely with generous tips. Perhaps these militants saw in these men a shadow of their past lives- the misery of underemployment that fades dignity- and the way these waiters and security people rushed the militants when they left the club to beg for money is a fragrant prove of indignity. I even heard rumours that during Jonathan's presidency when militants had more money, they would wind down their car glass and toss bundles of hundred dollar bills which the security men and other lucky passerby scrambled over.

However, this symbolic capital that militancy brought was one of ambiguities. While militancy provided masculine capital for young men and elevated their social status, they also struggled to get social acceptance. Some of them could get sexual access to the most coveted girls in the night clubs but they could not win the acceptance of the parents of the women they loved. Now they had money to marry, but when they came to knock on the door, they were not accepted. Such was the experience of Comrade X, who explained during an informal chat how he was unable to marry the woman of his dreams, Veronica. Veronica's parents convinced her against marrying Comrade X whom she dated for the most part of her university days because he is a popular militant and they had a premonition of a bad future with him.

Underneath the copious display of opulence by the militants, one could sense in them a feeling of emptiness and despair coming from their desire to have financial stability and fight stigmatisation. They lived a fast life spending lavishly on women and acquiring the latest luxury. Some of them built magnificent houses and invested in big businesses, but their houses and

business were always subjected to political whims and perhaps in the privacy of their thoughts these militants understood like Veronica's parents that tomorrow is not assured.

Crucially, while violence provided a pathway for manhood for some young men, it is also important to highlight the dissonances regarding how other young men coped with their experiences of unemployment and its impact on their manhood. The next section expounds on this point.

7.4.4 But Young Men's Responses to Violence is More Complicated

Out of a total of 49 men who were unable to provide financially for their families due to un/underemployment, 32 explored masculinisation pathway through violent militancy as explained above. But other men turned to non-violent pathways. Six men turned to the church. Five relied on the support of relatives and three were supported by friends. It was not clear from their interviews how the remaining three young men dealt with their experiences of weakened manhood due to unemployment.

It is important to recognise the nuances in terms of how young men respond to their experiences of unemployment for many reasons. First, a dearth of research on how young men navigate unemployment without resorting to violence ensures that we unquestioningly accept one-dimensional accounts in which all male youths are stereotyped as violent because it is all we know about youths and violence. Second, the fact that violence is a part of everyday life for young people means that life is already hard for them and that they are already living an undignified life. As such, it is important that researchers treat their experiences of violence with dignity, and showing the complexity of their lived experiences is certainly one way to do this.

It is evident from young men's interview that in the context of high experiences of unemployment, personal factors such as friendships, family support as well as religion provided a more positive avenue for young men to

navigate manhood. Let us explore this point in more detail through the responses from youth interviews combined with my personal observations.

I met Paul at a night club in Port Harcourt. We exchanged contacts that night, and after several failed attempts to schedule an interview, I finally arrived in Paul's house for an interview on a Monday morning. Paul's younger brother Oifie was also in his house during my visit, and he graciously agreed for an interview. Oifie was opening a tin of Three Crowns milk placed on a wooden dining table when he explained the circumstances surrounding his name. His parents had given birth to him when they were going through economically tough times, and they hope that his birth would bring them prosperity. Paul and Oifie are two different men both in their convictions and their looks. Paul, tall and dark is very rich and many people believe his wealth came from oil bunkering and political thuggery and he is also notoriously associated with the mystical powers of Egbesu. His brother, Oifie, was the opposite; light-complexioned, and a Christian who does not support violence. When I asked Oifie how his experiences of violence affected him as a man, he replied:

'Nigeria is hard for the young man. Where is somebody going to start from? The university is increasing the money every day and it is only if you have money then you will go to school. The government is not doing anything to give the youth job. There is oil in our backyard. We are the one that is feeding this nation. When people say my brother is a militant, he is this and that I am not happy but you cannot blame my brother. The men are not happy because there is no job to feed their family. The people are talking but they don't know what the men are seeing. That is why they carried gun. They are suffering. Even me that is talking here if not that I gave my life to God, maybe I will join them. But I am a born again Christian and as a Christian I know that God is against violence. At least, I am working in the church. I am the driver for the church and if not that job I don't know how I will be able to take care of my people in the family.

As we see from Oifie's interview, direct support from the church in the form of a driving job provided a non-violent pathway to provide for his family. Also, his religious values or his religious habitus to follow Bourdieu influenced how he responded to his experiences. In as much as Oifie

acknowledges the suffering that accompanies young men's experiences of economic harm, he distances himself from violence because he believes that violence is inconsistent with his spiritual values.

However, the church and violent militancy weren't always all that sharply separated from each other. In fact the popular rumour was that Oifie's brother, Paul donated the church bus which he drove. People also said that Oifie benefited immensely from Paul's generosity considering that all his children are enrolled in private schools that his meagre driver's salary cannot afford. If this rumour is true, then not only did family support help Paul to meet his provider role as a man, the car donation from his brother which could have been purchased using money realised from militancy made his job possible in the first place. In this sense, the church and militancy are intertwined.

In addition to providing economic support, the church also serves as a pathway to manhood by offering young men leadership opportunities.

When I interviewed Tonye in his house in Port Harcourt, he had just returned from a Sunday service holding a church bulletin. The front page of the bulletin had a portrait picture of a man on a black suit and because the man tucked his right thumb underneath his jaw in the common way that most Nigerian pastors did in their posters, I imagined that he might be Tonye's pastor. Somewhere in the middle of the interview, Tonye began to speak passionately about his faith, and the link between masculinity and religion was implied as he spoke.

Tonye worships with one of the Pentecostal churches where he leads the youth wing of the church. He also collaborates with his pastor to provide marriage counselling services to church members, a position he said was giving to him due to the high degree of 'respect' he has in the church community. He was also absorbed in other church duties which came due to his admirably respectable image. In this way, religion provided Tonye with an opportunity for leadership and respect in a context where young people's chances at leadership and respect are constrained by gerontocracy.

While the role of family support in providing Oifie with an alternative pathway to masculinity can only be implied, it is obvious in Mekus' case.

When I followed Mekus to a traditional wedding ceremony, he told me how his brother had played a huge role in his life by being a good provider. His brother is a bank director who is thought to be well connected in the political circle. While militant men purchased luxurious cars using illegal wealth, Mekus drove the car his brother had passed down to him. His brother also dashed him many other things, including the designer wrist watch he wore that day. Mekus too was disposed to be a man, to seek social status and to seek recognition like the militants. But unlike the militants who perhaps did not have rich brothers, his brother's financial support could mean less financial pressure to embrace violent militancy as a means to social mobility.

Similar to Oifies's situation, during the interview with Nimi, he explained how he was able to get a job after many years of unemployment through the help of a church member.

When I finished school I came back home to join my father in the farm. Because of oil spills, which came to two of our main farms, we could not make enough money from farming again. So I travelled to come to Portharcourt to look for work with my certificate. I stayed three years in Portharcourt but no job. One day in church, our pastor said it was a youth week, so all the graduates in the church who are looking for job should submit their CVs to the altar. After some time, I got my job in the company of one of our church members. (Nimi).

Nimi's story is similar to Yoroakpo, a 27-year-old man who narrated how a very influential church member paid for his hospital bill in India. It was also this same church member who took up the responsibility of paying Nimi's university tuition fees when his father died two weeks after his matriculation. Now waiting for his NYSC, Nimi believes that financial success seemed just on the horizon. He has hope that after NYSC, he could find a good job and perform his manly responsibilities, including 'building a house' and 'starting a family'.

Despite the financial challenges Lucky faced when he was underemployed for four years, he did not consider violence. Lucky says his non-Christian parents thought him that violence hardly solves any problem. He looked up to his father, a local bicycle repairer whom he described in a very loving way as a kind, amiable man. Lucky's lucky day came one afternoon when he ran into Jide, an old university classmate in a local fuelling station. Their interaction in the fuel station was short, but they later met again before Jide left town for Abuja where he was pursuing a very lucrative supply contract. He was careful to keep Jide's contact securely because according to him 'I just had this feeling that something good was going to happen from Jide, I don't know I felt it'. Lucky's economic circumstance overturned quickly after meeting Jide as Jide used his contact to secure him a well-paying job. Now, Lucky says that life is no longer as hard as it used to be in the past when he woke up at '3 am' not because he wants to pee but because his 'stomach is doing summersault because of hunger'. He has also changed his children from a government school to a private school because the standard of learning in many government schools in Nigeria is poor. In this way, Lucky's friendship with Jide helped him to find a job which enabled him to be a providing father.

Bob lost his father at three. His mother, Patricia who had nursed the hope that her husband would become a successful man in the future was left alone to navigate the future with her only child, Bob, after her husband died in a ghastly motor accident. Few months after his father's death, Bob's uncles tried to evict them from the only property his father had in which they lived, arguing that since their brother did not marry Patricia traditionally, she had no right to inherit his property. This is another importance of traditional marriage, a demonstration of the social recognition and the economic security attached to it.

A few years later, the simmering conflict between Patricia and her in-laws had escalated to open hostility and allegations of death attempts soared. Patricia was forced to leave the house and escape with Bob for their safety. Life was very difficult for them and at many points, Bob doubted their own

ability to cope. But one day, amid their financial worries, Bob's mother decided to reach out to an old friend Vicky to ask for help. Even though Vicky explained that Patricia's plea did not come at the right moment, she promised to do something next year depending on her circumstance, and she did. Vicky provided financial support which enabled Patricia to start up a good business, using the profit to train her son in the University. Now a computer scientist, Bob explained that even though he wants a better job, he is happy that he can provide for his mother who had since stopped her business due to increasing infirmity. Bob's job came from Vicky's connections.

Young men are finding innovative ways of performing their provider roles without resorting to violence and *Akawo* is one of these ways. *Akawo* is a daily or monthly financial saving system operated sometimes by a committee of friends who know and trust each other. At an agreed time-monthly or yearly, the total money collected from members of the committee is given to all members one after the other following a rotational order. During a focus group interview, two young men explained how the money they received from *akawo* helped them to cope with the role of a provider.

'If not that we are helping each other in the *akawo*, I will not be able to bury my father because there is no money anywhere' David said. When David's father died, he did not only struggle with grief but the thought of how to raise funds for the burial complicated things. The role of a provider is not only limited to providing for the family. Young men are also expected to bear the financial cost for burials and like marriage, burials can be expensive often requiring elaborate entertainment. Thanks to the friendship network which provided money through the *akawo* contribution which enabled David to cater to the financial demands of his father's burial. Also, Buri another participant in his interview narrated how the money from the *akawo* contribution enables him to pay his rent every January.

To sum up, in this section, I have discussed how unemployment undermines manhood by decreasing the financial capacity of young men to perform the

social role of a provider and marriage. Young men see themselves as providers, and because of masculine capital such as recognition and respect attached to such roles, young men aspired to perform these roles. But these social roles require money and in the context where legitimate means of employment is scarce and violent militancy provides cash and to some degree respect and recognition, many young men embraced violence as a means to recuperate manhood lost due to un/underemployment. While a large number of young men explored violent pathways to recuperate lost manhood, other young men explored non-violent pathways including the church and networks of support from friends and relatives. In this sense, the issue of youth violence is not so much about unemployment neither is it entirely about young men using militancy as an avenue for criminal enrichment. Rather, youth violence can be understood as the struggle to recuperate manhood weakened by un/underemployment.

In the table below, I synthesise the core arguments in this Chapter highlighting different forms of masculine identity/role, how these roles are used to justify and explain violence and how violence helps young men to recuperate masculine capital.

Table 7.1 Masculine Identity, Impact on Manhood, how Violence recuperates

Manhood

<u>Masculine Identity/Masculine role</u>	<u>Explanations of Masculine Roles/Identity</u>	<u>Impact on Manhood/Justification for Violence</u>	<u>Violence as a Capital bridging resource.</u>
Warriorhood Masculine Habitus/ Ijaw Men as Community Protectors	Ijaw men see themselves as powerful warriors who must protect their communities against external threats.	Ijaw men justified violence as a necessary way of being a man in the Ijaw community Young men who are unable to conform to these roles are emasculated; shamed and disrespected	Violence provides militants with symbolic capital; honour, respect, recognition This respect is highly crucial in a context where local leaders infantilise young men
Egbesu Spiritual Capital	Egbesu is the Ijaw god of warrior and Justice. Egbesu is intertwined with the warriorhood culture in the sense that she expects young men to fight for justice in the community She promises spiritual protection and courage to young men who fight for the good of the community.	Ijaw men justified violent militancy as a necessary reaction to their experiences of injustice as sanctioned by Egbesu	Violence provides Egbesu men with symbolic capital: They are feared to be powerful and some local residents respect them as the boys who are fighting for the community Egbesu offers protection to young men in a context where they question the role of government in protecting their lives.

<p>Young men as Providers</p>	<p>Young men see themselves as people who have to provide the basic needs of their families</p> <p>Inability to provide these needs leads to loss of self-esteem, loss of control in the family, and disrespect.</p>	<p>Experiences of unemployment undermine young men's ability to perform their role as providers</p>	<p>Violence provides young men with economic (money) symbolic (cars, designer items, recognition, women) capitals.</p> <p>Not all men used violence to recuperate manhood. The church, family support and friendships helped young men to recuperate manhood lost due to unemployment</p>
<p>Marriage</p>	<p>Marriage elevates young men from junior men to senior manhood which comes with social status, respect, and social recognition</p>	<p>Marriage requires money. In the context of high unemployment many young men do not have money to marry</p>	<p>Violence provides young men with money which enable them to get married and to provide for their families.</p>

7.5 Conclusion

This Chapter has analysed how social factors related to gender identity, ethnic identity and religion shape how young men justify and respond to their experiences of violence. Ijaw men are socialised to see themselves as warriors who have the responsibility to protect their community against external threats. Based on this gender role, the experiences of violence became a problem especially for Ijaw men because it challenged their manhood and required them to demonstrate their manhood by resisting the oil complex, violence for violence. Hence, based on this gender role, Ijaw men justified violence as a necessary way of being a man in the Ijaw community. Further, with the spiritual protection and courage from Egbesu, the Ijaw god of warrior and justice, it became possible for many Ijaw men to resist the oil complex even though Egbesu's protection depended on living a life of purity which many youths were unable to live. The fact that Ijaw men see themselves as community protectors could explain why experiences of bodily harm were significantly higher amongst ethnically Ijaw men. Also, the social role of a provider and marriage shaped young men's relationship with violence in the sense that these roles require money and in the context of unemployment many men embraced violence since it provided money to perform these masculine roles. Even though not all men responded to lost manhood through violence, the majority of young men did and in this way, violent militancy can be understood as an effort to recover manhood lost due to unemployment.

Chapter 8: Conclusion: Youth, Oil, and Violence through the Lens of Political Ecology

As I stated in Chapter one, this thesis aims to explain oil-related violence in the Niger Delta from the perspectives of young people. This means an account of youth violence that focuses on understanding how young people justify, explain, and make sense of their relationship with violence in relations to oil exploration. My interest in a youth centred approach to petro-violence comes from the need to transcend the individual-level explanations which blame young men in particular for petro-violence, to an analysis which gives young people a voice by recognising how the social structure shapes their everyday agency.

In trying to understand young people's perspectives on youth violence, I use political ecology as a general perspective that shaped the arguments in this thesis. This is because political ecology has the analytical ability to capture the multi-level factors and the resource base, that shape how environmental processes are contested. In addition to political ecology, I have also drawn from Bourdieu's thinking tools-habitus, field and capital-and Connell's idea of hegemonic masculinity as a guide for analysis. These two theoretical insights enrich the political ecology approach; Bourdieu's tools help us to understand how the dialectic between structure and agency shapes how young people contest oil exploration, and Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity helps us to understand within Bourdieu, how the masculine gender identity/gender structure shapes such contestation/agency.

In bringing together these ideas, the thesis illustrates the arbitrary nature of the social context in which young people's lives are located. Institutional representatives use their views on youth violence to reproduce their power, denying young people any agency other than the enactment of violence and limiting the available resources which could have been used to improve young people's lives and move them further away from violence. Below, I

synthesise the major findings of this research by locating them within the boundaries of the theoretical approaches outlined above.

8.1 Major Findings

8.1.1 The Political Ecology of Oil in Nigeria Shapes Young People's Experiences of Violence

The analysis of young people's interviews shows that there is a collective belief amongst young people that Nigeria does not work for them. Precisely, young people recognise themselves as being excluded from the benefits of oil and take as theirs the inevitable harm associated with oil exploration regardless of where it occurs. The analysis in Chapter 6 captures the different ways in which young people experience oil related harm starting with experiences of political exclusion.

Young people in the Niger Delta strongly believe that their political interest is hardly realised not only at the local level but also at the federal government level. The feelings of political exclusion were common amongst young people from the two ethnic groups interviewed. At the local level, young people blamed their local leaders for excluding them from local political life. They accused their local leaders of failing in their traditional elderly duty of care by not challenging the oil companies and the federal government for their unjust practices against the oil communities. Instead, they explained that local leaders allied themselves with the oil companies and the federal government and such alliance allow them to accumulate petro-dividends and to enrich themselves through corrupt practices which leave little money for development projects which could have improved young people's lives. At the federal level, young people complained about poor representation at the lawmaking chambers of the government-the Senate and House of Representatives-due to their ethnic minority status. Such poor political representation has a strong bearing on the degree to which the interest of the oil communities is promoted in policies that have implications on the political economy of oil.

Concerns about poor political representations in the region can be traced to the pre-oil Nigeria when the Niger Delta region was merged with the Igbos in the Eastern administrative block in which the former accused the latter of political domination. But this has been deepened by the new politics of oil and to say that the sense of political exclusion has been renewed in the region in the last few years since the end of Goodluck Jonathan's presidency will be stating the obvious. To a significant degree, presidential power is connected to local violence. Goodluck Jonathan is the only man from the region to become the president of Nigeria, and while Jonathan's presidency signalled political inclusion for the region, this feeling was cut short when Jonathan lost his second tenure re-election bid in 2014. The region blames opposing political forces from the dominant ethnic groups especially the Hausas for Jonathan's loss.

The most serious consequence of the region's poor political participation at the federal level is that it represents for many young people, an explanation for why the current revenue distribution pattern which many of them believe dispossesses them has remained despite their long-standing agitations for an upward revision. Before the discovery of crude oil in the Niger Delta in 1956, Nigeria's economy was predominately agrarian and the revenue sharing pattern at this time was such that the regions controlled 50% of their wealth. However, the discovery of oil led to the enactment of new revenue-related policies such as the derivation principle, which moved the ownership of resources away from local communities concentrating it more in the hands of the federal government.

Successive governments have slashed the derivation principle from 5% to 3% and even 1%. Now, the derivation principle is currently at 13% meaning that the local communities retain 13% of the proceeds from oil while the rest goes to the federal government. Despite longstanding agitations for an upward revision of the derivation principle, the oil communities are yet to receive a favourable response from the government, and local residents attribute this to their lower standing in national political life. Further, the perspectives of

young people in the Niger Delta is that their poor political power affects other aspects of their economic lives; their ability to access high-status employment like jobs in the oil industry, the location of oil company headquarters, ownership of oil well license, and the location of important social projects such as higher institutions of learning.

In addition to poor political participation, economic exclusion is a very big problem in the region as many young men shared experiences of economic harm in the form of unfair revenue distribution and un/underemployment. There is a strong belief amongst young people that jobs in the oil industry and other well-paying jobs in government institutions favour mostly the politically dominant ethnic regions. They also expressed concerns that the main indices of revenue distribution such as population size means that the ethnic majority groups, especially the North receive more share of oil revenues. Local residents often cited this example to support their claims about being excluded from the material benefits of oil. In the past, local youths were told that their lower educational status makes it difficult for them to access oil company jobs many of which requires highly specialised skills. However, now, some government programmes including PAP are training local youths in various skills that are relevant to the oil industry. But these youths complete their training and there are no jobs available for them.

While the region does not participate meaningfully in the political, economic and social life of the country, experiences of environmental harm are growing here more than in any part of the world and the major sources of environmental harm here are oil spills and gas flaring. The cause of the oil spill is often disputed. On the one hand, MOCs attribute a significant number of spills to pipeline vandalism or bunkering by local youths. On the other hand, local youths justify oil bunkering as a necessary means of livelihood in the context of high economic exclusion and attribute the majority of the oil spill incidents in the region to equipment failure by MOCs.

In 2011, reports by the United Nations validated local concerns about their poor environmental quality when they named the Niger Delta the world pollution capital (United Nations Environmental Programme, 2011). But despite this report recommending that comprehensive remediation of the Niger Delta is dire, not so much has been done to improve local environmental condition due to politics and bureaucracy.

Young people expressed concerns about the multiple ways in which the degradation of their environment affects their lives. First, the quality of local life has been undermined due to lack of means to afford basic needs since the main means of livelihood here is subsistence agriculture and oil spills have made fishing and farming problematic. Local concerns for health and safety are rising in the context of high experiences of environmental harm. With the national unemployment rate at 18.8% (Africa Check, 2018) the rest of Nigerian youths are by no means excluded from the economic suffering that comes with unemployment. But the added experiences of environmental harm means that young people in the Niger Delta feature more predominately in this suffering.

As I highlighted earlier in this, young people from two different ethnic groups-Ogoni and Ijaw- were interviewed in this study and youths from these two ethnic groups shared experiences of environmental harm. However, unlike respondents from Ijaw ethnic group, youths from Ogoni ethnic groups emphasised the intimate ways in which their social lives are connected with their environment, and how these connection have been severely disrupted by oil exploration. For example, while Ijaw youths experiences of environmental harm focused only on how local agricultural life has worsened due to oil spills, Ogoni youths such as Mene, Lah and Lera recognised the impact of oil spill on agricultural practices but also how oil disrupts other forms of local life including traditional religious practices, traditional medicine, and sense of place. These differences in terms of how youths from these two ethnic groups articulated their experiences of environmental harm could explain

why experiences of environmental harm were significantly higher amongst ethnically Ogoni men (66.7%) than ethnically Ijaw men (10%).

Alongside these experiences of political and economic exclusion and environmental harm, oil exploration has also harmed young people by increasing their experiences of bodily harm, and this was the experiences of ethnically Ijaw men in particular. Out of 40 Ijaw men interviewed, 39 (97.5%) shared experiences of bodily harm while out of a total of 30 Ogoni men interviewed, 9 (30%) shared experiences of bodily harm. Young men reported being targeted unfairly by the security officials of oil companies and the federal government deployed to secure very costly oil infrastructure.

Taken together, what these experiences of harm illustrate is that violence is a part of the Nigerian society because it manifests in young people's everyday lives in different forms. It manifests in the resource economy in which young people are excluded, in the political life at all levels in which young people do not participate meaningfully, in the pollution that diminishes local livelihood, the collapsed road infrastructure that subjects young people to a high possibility of road accidents, and the scars that young men bear from their disturbing encounter with the notoriously brutal security forces in their region. Crucially, these experiences of violence create a context in which young people's aspirations are hardly realised. The consequence is that many young people in the Niger Delta are frustrated and their sense of hopelessness and lack of belonging run very deep. They believe that the oil companies, the federal government and their local leaders are shortchanging them, and in a context where peaceful negotiations have delivered no good results, young people have embraced violence as a potent strategy to negotiate a better future for themselves.

8.1.2 Institutions Reinforce the Cycle of Violence

The second finding of this study is that institutions established to respond to the development needs of the Niger Delta reinforce young people's experiences of violence. As we see in Chapters, 1, 3, 6 and 7, oil raised the

hopes of local residents about the rapid development of their region. Local residents were told that oil meant wealth and automatic access to a better life. Unfortunately, the reality on the ground is that as oil exploration expanded in this region, their development needs increased.

In response, the federal government put up some institutional mechanisms to accelerate the development of the region. But there is evidence that these institutions, rather than driving the socio-economic transformation of the Niger Delta reinforce young people's experiences of structural violence-positioning them further away from the benefits of the oil that surrounds them. The Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP), for example, which was created to train local youths in skill acquisition and drive development projects despite some progress has become an avenue through which politicians and senior militants enrich themselves, reducing the funds available for development projects which could improve the quality of life for oil communities. This amplifies young people's experiences of economic exclusion and makes them very frustrated with life.

A similar story exists for local politicians and other development agencies such as NDDC where corruption has meant that money for development has gone into private pockets reinforcing young people's experiences of exclusion. The majority of government officials at the federal level of government as well as the staff of oil companies bring up this point to explain youth violence, and this helps them to attribute youth violence to the failure of local leaders and greed on the part of the youths. However, such explanations of youth violence allow them to reproduce their position of power in the field of the political economy of oil. Because through such definitions, they can justify the militarisation of the region and absorb themselves from any policy effort that may be implicit if they admit any responsibility for the violence.

However, the majority of local leaders challenge this explanation of youth violence arguing instead that development agencies are mere additional

conduits through which the federal government continue to control the affairs of the region. They blame the federal government for asking that money for development agencies be used to fund elections and for underfunding which limits the number of development projects realisable in the region. Meanwhile, one local leader attributed violence to young men's destructive tendency which makes them incapable of good leadership. This view of youth violence helps local leaders to reproduce their power in the field of the political economy of oil because characterising young people as incapable of leadership justifies gerontocracy which positions older people in leadership positions and access to petro-dividends that may come from such positions while excluding young people from both. However, the majority of experts and practitioners and NGO staff attributed youth violence to poor governance which undermines young people's hope and aspiration and forces them to embrace violence as a way of bringing value back into their lives.

8.1.3 Social Factors Structure Young Men's Responses to their Experiences of Violence

Ijaw men suffer the majority of the experiences of bodily harm and cultural factors related to warriorhood identity and Egbesu belief practices are crucial for shaping Ijaw men's experiences of bodily harm. Ijaw men are socialised to see themselves as strong warriors who have the responsibility to protect the community against external threats and as such they saw themselves as people who must protect the community against their experiences of oil-related violence, and this required them to use violence to resist an equally violent security force. Hence, through violence, young men reproduce the violent gender structure. Even though the warriorhood culture is an age long Ijaw culture which dates back to the era of palm oil trade, many Ijaw men still employ this violent identity of their past today because it justifies the use of violence to deal with experiences of violence which have become the norm in their everyday lives.

Because Ijaw men are positioned as community protectors, they justified violence as a necessary way of being a good man in the Ijaw community. As such

violence for them was not a deviant behaviour, it was a matter of doing what they are supposed to be doing as Ijaw men. In a context where young men's chances at leadership, respect and recognition is undermined by gerontocracy, violence brought back value to young people's lives by offering them respect and recognition- important symbolic capitals which improve their social position in the Ijaw community field. The warriorhood masculine identity is tied intimately with Egbesu traditional religion in the sense that Egbesu, the Ijaw god of justice and warriorhood sanctions violence against injustice and offers protection to Ijaw men who offer their bodies to such violence. As such, in this context where the Christian religion is quickly supplanting the traditional belief system, Egbesu thrives because she sanctions violence against injustice and provides young men with a sense of protection as they violently resist injustice.

Other crucial social factors that shape how young men respond to their experiences of violence include marriage and the provider role which are both common versions of manhood in the local context. The ability to fulfil these roles means that young men can accrue highly valued masculine capital, including respect, honour and ability to participate meaningfully in community lives just like elders. Where young men are not able to live up to these roles, their transition from junior to senior manhood is prolonged, and they are usually perceived to have failed as men. But marriage is an elaborate process which requires money just as being a provider, and in the Niger Delta, jobs are scarce and as such young men see unemployment as an obstacle to manhood. Because young men are socialised to see these roles as standards of manhood, they strived to live up to them and in a context where legitimate livelihood opportunities are limited, many young turned to violent militancy as an avenue to achieve manhood. Violent militancy provided young men with masculine capital in the form of money, respect, recognition and even sexual access to women.

A lot of challenges that many young men in the region face do not appear to be present in the lives of violent militants. While the majority of young men struggled to marry and to live up to their gender roles as providers, militants built magnificent houses and wore expensive western designer brands. Even in the clubs

where young men struggled to afford entrance fees, militants were known as champagne men, and in social functions, they were honoured as chairmen. In this sense, violence helped young men to restore masculine capital that has been undermined by unemployment and petro-capitalism.

Even though the majority of young men who experienced unemployment embraced violence as a pathway to recuperate manhood, some men explored a non-violent pathway to manhood including the church, friendship networks and the support of relatives. These complexities of the social world are often obscured in one-dimensional accounts in which youth violence is attributed solely to greed on the part of young men (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004; The New York Times, 2007).

The fact that young men strived to live up to the dispositions or values of their masculine habitus validates Bourdieu's point that habitus structures social actions (Bourdieu, 1990; Bourdieu, 1973). But the fact that young men chose different pathways to manhood shows that opportunities in the social context can shape reflexivity and agency. Hence, we cannot understand young men's relationship with violence in terms of their masculine habitus alone. Rather, young men's relationship with violence is shaped by the relations between their masculine habitus and opportunities available in their current local context-the field.

Taken together, what these three major findings show is that youth violence is a complex phenomenon which is multi-causal and hence requires multiple solutions. Crucially, these findings can enrich our understanding of youth violence and provide grounds for questioning oversimplified accounts in which youths are blamed for violence without recognising the structural dimensions of this violence. With this being said, I discuss the contribution of this thesis and finally, the implication of these findings.

8.2 Contributions to Knowledge

8.2.1 Empirical Contributions

This research, I hope, deepens our understanding of youth violence by illustrating how the political ecology of oil shapes young people's experiences of violence, how institutions reinforce these experiences and how having a male gender identity shapes the responses to violence. Rather than what follows in many accounts of youth violence in which young people and young men, in particular, are blamed for violence even though they are the ones most affected by it, these findings help us to understand the complex factors which interact to shape young people's relationship with violence. By researching youth violence through the perspectives of young people, we see that the dispositions of young men's masculine habitus and the opportunities available to them influence their relationship with violence. By showing how the structural context shapes young people's relationship with violence, this research adds to an increasing number of scholars (France & Roberts, 2015; France, et al., 2012; Mendoza-Denton, 1996; Fraser, 2010) whose work highlight how young people's relationship with violence is shaped profoundly by structural factors out of their control.

8.2.2 Redefining Violence Using Bourdieu

In addition to the empirical contribution above, the insights from Bourdieu's thinking tools-habitus, field and capital help us to understand young people's relationship with violence in a way that has not been done in any work on youth violence in the Niger Delta. The concept of field helps us to understand the dynamics of the social context in the Niger Delta and how changes in the social context shape youth experiences of violence. In Chapter 5 the concept of field helps us to understand the arbitrary conditions of the institutional landscape that sets regulations and implement policies that crucially shape young people's lives. Also, in Chapter 7, the concept of Niger Delta community field helps us to understand how oil modernity means that young people are confronted with modern meanings of manhood different from what

was obtainable in the pre-oil era and what these changes mean in terms of young men's relationship with violence.

Analysing the dynamics of the field alongside the concept of capital enables us to gain a deeper understanding of what logic guided young men's actions in their field, and this was very important for understanding the gendered nature of youth violence. Ultimately, the concept of habitus helps us to understand how violence becomes embedded in social lives and how it is reproduced as a part of society. For example, habitus helped to explain how institutional actors reproduce the social order marked by structural violence through the way they frame youth violence. At the same time, the concept of masculine habitus also helps us to understand how youth violence is the reproduction of the internalised gender structure.

Together, these three concepts from Bourdieu help us to understand how violence becomes an inescapable part of young people's lives. By helping us to better understand how violence becomes an integral part of life in the Niger Delta, Bourdieu's insights can help us bring nuance to our understanding of violence especially in the context of Nigerian society. Given the ubiquity of violence in young people's lives, I propose we define violence as an accepted part of life. Defining violence this way helps us to capture the experiences of all the 84 youths I interviewed in the Niger Delta who live with violence in one form or the other as part of their everyday lives. Crucially too, understanding violence as part of the society shifts the focus away from youths as social problems to a discussion of how to emancipate the youths from the violence of the society, and such discussion is very central to Bourdieu's critical sociology. On this note, I move to the next section where I suggest some ideas that may help us to tackle the violence of society, but before that, I highlight another important theoretical contribution of this thesis.

8.2.3 The Innovative Confluence of Bourdieu's Tools and Connell's Hegemonic Masculinity Advance Political Ecology

By combining Bourdieu's tools and hegemonic masculinity to study youth violence in the Niger Delta, this thesis makes novel theoretical contributions to the political ecology literature. Political ecology is about how power relationships shape environmental struggles. In this light, the contribution of habitus to political ecology is that it could help to account for how structural relations of power and human agency shape environment struggles. In the context of this thesis, the concept of habitus helps us to understand how structural factors related to ethnicity, religion, gender relations as well as corporate and state violence shape youth violence. By combining the concept of habitus with hegemonic masculinity, it became possible to explain more explicitly how gender power relations is a crucial aspect of the habitus. The concepts of field and capital also enrich political ecology because they are useful for explaining the social meaning of environmental struggles. Applying both concepts in this research help us to understand the social meaning of youth violence, because they point attention to young men's social position in the Niger Delta community filed, and how violence helps young men to bring value into their social lives.

In seeking to balance many one-sided accounts in which young people are blamed for violence, an increasing number of scholars are combining insights from Bourdieu and political ecology to provide a more rounded picture of young people's relationship with violence in a context of ecological change. (France et.al, 2012, Bottrell, 2009). Others have used the idea of hegemonic masculinity to shed light on the ongoing crisis of masculinity, highlighting the role of social factors in shaping young men's relationship with violence in the African Context (Golden, 2012; Dolan, 2002; Ramphele, 2002). This thesis contributes to these debates by combining Bourdieu and hegemonic masculinity to provide a political-ecological account of youth violence in the Niger Delta from the perspectives of male youths in particular.

Also, by applying the concept of capital to interpret the social meaning of youth violence in the context of the Niger Delta, I hope to contribute to the larger community of scholars who are extending Bourdieu's concept of capital to highlight the role of power resources in shaping sociological relations (Boamah and Overa, 2016; Fraser, 2010; Morrow, 2001; Erel, 2010; Schaefer-McDaniel & Nicole, 2004).

8.3 Implications of Findings

Based on the findings of this thesis, a number of actions can be taken to address violence as an accepted part of young people's lives. There is not a bulletproof solution to young people's problems because the breadth and scale of petro-violence is a rather larger problem. However, a few recommendations could constitute an important starting ground for addressing youth violence in the Niger Delta.

First, addressing youth violence in a sustainable manner requires us to recognise the geopolitical dimensions of petro-capitalism in the production of local violence. When youth violence is explained narrowly as criminal behaviour, it obscures the complicity of MOCs in the production of local violence and discourages conversations about responsible cooperate practices which can open debates about transnational justice. A political ecology approach to youth violence rearticulates the dynamics of youth violence by capturing how MOCs play a part in local violence especially through very poor environmental practices, resource extraction, and the arbitrary use of security forces in the local communities. If we are to achieve long term peace in the Niger Delta, the cooperate practices of oil companies must align with local concerns, especially as regards environmental degradation and the securitisation of the Niger Delta. Academics, NGOs and activists are doing a good job in terms of highlighting human rights violations in the Niger Delta by the security forces of MOCs and the federal government and it is very crucial that such work continues to ensure that oil exploration does not continue to benefit MOCs at the expense of the local communities.

Within Nigeria, there is a dire need to address the problem of revenue distribution pattern because it is an important source of young people's feelings of economic exclusion. Resource control is one of the most contentious topics in Nigeria and the Nigerian Biafra war reminds many Nigerians just how dangerous issues related to the political economy of oil could become if not handled well. But the fact remains that in Nigeria today there is almost a consensus that the current centralist federal structure benefits only those with political power or those close to it, disadvantaging the rest of the citizens. This frustration is reflected not only in youth violence in the Niger Delta but in the increasing calls for secession and restructuring by other disgruntled groups like the IPOB-Indigenous People of Biafra. It is not certain whether a decentralised Nigeria will work better than current centralist Nigeria because studies show that decentralisation does not always translate to the efficiency of governance especially if the subnational governments-local and state-remain corrupt (Festus, et al., 2009; Suberu, 2004). But what we have seen so far in Nigeria is that corruption and inefficiency are at an abysmal level in Nigeria's centralist structure and the government needs to encourage conversations about what new structures of government might work better.

Also, addressing the problem of youth violence will require a radical change in institutions of governances in Nigeria from being channels where public resources are channelled into private pockets and justified as taking a region's share of the national cake to strong institutions where there are serious consequences for corruption. Further, Nigeria could benefit from constitutional reforms which could reconsider provisions like giving immunity to government officials which allow them to engage in corrupt practices in large measure while in office, and by the time they leave office, they have already syphoned enough public funds to settle equally notoriously corrupt anti-corruption agencies and an ineffective judiciary.

Also, we see from young men's interviews that many of them explained that they engaged in violence because they are 'doing nothing'. To stretch this

phrase further, 'doing nothing' means frustrations about the absence of legitimate employment and the high chances of considering a violent economic alternative. As such, the need for a job was used to justify violence, and with this in mind, it is crucial to engage young men with productive employment. Since manhood is not only associated with money but dignity, honour and status, institutions working to address youth violence should take these multiple meanings of masculinity into account when planning youth employment programmes. For example, since social changes in the Niger Delta community field means that many young men aspire to have modern employment which gives them more sense of pride, increases their respectability, and provides enough money to cope with the demands of modern day family needs, then the question is what kind of job would allow young men to provide for their families without jeopardising their respectability or self-esteem. Crucially, even though unemployment poses more problems for young men, both men and young women need employment opportunities because providing employment opportunities for only men will be disastrous to young men and women in the long run.

Finally, addressing youth violence in the Niger Delta requires understanding the cultural embeddedness of violence. Young Ijaw men justified violence based on the Ijaw warriorhood culture even when this culture subjects their bodies disproportionately to experiences of bodily harm. If Ijaw men's identity is asserted through violence, then it means that we have to question the appropriateness of cultural norms such as warriorhood which supports violence as a highly valued masculine attribute. Is it fair that Ijaw men's bodies who are already subjected to harsh economic, social and political conditions associated with oil exploration continue to be etched with cicatrices which remind them that pain is an accepted part of their lives? Is it not time for academics, NGOs, the media, religious organisation and development institutions come together to encourage a humanising men's movement which will drive conversations away from violent cultures which emphasise violence as a part of male identity to a culture in which young men can be communal without the use of violence?

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