

Dr. Simon Perry – Academic Biography

In my thirty years as a practitioner in the world of Criminal Law Enforcement, working for the Israeli Police in Israel, Europe and North America, I was captivated by three major phenomena: The first phenomenon which intrigued me is at the center of theoretical discussion in criminology. Through my numerous interactions with criminals over my many years as an intelligence officer in the Israeli National Police, I found the criminals to be similar to the overall population, both in their decision making about behavior and in their basic motivations. This observation contradicts most traditional theories of deviation that base their deterministic explanation of crime on factors outside the control of the individual due to biological, psychological or social "defects". These positivist theories seek the causes of crime in those characteristics that differentiate criminals from non criminals. Contrary to these deterministic theories, is the approach of the "reasoning criminal", which posits that the individual considers carrying out criminal activity in the same "rational choice" fashion that ordinary people considering their "normative" activity. Crimes are mainly, then, the result of rational situational choices, based on an evaluation of the costs and the anticipated benefits.

My dissertation provided me with the opportunity to test the theory of "Rational Choice" in the context of a real sample of offenders. It attempted to explain criminal behavior by emphasizing the similarity between criminals and non-criminals, while focusing on situational factors, opportunities, alternatives, and deterrents, therefore enabling us to explain other criminal behaviors as well.

My research findings show that criminals involved in the heroin market fit the classic criminal stereotype, since they are in constant conflict with the enforcement system for crimes related to drugs such as violence, property offences, and prostitution. Indeed the findings support the theory of "Rational Choice" whereby these criminals are similar to the overall population, both in their process of choosing behavior and in their basic motivation. Similarly, the heroin market behaves just as any other market of legitimate types of merchandise. The findings contradict the stereotype of the drug addict who cannot adjust him or herself to reality and cannot survive without the fixed daily amount of heroin. Contrary to common belief, the demand for heroin is not as rigid as is often thought. The user adjusts to reality and makes rational choices regarding his or her behavior, taking into consideration the expected costs and risks of maintaining that behavior. The drug addict is not an individual who is completely

out of control regarding his daily activities as a result of pathological problems (biological, psychological or social). The heroin addict, like any other person, defines the reality, and chooses the behavior, from amongst the various alternatives, which will increase his personal benefit to the extent possible, as he defines it at that point in time and place.

Based on the findings of my dissertation, effective policies should focus on changing the relationship between the costs and benefits, reducing the opportunities present in certain situations which encourage using, purchasing and trafficking in heroin. Now in my second career I am trying to advance my research and publications in these areas.

The second phenomenon which concerns me even today is the gap which exists between the world of practitioners and that of the criminology scholars. This gap is the result of attitudes on both sides. On the one hand, many, if not most, of the practitioner strategies for criminal prevention, enforcement and treatment programs have not been founded on evidence based empirical examination of the characteristics of the criminal world/ markets. On the other hand, in my opinion, in the past, criminology scholars, in Israel, neglected hardcore policing issues (i.e. performance, effectiveness, and strategies). They did not focus enough on research which would provide practitioners with applicable and relevant findings and evidence in a language which could be easily understood and converted into practical tools for law enforcement.

In the past few years, the Hebrew University has shown interest and great capabilities in assisting the Israeli Police. Yet there is a low level of willingness, on the part of the leading practitioners, to take advantage of the benefits that such a relationship could provide for law enforcement in Israel. Over the years, as a practitioner, I tried to bridge this gap and to base strategies, in areas under my authority and supervision, on evidence based research. For example as the head of the Narcotics Unit in the Israeli Police, I drafted the national strategy for Narcotics Policy and Enforcement founded on the evidence based literature and research that was available. For this exact reason I chose to focus my PHD dissertation on understanding and describing the behavior of the drug market in Israel, so that we could construct an effective drug policy, for what is viewed as one of the main social problems in modern society.

At this juncture of my career I am also trying to bridge this gap between these two worlds of the practitioners and the scholars, in three different ways. Firstly, I am involved in promoting

criminology education for practitioners in the field in my work at the Institute of Criminology. Secondly, through my connections with practitioners I try to promote research intended to benefit the world of the practitioner. Thirdly, since much of the lack of knowledge about the criminal work, stems from real limitations in the collection of data by researchers, I help my colleagues and students gain access to data through my professional experience, contacts with practitioners and knowledge of the system.

The third phenomenon which I find very disturbing, especially in light of increasing terror threats around the world, is the extreme lack of evidence based models for the new role of "policing terrorism". There are few descriptions of strategic and tactical activities for policing terror and therefore little is known about what the anti-terrorism strategies and tactics are and what they should be. This lack of evidence-based models in the policing-terrorism field, as well as a lack of systematically evaluated strategic and tactical activities, is a result of two main reasons. First and foremost, law enforcement intelligence and security agencies are very reluctant to cooperate with such research, as they fear the possible ramifications including the exposure and compromise of counterterrorism methods, tools, sources and tactics. Secondly, this type of research encounters difficulty in the measurement of success and the determination of cause and effect.

Attempting to answer the key questions – Is there an effective “policing terror” model, and what does it include? I am attempting together with other colleagues to systematically describe, measure, evaluate and assess the effectiveness of different police responses to terrorism. In a joint project, we have tried to describe the goals and strategies of the Israeli model for policing terrorism (*Criminal Justice and Behavior*. 36; p.1259 2009). In another joint project, we edited a book that attempts to analyze the roll of the police in protecting the community from terrorism while at the same time to serving the community and providing it with classical police services. (2009. New York: Springer). In the past year, I have been working in collaboration with the Israel Security Agency on describing and evaluating the "Proactive Intelligence" and Operational Cycle in Counter Terrorism.

In another collaborative project with Professor Ronald Clarke from Rutgers University and Professor Graeme Newman from SUNY Albany, leading international researchers in the area of rational choice in criminology, we are trying to examine the use of physical barriers to prevent terrorist attacks and evaluate and test Crime Displacement Theory. This project provides me with the opportunity, on the one hand, to test Situational Prevention Theory by

examining whether and to what extent terrorist attacks as well the theft of cars from Israel (for export to Palestinian Authority) are prevented by security barriers, and on the other to examine whether they have displaced to other locations. This project also puts to the test practical tactics by evaluating whether the use of physical barriers successfully reduces the occurrence of terrorist attacks in the areas where they were employed.

I am very interested in continuing to pursue these practical applications of rational theory in my work at the Hebrew University. I am hoping to develop future projects particularly in the area of policing terrorism, but also more generally in crime prevention. I also hope to continue to work to integrate evidence based policy into police practice in Israel, both through research and through teaching at the Hebrew University.