are also incorporated. Each subject can select as much, or as little, information as they desire in order to come to a final decision. Finally, age and experience are specifically included and examined as possible moderating influences on the impact of cues on target attractiveness.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research conducted for this thesis was divided into two studies. The first provides a general overview of heroin use and B&E. While conducting the interviews with experienced heroin using burglars information was also sought on the main cues that subjects used to assess a possible target. The information provided by subjects was analysed along with findings from previous research. The results enabled the development of a list of 17 cues that were used in the second study. The second study specifically focused on burglar decision making, the rational choice perspective, and routine activity theory. The study examined in detail the actual process whereby offenders selected and weighed up various combinations of cues.

The four research questions addressed by the two studies conducted for this thesis follow:

Study One:
1. What are the processes used by burglars to select a target, break in, steal, and distribute the proceeds?
2. What are the crucial decision making cues used to select a target?

Study Two:
3. What is the impact of various cues, cue alternatives, cue order and combinations selected on target attractiveness in a controlled situation?
4. Does age or experience interact with the effect of any cues?

Study Two addressed four weak points in the literature on burglar decision making:
(a) The failure to examine the strength of cues in various combinations;
(b) The failure to allow subjects to choose as little or as much information as they require to reach a decision;
(c) The failure to incorporate different alternatives for cues, such as their presence or absence; and
(d) The failure to assess the moderating impact of age and burglary experience on the effect of different cues.

OVERVIEW OF THE REMAINING CHAPTERS

Chapter Two sets the scene for the thesis as a whole. B&E is very prevalent (Van-Kesteren, Mayhew and Mieuwbeerta, 2000) and it remains a serious problem in Australia (Townsley, Homel and Chaseling, 2000) and traditional reactive policing methods have achieved only mediocre results. These poor outcomes stimulated the development of alternative methods centred on a proactive response to crime. A leader in this proactive field is the rational choice perspective, which focuses on the decision making of the offender before committing a crime. The rational choice perspective provides a method for analysing the criminal decision making of offenders. The rational choice perspective contends that offenders commit crimes to receive a benefit. Although an offender’s decision making is constrained it is still purposive and goal orientated. All decision making must take place within wider environmental and personal constraints, which can effect the interpretation of cues from the environment.

There are many influences on decision making. Chapter Two discuss four principal influences. First, studies on criminal careers have found that decision making can vary depending on the stage a person is at in their criminal career. As experience in a particular crime increases a person can develop specialised skills and abilities that will influence what cues are selected and how cues are interpreted, this will be specifically examined in the research conducted for this thesis. Second, the prevalence of drug use by criminals is high and drugs can affect decision making. The cycle of drug use can also impact on decision making. When an offender is
desperately in need of heroin decision making can become less thoughtful. Third, 
environment and behaviour research examines how persons interact and interpret the 
built environment. It is important to pay reference to this field as this thesis concerns 
how a person interprets certain cues from the built environment. Currently any 
deterministic arguments have been discarded the contemporary reasoning is that the 
built environment can only create spaces of probabilistic encounter. The final 
influence discussed is crime prevention through environmental design, which 
developed from environment and behaviour research. It specifically examines the 
built environment and any relationship it could have to crime. Crime prevention 
through environmental design hinges on the concept of group territoriality. Cues that 
signify group territoriality and ownership will have a deterrent influence such as the 
presence of neighbours in a street.

Routine activity theory is examined because routine activity theory contends that all 
decision making has to be adjusted to accommodate spatial and temporal limits. 
Routine activity theory contends that a crime is more likely to occur when three 
elements converge (a suitable target, a likely offender and an amenable place). 
Crime minimisation is reliant on forces that restrict the supply and convergence of 
these three elements. The handler exerts control on the likely offender, the manager 
supervises the amenable place and the capable guardian protects the suitable target. 
This thesis is concerned with the point of convergence between the rational choice 
perspective and routine activity theory, which is at the capable guardian and 
amenable place elements. For example, offenders choose between various possible 
targets on the strength of the varied deterrent capabilities of residential properties. 
When an offender, through a decision, determines that a property has poor deterrent 
capabilities he has decided that there is an absence of a capable guardian and the 
place is suitable for a crime.

No discussion of any theory is complete without due consideration of possible 
strengths and weaknesses. One of the unforeseen benefits of situational crime 
prevention based on the rational choice perspective and routine activity theory is 
diffusion of benefit. That is when prevention spreads beyond an intended target.
There are four principal moral, philosophical and theoretical criticisms of situational crime prevention utilising the rational choice perspective and routine activity theory. Firstly, an emphasis on the decision making of the offender allows the use of neo-liberal solutions. Secondly, situational crime prevention concentrates on petty street and property crime and ignores crimes such as incest, domestic violence, child abuse, industrial safety and environmental vandalism. Thirdly, initiatives are often hijacked by the more affluent segments of society. Finally, it blames victims.

The main practical criticism levelled at situational crime prevention based on the rational choice perspective and routine activity theory is displacement. Critics have argued that if a crime is occurring in one location a prevention initiative will merely move the crime to another location.

By the beginning of Chapter Three this thesis has introduced and discussed the main theories that are directly and indirectly related to the research conducted for this thesis. Before progressing any further a thorough description of the actual crime of B&E is required. Chapter Three accurately examines the extent of B&E in Australia and other jurisdictions and it presents a synopsis of B&E covering areas such as its prevalence, its impact on victims and attempts by police at prevention. B&E is a common crime that can have very negative effects for victims and this has forced police to attempt various prevention initiatives. Traditional policing has had mixed results so police and authorities have tried to respond to rising rates of B&E by using non-traditional strategies.

At this point in Chapter Three the main theories have been introduced and B&E has been thoroughly detailed. This leads into a discussion of B&E research that has been conducted from a routine activity theory and rational choice perspective focus. There is a vast body of research that supports both the rational choice perspective and routine activity theory. Finally, Chapter Three concludes with a section that summarises the weaknesses in past B&E research. This summary provides ample justification for the conducting of the research completed for this thesis.
Chapter Four outlines the aims and method for the first study conducted in this thesis called, Study One. The chapter starts with an outline of the ethics approval obtained. The subject selection method is then presented. Study One is an examination of the personal accounts of B&E and drug use (predominantly heroin). The 50 subjects for Study One were all experienced burglars. Some had committed a few burglaries, while others had committed over 100. Offenders were accessed through methadone clinics in Brisbane (Queensland, Australia). Each subject took part in a semi-structured interview. During interview, each subject was asked their process for selecting a target and gaining entry, that is their template of operation. The interview covered all aspects of target selection, attractiveness and risk assessment. The semi-structured interviews were conducted to establish the basic parameters for Study Two and to test the applicability of relevant overseas research findings. The data gained from Study One was used to construct the cues utilised in Study Two.

Chapter Five presents the findings for Study One. Firstly, a life history of the subjects’ involvement in drugs and B&E is outlined. Subjects were asked about the cues that they utilise to assess targets. The main cues nominated by subjects are discussed. Chapter Five then contains a synopsis of the process subjects use to commit a B&E. The final section in the chapter discusses how subjects dispose of stolen property.

Chapter Six presents the aims and method used for Study Two. Seventeen cues were developed using the information from the lengthy interviews that were conducted with 50 heroin using burglars in Study One and from the results of previous research. Burglars use these cues to assess the vulnerability of a potential target. Each cue had different alternatives. For example, one cue was cue 3 (alarm) when a subject chose that cue they would receive two possible alternative responses – no alarm on house or a very good alarm on house. A computer software program was developed which exposed 96 subjects to a series of 20 case studies. Each case study contained the 17 cues. The 96 subjects were recruited through a privately run post-prison reintegration scheme in Melbourne (Victoria, Australia). The alternatives for the cues were arranged in combinations that removed any intercorrelations between cues.
The subjects could select as much or as little information as they wished. Subjects gave a rating of vulnerability or attractiveness for each target as they selected each cue and when they had finished assessing all the selected information. Examination of the data allowed detailed analysis of particular aspects of the decision making of burglars when they selected a target. The method used for this study could be replicated for almost any other crime type involving the selection of a target.

Chapters Seven to Eleven present the results of Study Two. Each chapter is based on an onion skin metaphor. As each layer of onion skin is peeled back, a deeper and more detailed understanding is revealed. Chapter Seven presents all of the overall findings from the research conducted such as the background of the subjects, number and type of cues selected, final ratings given and number of cues used to reach a decision. Chapter Eight presents a detailed decision tree for the paths that follow the four most popular first selections – cue 16 (inside information), cue 3 (alarm), cue 1 (dog) and cue 13 (people in the street). Chapter Nine presents two comprehensive decision trees. One for the case study found most attractive (case study 17) and one for the case study found least attractive (case study 8). Chapter Ten contains regression models that investigate the predictive capabilities of the cues on the final rating given for the twenty case studies. Chapter Eleven integrates the possible interaction effects of age and experience on the decision making of subjects across the twenty case studies.

In the final chapter (Twelve) overall conclusions of the study are formulated and the theoretical and practical implications of the findings are discussed. The implications for the results of both studies and directions for future research are discussed and considered.
CHAPTER 2: DECISION MAKING AND THE ENVIRONMENT

This thesis examines how burglars interpret their wider environment with the objective of determining a suitable target. This chapter begins with a description of the rational choice perspective (Clarke and Cornish, 1985; Cornish and Clarke, 1986), which argues that offender behaviour is purposive. Offenders endeavour to advance themselves by criminal pursuits. To achieve this offenders make decisions based on perceptions of risk versus gain.

Decision making does not take place in a vacuum. Decision making takes place within environmental constraints and influences. There are four main areas of research relevant to burglar decision making as they can influence decision outcomes—criminal career research, drug use, environment and behaviour and crime prevention through environmental design.

First, the stage an offender is at in their career will affect target selection. As an offender becomes more practiced at an offence decision making should become more efficient and specialised. Offenders will start to interpret potential targets differently. Second, drugs and crime, especially heroin and B&E, are very strongly linked. Substance misuse can effect the decision making of persons and offenders. Third, environment and behaviour research examines the relationship between the physical environment and people. Researchers believe that designs that encourage homogeneity have a strong deterrent influence on crime. Fourth, crime prevention through environmental design specifically examines how the manipulation of the physical environment can influence the occurrence of crime. Designs that increase territoriality and ownership of space will minimise crime.

After the discussion of these influences on decision making the other main theory relevant to this thesis is introduced. Routine activity theory (Cohen and Felson,
1979; Felson, 1995) states that when three elements (likely offender, suitable target, and an amenable place) escape the influence of their controllers (handler, guardian and manager) there is a greater likelihood that a crime will occur. The two theories (rational choice perspective and routine activity theory) are then compared and contrasted in terms of their similarities and differences. The complementary aspects of the two theories are also outlined. This thesis directly examines the utility of the rational choice perspective and routine activity theory in relation to B&E.

No discussion of any theory is complete without an honest and detailed discussion of its criticisms. The assets of situational crime prevention beyond crime reduction are presented followed by a discussion of the principal criticisms of the rational choice perspective, routine activity theory, and situational crime prevention.

THE RATIONAL CHOICE PERSPECTIVE

B&E is a very common crime that can have very harmful effects on victims. The traditional reactive criminal justice response has at best a mixed or poor influence on the occurrence of the crime. Over time this has led to police and researchers exploring a proactive response to crime, including B&E. One focus of this proactive development concentrates on the decision making of the offender before committing a crime. The leader in this field is the rational choice perspective. The goal for this researcher and others is to create and test models that reflect real environments so that the knowledge gained is relevant and can be applied.

The rational choice perspective assumes an offenders' behaviour is purposive and they endeavour to advance themselves by criminal pursuits. This involves the making of decisions and choices, however basic in formulation they may be. A decision design is constrained by temporal limits, an offender's cognitive capabilities and the accessibility of appropriate information. In other words, offenders exhibit limited rather than normative rationality. The rational choice perspective assumes that the decision process and the elements taken into consideration will vary by the type of offence, the stage of criminal career (onset, duration and desistence) and by
the immediate environment. The degree to which the thought processes vary stretches on a continuum from extremely rational and well thought through to an almost opportunistic system of thinking. Offenders are goal orientated and their endeavours are not totally thoughtless. Some effort can be made to check their behaviour. Simon (1983) described this behaviour as *self-satisficing*, where decisions are made to meet needs with the least effort.

While the rational choice perspective was developing, gains were being made in the area of situational prevention. Situational crime prevention is very broad in its perspective (Lab, 2000; Smith and Clarke, 2000). It encompasses the entire environment in which a crime is committed. The situational crime prevention approach has led to the formulation of sixteen opportunity-reducing techniques that can be summarised under four categories (Clarke and Homel, 1997). Category 1 is increasing the effort, and includes target hardening, access control, deflecting offenders and controlling facilitators. Category 2 is increasing the risks, covering entry/exit screening, formal surveillance, surveillance by employees, and natural surveillance. Category 3 is reducing the rewards, encompassing target removal, identifying property, removing inducements and rule setting. Category 4 is inducing guilt and shame, encompassing rule setting, strengthening moral condemnation, controlling disinhibitors and facilitating compliance. Figure 1 illustrates the generalised results of a situational crime prevention program. It is very much akin to the economic law of diminishing marginal returns (Walsh, 1982).

Many of the critics of the rational choice perspective argue that it neglects the root causes of crime. Felson and Clarke (1998) state that this criticism mistakenly presumes that the most distant causes are the most significant. Most criminological theories attempt to explain why certain individuals or groups are disposed (by heredity, family background or current social circumstances) to behave in a consistently criminal manner (Clarke and Harris, 1992b). These are theories of criminality rather than crime (JJD, 2000; Lilly, Cullen and Ball, 1995). However, Clarke and Harries (1992b) argue that "a much more serious effort must be made to extend criminological theorising beyond the roots of criminality to encompass the
choices made by offenders and the situational and environmental contexts that influence their decisions” (p. 40).

The rational choice perspective has a central premise that offenders choose to commit crimes for the benefits they confer. It is a hypothesis of both of crime and to a lesser extent criminality. The rational choice perspective examines and develops models primarily centred on the criminal event itself. For example, Clarke and Harris (1992a; 1992b) illustrated the rational choice perspective in an analysis of auto theft in the United States. The study revealed that the choice structuring properties for auto theft could be grouped into three major categories and the type of cars stolen were different in each category.

Much of the misunderstanding surrounding the rational choice perspective is based on a misguided appreciation and comprehension of the concept. In the words of Niggli, (1994) the “rational choice perspective stresses the element of rationality but not that of conscious choice” (p. 84). As Niggli states, much of the problem stems from the use of the word rational. “The name, ‘rational choice’ ... could be seen as a misnomer, because it stresses unnecessarily the element of choice” (p. 84). What must be clearly understood is that the rational choice perspective does take into account that the decision maker is acting under restrictions and pressures not
common to most citizens. Reiterating Simon (1955; 1979; 1983) and his concept of bounded rationality, offenders often make decisions that are best described as self-satisficing, where decisions are made to meet needs with the least effort.

Lattimore and Witte (1986) provide one of the best definitions of the rational choice perspective. They state that rational in the rational choice perspective means an optimalisation of expected utility, not maximisation (or minimisation) which would be a conventional economic based interpretation. Optimalisation means the process is internally defined and unique to each offender. Alternatively Frank (1988; 1990) states that rationality should be defined not as consistency but as efficient promotion of self-interest.

A common criticism is that the rational choice perspective cannot be an adjunct to more comprehensive theories of crime. It is sometimes argued that if a new perspective on crime cannot explain all the occurrences and types of crime it is unacceptable. Akers (1990) would agree, as he states “that thus far, no new general theoretical concepts have been added to criminological theory by rational choice studies” (p. 654). The main strength of the rational choice perspective is that it can be applied at all different levels of cognition. One is not bound as one would be with earlier economic choice models with having to view all offenders as sophisticated, intellectual and thoughtful decision makers. If the behaviour of an offender appears irrational to an observer, this is really an illustration of that observer’s inability to understand that offender. Due to the utility and impact of the rational choice perspective Clarke has become one of the most commonly cited authors in modern criminological journals (Cohn and Farrington, 1999).

CRIMINAL CAREERS

The stage an offender is at in their criminal career will effect decision making. As one’s experience increases in any pursuit, even B&E, one evolves and develops in terms of decision making (Fried and Reppucci, 2001). The concepts of maturity and experience are examined as part of the research conducted for this thesis.
Many researchers (Agnew, 1985; Farrington, 1992; Krohn and Massey, 1980; LaGrange and White, 1985) have argued that studies of criminal decision making must include reference to a developmental component. This means an investigation of the effects of different stages of the criminal career, such as how many similar crimes a person has committed. Offenders may interpret and react differently to the same stimuli depending on the stage they are at in their criminal career. If experience is not included as a factor in an analysis, effect could be incorrectly attributed to another variable.

A criminal career is a longitudinal sequence of offences committed by an individual during some part of their lifetime. Criminal careers have a beginning (onset), an end (desistance), and a career length in between (duration). During a career crimes are committed at a certain rate (frequency). Criminal career research has no set theory behind it. The objective is to investigate why careers start or end for certain individuals. The motivation for this field of study is that predictors may be determined that correlate with the acceleration and deceleration of frequency. Prevention measures could be developed in the hope of curtailing some careers at an earlier stage, or preventing them altogether.

Typical career studies have shown that independent of maturation men become less deviant after marriage (Le Blanc, 1993; Rand, 1987; Sampson and Laub, 1990; West, 1982), especially if the spouse was non-deviant (Bachman, O’Malley and Johnston, 1978; West, 1982). It has even been found that enlisting in the armed forces lowered the offending rates of non-white males (Rand, 1987). Le Blanc has stressed that the initiators of desistence are not just the opposites of the initiators of a criminal career. Parental influence has a large influence on desistence and initiation when offenders are young. When offenders are older marriage and job stability are the major influences. They operate independent of previous parental influence (Le Blanc, 1993).

It has been found that as a criminal career develops specialisation occurs independent of age (Piquero, Paternoster, Mazerolle, Brame and Dean, 1999). Many studies on
B&E have compared the deliberations of burglars to non-burglars (Deusinger, 1989; Taylor and Nee, 1988). Nee and Taylor (1988) compared burglars to non-burglars and they found that the burglars’ responses were much more homogenous compared to the non-burglars. The burglars were more aware of the vulnerability of corner positions, poor security and were attracted more by easy and concealed access and egress routes.

Persons studying criminal careers are often concerned with the onset (Elander, Rutter, Simonoff and Pickles, 2000) or desistence (Warr, 1998) phases as they are trying to identify factors that prevent people engaging in crime or factors that lead to criminal desistence. This thesis is predominantly concerned with the middle phase (duration) and whether the interaction effects of increasing age and experience significantly affect burglar decision making. If age and experience do significantly interact it could have prevention implications. Regardless of the skill level of offenders at any given time, there is also the possibility that if a certain type of crime is repeated a person will improve their offending skills. Brown and Bentley (1993) studied the decision making of burglars and found that one sub-group utilised cues that signified the size of the take, while another sub-group were more sensitive to territorial based risk cues. The researchers did not elaborate further on what could be causing the sub-groupings probably due to a lack of pertinent data.

Wright, Logie and Decker (1995) and Wright and Logie (1988) disagree with Hirschi (1986) who argues that a criminal career is not one where advanced skills and sophistication are developed. Wright et al. argue that “as with those in other occupations, residential burglars clearly understand their trade in a way that outsiders fail to appreciate” (p. 52). Wright et al. found that active burglars focus on a different mix of cues than do a matched group of non-offenders. Decker, Wright and Logie (1993) argue that burglars’ perceptions of risk versus reward differ significantly from non-offenders. Wright, Logie and Decker (1995) state that burglars clearly “posses and can use specialist knowledge in selecting targets ... what is more, this knowledge cannot be accounted for by age, sex, race, or socioeconomic status. Rather it appears to have been acquired through experience” (p. 52). Wright
et al. (1995) state that “attempts to manipulate criminal opportunities are unlikely to succeed in reducing offending unless these efforts are based on firm understanding of the way in which offenders actually view and interpret such opportunities” (p. 52). They found that the police had incorrect views and had faith in methods that they believed (falsely) would deter burglars.

Farrington (1992) states that there is less criminal career research on the duration phase. He further states that because “existing criminal career research has a focus on individual development it has few implications for situational prevention, which is concerned with opportunities, victims and immediate environmental influences on crime” (p. 10). However, he contends that there are many other aspects to criminal careers that could be studied to advance knowledge and to improve crime prevention. Although Farrington lists some possibilities including specialisation he does not list the possible interactive effects of age and experience. This thesis is a small evolutionary step in criminal career research. The duration phase includes increases in age and experience that can have implications for situational crime prevention.

Studies generally compare burglars to non-burglars, but not the interaction effect of age and experience within a varied burglar sample. More data collected on the experience built up during the duration phase of a criminal career and how experience and maturity affect decision making would be useful. A greater understanding could allow informed development of successful strategies to prevent crime. The research for this study specifically examines whether experience and maturity have an influence.

**DRUGS AND DECISION MAKING**

The level of drug use among offenders is high (May, Edmunds and Hough, 1999). Therefore, the adoption of the rational choice perspective without acknowledging the possible influence of drugs or the disposition of drug users would be short sighted. It is difficult to devise a method that could test and control for all of the possible influences on burglar decision making. However, to not discuss and appreciate all of
these possible influences would be disingenuous. To cover burglar decision making without any considered reference to drugs would be inadequate because of the almost inseparable amalgam between heroin and B&E. The following summarises the findings of many studies that have found influences of drugs on decision making.

Many studies have found elements of an environment influence decision making by affecting cue cognisance, task performance and behaviour such as overcrowding (Evans, Palsane, LePore and Martin, 1989; Macintyre and Homel 1994; Ostfield, Kasl, D’Atri and Fitzgerald, 1987), temperature (Anderson, 1987; 1989; Anderson and Anderson, 1984; Cohn and Rotton, 2000; Field, 1992; Rotton and Frey, 1985; Ruback and Pandey, 1992), level of arousal (Easterbrook, 1959; Zajonic, 1965; 1980), humidity (Charry and Hawkenshire, 1981), and noise (Donnerstein and Wilson, 1976; Glass and Singer, 1972; Koneci, 1975).


Drugs can interact with and alter decision making that is studied in a laboratory or artificial environment. Cromwell, Olson and Avary (1991a; 1991b; 1993) and Cromwell, Olson, Avary and Marks (1991) have tried to quantify the effects of drugs on decision making. They found that marijuana and heroin users rated possible B&E targets as less attractive than non-drug using burglars, while cocaine users rated the same targets as more attractive.

Research has been conducted that has tried to determine if there are any common dispositional traits in drug users. Dispositional findings are important in terms of decision making. The more considered a person’s disposition the greater the
opportunity for prevention based on altering environmental cues. However, the less considered a person’s decision making the lesser the opportunity.

Research is divided between those who claim that heroin addicts are indiscriminate, random and impulsive in the way they carry out their criminal activities. They believe heroin users are socially marginalised members of society, who are highly impulsive, opportunistic, and highly motivated by a psychological and physiological need for drugs (Goldstein, 1981; Inciardi, 1979; Inciardi, Pottieger and Faupel, 1982; Johnson, Goldstein, Preble, Schmiedler, Lipton, Spunt and Miller, 1985; Merton, 1983; Rosenbaum, 1981). Those of the opposing view believe that heroin addicts are specialists in a certain criminal activity, with skills and knowledge of a very high level (Faupel, 1986; 1987; Faupel and Klockars, 1987; Hanson, Beschner, Walters and Bovelle, 1985; Kowalski and Faupel, 1990).

Research agrees that heroin users tend to specialise in one or two crimes and they tend avoid crimes that have no financial benefit. However, it would seem that research is divided on the overall type of disposition that a heroin addict has. Researchers view addicts as either impulsive or thoughtful. It would appear that a heroin misuser’s disposition is as varied as that found in the general population, therefore there is potential for prevention based on the rational choice perspective.

Shover (1991) states that rational choice perspective investigations of B&E will only be useful if they include more real life intervening variables, “consider the importance of mood, whereas the model criminal decision maker is never angry, desperate, or defiant, the moods of real-life decision makers can distort the criminal calculus severely and make offenders unconcerned about risk” (p. 103). This research is an attempt to bridge the gap from ideal to the real.

Decision making can be influenced by many factors that are common to drug using burglars, such as alcohol abuse. In addition, the decision making of a burglar could be influenced if they are in the ingestion or withdrawal stage of their drug addiction cycle. One of the weaknesses of many of the studies on burglar decision making is
the failure to incorporate the possible effects of drug use. The research for this thesis
does not incorporate the effect of drugs or the possible influence of the addiction
cycle on decision making. Such a task was simply not practical given the available
resources for the research. However, the research in this thesis could in theory be
replicated with two samples of subjects. One sample could be under the influence of
a certain drug, while the other sample would be non-intoxicated.

The previous two sections (criminal careers and drug use) discussed factors at a
personal and individual level that can influence decision making. The next two
sections (behaviour and the built environment and crime prevention through
environmental design) discuss factors that can influence decision making on a
comprehensive and more amorphous level.

THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

The research reviewed in this section is largely concerned with how an offender
interacts with, and interprets cues of a built environment. This brings into discussion
environment and behaviour research within the field of architecture. This branch of
study is defined as research into the interaction between the physical environment
and human behaviour (Hsia, 1988). Although usually concerned with non-criminal
behaviour the work is still relevant because this thesis is concerned with how a
person interprets cues from the environment, including the built environment. This
leads into the following section, which is a further development of environment and
behaviour research. It discusses crime prevention through environmental design,
which is crime specific research into how criminals and non-criminals interpret the
built environment.

Very early practitioners believed that environment exerted a direct causal influence
upon behaviour. Very much a positivistic and deterministic stimulus response
relationship, this stance has continually been challenged and modified. The current
condition of the evolution of this field of study is labelled as environmental
probalism. It is now believed that the environment can provide possibilities of
choice, but it cannot determine the choice. It is widely argued now that people are cognitively active, creating order out of complex situations (Giles and Mullineux, 2000).

Stokols (1978) examines the cognitive patterning of events. According to Stokols people strive to achieve optimal results from their environment on a cyclical feedback model of human cognition and behaviour. Downes and Stea (1973) defined this as “a process composed of a series of psychological transformations by which an individual acquires, codes, stores, recalls and decodes information about the relative locations and attributes of phenomena associated in his everyday spatial environment” (p. 9). There is not a one-to-one direct relationship between psychological space and the built environment. There is the real world and the perceived world. Everyone filters the real world through two filters, a cultural filter and a personal filter. There is no universal environment but a mental construct. It is impossible to separate what is reality for a person from the nature of that person and their socio-cultural context. It is also impossible to define an objective reality independent of the perceiving-cognizing individual. Altman and Chemers (1980) developed a theoretical model (Figure 2) that illustrates the complexity of the exchange between the built environment and humans through cognitive and cultural constraints. It is a conceptual model that provides a way to view the interactions at work rather than a precise statement of exact relationships between or among variables. The model is an illustration of how every person, even a burglar, will bring with them to each new situation a multitude of complex experiences and decision making methods. An example best illustrates the model’s meaning in relation to burglary. If a person grew up in a non-urban tropical environment, but now as an adult they find themselves residing in a city in a temperate climate they will interpret cues from the environment differently from someone who grew up in a city in a temperate climate. The architecture varies between the two extremes. The stored experiences of the burglar in this example would interact in the new environment in a different way to someone who grew up in a city located in a temperate zone. This thesis only examines certain aspects of environmental