Can Poor Neighbourhoods be Correlated with Crime? Evidence from Urban Ghana

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Abstract

The subject of crime and poverty has long been of interest in the field of crime studies. Consequently, many studies in criminology have explored the extent to which crime correlates with poverty and the mechanisms that facilitate this relationship. Based on a household survey and a qualitative study conducted in different socio-economic neighbourhoods in four key cities (Accra, Kumasi, Sekondi-Takoradi, and Tamale), this paper explores the extent to which crime and poverty can be correlated in urban Ghana. This is interesting given the fact that limited studies have been undertaken on the subject of crime and poverty in urban Ghana, although a large body of literature exists on urbanization. The paper reveals that low-class and high-class neighbourhoods were assessed to be relatively safe compared with middle-class neighbourhoods—a conclusion that contradicts broad findings in the criminology literature. The relative safety of low-class neighbourhoods compared with middle-class neighbourhoods is attributed to strong social cohesion and the presence of guardianship at all times of the day in poor neighbourhoods. However, the findings of the paper also suggest a relationship between poverty and crime for specific crimes such as sexual and property offences, in line with the literature. The study recommends that crime prevention measures be place-specific and that urban planning in Ghana recognize in practical terms that a built-up environment can facilitate as well as prevent crimes.

Key words: crime; poverty; urban; Ghana

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Introduction

Growing urbanization in much of the global South is associated with rising urban poverty (Mitlin & Satterthwaite, 2013; Satterthwaite & Mitlin, 2013). Although currently South Asia holds much of the urban poor, rapid economic growth in the region is leading to a rapid decrease in its urban poor population (Grant, 2015a). On the contrary, as Grant (ibid.) notes, rapid urbanization and the 'not too good' economic performance in Sub-Saharan Africa are creating cities of increasing inequalities and poverty.[1] A report issued in 2007 by the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA), titled *Urbanization and insecurity in West Africa: Population movements, mega cities and regional stability*, notes that 'in the absence of appropriate action to confront the problems of unplanned or unmanaged rapid urbanization, the results will be general human insecurity and instability both nationally and sub-regionally' (UNOWA, 2007: 11). Viewed in this context, the question of crime and poverty becomes a subject of greater importance in a future Sub-Saharan Africa which is largely predicted to be urbanized (Satterthwaite, 1996; Grant, 2015a, 2015b).

The subject of the poverty–crime nexus has been extensively studied elsewhere, especially in the Western world and Latin America. It has yet, however, to be subjected to any extensive scientific and empirical analysis in Ghana in particular, and Sub-Saharan Africa in general. This study therefore adds a Third World or Sub-Saharan Africa perspective to this area of criminological inquiry and aims to enhance our understanding of the poverty–crime nexus—if not of crime aetiology as a whole. To the best of our knowledge, only a few scholarly articles exist on crime in Ghana, never mind on the subject of the crime–poverty nexus (see Abotchie, 1997; Appiahene-Gyamfi 2002, 2003; Adu-Mireku, 2002; Tankebe 2009, 2011). Many of these studies have focused on analysis of aggregated police crime data, such as the studies of Appiahene-Gyamfi, and of the police and the criminal justice system, as in the work of Tankabe. More recently, Obeng-Odoom et al. (2014) have analysed crime as a key driver of the proliferation of gated-communities in Ghana and Malaysia, but he found a heightened sense of insecurity among wealthy households residing in these communities relative to the deprived majority. Although a careful assessment of these existing studies reveals some implicit or indirect attempts to link crime and poverty, a more focused and direct attempt to explore the linkage has been lacking thus far.

According to Hipp and Yates (2011: 955-956), although much debate and uncertainty exist 'across the field of criminology regarding which characteristics of neighbourhoods or communities create more crime, one bedrock conclusion is that the presence of more poverty is associated with more crime'. To what extent is this conclusion applicable to urban Ghana? In other words, are poor low-class and urban neighbourhoods more crime-prone than middle- and high-class neighbourhoods in urban Ghana? Based on a household survey and interviews conducted in 13 different socio-

[1] Although recent economic growth rates in many Sub-Saharan African countries, especially those linked to natural resources, have been better than past decades, growth is not robust enough to facilitate rapid economic growth and development (Grant, 2015a).

economic neighbourhoods (low-, middle- and high-class) in four key cities (Accra, Kumasi, Sekondi-Takoradi, and Tamale), the current study explores the extent to which crime can be correlated with poverty in urban Ghana. After the introduction, the paper is divided into five parts, beginning with an overview discussion of the theoretical perspectives on crime and poverty. This is followed by the study's methodology and then a discussion of urbanization, poverty, and crime in Ghana. Next, the paper explores the relationship between crime and poverty in Ghana based on the survey and interview results, and it ends with the study's conclusions and policy implications.

Theoretical perspectives: Crime and poverty nexus

According to Pridemore (2011: 739), 'the theoretical literature addressing the association between social structure and violence has a long history in Europe and the United States'—what can be broadly described as the Western world. This long history associated with extensive studies on the subject of crime and poverty has led to the robust conclusion that neighbourhoods with higher levels of poverty will at the same time experience higher levels of crime compared with middle- and high-class neighbourhoods (see Wilson, 1987; Peterson et al., 2006).

Another widely shared, robust conclusion in the field of crime studies is the view that fear of crime or the risk of being a victim of crime is not equally or randomly distributed over space, and that these differences reflect the level of socio-economic differences across and within neighbourhoods (Sampson, 2006; Ceccato, 2012). Consequently, many models and theories in the field of criminology suggest that poor neighbourhoods, with their run-down infrastructure and possible social problems such as crime, delinquency, and unemployment, tend to generate fear and provide cover for criminals. Consequently, crime tends to be higher in these poor neighbourhoods than in middle- and high-class neighbourhoods.

Nevertheless, a more recent competing view has challenged the dominant proposition of higher poverty levels triggering higher crime incidence. In broad terms, these counter propositions or models hold the view that poverty does not necessarily trigger crime if strong social control measures, as well as policing, are in place. Furthermore, poverty and economic downturns can slow crime rates, because they limit the number of potential targets as well as limit the rewards or benefits from criminal activities (see Plumer, 2010).

However, as Rose (2006) notes, any examination of the impact of poverty on crime is constrained by the different perspectives, political orientations, definitions, and measurements of these highly contested concepts. Rose adds that

contemporary examination of poverty/crime association must also consider the arguments about the extent to which crime is seen as a result of individual factors, environmental factors, or a combination of both; the extent to which 'nature' and 'nurture' influence crime. (ibid. 107)

In other words, Rose argues that any crime–poverty association requires a careful consideration of multiplicity and interrelated factors, at both the individual and community levels.

Although, as earlier noted, the literature on crime reveals a number of competing theories on the relationship between poverty and crime, we found Hipp and Yates' (2011) classification of the existing theories into three functional forms a useful guide for the present study. Indeed, not only does their model helps to neatly unpack the different theoretical discussions regarding crime and poverty, but it also allows the competing theories to be placed within three simplified functional classifications: an accelerating increasing relationship (sometimes referred to as a threshold effect or exponential relationship); a linear relationship and; a diminishing relationship.

According to Hipp and Yates (ibid.), the *accelerating increasing effect of poverty on crime* is the classical theoretical model of Wilson (1987), which postulates that the association of poverty and limiting livelihood opportunities as well as the resultant breakdown of social values and norms result in higher rates of crime. In other words, the results of increasing poverty and limited opportunities impact negatively and/or weaken social control systems, thereby increasing crime rates. This explanation tends to establish a direct relationship or association between poverty and crime, implying high levels of poverty mean high levels of crime, or vice versa.

The second postulation under Hipp and Yates' (ibid.) functional classification is the *linear effects of poverty on crime models*. At the heart of the *linear effect of poverty on crime models* is the theory of social disorganization (see Shaw & McKay, 1942; Sampson, 2006), which argues that 'neighbourhoods with higher rates of poverty have reduced cohesion and collective ability to petition for resources from the larger community to combat crime' (Hipp & Yates, 2011: 959). In other words, increasing levels of poverty reduce a neighbourhood's resources, leading to a linear relationship between poverty rates and crime rates.

The third and final specification in Hipp and Yates' (ibid.) model is the *diminishing effect of poverty on crime*. This view posits that although increasing poverty is associated with higher levels of crime, there is a tipping point at which this relationship weakens. In other words, at higher levels of poverty, and though there may be a higher presence of potential criminals, crime rates drop owing to the limiting suitable crime targets as a result of limited resources within the neighbourhood (Hannon, 2002; Hipp & Yates, 2011). In other words, high levels of poverty result in the near absence of one of the key conditions required for crime to occur, as postulated by the routine activity theory of Cohen and Felson (1979)—that is, the absence of suitable targets. As Hipp and Yates (2011: 961) argue:

at higher levels of poverty, increasing the poverty rate will still increase the number of motivated offenders but will actually begin to decrease the number of suitable targets resulting from the limited economic resources in the neighborhood.

Some scholars have recently suggested that the diminishing effect of poverty on crime model has in effect turned the long-held association between crime and poverty on its head (Plumer, 2010). Indeed, commenting on the recent economic recession and crime in the USA, many experts and analysts have been bemused by the drop in crime rates across all crime types, including property crimes (ibid.). Drawing on the views of criminologists such as Felson and Weinberg, Plumer (ibid.) explained the fall in crime rates during the period of economic recession as follows:

On the one hand, during economic downturns, people (particularly young men) are making less money, so crime seems more enticing […]. [O]n the other hand, consumers are purchasing fewer luxury items, so there's just less to steal […]. When you have people going outside less and spending less money, crime can go down [...].

While the above discussion is not meant to provide an exhaustive review or discussion of the different models and theories linking crime and poverty, it nevertheless provides an overview of the competing schools of thought on the subject. More importantly, the review suggests clearly, as noted earlier, that the crime–poverty relationship is not simply a straightforward one, especially when one takes into account the views on the diminishing effect of poverty on crime. According to Fafchamps and Minten (2005), although there has long been a suspicion that poverty favours criminal activity, establishing a direct causal link has been difficult for a number of reasons, including the fact that the prevalence of crime in an area discourages businesses, hence contributing to unemployment and poverty; crime-prone areas tend to attract other criminals, as they provide a haven against arrest and promote trade in illegal goods and services; and persons with a high predisposition for crime are likely to possess traits which make them less employable and thus poorer even if they do not resort to crime.

Furthermore, recent contributions to the social disorganization theory—especially its variant form, the 'collective efficacy theory' proposed by Sampson et al. (1997)—provide another compelling challenge to the poverty–crime association. The collective efficacy theory is based on the proposition that neighbourhood crime is best understood by examining the extent to which a community activates its social ties to achieve shared goals through both informal and formal control of the behaviours of individuals and groups, for the purpose of collectively achieving an orderly and safe community (ibid.). In the view of Sampson (2006), collective efficacy requires mechanisms of social organization that may facilitate collective actions, but not necessarily the strong social ties and associations proposed by the social disorganization theory. In other words, collective efficacy theory emphasizes social ties and associations, no matter how loose they are, among community members for the purpose of achieving shared expectations for social control to reduce crime. As Sampson (ibid. 152-153) put it:

collective action is meant to signify an emphasis on shared beliefs in a neighbourhood's capability for action to achieve an intended effect, coupled with an active sense of engagement on the part of residents.

To what extent do these models on crime–poverty association fit the Ghanaian case? More importantly, do most crimes occur in poor urban neighbourhoods in Ghana? Based on the theoretical discussion above, we will proceed to attempt to address these questions by first looking at the study's methodology and the selected communities, and then urbanization, poverty, and crime in Ghana.

Study methodology

This study is based on a survey of 2,745 households, conducted in 13 selected low-, middle-, and high-class neighbourhoods in Ghana's four key cities: Accra, Kumasi, Sekondi-Takoradi, and Tamale (Table 1). In terms of population, these cities constitute over 40% of Ghana's total urban population and account for a dominant share of the country's gross domestic product (GDP). In addition, these urban centres constitute the main rural–urban migration destination centres, especially Accra and Kumasi, as they offer relatively better livelihood opportunities compared with other centres (World Bank, 2014).

In each city, three different socio-economic neighbourhoods (low-, middle-, and high-class) were selected, following earlier work of Benneh et al. (1993), Songsore et al. (1998, 2005), Agyei-Mensah and Owusu (2010), and Owusu and Agyei-Mensah (2011). However, in Accra, two low-class neighbourhoods were selected, bringing the total number of neighbourhoods selected in the four cities to 13.

Table 1: Selected communities and EA and household sample allocation

City	Community	Community SE status	No. of selected EAs	Sample allocation of households
Accra	Airport Residential Area	High-class	2	30
	Dansoman	Middle-class	20	300
	Glefee-Dansoman	Low-class	4	60
	Nima	Low-class	34	510
Kumasi	Ahodwo/Nhyiraso	High-class	4	60
	Oforikrom	Middle-class	31	465
	Aboabo	Low-class	24	360
Sekondi-Takoradi	Chapel Hill	High-class	11	165
	Anaji Estate	Middle-class	9	135
	New Takoradi	Low-class	14	210
Tamale	Russian Bungalow	High-class	3	45
	Zogbeli	Middle-class	15	225
	Aboabo-Tamale	Low-class	12	180
Total			183	2,745

Using a clustered and multi-stage probability sample design, and with the assistance of the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS)—the public agency in Ghana responsible for public surveys and census—Enumeration Areas (EAs), the smallest, spatially well-defined units within each

community, were randomly selected based on each city's proportion of the total population for the four cities. Following the selection of EAs in each neighbourhood, 15 households were selected systematically with a random start and interval separately in each EA, to produce a total of 2,745 households for the 13 neighbourhoods in the four cities (Table 1).

The household survey was preceded by in-depth key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs) with both male and female community members in all the selected neighbourhoods. In all, 50 KIIs and 15 FGDs were conducted in the four cities. The key informants interviewed included city and national senior police officers, private security staff, city planners/administrators, traditional leaders, NGO staff, and youth leaders. Both the in-depth KIIs and FGDs covered issues related to city and neighbourhood characteristics; nature, type, and incidence of crime; causes and effects of crime; community members' perceptions of the relationship between crime and poverty; and measures undertaken by households to combat and reduce crime. The results from the KIIs and FGDs provided critical inputs which were used to develop the household questionnaire for the survey.

Selected communities/neighbourhoods

Although individually the selected study sites of low-, middle-, and high-class neighbourhoods possess unique identities in terms of their location, age and history, ethnic composition, and socio-economic development, each group possesses distinct characteristics which distinguish it from the rest. In the following, we present a brief overview of the differences or unique characteristics among the three socio-economic neighbourhoods, which then allows one to situate their poverty status:

Low-class neighbourhoods

Any visitor to any of the low-class neighbourhoods (Nima, Glefee, Aboabo-Kumasi, Aboabo-Tamale, and New Takoradi) will be struck by the intense congestion, dilapidated houses, and poor sanitation in these neighbourhoods. Although these communities appear socially integrated, one cannot but notice the poor infrastructure and services and the general deprivation, which together give an immediate impression of distressed communities trying to survive (Songsore, 2003; Owusu et al., 2008). Songsore (2003) argues that the majority of the houses in the low-class community have been built without authorization, resulting in massive congestion that defies any planning norm. In addition, local and central governments, to a large extent, have abandoned their responsibilities and allowed these communities to develop in a *laissez-faire* fashion.

A unique feature of low-class neighbourhoods is the dominant presence of compound houses. These types of houses—built with several one- or two-room compartments, hosting many households with a common courtyard and shared facilities such as kitchen, toilet, bathroom, etc.—are very popular with lower-income and poor households. The sharing of facilities allows a number of households to be housed within a limited space at a relatively low cost. However, given the intense congestion, continuous use, and limited repair and maintenance, many compound houses

in low-class neighbourhoods are in poor shape, frequently posing a threat to the lives of their occupants. Again, a distinct feature of low-class neighbourhoods is the near absence of in-house, and limited public sanitation services. Consequently,

what limited toilet facilities exist in the community are privately owned and operate on a pay-per-use basis. People who cannot pay—children, for example—defecate in the open or in plastic bags which are often dumped near toilets […].' (ISSER/UNICEF, 2011: 3)

The houses in the low-class neighbourhoods in urban Ghana are not walled and have limited fortification measures. This obviously allows free mixing of the population, especially households who live in compound houses and share common facilities. Consequently, these conditions enhance community social cohesion and bonding—a critical condition required to prevent and reduce crime. Also, the absence of walls around houses, as well as the use of homes for home-based economic activities, allows natural surveillance and facilitates the presence at home of 'guardians' at all times.

Nevertheless, overflowing garbage containers and uncollected waste; liquid waste flow on the street; idling youth; the use of huts, wooden kiosks, and containers as living quarters, etc.—all together provide a vivid demonstration of poverty in these communities. Indeed, various national surveys have tended to portray Accra and other cities as relatively better off; according to ISSER/UNICEF (2011: 20), however, 'while this may not be disputed in aggregate terms, these findings tend to mask the numerous pockets of poverty in the city with deplorable living conditions which clearly depict poverty'. Although one is likely to come across a few wealthy households within urban poor communities, the high concentration of poor households within these communities under deplorable conditions remains in little doubt.

Middle-class neighbourhoods

Unlike low-class neighbourhoods, middle-class neighbourhoods tend to be well planned, with access roads and relatively good drainage and sanitation systems. In addition, they tend to be less congested, with a relatively high presence of separate houses, semi-detached houses, and flats/apartments—reflecting the socio-economic status of these neighbourhoods. Furthermore, houses in the middle-class neighbourhoods selected for our study (Dansoman, Oforikrom, Anaji Estate, and Zogbeli) tend to have in-house facilities such as water supply, toilets, and bathrooms. Consequently, there is a limited presence of pay-per-user facilities such as toilets and bathrooms in these communities. In addition, household members of middle-class neighbourhoods have higher levels of educational attainment, which reflect the overall higher socio-economic status of households in these neighbourhoods.

To illustrate the poverty status of middle-class neighbourhoods, we contrast some selected socio-economic indicators of Dansoman with Nima (low-class neighbourhood), as recorded in the 2010 Population and Housing census data. The census data show that while Nima has 89% of its dwellings in the form of compound houses, the figure was roughly 37% in the case of Dansoman.

Also, while 72.3% and 78.4% of households in Dansoman have an in-house water-closet (WC) and solid waste collection, respectively, the figures were 11.7% and 29% respectively in the case of Nima. This illustrates the poor sanitation which frequently triggers the outbreak of poor sanitation-related diseases such as cholera in poor urban communities, with serious implications for the health and general well-being of households in these areas.

High-class neighbourhoods

Sitting at the very top of the three socio-economic groups are high-class neighbourhoods. These neighbourhoods stand in sharp contrast to low-class neighbourhoods and house the very wealthy and prominent households in Ghana. Key among these households are top politicians, senior civil and public servants, top business executives, and other high-income earners. The prices of land, property and rent in these high-class neighbourhoods are very high and usually beyond the reach of a large proportion of the population. Indeed, for prominent high-class neighbourhoods such as Airport Residential Area in Accra, the prices of land and rent are sometimes quoted in foreign currencies such as the US dollar (ISSER, 2013), and similar findings have been noted in Kumasi (see World Bank, 2014). ISSER (2013) adds that the rent for a 3–4 bedroom house at Airport Residential Area could be between USD 3,000 and USD 6,000 per month.

A key feature of high-class neighbourhoods is that they tend to be well-located and have well-developed infrastructure and services. The neighbourhoods are noted for their sophisticated modern apartment blocks and detached houses with green environments. Similar to middle-class neighbourhood housing units, high-class neighbourhoods are characterized by high walls. However, unlike middle-class neighbourhoods, the high walls come with barbed wire and other target hardening measures to prevent burglary and break-ins.

Urbanization, poverty and crime in Ghana

Although some analysts have questioned the use of the mantra of 'rapid urbanization' in Sub-Saharan Africa (see Potts, 2012a, 2012b), there is no question regarding the continuous and rapid concentration of population in urban centres in the Ghanaian case (Grant, 2015a, 2015b; Owusu & Oteng-Ababio, 2015). The level of urbanization in Ghana increased from 23.1% in 1960 to 28.9% in 1970, 32% in 1984, and reached 43.8% and 50.9% in 2000 and 2010, respectively (World Bank, 2014)—a process clearly accelerating in the last three decades (Fig. 1a). It has been projected that if current growth trends continue, Ghana's level of urbanization will hit 65% and 70% by 2030 and 2040, respectively (GSS, 2005; Farvacque-Vitkovic et al., 2008; World Bank, 2014).

The period of rapid urban growth (1980s to date) has coincided with stable and positive economic growth, with real GDP growth averaging about 5.7% between 1984 and 2013 (World Bank, 2014) (Fig. 1b). According to the World Bank (ibid.), this stable economic growth facilitated by urbanization has contributed to significant reduction in poverty across Ghana. However, evidence

also suggests that the period of rapid urbanization and stable economic growth rates has witnessed a widening of inequalities (Aryeetey et al., 2009; World Bank, 2014). According to Aryeetey et al. (2009), analysis of Ghana Living Standard Survey (GLSS) reports covering the period 1991–2006 reveals that while income inequality may have been positive though marginal in the past, the phenomenon has actually worsened in recent years, with disparities in household welfare appearing to be fundamental and consistently contributing to increasing disproportional distribution of welfare within and across regions in Ghana. The GSS (2014: 21) notes that despite a reduction in poverty between 2005 and 2013, the country's Gini coefficient (a measure of the extent of distribution of income or consumption among individuals and households) increased from 41.9% in 2005 to 42.3% in 2013—indicating that over time Ghanaians are not benefiting evenly from the growth process nationally. Indeed, the GSS (2014) notes that as was the case with earlier GLSS reports, urban areas, and especially Accra and other large urban centres, seem to have fared much better economically in terms of reductions in both poverty and inequality, thus contributing to their continuous attractiveness as destinations for migrants.

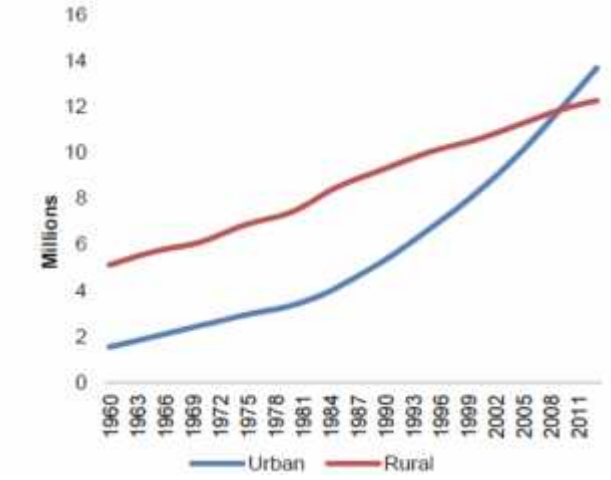

Fig. 1a: Urban population, 1960–2011 **Fig. 1b: Urbanization and GDP growth rates**

Source: World Bank (2014: 1)

While continuous migrant inflows and natural population increase lead to growing population concentration in Ghanaian cities, weak planning and poor governance systems, compounded by weak financial and other resources, have hindered the extent to which these cities are able to respond to the needs of many of their resident population and new migrants (Obeng-Odoom, 2013). At the same time, city and national government efforts to create a semblance of 'developed country cities' in a developing country such as Ghana have resulted in well-planned neighbourhoods with better infrastructure and services being primarily occupied by the middle and

upper classes, existing side by side with slums and other poorly planned informal settlements. As Appiahene-Gyamfi (2003: 21) notes:

[…] the lifestyles or conspicuous consumption habits of the affluent may have led to different types and degrees of exposure to crime victimization. The daily routine activities, lifestyles, ostentation, and conspicuous consumption habits of the affluent suburbs contrast sharply with the poverty and deprivation of the slums that sometimes face the affluent suburbs. The closeness of the affluent to the slum neighbourhoods may have increased greater target visibility and exposure to personal and property victimizations.

Adding to the above context and fostering crime are the stretched or limited police and security infrastructure and services as cities expand and urbanization proceeds at a rapid pace. In short, the period of rapid urbanization and urban growth also coincides with increased crime and fear of crime (Appiahene-Gyamfi 2002; GSS, 2010; Oteng-Ababio et al., 2016). Indeed, the Ghanaian media is choked with daily reported cases of crime, especially in key cities such as Accra, Kumasi, Sekondi-Takoradi, and Tamale. A victimization survey carried out in 2009 by the GSS and funded by the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in the four key cities (Accra, Kumasi, Sekondi-Takoradi and Tamale) indicated that roughly 35% and 20% of respondents, respectively, felt unsafe walking alone in their communities after dark and when alone in their homes after dark. In addition, the survey further found that almost 56% of respondents felt they were likely to become victims of burglary in the 12 months after the survey (GSS, 2010).

Table 2: Decadal aggregate crime growth and variation in Ghana, 1980–2010

	Decade aggregate			**Inter-cohort variations (percentage)**	
Crime type	**1980–1989**	**1990–1999**	**2000–2010**	**1980–1999**	**1990–2010**
Murder	3,527	3,473	5,313	-2	35
Assault	446,625	645,903	972,722	31	34
Armed robbery	1,848	1,345	12,069	-37	89
Theft	416,145	517,420	801,483	20	35
Narcotics	228	465	5,481	51	92
Total	868,373	1,168,606	1,797,068	26	93

Source: Crime Statistics Bureau, Ghana Police Service, Accra (Owusu et al., 2015)

Table 2 provides a perfect illustration of the growth of crime in the last three decades of rapid urbanization. The data derived from cases reported (tainted with substantial under-reporting) to the police show a growth in crime particularly for the period 2000–2010. Notably, crime growth observed for the period includes armed robbery, which usually involves violent attack with weapons (guns, knives, machetes, etc.) on victims to dispossess them of their monies, electronic gadgets, and other movable and portable items. This usually results in death or injury and traumatic

experience for the victims. Indeed, the 2010 International Centre for the Prevention of Crime (ICPC) annual international report on crime notes that Africa still has the highest reported rate of burglary in surveys of cities, despite an assumed under-reporting (estimated at 55% reporting rate in Africa and 72% in Europe), which contradicts assumptions that high consumption countries with more portable consumer products will have higher rates of acquisitive crime (ICPC, 2010: 20).

With growing crime and fear of crime in many Ghanaian cities, the middle- and high-class neighbourhoods and households have responded by adopting building designs and architecture which include high fenced walls, metal burglary-proof windows and doors, use of CCTV cameras, security doors, foreign-bred security dogs, etc. These measures (popularly referred to as 'target hardening'), however, have unintended consequences of weakening social cohesion and undermining community efforts to prevent and fight crime. In addition, some households, particularly the high-class ones, are increasingly employing the services of private security companies to provide security in the absence of public policing (Owusu et al., 2016). In essence, security becomes a commodity which is sold to the highest bidder rather than a public good for all. Unable to source formal security, low-class neighbourhoods and households resort to informal and sometimes illegal measures, such as the lynching reported by Bagson and Owusu (2016) in this volume. Indeed, as Tankebe (2009, 2011) notes, vigilante self-help and other uses of force by citizens are widespread features of social control in Ghana and Sub-Saharan Africa in general.

Establishing the relationship between crime and poverty in urban Ghana

The relationship or association between crime and poverty can be gauged in the Ghanaian context by examining neighbourhood or household socio-economic characteristics and crime. As already noted, growing urbanization in Ghana is associated with rising levels of poverty and inequalities among households and neighbourhoods in towns and cities (Aryeetey et al., 2009; World Bank, 2014). This leads to a situation whereby the incidence and levels of crime as well as the fear of crime are unequally distributed among individual households and neighbourhoods of various levels of (dis)advantage, thus suggesting the situated nature of crime (Peterson et al., 2006; Mellgren, 2011).

A long-held view in the criminology literature, as noted earlier, is that socio-economic characteristics of households and neighbourhoods have huge implications for crime. However, Landman (2012) has argued that although socio-economic characteristics of households and neighbourhoods are important, often there is no clear linear cause–effect relationship between the crime drivers, pressures, impacts, and responses. She adds that the relationship must instead be seen as 'a systemic one with both reinforcing and balancing feedback loops, where, for example, a number of drivers such as poverty and demographic change combine to create the pressure of crime' (ibid. 241). In other words, crime has a significant impact on, and is also impacted by, the urban environment through ecological influences and spatial reconfiguration (see Smith, 1987).

This view underpins Rose's (2006) argument of the influence of nature and nurture (or the combination of both) on crime.

Analysis of the results of the household survey and interviews conducted in the four cities (Accra, Kumasi, Sekondi-Takoradi, and Tamale) provide a picture of the prevalent types of crime in urban Ghana. In broad terms, property crimes (mainly robbery and burglary) tend to be relatively higher in middle- and high-class neighbourhoods (Table 3). This is obviously due to the higher income status of the households in these neighbourhoods and the potential reward for offenders in terms of obtaining cash, jewellery, electronics, and other valuable portable items. In addition, Appiahene-Gyamfi (2003: 19) has argued that the 'the low burglary rates recorded in the slums could be attributed to unemployment or the ever-presence of capable guardians in these homes, and the nature of the architectural designs of the homes'. As noted earlier, the architectural designs of many low-class neighbourhood houses are of compound houses, and the occupants of such homes are the poor or those in the lower socio-economic group (ISSER, 2013). The multiple household occupation of compound houses ensures that there are usually guardians around in low-class neighbourhoods. In addition, the absence of high opaque walls around compound houses means these houses take account of some of the key principles of the concept of crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED)—namely, natural surveillance and natural territorial reinforcement (Newman, 1972, 1996; Lersch, 2007). The presence of neighbours at home at all times of the day in these low-class neighbourhoods is due to the use of these homes as places for home-based economic activities, with high unemployment leaving many idling at home. These conditions ensure strong social cohesion and bonding and increase guardianship, thereby preventing burglary and robbery (see Appiahene-Gyamfi, 2003; Owusu et al., 2015). Despite this, there is a strong perception in the narratives of the police and city authorities that low-class neighbourhoods are dens for crime and criminals. As a senior police key informant interviewee noted regarding crime in the middle-class residential neighbourhood of Dansoman, Accra:

If you talk about burglaries, stealing, break-ins, and robberies, the perpetrators are mostly found in Russia, Sukura, Zamrama Lane, Tankas Lane area [all low-class residential areas]. They come from there to rob people [middle-class households] in this place [Dansoman].

On the other hand, interviews with the police, especially the Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit (DOVVSU) of the Ghana Police Service, and other key informants as well as FGDs suggest that sexual crimes (mainly rape and defilement) tend to be relatively high in low-class neighbourhoods, as demonstrated by Wrigley-Asante et al. (2016) and Wrigley-Asante (2016) in this volume. However, the survey results captured in Table 3 do not support this conclusion, possibly owing to respondents' under-reporting of sexual crimes, a subject widely acknowledged as very sensitive. Nevertheless, Ghana Police Service (GPS) crime data for the past decade have consistently placed defilement and rape among the top five major offences (namely, murder, rape, defilement, robbery, and possession, use and distribution of narcotic drugs) in Ghana. In fact, defilement ranks as the top reported crime of all five major offences in Ghana, as revealed in the study of Wrigley-Asante (2016).

Table 3: Victimization prevalence of households by neighbourhood socio-economic status

Type of crime	**Neighbourhood SE status**			
	Low	**Middle**	**High**	**Total**
Household crimes				
Car theft/car part theft/theft from car	10.4	20.1	17.9	15.1
Theft of motorcycle	5.6	5.5	0.0	5.3
Theft of bicycle	7.7	7.5	10.7	7.7
Theft of livestock	11.5	9.8	3.6	10.4
Burglary with entry	30.3	33.9	35.7	32.2
Attempted burglary	12.9	8.7	17.9	11.2
Kidnapping	0.7	0.8	0.0	0.7
Other	20.9	13.8	14.3	17.4
Crimes against the individual respondents				
Drug peddling/addiction	1.4	0.5	0.0	1.0
Robbery	10.1	30.4	26.3	18.2
Personal theft	59.7	50.7	42.1	55.5
Rape	1.6	3.2	2.6	2.3
Defilement	0.8	0.0	0.0	0.5
Prostitution	1.4	0.5	13.2	1.8
Assault/threat	14.0	6.9	10.5	11.3
Corruption	1.9	0.0	0.0	1.1
Other	9.0	7.8	5.3	8.4

Source: Household crime questionnaire survey, 2014

Studies suggest that crime is unevenly distributed across urban neighbourhoods with poor neighbourhoods disproportionately disadvantaged (see Wilson, 1987; Peterson et al., 2006). Consequently, household assessment of the level of safety and perceptions about crime levels will vary depending on the socio-economic status of the neighbourhood and households. Indeed, low-class neighbourhoods, with their poorly planned built environment and limited infrastructure and services as well as occupation by mainly the poor and low-income groups, are generally regarded as areas of high crime. As Peterson et al. (2006: 169) note:

Even the most casual observer is aware of the ways in which such spatial concentrations of disadvantaged […] populations are associated with high levels of social problems including street crime. At the same time, they see that low crime, violence, and other social ills pervade in more economically advantaged […] communities.

Following from the above, one would expect that perceptions about community safety and crime rates would be negatively correlated with poor communities and otherwise in the case of middle- and high-class neighbourhoods. However, disaggregation of our survey results by socio-economic status of neighbourhoods provides a contrasting picture to the broader view in the literature on crime studies (see Tables 4 & 5). Table 4 shows that 19% of high-class neighbourhoods assessed their community as not safe when walking alone at night compared with 26.7% and 36.4% in the case of low-class and middle-class neighbourhoods, respectively. A similar observation can be made in Table 5 regarding the different socio-economic neighbourhoods' rating of the level of crime in their neighbourhoods. Indeed, in both tables, poor neighbourhoods seem to have fared relatively better than middle-class neighbourhoods.

Table 4: Households assessment of level of safety when walking alone at night by socio-economic status of community

	Neighbourhood			
Rating	**Low-class**	**Middle-class**	**High-class**	**Total**
Very safe	27.2	16.8	35.9	23.7
Safe	43.3	42.3	42.7	42.9
Not safe	26.7	36.4	19.0	29.9
Don't know	2.8	4.5	2.4	3.5
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Source: Household crime questionnaire survey, 2014

Table 5: Households assessment of crime rates by socio-economic status of community

	Neighbourhood			
Crime rating	**Low-class**	**Middle-class**	**High-class**	**Total**
Increased	15.9	25.5	10.0	19.3
Stayed the same	10.7	18.5	16.5	14.6
Decreased	70.5	49.3	58.4	60.3
Don't know	2.9	6.6	15.1	5.8
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Source: Household crime questionnaire survey, 2014

The relatively higher rating of safety in the high-class neighbourhoods may be due to extensive target hardening of homes and the possible presence of both state and private security agencies in these neighbourhoods compared with low- and middle-class neighbourhoods. On the other hand, the ratings for low-class neighbourhoods, as observed in Tables 4 and 5, are also better than those for middle-class neighbourhoods. This may possibly be due to strong social cohesion and community bonding in low-class neighbourhoods, and to limited target hardening measures as well as public/private security agencies in middle-class neighbourhoods. These conclusions reinforced

the earlier point that a non-linear relationship exists between crime and the level of socio-economic development of neighbourhoods and households. In this case, limited security infrastructure and services as well as poor/limited social cohesion in middle-class neighbourhoods result in relatively poor ratings for the level of safety at night and crime in general in these neighbourhoods compared with low-class neighbourhoods.

Conclusion and policy implications

This paper sought to explore the relationship or association between crime and poverty in urban Ghana, using three different socio-economic neighbourhoods in Ghana's key cities (Accra, Kumasi, Sekondi-Takoradi, and Tamale) as a case study. However, establishing a direct correlation between crime and poverty is somewhat difficult due to the complexity of the concepts of 'crime' and 'poverty' and the varied contexts under which they can be defined and applied—individual and environmental contexts. In addition, poverty is generally regarded as multi-dimensional, and therefore its direct correlation with crime becomes even more complex.

Our intra-city analysis on the basis of the different socio-economic neighbourhoods found low-class and high-class neighbourhoods to be more secure and safe in terms of crime than middle-class neighbourhoods. This conclusion does not supports Hipp and Yates' (2011) model of three functional forms of the direct association between poverty and crime (accelerating increasing relationship, linear relationship, and diminishing relationship) in the Ghanaian case. However, the findings of the paper suggest a relationship between poverty and crime for specific crimes such as sexual and property offences, in line with the literature.

Although in broad terms the Ghanaian case does not wholly exhibit a strong linear relationship between poverty and inequalities, on the one hand, and crime on the other, it does suggest a need to look at crime as place-specific and that any analysis must take into account the context and the specific neighbourhood dynamics. This study has revealed that while low-class neighbourhoods have high poverty characteristics, they tend to have high social cohesion and strong community bonding, both of which help in positively impacting crime—and hence the assessment of these neighbourhoods as relatively safe compared with middle-class neighbourhoods. However, the peculiar situation of low-class neighbourhoods, especially poor housing and congestion as well as low income, tends to impact negatively on sexual crime incidence. In other words, the household and neighbourhood characteristics of low-class neighbourhoods facilitate sexual crimes.

Responses to crime prevention in the different socio-economic neighbourhoods of urban Ghana require neighbourhood-specific responses. Indeed, neighbourhood-specific responses offer opportunities for analysing and understanding the internal dynamics of these neighbourhoods, as well as for understanding the key stakeholders at neighbourhood level as critical conditions for tapping into the energies of residents toward addressing the challenges of crime prevention. Indeed, crime is likely to remain a critical challenge to Ghana's future, which is predicted to be largely urban. This is against the backdrop of increasing privatization of security and growing

inequalities across and within cities and regions of Ghana. On the one hand, middle- and high-class households' fear of crime and response to crime, in the context of target hardening, and on the other hand, low-class households' strong social cohesion and community bonding, are unlikely to produce safety and security for all in urban Ghana. Proper planning of towns and cities and recognition by cities authorities and other planning units that built-up urban environments can facilitate crime are critical to producing a more responsive, inclusive and safe urban development agenda. This agenda should see urban security and safety as critical to guaranteeing the security of all in the short and long terms and to producing a sustainable and inclusive urban development.

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