

Perceptions of crime and the built environment: the case of the Bloemfontein Central Business District (CBD)¹

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Abstract

Internationally, inner-city crime has been a well-documented area of urban studies. In South African urban discourse, however, crime studies and inner-city crime studies *per se* have been scant. Therefore, it is the aim of this article to address the paucity of academic reflection, in this regard in South Africa, by means of a case study on the spatial patterns of crime distribution, perceptions of crime, and fear of crime in the inner city of Bloemfontein, and how these factors influence urban morphology (and *vice versa*). This case study on one of South Africa's middle-order cities may potentially comprise a valuable contribution, since the majority of inner-city studies on crime thus far have focused predominantly on the three major metropolitan areas of South Africa. Therefore, three arguments shall be put forward. Firstly, the impact of decentralised shopping centres on the prevalence of crime in inner cities will be highlighted. Secondly, the relationship between crime and 'grime' (physical decay and neglect) as causal factors in inner-city areas will be discussed. Thirdly, it will be argued that the fear of crime in the inner-city is an important consideration to be taken into account when assessing the spatial patterns and perceptions of this occurrence. In the case of Bloemfontein, this fear does not seem to be only racially related as black and white people experience the same levels of fear. By means of these arguments, an attempt will be made to contribute to the understanding of inner-city crime and its relationship to the urban form.

Keywords: Inner-city crime, decentralisation, grime (decay), Bloemfontein CBD, location

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¹ This article draws extensively from a CBD economic development study conducted for the Mangaung Local Municipality

Abstrak

Binnestadmisdaad is internasionaal 'n goed gedokumenteerde veld in stedelike studies. In die Suid-Afrikaanse diskoers oor stede was studies oor geweld en studies oor binnestadgeweld *per se* tot dusver egter redelik skaars. Hierdie artikel het dus ten doel om die leemte in akademiese nadenke op hierdie gebied in Suid-Afrika deur middel van 'n gevallestudie oor ruimtelike verspreiding van misdaad, persepsies oor misdaad en vrees vir misdaad in Bloemfontein se binnestad te vul, asook hoe hierdie faktore die stedelike morfologie beïnvloed (en omgekeerd). Hierdie gevallestudie oor een van Suid-Afrika se middelorde-stede hou die moontlikheid in dat dit 'n waardevolle bydrae kan lewer aangesien die meeste studies oor misdaad in die binnestad tot dusver oorwegend op óf Kaapstad óf Johannesburg gefokus het. Daar word drie argumente geopper. Eerstens, die impak wat gedentraliseerde winkelsentra op die voorkoms van misdaad in die binnestad het, word uitgewys. Tweedens, die verhouding tussen misdaad en 'morsigheid' as faktore wat misdaad in die binnestad veroorsaak, sal bespreek word. Derdens, word daar geargumenteer dat die vrees vir misdaad in die binnestad 'n belangrike rol speel wanneer die ruimtelik patrone en persepsies van misdaad geassesseer word. Dit lyk asof die vrees in Bloemfontein se geval nie net rasverwant is nie. Deur hierdie argumente word gepoog om 'n bydrae te lewer tot die verstaan van misdaad in die binnestad en die verhouding daarvan met stedelike vorm.

Slutelwoorde: Misdaad, geweld in die binnestad, desentralisering, morsigheid, Bloemfontein se SSG, ligging

1. Introduction

Internationally, inner-city crime has been a well documented study area in urban studies (see, for example, Foster, 1990; Robins, 1992; Sanders, 2005). However, in South African urban discourse, research on the spatial distribution of inner-city crime has been fairly limited. This is surprising, considering the array of literature on urban morphology and the impact of *apartheid* on these areas (Smith, 1992; Beavon, 2004), as well as an ever-increasing number of papers assessing post-*apartheid* urban transformation (e.g. Donaldson & Van Der Merwe, 2000; Donaldson & Marais, 2002; Dewar, 2004). There are, however, a few existing research documents in which the relationship between inner cities and crime does, in fact, feature prominently (see, for example, Allen, 2002; Newham, 2002; Reid & Dirsuweit, 2002; Lemanski, 2004; Liebermann & Coulson, 2004). Other related research delineates the effects of gated communities as a response to crime (Hook & Vrdoljak, 2002; Landman, 2002; Landman & Schönsteich, 2002), and the relationship between crime and the built environment (Bremmer, 1998; Liebermann, 2003). At the same time, some extensive work has been conducted on inner-city change; and reference is made to crime, amongst other issues (cf. Morris, 1999; Gnad, Bähr & Jürgens, 2002; Donaldson, Jürgens & Bahr, 2003; Hoogendoorn & Visser, 2007). Nevertheless, very little emphasis has been placed specifically on inner-city crime in South

Africa. Therefore, it is the aim of this article to address the paucity of academic reflection on inner-city crime in South Africa by means of a case study on the different perceptions of crime and to an extent the spatial distribution of this occurrence. The article will in the first instance argue that the development of decentralised shopping centres has been an underlying factor in the increase of crime in inner-city areas. Secondly, that the relationship between crime and 'grime' are the causal issues of inner-city crime. Thirdly, that fear for crime is a prominent aspect that needs to be more clearly understood.

In order to develop these arguments, the article unfolds as follows: Firstly, an international literature review will be provided in respect of the contentious issue of inner-city crime. This will be followed by a national literature review pertaining to crime research, which will continually refer back to the inner-city experience. Finally, the situation with regard to crime in the Bloemfontein Central Business District (CBD) will be presented as a case study.

Methodologically, the article is based on empirical data gathered over several months during 2005, as well as on two residential surveys conducted in 2001 and 2004. Four specific methods that were used are mentioned in more detail. First, semi-structured interviews were conducted with property owners and managers in Bloemfontein's CBD. Second, the section reflects on the experiences of potential CBD customers. For this purpose, 688 interviews were conducted with customers. Of these, 304 individuals (44.1%) were interviewed in the CBD and 384 individuals (55.8%) were interviewed at one of the main decentralised shopping centres in Bloemfontein. Third, the article draws on the results of 308 questionnaires, 208 of which were completed during June 2005 by respondents from formal business units, and 100 by respondents from informal enterprises. The final phase of the study consisted of a longitudinal study of the changing residential environment in the Bloemfontein CBD which was used as a source of background and contextual information. Two surveys were conducted, one in 2001 and in 2004; and some of the responses to the questions in these surveys reflect people's perceptions regarding crime.

2. An international review of inner-city crime

The past two decades have seen a growing realisation on the part of policy makers, policy agents, and researchers that understanding the context of crime – the 'where' and 'when' of a criminal event – comprises the key to understanding how crime can be controlled

and prevented (Cahill, 2004). According to Foster (1990), crime is an ever-present and pervasive characteristic of many inner-city areas. Sah (1991) moreover argues that crime and the fear of crime have deeply negative impacts on personal and societal well-being. The aim of this section is to explore the place-bound effects of inner-city crime, the reasons why there is more crime in the inner city, and how such crime is generated. The literature indicates that the relationship between decentralised development and inner city crime, the relationship between crime and grime and the fact that perceptions on crime are central to decisions regarding location and relocation of businesses and individuals has already been extensively debated.

One of the most puzzling aspects relating to crime and linked to the question of why crime is prevalent in inner-city areas is not the overall level of crime, nor the relationships between the factors that lead to crime, but rather the fact that crime is a deterrent to social capital and economic opportunity in inner-cities. Oc & Tiesdell (1997) suggest that changes in the central city are compounded by many factors, such as disurbanisation and the creation of non-centralised shopping malls. Thus, the deterrence of economic opportunity in CBDs is often created by the effects of decentralised commercial developments. For example, Thomas & Bromley (2000) argue that, in the past 30 years, the pre-eminent status of city centres in the retail system of British cities has been challenged by the competitive impact of retail decentralisation. Arguably, businesses participating in decentralisation adopt an attitude of 'reroute to remain'. According to Burnham *et al.* (2004), high crime rates near the CBD, whether real or perceived, could increase concerns for personal safety and thereby induce the migration of affluent residents to the suburbs, with a concomitant relocation of employment opportunities and businesses. The consequence is that the CBDs from which such relocation takes place is increasingly subjected to economic and social decay with the consequent influx of criminal elements.

Research confirms the above. For example, Deutch & Epstein (1998) found a correlation between the distance from crime hotspots such as inner-city areas, and criminal activity - for example, in terms of a reduction in the frequency of crime. In addition, Zenou (2003) mentions that it has consistently been pointed out in the relevant literature that, within cities, crime is highly concentrated in a limited number of areas. For instance, in the metropolitan areas of the USA, crime rates are much higher in central cities than in suburbs. Furthermore, Thomas & Bromley (2000) argue that early redevelopment strategies have created significant degrees of spatial fragmentation

between functions, and have led to the loss of a substantial residential population. In the present social climate globally, these changes have resulted in negative implications for the perception of safety, as well as the generation of fear and anxiety among users of the city centre.

Sah (1991) implies that the rates of participation in crime in different societal groups often correlate with such background variables as location (city centres versus suburbs versus rural communities), age structure, and ethnicity (for example, blacks versus whites), even after a large number of economic and deterrence variables have been controlled. Dorfman & Schiraldi (2001) argue that, in many instances, society tends to equate race with location, and, accordingly, to favour the suburbs, as against the inner city.

Many city centres world-wide are 'no-go' areas for numerous groupings (Mooney, 1999: 126). Therefore, it is clear from the above that mental associations are created between the locality of crime, the presence of the 'underclass', and their influence on drug trafficking. Grogger & Willis (2000) argue that, in the popular view, the arrival and widespread use of drugs such as cocaine led to increases in central-city crime and accelerated trends towards urban decay. Popular and ethnographic reports link drugs to gang violence, high murder rates, urban unemployment, poverty, and family disruption.

In conclusion, this section has attempted to review the international experience of inner-city crime, with specific reference to spatial preferences, the deterrence of economic opportunity, the effects of decentralised shopping centres, and perceptions in respect of crime. The focus will now fall on inner-city crime in the South African context.

3. The impact of crime on South African society: a link to inner-city crime?

3.1 Crime in South Africa: an overview

As the available literature on inner-city crime in South Africa is limited, the section first provides a broad overview of inner-city crime and its spatial distribution, followed by an overview of existing research on inner cities and crime. It is common knowledge, corroborated by research, that crime is a major problem in South Africa. Dirsuweit (2002) states that crime has become a national obsession. Shaw (1995) argues that both political and social transformation have had a profound effect on South African cities. Maintaining order in

the cities during the period of reconstruction and democratisation has been crucial to promoting the welfare of the new society. Shaw (1995) encapsulates the situation in suggesting, for many South Africans, the decline in political violence marked the end of South Africa's transition to democracy; but that the political violence for many former white group areas such as Central Business Districts were then replaced by growing levels of crime. Although it should be admitted that a fair amount of ambiguity exists regarding levels of crime before and after 1994 because of changes in legislation (see for example, Du Plessis & Louw, 2005).

In the opinion of many, the failure of local government to enforce municipal by-laws, coupled with the physical decline of public space (mainly in inner-city areas), created a sense of urban lawlessness, leading to heightened crime and perceptions of crime (Morris, 1999).

According to Dirsuweit (2002), in a survey of 110 countries conducted in 1997, Interpol ranked South Africa as having the highest *per capita* rates of murder and rape. Interpol also found that South Africa had the second highest *per capita* rate of murder and the fourth highest number of cases of serious assault and other sexual offences. To highlight the severity of crime, Louw (1999) presents the findings of a study on crime in South Africa's four major metropolitan areas, namely Johannesburg, Durban, Pretoria, and Cape Town:

- Johannesburg had the highest incidence of crime, with 62% of all respondents having been victims of crime.
- Durban had the second highest incidence, with 59% of all respondents having been victims.
- Fifty-four percent of all respondents in Pretoria had been victims.
- Lastly, 49.5% of all respondents in Cape Town had been victims.

More recent research by Ipsos Markinor suggests that:

- "60% of South Africans believe that crime has increased over the past six months
- 90% of South Africans have not experienced any form of crime over the past six months
- 39% of South Africans know someone who has been a victim of crime over the past six months

- 50% of South Africans think the police are not doing enough to combat crime
- 33% of South Africans believe the government is handling the issue of combating crime well. Down from 54% a year ago
- 63% of South Africans have done nothing to address crime in their communities
- 4% of South Africans have taken an active role by either joining as a police reservist or by taking part in community policing forums" (Ispos Markinor, 2007: online).

With crime rates being very high in South Africa, crime and the fear thereof have locally created certain 'fear-based' spatial distributions. The absence of a thorough analysis of the fear of crime, in terms of, *inter alia*, the displacement of anxieties about transition and the 'stereotyping' of others, may hamper the effectiveness of interventions aimed at dealing with the spatial processes of crime, and the fear of crime (De Bruyn, 2002). Altbeker (2005) points out that the results of surveys that have been conducted all over the world suggest that the fear of crime is higher in diverse societies than in uniform societies.

3.2 Inner-city crime in South Africa: some perspectives

Although relevant research in respect of inner-city crime is limited, a number of contributing comments need to be made. According to Allen (2002), the discourse in respect of race is an ever-present issue within the South African inner-city context, especially in view of the fact that white people often equate black people with criminality. The challenge, however, lies in the examination of the various ways in which the different communities experience fear, as well as an ethnographic approach to the fear of crime (Dirsuweit, 2002). Dirsuweit & Reid (2002) rightfully point out that urban citizenship entails the freedom to move around in, use the public facilities of, and express one's identity, in a particular city. A situation, in which violence and crime are rife in the city, comprises an extreme instance of the curtailment of these rights. Such a situation erodes people's sense of safety and restricts choice. This factor underpins the urgency of the need to prohibit crime in the inner city.

In conclusion, with regard to the South African situation, it is clear that inner-city crime specifically has received very little attention as a specific topic of research as crime statistics are seldom provided for smaller geographic entities. Nevertheless, intensive research has

been conducted on the relationship between actual crime and the fear of crime, as well as on levels of victimisation. Reducing the negative perceptions in respect of crime, while concomitantly bringing down the actual crime rate to a corresponding level, could prove to be essential towards creating a stable society. The lack of research can be regarded as an opportunity to contribute to the development of a theoretical base with regard to inner-city crime in South Africa and to determine how it differs from the international experience. In addition, this research could contribute to the understanding and development of the current South African society and how they negotiate inner-city areas.

4. Inner-city crime: a Bloemfontein case study

4.1 A historical background on Bloemfontein and the Bloemfontein CBD and its relevance to inner-city crime

With a view to facilitating a more in-depth understanding of perceptions of crime and its spatial influence in the Bloemfontein inner city, a broad historical overview will now be provided. Bloemfontein has been described as a quintessential *apartheid* city (Krige, 1991; 1998). This statement refers, amongst other factors, to the 'effective' manner in which the various population groups were segregated, with the CBD (see Figure 1) as the focus of convergence for commercial purposes. Residential segregation goes back a long way (see Krige, 1991). The residential component of the Bloemfontein CBD was a 'whites-only' area under *apartheid*. Jürgens *et al.* (2003) point out that Bloemfontein's CBD witnessed a shift in racial composition from a 'whites-only' area in 1991, to an area with a desegregation level of almost 50% in 2001. The estimates in 2005, suggest that the levels of desegregation have increased even further, to approximately 77%. However, more importantly, the Bloemfontein City Council has taken various decisions in favour of decentralised shopping centres since the early 1980s (Hoogendoorn & Visser, 2007). Krige (1998) noted that, since 1994, nearly all private development has taken place towards the west of the CBD. The latest of these decentralised developments have also been designed with a view to discouraging crime. For example, secure and under-cover parking and limited entrances to retail complexes are major characteristics of the new architecture aimed at limiting crime in these malls. These decentralised developments have played a fundamental role in causing white customers initially, and later, middle-class customers in general, to avoid the CBD as a shopping area. At the same time, these developments have increased the pressure on the police service to

provide effective policing in areas surrounding decentralised commercial shopping centres. Furthermore, as a result of the withdrawal of the middle- and higher-income groups from the CBD, it was necessary for the CBD to undergo a phase of adjustment to a new clientele. This meant that, for the last ten to fifteen years, very little private-sector finance went into the CBD. Overall, buildings were not always maintained, while public spaces and services did not always receive adequate attention. The low levels of public investment in services - that went hand in hand with the development of decentralised commercial areas led to the further deterioration of the CBD and creating conditions conducive to crime. The result was that crime increased steadily over a period of time. In the late 1990s, closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras were erected in strategic places to curb the incidence of crime. At that stage, it seemed as if some of the crime in the inner city had been displaced to suburbs such as Westdene, adjacent to the CBD (Hoogendoorn, 2005). It is thus clear that the increase of crime in the Bloemfontein CBD since the 1980s cannot be viewed in isolation from the purposeful development of decentralised complexes.

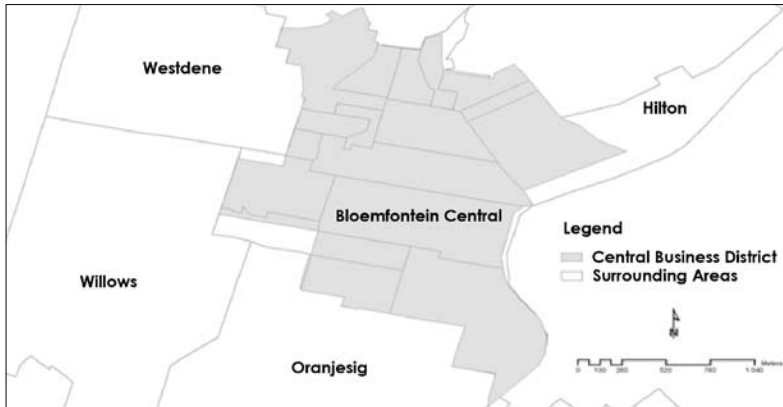


Figure 1: The Bloemfontein Central Business District

In the light of the foregoing overview, the focus will now shift to patterns of crime in the CBD, as well as to the results of the various interviews that were conducted for this study.

4.2 Patterns of crime in the Bloemfontein CBD

Statistics of crime are not always available and are often unreliable given that, for example, many crimes are not reported, as well as that many crimes are not recorded because of institutional impediments. Therefore, there might be some ambivalence as to the accuracy of crime statistics holistically. In addition, they do not always take crime waves into account (Altbeker, 2005). Despite these acknowledged shortcomings, a brief assessment of the available statistics will now be provided. In order to underline the severity of the crime situation in Bloemfontein's CBD, a comparison will be drawn between the CBD and three former white group areas in Bloemfontein (no other comparisons being available at the time of research). During June 2005 – November 2005, 16 categories of priority crimes were identified by the Park Road Policing Precinct which is the head offices of the South African Police Force in Bloemfontein, including, *inter alia*, malicious damage to property, robbery, common assault, and theft of (and from) vehicles. The cases were reported in Bloemfontein's CBD for June 2005 alone, numbered 1413, while Westdene, bordering the CBD to the west, had only 215 reported cases in June 2005. Willows, to the south of the CBD, had only 101 reported cases during June 2005. Lastly, Heuwelsig, an upper-class suburb in the north of Bloemfontein, had 27 reported cases during the period (Community Policing Forum, 2005; Landman & Liebermann, 2005) (Figure 2).

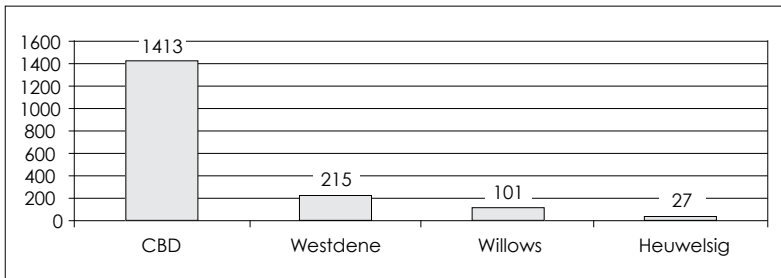


Figure 2: Reported crimes in June 2005 – Nov 2005 Bloemfontein

On the basis of Figure 2, two main comments need to be made. Firstly, it is evident that the crime rate in the CBD is extremely high in comparison with that of the other areas of Bloemfontein such as Westdene and Willows which has a similar residential and commercial base. These statistics do however need to be viewed in a specific context. The primary crime hotspots in the CBD are located around the Sanlam Centre, with 107 incidents having been reported from January to June 2005, and the Middestad Centre, with 45 incidents

(Landman & Liebermann, 2005). At the same time, it should be recognised that if the number incidents of crime were to be considered in relation to the number of people in each of these areas, the resulting ratio would not reflect quite so negatively on the CBD.

Secondly, the following question needs to be asked in this regard: In what way is crime in Bloemfontein's CBD different from crime in other parts of Bloemfontein? The number of reported crimes in the CBD is six times higher than the number of crimes reported in, for example, Westdene, which has the highest crime rate after the CBD. Crime-related evidence suggests that crime within the CBD is constantly present, while other areas of Bloemfontein tend to undergo fluctuations. Thus, crime is not a constant phenomenon in these areas. The existence of the crime hotspots in the CBD (Landman, 2002) testifies to the permanency of crime in these particular areas. Another difference is that crime in the CBD is more serious in nature, with rape and murder, as well as armed robberies (a major cause of concern for businesses), being more prevalent than in the suburbs. Therefore, an investigation was undertaken to determine the perceptions of customers, business owners, residential owners and property owners in the CBD in Bloemfontein with regard to crime.

4.3 The perceptions of businesses in respect of crime in the CBD in Bloemfontein

Business owners hold many negative perceptions of the CBD. The key disadvantage for formal-economy businesses relates to safety and crime (50.6%) and, to a lesser extent, to the (lack of) cleanliness of the area. The migration of key customer cohorts to decentralised business nodes elsewhere in Bloemfontein also plays a part. An important aspect relating to this issue is that enterprise owners in the informal economy, who are often more vulnerable to crime, do not share this concern. Indeed, only 3.1% of owners of informal-economy enterprises cited crime and safety issues as disadvantages resulting from their location in the CBD. It seems that to them their fight for legitimate existence is a more important consideration than crime. At the same time, informal businesses are also mobile enough to avoid crime hotspots, while formal businesses have fixed locations. Of all business owners (formal and informal) 9.5% were not satisfied with the levels of cleanliness. According to most of the landowners, the crime situation in the CBD is exaggerated. Landowners argued that newspapers tend to focus excessively on the CBD. This happens despite the fact that (according to them) more crimes are committed, comparatively speaking, in Westdene or at Mimosa

Mall. What seems evident from the discussions held with landowners is that it took the CBD approximately ten years to adapt to a new clientele after the middle- and high-income groups had withdrawn from the CBD. However, they are of the opinion that the CBD has, in fact, succeeded in adapting to the new clientele, and that what the CBD currently requires is effective basic service delivery such as refuse removal, cleaning of streets and upgrading of infrastructure to name a few examples. This process of adaptation to the new clientele nevertheless entailed a period of uncertainty and also a downscaling of many public-sector investments.

4.4 Customers' perceptions of the CBD in Bloemfontein

This section explores two customer cohorts' perceptions of Bloemfontein's CBD. The first group of interviews was conducted with customers in the CBD (mainly black respondents) while the second group of interviews was conducted with customers at decentralised commercial centres (mainly white respondents). Table 1 provides a reflection of the negative perceptions of the CBD, as experienced by these two groups of customers. The second table indicates the responses returned when these customers were asked what, in their opinion, would be likely to induce people to return to the CBD for the purposes of their general shopping (Table 2).

Table 1: Negative experiences within the CBD, 2005

Negative experiences	Location of survey participant		Total (%)
	In the CBD (%)	Decentralised shopping centre (%)	
Crime and feeling unsafe	26.3	40	34.3
Dirt and grime	28.7	19.5	23.6
Distance transport costs and transport problems	1.5	3.9	2.8
Foreigners	2.7	0.4	1
Hawkers street children and schoolchildren	23.5	3.9	12.5
Infrastructure-related problems e.g. leaking pipes toilet facilities	2.7	7.5	5.4
Lack of entertainment	0.3	0.4	0.4
Fewer economic opportunities	2.4	1.7	2
Negative social experiences	4.9	4.3	4.6
Overcrowded life too fast busy noisy	5.5	7.5	6.6
Racial problems	0.9	9.7	5.8
Total	100	100	100

Table 1 reflects the negative experiences of customers within the CBD. For people residing and working within the CBD, the main problems are the effects of crime (26.3%), the dirt and grime (28.7%), and hawkers and street children (23.5%). The problems experienced by customers at decentralised centres are similar except that the percentages in respect of crime are higher (40%). This is probably an indication of white fears - as has already been pointed out by other researchers in South Africa (Allen, 2002) - since the majority of respondents at the decentralised areas were white people. However, as suggested in the relevant theoretical sources, and as we will also argue later, the relationship between crime and grime should not be underestimated. If these two categories of problems are merged, the differences between the responses of the CBD respondents and those of the respondents at the decentralised shopping centres in respect of crime become less significant. It seems that the perceptions of white people are different from those of black people in the CBD. This factor influences the cultural variability and accessibility of the CBD.

Table 2: Suggestions concerning what could be done to induce people to come back to the CBD, 2005

Suggestions	Location of survey participant		Total (%)
	In the CBD (%)	Decentralised shopping centre (%)	
Crime-prevention measures make CBD safer policing	36.2	37.9	37.2
Economic improvement	14.5	10.3	12
Entertainment amenities and social development	1.5	1.6	1.6
Find ways of solving problems related to hawkers and street children	9.1	3.5	5.9
Cleanup operations	23.6	13.3	17.7
More development shops sports grounds art and culture	4.1	0.7	2.1
Negative evaluation - nothing can be done	3.7	6.7	5.5
Removal of unwanted elements (e.g. racial conflict)	4.4	6.5	5.6
Traffic and parking	0.3	4.6	2.8
Upgrading of services and aesthetic values	2.2	14.5	9.2
Total	100	100	100

Table 2 explores the issues that could be dealt with in order to revitalise the CBD and induce people to come back. Both surveyed groups, within the CBD (36.2%) and at decentralised shopping centres (37.9%), felt that crime could be prevented or reduced if policing were more visible. Another possibility is that, if elements of gentrification were to be introduced, this could be instrumental in improving inner-city districts (cf. Visser, 2002). At the same time, it should be noted that, despite some differences between the two groups regarding their perceptions of crime, the results in Table 2 suggest that respondents in both the CBD (mainly black respondents) and the decentralised commercial centres (mainly white respondents) felt that improved safety was a crucial factor towards ensuring a larger clientele. This finding suggests that aspects of fear for crime are not racially bound. Furthermore, both groups felt that (re)investment within the CBD, as well as general economic improvement, could be beneficial in terms of revitalisation of the CBD. Cleanliness was also an issue, especially with the respondents within the CBD (23.6%). It seems that, particularly in the opinion of the customers in the CBD, a correlation existed between crime and grime.

4.5 CBD residents' perceptions in respect of crime

This section focuses on the perceptions in respect of crime amongst the residential population of Bloemfontein's CBD. Respondents were asked what they disliked most with regard to the CBD (Figure 3). For the purposes of comparison, the information in Figure 3 is taken from two surveys conducted in 2001 and 2004.

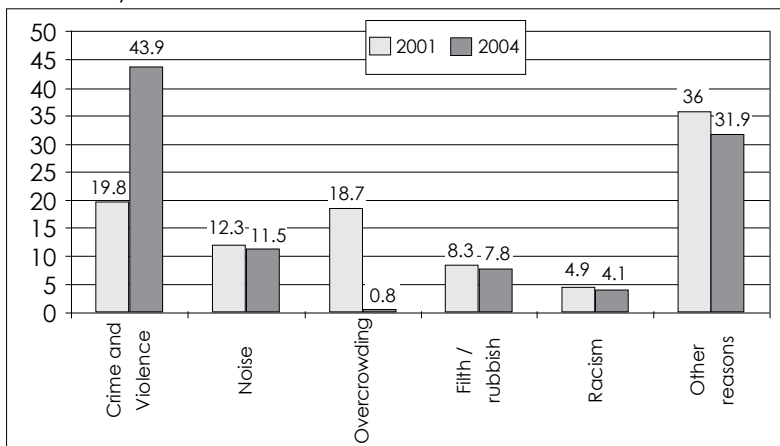


Figure 3: What respondents disliked most about the CBD 2001 and 2004

Figure 3 reflects the respondents' dislike of specific aspects of the CBD, according to two similar studies conducted in 2001 and 2004. Respondents' most important objection concerning the CBD was related to the situation regarding crime and violence. There was also a considerable increase in the negative perceptions pertaining to these aspects between 2001 and 2004 (from 19.8% to 43.9%). In 2001, the second most important negative aspect cited regarding the CBD related to noise (11.5%). A noteworthy aspect is that, in 2001, 18.7% of the respondents cited the levels of overcrowding in the CBD as a negative aspect. However, in 2004, not even 1% of the respondents mentioned this aspect. It seems clear that those who, in 2001, viewed overcrowding as the most negative aspect of the CBD, subsequently changed their opinions, and now (2004) regarded crime and violence as the most negative aspect. Furthermore, the crime waves that in 2004 affected adjacent areas of the CBD i.e. Westdene and Willows, as well as the fact that this situation was comprehensively reported on in local and national newspapers, may also have had an effect on the respondents' perceptions (Hoogendoorn, 2005).

The foregoing section focused on people's perceptions regarding crime. In view of the negative reactions related to the CBD outlined above, an attempt will now be made to assess the current situation with regard to crime and grime. Figure 4 provides an overview of the percentage of respondents who were mugged, burgled, or whose cars were stolen, as well as the percentage of respondents who perceived the CBD to be dirty (See Figure 4).

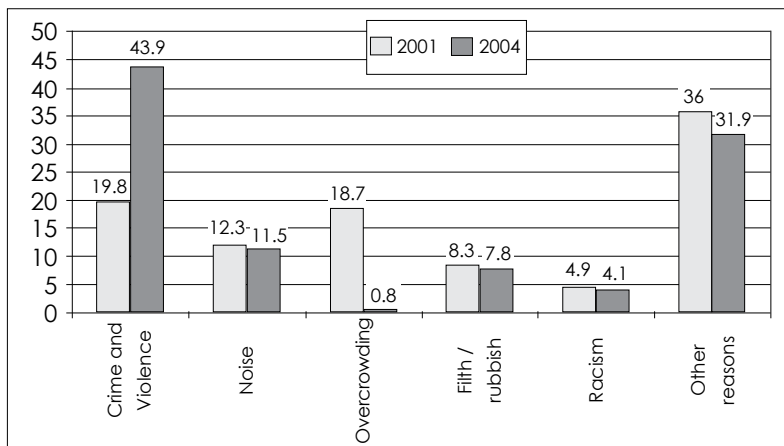


Figure 4: Changes in perceptions regarding crime and the environment perceptions in the CBD 2001 and 2004

A number of important considerations should be mentioned in respect of the percentages recorded in Figure 4 above. It seems that the number of people who became victims of crime decreased between 2001 and 2004. The proportion of persons who were mugged decreased from 61.8% in 2001 to 40.2% in 2004. Similarly, the percentage of respondents claiming that their flats had been burgled declined from 67.4%, to 20.7%. A decrease is also observable in the percentage of respondents whose cars were stolen or broken into. It is also significant that the percentage of respondents who perceived the CBD to be dirty, declined from 41% in 2001, to 32.7% in 2004. Concerning the above factors, as well as the comments made earlier in respect of what residents seemed to dislike about the CBD, three important concluding comments can be made. First, according to statistics, crime is undeniably a serious problem in the CBD. Nearly one-third of the respondents had been mugged; 20% had been burgled; and just under 20% had been victims of car theft or car burglary. Second, the increase in the perception of crime being a problem in the CBD was not accompanied by an increase in the number of real cases reported by respondents. Third, this increase could be an indication of an urban environment which, despite a decrease in victimisation, was not conducive to a change in individuals' perceptions. The then current spatial arrangements of the physical infrastructure and buildings tended not to make people feel comfortable.

5. What can be learnt from the empirical evidence concerning crime and the CBD?

A number of aspects should be noted in this regard. First, we are of the opinion that one of the main reasons for crime in the CBD is related to the development of decentralised commercial centres since the early 1980s. These centres have succeeded in directing the traditional middle- and high-income customers away from the CBD. To a large degree, these centres have led to the segregation of commercial areas in the city (initially in terms of race, but later in terms of income). Since the early 1990s, the withdrawal of the historical clientele has placed immense pressure on the existing businesses. At the same time, the provision of public services to the CBD does not seem to have been regarded as priority. Moreover, such services (including police services) have had to be provided to a much larger area. In the process of adapting to a new clientele, the CBD struggled to define its function within the city. Thus, decentralised development resulting in poor public services in the CBD, coupled with the search for a new function for the CBD by the private

sector, contributed extensively both to an increase in crime and fear of crime in the CBD. Second, in addition to the influence of decentralisation, the architecture of the newly-constructed decentralised centres is far less crime-friendly than the architecture of the CBD. The designers of the new commercial developments have ensured that the architecture of these developments provide barriers to crime. Therefore, in future developers in the CBD and elsewhere, could implement the principles of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) which as been explored within literature for a fair extent (see for example Liebermann & Coulson, 2005).

Third, as suggested by the literature on crime in South Africa and elsewhere, the fear of crime is an important consideration. Our research supports the findings of existing research in this respect. Fear of crime is evident from the perceptions of business owners, residents, and customers. It is noteworthy that fear of crime can be observed in all racial groups, and not only in the white population. In the fourth instance, the poor levels of service and the perceived lack of cleanliness further exacerbate the fear of crime. Finally, no specific comments have been made regarding the existence of subcultures in the Bloemfontein CBD. This is partly attributable to the fact that the Bloemfontein CBD has a far smaller contingent of non-South Africans than have other areas.

6. Conclusion

This article largely confirms the findings of the existing literature on inner-city crime and development. Yet, the empirical evidence and basic arguments about the relationship between crime, inner cities and decentralised developments in the case of Bloemfontein suggest increasing evidence that the management of these aspects have been contributing to inner-city crime. It is evident from the research that the middle- and higher-income populations (mainly white) avoid moving into the inner city as decentralised alternatives became available. Ongoing informalisation of local economies, which serves to underscore the 'Africanisation' of Bloemfontein's inner city, encompassing also its cultural atmosphere, is already firmly established (Jürgens *et al.*, 2003). The effects of the desegregation of the CBD, as well as the continued informalisation of local economies, led to the decentralisation of white businesses, or 'white flight' to adjacent areas such as Brandwag, Westdene and Wilflows. This decentralisation in turn led to economic deterrence and decay for the CBD, which created an opportunity for the infiltration of inner-city crime, owing to the fact that higher-order businesses

(formal enterprises which have moved out) depend on high levels of security for their clients, while lower-class businesses (more informal enterprises who remained in the CBD) do so to a lesser extent. Furthermore, decisions by 'city fathers' to support decentralised development have had a major impact on crime in the CBD. It has been argued in this article that, in the South African context, decentralised shopping centres mean further segregation of commercial space, which, in many cases, means that police resources are stretched despite the rise of the private security industry. What is also evident is that crime in Bloemfontein's CBD occurs mainly in certain specific areas, despite attempts by the police to disrupt criminal activities in these hotspots (Landman & Liebermann, 2005). Furthermore, the architecture of the CBD allows for the prevalence of crime – more so than in the case of the newly erected decentralised commercial centres. The features of the CBD's architecture include dark alleys, narrow roads, old dilapidated buildings and *culs-de-sac*. This can mainly be attributed to the age of many of the buildings that were not originally built with the specific intention of prohibiting crime. In contrast, decentralised shopping centres specifically cater for ensuring the safest possible shopping experience for their customers. Finally, we have argued that, as in the case of other areas, fear of crime is a prominent factor. However, in this case study, this fear was not exclusively linked to a single race group – even if some racial patterns are discernible in this regard.

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