

Zeitschrift: Geographica Helvetica : schweizerische Zeitschrift für Geographie = Swiss journal of geography = revue suisse de géographie = rivista svizzera di geografia

Herausgeber: Verband Geographie Schweiz ; Geographisch-Ethnographische Gesellschaft Zürich

Band: 59 (2004)

Heft: 3: Urban violence : a challenge for geographers? = Städtische Gewalt : eine Herausforderung für Geographen? = La violence urbaine : une provocation pour les géographes?

Artikel: Affective dimensions of urban crime areas : towards the psycho-geography of urban problem areas

Autor: Davies, Wayne K.D.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-872826>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 27.01.2026

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

Affective Dimensions of Urban Crime Areas: Towards the psycho-geography of urban problem areas

Wayne K.D. Davies, Calgary

1 Introduction

Although many geographers in the past have contributed to the crime literature, including texts by researchers such as GEORGES-ABEYIE & HARRIS (1980) or HERBERT (1982), their contribution has largely focused on the spatial patterns of crime and their correlations with social variables, environmental associations – whether physical conditions or design features – or the presence or absence of facilities in an area. However, their work is still very small when compared to the vast literature on crime and delinquency by sociologists, criminologists and psychologists and it is curious that few geographers have applied the many theories of crime to their studies, such as those summarized in basic books by PELFREY (1980), HAGAN (1985), or MUNCIE & McLAUGHLIN (2001). This is especially true of ideas that explain why individuals are prone to crime, such as older ideas of neutralization (SYKES & MATZA 1957) and self-control (GOTTFREDSON & HIRSCHI 1990), or newer theories such as General Strain Theory (AGNEW 1999) and Mentalization (FONAGY 2003; HOFFER 2003).

RACINE (2002), in a recent comprehensive review of the literature on crime with special reference to France and Switzerland, has criticized the traditional approach of geographers who have contributed to the study of crime. He argued that students of crime patterns have spent too much time attempting to find spatial correlates of crime, such as social deprivation (BOOTH 1894; SAMPSON & GROVES 1989; VEYSEY & MESSNER 1999) or social disorganization and anomie (DURKHEIM 1951; MERTON 1938, 1957; SHAW & MACKAY 1942; PASSAS & AGNEW 1997). Instead he argued that there is a need to focus more upon perceptual issues, not only about how we think about these areas, but also about the perceptions and attitudes of people who live in crime areas. In his words:

«We need to integrate analysis of the problems and causes of violence with our own *perceptual systems*... This would allow the inhabitants of these neighborhoods – along with those of the other inhabitants of the city – to engage in what amounts to a new interpretation of their own reality... the perceptual systems in question invest the city with symbolic meanings...» (RACINE 2002: 587, italics added).

This paper focuses only upon the need to improve the perceptual approach to the study of crime areas

as recommended by RACINE, what may be popularly described as the psycho-geography of crime areas. This may be especially relevant today once it is recognized that so many of the acts of crime against persons represent what seem to be senseless and often unpremeditated acts, whereas so much of the criminology literature searches for rational explanations in line with the scientific approach. Certainly there are many studies in human geography and ecology proposing concepts such as «territories of fear» (TUAN 1977) or other feelings about areas of crime. In addition, there are many ethnographic studies which have illuminated our knowledge of such areas, especially studies of what is known as street culture in inner city ghetto areas today (ANDERSON 1978a, 1978b, 1998). But the descriptive approach followed by ethnographical research means that most studies obviously focus on the feelings and behavior of people in the particular areas studied, rather than comparing several areas in the search for common features that can be generalized into measurable concepts, such as the quantitative approach adopted by community psychologists such as UNGER & WANDERSMAN (1985) in studies of the cognitive and affective dimensions of community differentiation. There is still a great deal of controversy over the types and range of these dimensions, for most studies by psychologists are of individuals, rather than groups in area. But some geographers have explored the approach as an extension of factorial ecology measures (DAVIES 1984) and tried to define and measure the range of cognitive-affective dimensions in community areas in a multidimensional, rather than a single variable sense (DAVIES, CHAN & TOWNSHEND 1999; DAVIES & TOWNSHEND 1999; TOWNSHEND 2002). This contrasts with the past practice of only identifying and studying individual affective dimensions as single concepts, such as sentiment or symbolism, as in the classical urban ecology literature. Further support for the study of the affective domain comes from recent papers by ANDERSON & SMITH (2001) as well as BOCHET & RACINE (2002), both of which call for more attention to the emotive domain in geography. However, it must not be forgotten that there is a long, if episodic, literature in such issues in geography, as work by PORTEOUS (1986) shows. This paper contributes to the developing trend of interest in the affective domain by combining previous studies of the cognitive-affective domains in community areas with those of crime areas. Its key question is to determine whether a distinctive set of cognitive-affective dimensions can be hypothesized for crime areas, based on the existing literature, in which

the focus is upon areas in which there are high levels of crime against persons and property, as well as illicit and anti-social behavior.

2 Are crime areas terrains of unique affective character?

Crime itself is a socially constructed and often contested phenomenon that depends upon the definition of some kinds of behavior by the state as being anti-social and punishable by law. Not only do these definitions vary by jurisdictions and through time but the measurement of crime acts is fraught with difficulties because so much is unreported and subject to variable recording and degrees of success in finding the offenders (NEWMAN 1999; HERBERT 2002). Although these problems may make it difficult to identify the real extent of crime, some areas have sufficient concentrations to be defined by the presence of crime alone. Although explanations for these concentrations and their persistence are often linked by geographers to traditional explanatory factors of the social structure of the areas, such as social deprivation, or social disorganization, as described above, it is argued that as much importance should be attributed to the attitudes and feelings of the people in these areas. This moves the research interest in crime areas to the study of the affective dimensions of these areas – dimensions associated with the feelings and attitudes of people – both inside and outside the areas. Such attitudes are important parts of what MILLER (1958), SUTTLES (1968) and FISCHER (1976) recognized as being a sub-culture, or a distinctive way of life in these areas, which differs from the main host society. As such, they complement the distinctive social characteristics of people in many of these areas – namely their material conditions and the way that they behave – with the attitudes that are held by the residents.

A review of the literature from both ethnographical and statistical studies in criminology linked to RACINE's (2002) discursive review of crime variations led to the provisional conclusion that at least ten very different attitudinal characteristics of people can be identified in these areas and many of these can be linked to existing theories of criminal behavior. They are proposed as distinctive dimensions, or separate sources of attitudinal variation that summarize what may be called the psycho-geography of high crime or delinquency areas. These are summarized as «terrains» of different affective character in this review, rather than «areas or landscapes», simply because these latter terms are more often associated with physical forms. Also, the introduction of a new term seems more useful in drawing attention to the different basis – the affective domain – of the source of differentiation

being dealt with. This makes it easier to distinguish the concepts from the more traditional explanations discussed above, either the area content ideas of social deprivation, or behavioral conditions such as social disorganization. As in the case of the range of affective dimensions proposed for community areas (DAVIES 1995; DAVIES & TOWNSHEND 1999), the dimensions of variation that are identified below can be more or less strong, and may be more or less present in various areas. Hence there can be innumerable combinations of these hypothesized dimensions to create very different types of crime areas. However, it must be stressed that the degree of separation and cohesion of these dimensions is still provisional. Indeed, some of these dimensions may, on empirical testing, be shown to be composed of sub-dimensions, whilst there may be others that still need to be isolated.

(T1) Terrains of social inadequacy. Compared to the host society in which these people live, most inhabitants of these areas lack the skills, education and previous success in life to be successful in the rest of society. Although these are the characteristics linked to social deprivation, the issue goes beyond material conditions, but can be explained by the differential distribution of rewards in society so familiar in Marxist theory. These conditions can also mean that most people in the area have low levels of personal esteem and self-worth, often combined with high self-denigration, which are often passed on to subsequent generations through poor parenting. Moreover, individuals have few and usually limited goals for the future, or few purposes in life, and very fragile coping mechanisms or support systems when problems inevitably emerge. This makes many people vulnerable to take escape routes that seem to offer hope of alleviation, at least temporarily, through alcohol, drugs and non-legitimate activities, in an attempt to improve their situation – although not all take this path. Participation in such behaviors often makes their situation worse, since this often leads to medical self-abuse and conflicts with the law.

(T2) Terrains of despair and limited goals. Most people in these crime areas are not able to fulfill their goals through legitimate activity, given their lack of skills and limited resources, both in social and financial capital. Hence a condition of despair and hopelessness frequently characterizes most people. It leads to an acceptance of the existing condition with little expectation of any change. Life in these areas in DUBET's (1987) words is a «struggle against the odds», of barely surviving in the mainstream of society leaving them marginalized, creating what he called a condition of *la galère* (RACINE 2002). People either have no goals, or rather goals that are not feasible of being achieved, given their skills, ability to work to attain them, and the conditions under which they live. They have very

low expectations of their ability to either alter their current situation or the area in which they live – by themselves, or with others. This means the majority of residents have low feelings of empowerment, of being able to change the environment in which they live, with few opportunities of moving elsewhere.

(T3) *Terrains of exclusion-discrimination.* Individuals in these areas are frequently stigmatized and labeled by outsiders – informally by individual decisions, or formally by police or media labeling – because of the perceived high levels of incivility and crime in the area and the conditions of social deprivation. In addition, the frequent (but not always inevitable) presence of high concentrations of one or more disadvantaged ethnic groups adds to the degree of separation. These conditions frequently lead to low levels of contact with outsiders and even adverse treatment by members of the mainstream society who do not want to mix or associate with the people from these areas. The result is a feeling of exclusion from the rest of society, since they have few jobs or social contacts with outsiders, and a feeling of being discriminated against, which reinforce the degree of separation of the residents. It usually leads to feelings of alienation from the host society, and resentment against its members. This exclusion is often expressed in two physical contexts. In a spatial sense many of these areas are either in remote locations – because they are peripheral or not well connected sites in transport terms, such as the public housing estates in the U.K. or the French *banlieue* – or because walls have been deliberately constructed to cut these areas off from neighboring areas. In a «basic needs» context these areas are usually deficient in medical, retail and social services, for few private providers of such services wish to operate in such areas, given the fear and incidence of crime. The exception may lie in publically-provided facilities, or in services associated with illegal or barely legal activities that are often tolerated by the forces of law and order through differential policing. Complementing the insiders feeling of exclusion is the negative way that outsiders view these areas, adding to the feeling of separation or alienation from the mainstream of society. The frequent stream of negative reports about these areas from various media reports adds to the negative symbolization of these areas, which reinforce the feelings of exclusion.

The contrast between the conditions experienced within these areas, compared to conditions outside, lead many insiders to envy the situation of others, whether the wealth or opportunities of individuals outside the area, or the prosperity of surrounding regions. For most this may be a simple benign trait; but for some, the contrast breeds bitterness against what are seen as unfair rewards and an unjust society. This may

encourage these individuals to seek ways of gaining access, however illegally, to these rewards, which frequently involves activities that the host society has «constructed» as being criminal behavior. For benign envy to turn into active resentment that leads to criminal actions, involves overturning existing societal codes of behavior relating to the rights of individuals and property. This change from feelings to action may be triggered by, or are dependent upon, some of the following sets of attitudinal dimensions.

(T4) *Terrains of decay-destruction acceptance.* Many crime areas have the appearance of a neglected and vandalized environment, full of the physical signs of decay, litter and graffiti. However it is not the actual physical conditions and appearance of the area so much as an acceptance of the conditions, that is linked with the feeling that it is impossible to rectify these conditions. Anti-social individuals in these areas often prevent progress in cleaning up the local environment. Also, there are also few role models prepared to stand up against these vandals and criminals to show a better way of life. In any case, since many people in the area feel they have no real stake in the area, and have nothing left to lose, some of these people may well be persuaded to turn upon the area, destroying existing property and services, especially those owned by outsiders, as a response to the frustrations of their life. Yet we must be cautious. The number of people vandalizing the area may be small; the normal condition is one of simply accepting the conditions that are found, rather than trying to improve the area. But once some signs of vandalism or even lack of repair appear, the inability or refusal of residents, landlords or government to rectify these problems, or to identify, admonish or even charge the offenders seem to encourage similar behavior, producing a cycle of increasing dereliction, often called the «broken windows» trend because it starts with this visible form.

(T5) *Terrains of anxiety and fear.* The high levels of incivility, delinquency and crime ensure that many residents in these areas also have very high levels of anxiety about their safety and often a real fear of being robbed or beaten. Usually relatively few residents of the area are perpetrators of serious crime; it is the people in the area who are the real victims. So residents are not only fearful about crimes but are witnesses to crimes against others. Since they are fearful of retribution if they inform on crimes that they have seen, there is little incentive to do more than accept the conditions. Although emphasis on this issue of fear may be placed upon the presence of what most would see as crime, it may be the daily exposure to high levels of what may be best described as «incivility to others» that presents the highest real levels of anxiety in these areas. These are acts that include individuals being jos-

tled, verbally abused by swearing or being ridiculed, or exposed to behaviors, such as littering, that cause discomfort for the observer. These incivilities are often perceived as the early stages of more aggressive behaviors that cause real harm to either persons or property. The result is that many people, especially the elderly and females, avoid such situations by staying indoors, especially at night. This reduces what may be seen as the «eyes on the street», a surveillance that is often accepted as reducing crime, since perpetrators may be more easily identified and caught.

(T6) Terrains of spontaneity of actions/emotions. One of the fundamental features of growing up is the ability to exercise control over emotions and basic human urges, as well as appreciating the consequences of various actions, especially the use of violence on others. However some individuals do not learn such behavior, and are more prone to react quickly without thought, which may often lead to violence against others and impulsive decisions to commit crime. COHEN (1955) argued that one of the key characteristics of middle class socialization was the ability to postpone gratification and to think about the consequences of impulsive actions, which means that spontaneity of action, or emotions that overtly hurts others is controlled. This type of feature parallels the way that middle class, and ambitious working class parents encourage their children to cultivate skills and pass examinations. These are seen as providing a passport to future success. Areas of high crime rates do seem to have this attitudinal characteristic of high spontaneity of action, which means that apparently unthreatening or passive individuals or groups can suddenly turn violent. Trivial disputes may suddenly escalate to unpremeditated murder if there are knives or weapons involved.

(T7) Terrains of indifference to others (Fonagy's «mentalization»). An important part of the ability to live together in harmony and safety is the ability to recognize the rights and needs of others. One of the crucial feelings of difference in these areas is the way that many of its inhabitants have high levels of indifference to others; this is not simply the lack of social connections that contribute to anomie, but the personal indifference to others. FONAGY's (2002, 2003) developmental theory of aggression coined the term mentalization to describe the extent to which individuals have been brought up with «no sense of the other», meaning an interest in, or concern for, other people's rights. Some individuals are not socialized in this way and have no, or little sense of concern if people are robbed or violated. This may be a crucial element in the increasing prevalence of what RACINE (2002) and others have described as «violence for own sake», or «violence without content», which may be attributed to the same indifference for the fate of others. The

mentalization theory may well provide the main justification for the presence of this type of affective dimension in crime areas. Moreover, it does seem to have a great deal of potential in suggesting new ways of reducing the problems caused by this indifference to others. For example, at the teenage level anti-social actions such as bullying are rarely eradicated through physical control. It may be more effectively modified by showing perpetrators how their anti-social behavior affects others in a negative way, or by ensuring that they feel the same experiences.

(T8) Terrains of low restraint or self-control. Low levels of self-control are also found among a significant proportion of people in the area, especially those who may be able to dominate others through their aggressive behavior and indifference to others. One result is far less respect for the rights of other persons or for owners of property. This means that people with such attitudes, such as some rebellious teenagers, believe the rights of other people can be violated with impunity. The rationale behind the presence of low levels of self-control can be attributed to the neutralization and self-control/crime opportunity theories. At this stage in our understanding it is still not clear whether the dimension is a single scale. GRASMICK et al. (1993) used multivariate analysis on a set of questionnaire items to illustrate that several separate traits could be identified as separate features. These individual traits are self-centeredness, anger, impulsiveness, risk-taking, and a preference for physical activity, and for simple over complex tasks. However the authors argued that the most appropriate description of the results was a single dimensional factor scale which summarized most of the variance, suggesting that self-control was a single personality trait as suggested by GOTTFREDSON & HIRSCHI's original theory (1990). VAZSONYI et al. (2001) have confirmed the utility of these traits and showed that although the first two of these factors were the best predictors of most crimes, assault was most highly linked to risk-taking. However these authors argued that these traits could not be combined in a single uni-dimensional scale of self-control as suggested by GOTTFREDSON & HIRSCHI (1990) and GRASMICK et al. (1993); rather these separate traits can be separately distinguished, although they come together in some people and make them especially prone to criminal acts. Most studies of delinquency and aggression have looked for ways in which some people acquire these traits. But it is worth noting again how FONAGY's (2003) new developmental theory of aggression argued the opposite, namely that aggression is part of the innate human condition but is socialized out in most children through various control mechanisms, especially those provided by mothers as people grow up. Other studies on aggression have shown that there is a generational consistency in these traits, since people identified as

prone to such behaviors at an early age were also the individuals with high levels of aggression at later ages, suggesting that the mentalization process was not successful. In addition, what seems especially important in accounting for different attitudes towards crime is the feeling among many young adults that they are somehow immune from being caught; after all, there are often few people in an area willing to admonish people displaying anti-social behavior. Role models of people of middle class values or people with senses of fair play or religious conviction may have moved elsewhere; others are threatened into silence. This assumption of immunity often proves to be false as most perpetrators of crime are caught. But the revolving door of the criminal system in some countries means that even if criminals are caught they may not be punished, adding to the feeling of immunity from their actions.

(T9) *Terrains of anti-social or subversive attitudes approval.* Areas of crime contain people with subversive attitudes – or at least subversive as far as the host society is concerned, since they are opposed to it. This ensures that the area norms consist of values different from the rest of society, or they possess dissident values that they are prepared to express and act upon in the area, not simply to repress because of pressures from the host society. Some of these values may be labeled as criminal by the forces of law and order, but are not necessarily viewed in this way by those residents who may derive an income or even status from such behaviors, at least until they are caught by the forces of law and order. A constant source of tension against existing mores comes from the development of unrestrained and often anti-social behaviors of some young adults, especially males, which produce generational sequences of unsettling behavior. It can be argued that the challenge against existing attitudes and behaviors is always part of a normal process of early maturity for teenagers and young adults as they seek to throw off the constraints of family. One way may be to illegally adopt adult behaviors, such as drinking or smoking, or challenge existing standards which can lead to attitudes which are different to, or even subversive of, existing societal norms. In addition, of course, they can adopt the general anti-social, and perhaps violent attitudes of the criminals in the local population because of admiration for their activities, or they emulate these behaviors to gain acceptance and recognition among their peers. Such generational rebellions may be present in all parts of the city, but in most areas a process of socialization through family, friends, adult role models and school leads most to eradicate such attitudes; it is a temporary phase of rebellion that is usually subsumed into attitudes that recognize the need to gain educational or employment qualifications. Yet there are always individuals who have rejected the opportunity to take this path and engage in criminal

behavior, often in search for thrills and excitement. In areas of high crime rates and social deprivation there are few incentives for young residents of crime areas to develop in this socially progressive way, since they have few expectations of such progress. Hence they may be socialized into adult criminality – showing the relevance of theories such as «learned behavior» or «social learning» (HAGAN 1985) – since this seems to be the only path for material success within the area. Of course, a minor route for the uneducated may lie in sporting or musical prowess, which take them outside the area to achieve another type of success in the host society. Focus upon the people who live in the area must not be allowed to disguise the fact that the «economy» of many areas of high crime rates is often linked to the receipts obtained from outsiders who visit the area temporally, to participate in illicit activities, such as prostitution or drug acquisition, or entertainments banned in other parts of the city, due to political or social pressure. Clearly such individuals are participating in a sub-culture of dissent for at least part of their life – the «second life» identified by PRESDEE (2000); this represents an important element in the maintenance of such areas.

(T10) *Terrains of peer group (gang) allegiance and respect.* RACINE (2002) noted that one of the important personal needs of most people is the component of «respect or recognition by others». The basic human needs of recognition and respect by others is absent for many people in these crime areas because they have few achievements, and limited social connections through family or organizations such as schools. So the usual means of achieving respect and a future in the larger society are blocked, given low educational or skill levels, except for a few individuals in sport or music. The missing support system is often provided by unsupervised informal peer groupings, which can be formalized as gangs. These lie outside the formal or accepted structures of the host society and may be opposed to it because of the types of subversive values discussed above. Membership of these gangs provides feelings of attachment or belonging to other members of the group; they also provide the frisson of excitement through gang activity, especially robbery and often violence. These groups are able to make up their own behavioral rules, especially in conditions of adolescent rebellion, or at least the questioning of societal mores. Within a context of anti-social behavior and few constraints, it is hardly surprising that some of these groups are prone to crime, violence, or at least anti-social behaviors which provide the element of risk as well as achievement that may be absent in the rest of the lives of these members. They may also provide access to possessions, through robbery, that they could not otherwise obtain. Such behavior, or rather the approval of such behavior in an attitudinal sense, may

be a challenge to existing or new members through some «rites of belonging»; they either provide thrills in throwing-off the constraints of society, or may be designed to prove that new entrants to the group belong to it, and, in doing so, participants obtain respect from participation in these activities.

ANDERSON (1998: 102) has made the point succinctly: «most people in inner-city communities are not totally interested in the code (of the street), but a significant minority of hard-core street youths who have to maintain the code in order to establish their reputation because they have – or feel they have – few other ways to assert themselves.»

The result is a socialization of some people, especially youths, to a new set of norms, which involves throwing off the guilt produced by adherence to other attitudes, so neutralization theory and social learning theory may be relevant explanations. Although it has long been known that gang members are more likely than non-gang members to commit various types of crime, it is worth noting THORNBERRY et al.'s (1993) study that shows that only 21% of individuals in gangs were members of the group at all three time periods that were investigated. This not only shows the temporary attachment of many people to these groups, thereby providing another episodic element in crime behavior, but led to the important conclusion that «participation in the gang is a more important factor in generating delinquency than is the type of person who is recruited to join the gang» (ibid: 83).

Some children, who have experienced, felt, and internalized racist rejection and contempt from the mainstream society may be socialized into situations where they learn to express negative attitudes for the more conventional society in turn. As they mature they will invest themselves and their considerable mental resources in what can be called an «oppositional culture» to preserve themselves and maintain their self-worth but also self-respect from others. These are the values that command respect and approval by their peers, with few neighbors or outside forces able to intervene. Moreover, it is important to note that these gangs can provide the excitement that many crave, of challenging others, or outwitting the law. These gangs are frequently very territorial with their own defined «turfs» that others only violate at the risk of violence and which may be marked with gang signs or markers. Adherence to these small «homelands» in particular parts of the city provides an additional identity, which is often reinforced with rivalry with gangs in other parts of the area or with outsiders. Their «homeland», however impoverished and vandalized, provides them with a safe haven and an identity among their peers that many would otherwise not have.

Although the dimensions proposed can be seen as independent sources of differentiation it must be stressed that these attitudinal dimensions seem to fall into two quite distinct types, one set with essentially passive attitudes, the other with active attitudes. For example, the dimensions which index social or individual inadequacy, despair, exclusion-discrimination, decay-destruction acceptance, and anxiety-fear seem to mark conditions that lead to passivity in a population, resulting in an unwillingness, or perhaps even in an inability for most residents of such areas to improve their position in life and to initiate opportunities to create change in such areas. In many ways these feelings are the results of the fact that they are the victims of societal injustice, either from others in their area, or more generally from the distribution of rewards and power in society. This produces negative attitudes towards their situation, although some may have the fortitude and resources to escape the deprived, often socially disorganized conditions that dominate these areas. In contrast, the dimensions that are associated with spontaneity of actions-emotions, indifference to others, low or limited restraint or self-control of behavior, approval of anti-social or subversive values, and peer group-gang allegiance and respect, represent attitudes that are clearly in opposition to the general norms found in the rest of society in most western cities and many can be linked to theories proposed to explain individual criminal behavior. Since there are few constraints upon their actions, and limited socialization to what may be considered «good behavior», but high socialization and exposure to «bad» behavior from unsupervised peer groupings, it means that some residents in crime areas are prone to what the general population would describe as anti-social and even criminal behaviors. This enables them to gain personal respect and approval from their peers by flouting the conventional norms. They ignore or downplay the rights of others, possess few constraints on their behavior and often act impulsively, without rationalizing the long-term consequences of actions. People with these attitudes may be in a minority in these crime areas, but are more likely to dominate and victimize their neighbors who possess the passive attitudes described above; the latter do not have the personal resources, or beliefs and support systems to counteract the attitudes that can lead to potentially disruptive behaviors or to crime.

3 Conclusions

This study has developed some of the arguments used in a previous attempt to define the distinctive affective dimensions of community areas (DAVIES 1995; DAVIES & HERBERT 1993; DAVIES & TOWNSHEND 1999) by extending the spatial domain of interest to crime areas. It is

argued that the affective domain features hypothesized above for crime areas give these places as distinctive a character as those that come from the traditional spatial descriptions based on indicators of social deprivation, social disorganization or design flaws and facility deprivation (LAGRANGE 1999). These dimensions of the affective domain obviously add to the huge differences between these areas of high crime and other parts of the city. They also seem to play a large part in explaining why crime areas persist, for most attempts to eradicate these areas focus on changes in social structure or behavior, which may not change attitudes and feelings that have been shown to be frequently linked to particular theories accounting for why individuals commit crime. There is no doubt that crime is the product of many causes, so it is inappropriate to over-emphasize any one of the various factors and explanations that have been proposed, although there does seem to be important linkages between many of the affective dimensions proposed and various theories of crime. Finally, it must be admitted that the dimensions identified above are simply hypotheses at this stage in the research project, dimensions that were independently derived from the literature. Obviously they need to be empirically tested, adjusted and probably extended in the future. In addition, the relationships between these affective dimensions and those previously defined for communities needs to be explored. These issues must await further study.

References

- AGNEW, R.A. (1999): The General Strain Theory of community differences in crime rates. – In: *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 36, 2: 123-155.
- ANDERSON, E. (1978a): *A Place on the Corner*. – Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- ANDERSON, E. (1978b): Violence and the inner city street code. – In: MCCORD, J. (ed.): *Violence and the Inner City*. – New York: Cambridge University Press.
- ANDERSON, E. (1998): The social ecology of youth violence. – In: *Crime and Justice: A Review of Research* 24: 65-104.
- ANDERSON, K. & S. SMITH (2001): Emotional geographies: editorial. – In: *Transactions, Institute of British Geographers* 26, 1: 7-10.
- BOCHET, B. & J.-B. RACINE (2002): Connaître et penser la ville: des formes aux affects et aux émotions, explorer ce qu'il nous reste à trouver. Manifeste pour une géographie sensible autant que rigoureuse. – In: *Geocarrefour* 77, 2: 117-132.
- BOOTH, C. (1894): Life and labour of the people of London. – In: *Journal of Royal Statistical Society* 55: 557-91.
- COHEN, A.K. (1955): *Delinquent Boys: The Culture of the Gang*. – New York: Free Press.
- DAVIES, W.K.D. (1984): *Factorial Ecology*. – Aldershot, England: Gower Publishing.
- DAVIES, W.K.D. (1995): The power of communities. – *Acta Wasaensis (Finland)* 45, 6: 49-74.
- DAVIES, W.K.D. & D.T. HERBERT (1993): *Communities within cities: an urban social geography*. – London: Belhaven Press, New York: Halsted Press.
- DAVIES, W.K.D. & I.J. TOWNSHEND (1994): How community associations vary. – In: *Urban Studies* 31, 10: 1739-1761.
- DAVIES, W.K.D. & I.J. TOWNSHEND (1999): Identifying the elements of community character. – In: *Research in Community Sociology* 9: 219-251.
- DAVIES, W.K.D. & I.J. TOWNSHEND (2002): *Monitoring Cities: The Calgary Papers*. – Berlin and Calgary: Urban Commission, International Geographical Union.
- DAVIES, W.K.D., CHAN, J. & I.J. TOWNSHEND (1999): How do communities differ: empirical evidence for behavioral and cognitive-affective dimensions of communities. – In: AGUILAR, A. & I. ESCAMILLA (eds): *Problems of Mega-Cities: Social Inequalities, Environmental Risk and Urban Governance*. – Mexico City: Institute de Geographia, Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico: 529-542.
- DUBET, F. (1987): *La Galère: Jeunes en Survie*. – Paris: Fayard.
- DURKHEIM, E. (1951): *Suicide*. – Translated by G. Simpson, New York: Free Press.
- FISCHER, C.S. (1976): Toward a subcultural theory of urbanism. – In: *American Journal of Sociology* 80: 1319-1340.
- FONAGY, P., GERGELY, G. & E. JURIST (2002): *Affect Regulation, Mentalisation and the Development of Self*. – New York: Other Press.
- FONAGY, P. (2003): Towards a developmental understanding of violence. – In: *British Journal of Psychiatry* 183: 190-192.
- GEORGES-ABEYIE, D.E. & K.D. HARRIS (1980): *Crime: A Spatial Perspective*. – New York: Columbia University Press.
- GOTTFREDSON, M.R. & T. HIRSCHI (1990): *A General Theory of Crime*. – Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- GRASMICK, H.G., TITTLE, C.R., BURSİK, R.J. & B.J. ARNEKLEV (1993): Testing the core empirical implications of Gottfredson and Hirschi's General Theory of Crime. – In: *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 30, 1: 7-29.
- HAGAN, J. (1985): *Modern criminology: crime, criminal behavior, and its control*. – New York: McGraw-Hill.
- HERBERT, D.T. (1982): *The Geography of Urban Crime*. – London et al.: Longman.
- HERBERT, D.T. (2002): Crime and its control in urban environments. – In: DAVIES & TOWNSHEND, op.cit.: 541-555.
- HOFER, M.A. (2003): The emerging neurobiology of attachment and separation: how parents shape their infants brain and behavior. – In: COATES, S.W. & J.L. ROSENTHAL (eds): *When the Bough Broke: Attach-*

ment Theory. Psychobiology and Social Policy. – New York: Analytic Press.

LAGRANGE, T.C. (1999): The impact of neighborhoods, schools and malls on the spatial distribution of property damage. – In: *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 36, 4: 393-422.

MERTON, R.K. (1938): Social structure and anomie. – In: *American Sociological Review* 3: 672-82.

MERTON, R.K. (1957): *Social Theory and Social Structure*. – Glencoe, Illinois: Free Press.

MILLER, W. (1958): Lower class culture as a generating milieu of gang delinquency. – In: *Journal of Social Issues* 14: 5-19.

MUNCIE, J. & E. McLAUGHLIN (2001): *The Problem of Crime*. – Second Edition, London: Sage Publications and Open University.

NEWMAN, G. (ed.) (1999): *Global Report on Crime and Justice*. – United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.

PASSAS, N. & R. AGNEW (1997): *The Future of Anomie Theory*. – Boston: North Eastern University Press.

PELFREY, W.V. (1980): *The Evolution of Criminology*. – Cincinnati: Anderson Publishing.

PORTEOUS, J.D. (1986): Geography as personal art. – In: *Operational Geographer* 10: 43-45.

PRESDEE, M. (2000): *Cultural Criminology and the Carnival of Crime*. – London: Routledge.

RACINE, J.-B. (2002): Explaining, regulating or monitoring violence in the cities of tomorrow: appraisals from French and Swiss experience. – In: DAVIES & TOWNSHEND, op.cit.: 557-597

SAMPSON, R.J. & W.B. GROVES (1989): Community structure and crime: testing social disorganization theory. – In: *American Journal of Sociology* 94: 774-802.

SHAW, C.R. & H.D. MACKAY (1942): *Juvenile Delinquency and Urban Areas*. – Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press.

SUTTLES, G. (1968): *The Social Order of the Slum*. – Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

SYKES, G. & D. MATZA (1957): Techniques of neutralisation: a theory of delinquency. – In: *American Sociological Review* 22: 664-670.

THORNBERRY, T.P., KROHN, M.D., LIZOTTE, A.J. & D. CHARD-WIERSCHEM (1993): The role of juvenile gangs in facilitating delinquent behavior. – In: *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 30, 1: 55-87.

TOWNSHEND, I.J. (2002): Monitoring Community Dimensions. – In: DAVIES, W.K.D. & I.J. TOWNSHEND, op.cit.: 435-460.

TUAN, Y.-F. (1977): *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*. – London: Edward Arnold.

UNGER, D.G. & A. WANDERSMAN (1985): The importance of neighbours: the social, cognitive and affective components of neighbouring. – In: *American Journal of Community Psychology* 13: 139-69.

VAZSONYI, A.T., PICKERING, L.E., JUNGER, M. & D.

HESSING (2001): An empirical test of a General Theory of Crime: a four nation comparative study of self-control and the prediction of deviance. – In: *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 38, 2: 91-131.

VEYSEY, B.M. & S.F. MESSNER (1999): Further testing of social disorganization theory: an elaboration of Sampson and Groves's community structure and crime. – In: *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 36, 2: 156-174.

Abstract: Affective Dimensions of Urban Crime Areas: Towards the psycho-geography of urban problem areas

Traditional studies of crime areas within cities by geographers focus on the spatial variations in the incidence of crime, as well as the social deprivation and social disorganization of these areas. Although these social content and behavioural features are often highly correlated with crime areas, it is argued that analytical studies of crime areas need to be extended to deal with the feelings and attitudes of people in these areas. Ten separate dimensions of the affective domain are hypothesized, each of which describes different feelings and attitudes that characterize crime areas. These can be called «terrains of distinctive affective characters», namely: social inadequacy; despair or limited goals; exclusion and discrimination; acceptance of decay and destruction; anxiety and fear; spontaneity of actions and emotions; indifference to others; low self-control and restraint; approval of subversive or deviant values; and peer group allegiance in gangs. Confirmation of these dimensions must wait for empirical testing but they point the way to the systematic development of a psycho-geography of crime areas in which the dimensions can be linked to different theories of criminal behaviour.

Zusammenfassung: Affektive Dimensionen von städtischen Kriminalitätsgebieten: Zur Psycho-Geographie in städtischen Problemzonen

Traditionelle Studien über Gebiete mit hoher Kriminalität in Städten durch Geographen konzentrieren sich auf die räumlichen Variationen der Vorkommen von Verbrechen, ebenso auf die soziale Entbehrung und die soziale Desorganisation in diesen Gebieten. Obwohl dieser soziale Inhalt und die Verhaltensmerkmale oft in starkem Zusammenhang mit Gebieten von hoher Kriminalität stehen, wird angeführt, dass analytische Studien über Gebiete mit hoher Kriminalität ausgeweitet werden müssen, indem sie auf die Gefühle und Gewohnheiten der Bevölkerung in diesen Gebieten eingehen. Zehn verschiedene Dimensionen der affektiven Domäne werden vermutet, wobei jede von ihnen verschiedene Gefühle und Gewohnheiten, die Gebiete mit hoher Kriminalität charakterisieren, beschreibt. Diese können bezeichnet werden als Ter-

rains mit unterschiedlichen affektiven Charakteristika, namentlich: soziale Unzulänglichkeit, Verzweiflung oder limitierte Ziele; Ausschluss und Diskriminierung; Akzeptieren von Verfall und Zerstörung; Angst und Furcht; Spontaneität von Handlungen und Emotionen; Gleichgültigkeit gegenüber Anderen; niedrige Selbstkontrolle und Hemmnis; Billigung von subversiven oder abwegigen Werten; *peer group*-Unterwerfung in Banden. Eine Bestätigung dieser Dimensionen muss empirisch erhärtet werden, doch sie weisen den Weg zu einer systematischen Entwicklung der Psycho-Geographie von Gebieten mit hoher Kriminalität, in welchen die Dimensionen mit verschiedenen Theorien kriminellen Verhaltens verbunden werden können.

Résumé: Les dimensions affectives des secteurs urbains à forte criminalité: vers une psycho-géographie des aires urbaines en difficulté

Une vue d'ensemble des différentes approches ayant eu pour objet de comprendre la fréquence des crimes et leur implantation spatiale dans la ville nous sert de fondement à l'identification de dix dimensions principales dans le domaine affectif. Premièrement, il est montré que le crime et sa fréquence sont socialement construits, souvent contestés et spatialement variables. Deuxièmement, les nombreuses théories alternatives qui expliquent le crime et ses variations peuvent être résumées en termes de facteurs individuels ou comme relevant des structures larges de la société. Etant donné que le crime est un phénomène aux multiples causes, une combinaison de ces facteurs est généralement requise pour expliquer la croissance des aires urbaines à forte criminalité. Cependant, peu d'études systématiques se sont attachées à décrire les sentiments et les comportements des habitants de ces quartiers soumis au crime, les études traditionnelles se focalisant sur le dénuement et la désorganisation sociale. Bien que ces phénomènes soient fortement corrélés avec les secteurs criminalisés, il est cependant nécessaire d'étendre l'étude aux sentiments et comportements des gens qui y habitent. On fait l'hypothèse qu'il existe dix dimensions affectives, qui semblent produire des terrains distinctifs et qui sous-tendent le développement d'une psycho-géographie particulière à ces zones: inadéquation sociale; désespoir et peur; exclusion et discrimination; acceptation du délabrement et de la destruction; anxiété et peur; spontanéité des actions et des émotions; indifférence aux autres individus; faible modération et contrôle de soi-même;

approbation de valeurs subversives ou déviantes; allégeance de groupe dans le cadre des gangs. Ces dimensions doivent encore faire la preuve empirique de leur valeur. Cependant, on trouve des confirmations de leur existence dans la comparaison des indicateurs de socialisation des classes moyennes, dans les mesures d'accomplissement de soi-même (*self-actualisation*) et dans les études de différenciation spatiale communautaire. Il est montré que ces domaines affectifs peuvent être des dérivés des études de différenciation communautaire plutôt que des axes uniques de réflexion.

Teaching of Geography – relevant questions

- What is the aim of the study?
- What new approach has been presented?
- According to this approach, what factors lead to violence?
- Distinguish between the «passive» and «active» dimensions in the affective or psycho-geography domain of crime or problem areas.
- Why do the «passive» psycho-geography dimensions make it difficult to change conditions in crime and deprived areas?
- Discuss the extent to which the «active» dimensions of the affective domain in crime and deprived areas are essentially based on attitudes that oppose the general norms of society.
- Crime levels are difficult to compare because crime is essentially «socially constructed» with variable definitions in different areas and times. Discuss.

Prof. Dr. **Wayne K.D. Davies**, Department of Geography, University of Calgary, 2500, University Drive, Calgary, Alberta, Canada, T2N 1N4.
e-mail: wdavies@ucalgary.ca

Manuskripteingang/received/manuscript entré le
29.3.2004

Annahme zum Druck/accepted for publication/accepté pour l'impression: 20.8.2004