

meanings. Often different groups of people are prone to common and yet distinct definitions of words.

The special attention of differently experienced subjects is also a major limitation of this technique, although this can also be used to advantage. For this reason, homogeneous groups of subjects should be used when aggregating results. It would, for example, be very dangerous to have architects and non-architects in the same sample, but the technique may be useful for demonstrating their differential perception of space.

### **But what does it mean?**

So the semantic differential and other similar techniques can tell us how someone or a group of people feel about a space. However, we have still no idea which attributes of the space are causing which aspects of the emotions. We may guess at this, but if we want more objective measurements then some further investigations are going to be required. An obvious way of tackling this problem is to do some parametric studies. Here we might systematically vary some attributes of a scene and compare the score achieved on the semantic differential scales. One of our students has recently used this device for examining Iranian streetscapes. She compared streetscapes that had very varied skylines, for example, with ones that had more regular skylines, and compared streets where the predominant shapes gave horizontal proportions with those that gave vertical ones. She was able to show that this factor changed the way people saw these streets significantly, but the effect was different for Iranian and British subjects (Rezazadeh 1999).

Such studies are difficult to complete in the real world, since it does not nicely come in parametric variations. Usually many characteristics are changed as we move from place to place. For this reason some researchers have resorted to analytical measurement of the scene itself and tried to correlate this with semantic differential scores. Some have taken up the information theory ideas, which we looked at in Chapter 4, and which enable us in theory to measure the uncertainty or levels of information in a scene. Again, however, such studies are usually confounded by the various items of a façade or building that could be analysed. Is it the overall proportion, the variation of colour or texture, variations in sizes of features, or their proportions or frequencies of occurrence? In reality, we know so little about such matters that it is extremely difficult to do such research.

For this reason, effort has been expended on determining the features of buildings that most influence our perception of them. One line of investigation has focused on building façades, and has developed into what is known as the 'type/token' ratio. This simple measurement relates the variety of a feature to its frequency of occurrence. For