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## CHAPTER SEVEN

# ENTREPRENEURSHIP: A DIVERGENT PATHWAY OUT OF CRIME?

ROBERT SMITH

### **Abstract**

This chapter illustrates how knowledge of entrepreneurship can be used as a diversionary mechanism to divert and lead offenders out of crime. Indeed, entrepreneurship offers such a divergent pathway but paradoxically entrepreneurship being amoral can be used to achieve both good and bad ends. Nevertheless, entrepreneurship as a life theme pervades society and the actions of individuals within them. The chapter begins by discussing the links between entrepreneurship and crime and in particular the hidden links between crime – dyslexia – and entrepreneurship. Building upon this theoretical foundation by using examples and case studies from across the globe, this chapter demonstrates how social entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education is already making a contribution to the Criminal Justice Systems in their respective countries. These examples and other themes developed within the chapter are worked into a tentative model which can be used by those in such Criminal Justice Systems to divert even more offenders away from a debilitating life of crime.

### **Introduction**

Traditionally for the working classes, crime and entrepreneurship are often divergent pathways for the acquisition of wealth, status and power. This exploratory theoretical / conceptual contribution illustrates how knowledge of entrepreneurship can be used by society and by individuals as a ‘divergent pathway out of crime’. This approach is international in perspective because crime and entrepreneurship are international and indeed global in nature. Moreover, the social problems faced by different countries are often generic in nature - therefore a model which works in

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one country may work in another. In addition, the notion of criminal-entrepreneurship is a recurrent international / global phenomenon of interest.

As a theory entrepreneurship has been portrayed in criminology in a variety of ways in the past. For example crime has been considered as a career and in particular the professional thief has been considered an entrepreneur (Sutherland, 1937); Anomie (Merton, 1938); and Opportunity Theory (Cloward and Ohlin, 1960) played a part in the generation of the Poverty Program in the United States. Moreover, Bell (1953, 1960) wrote of the 'Crooked Ladder of Crime' as an alternative avenue of entrepreneurial advancement. This emphasis led to entrepreneurship generated programs which failed and, like rehabilitation, these efforts have been generally abandoned. Nevertheless, there is a residual interest in entrepreneurship which refuses to dissipate and the notion of the Crime-entrepreneur (Van Duyne, 2000) is very much in vogue.

Of necessity this paper must gloss over much of the relevant criminological-entrepreneurial theory as it concentrates upon issues of entrepreneurship and rehabilitation. The collective consensus is that entrepreneurial propensity appears to provide the criminal with an alternative legitimacy. Nevertheless, the idea of the criminal as entrepreneur no longer holds the criminological imagination. Indeed, academic writings on the crime-entrepreneurship nexus tend to be firmly rooted in one domain or the other – that is either in Criminology or Entrepreneurship studies. As such the knowledge base is generally confined within the particular discipline. This acts as a constraining mechanism hindering the development of cross-disciplinary theories. However, of late, entrepreneurship scholars such as Baumol (1990) have argued that the paucity of genuine entrepreneurial opportunities can act as a pathway into crime; and Williams (2006) that often criminals and entrepreneurs come from the same societal pool. Clearly, there may be merits in forming hybrid theories of criminal entrepreneurship.

As a general rule, the focus of research into how entrepreneurship influences crime and criminality is on the individual and their traits as opposed to the criminological-entrepreneurial system in which both entrepreneurial genres are nurtured. Incisively, Baumol (1990) posited the notion of entrepreneurship as productive, unproductive and destructive. Baumol classified criminal entrepreneurship as destructive blaming the system / establishment for the lack of genuine opportunity. This chapter argues for the need to take a more holistic approach. This is important because systemic artefacts can be applied in a Global perspective.

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Accordingly, this chapter takes a different stance by examining selected theories of crime and entrepreneurship in conjunction. This highlights points of convergence in relation to marginality thesis; class based theories of crime and enterprise; push versus pull theories of crime and enterprise; trait and personality theories and in particular the significance of dyslexia and other learning difficulties as a pathway to direct those who are 'differently abled' into the virtuous path of enterprise. The alternative is to do nothing and see disaffected youth spiralling out of control along the pathway to crime. Bolton and Thompson (2000) suggest that entrepreneurial life themes permeate the rhetoric of crime. Indeed, the two socially constructed entities share so much in common that it is surprising that no one has to date attempted to combine the knowledge base which comprises of both the theories of both crime and entrepreneurship. This chapter makes an attempt to do just this by creating a theoretical model to underpin the practical models discussed below. Nevertheless, the focus of this chapter is very much upon using entrepreneurship as a diversionary mechanism to reduce the social effects of crime. In particular, dyslexia is an example of a social malady that cuts across crime, entrepreneurship and rehabilitation. Developing an appreciation of the destructive and constructive power of dyslexia is the first step towards building a theoretical bridge between crime and entrepreneurship which one day may provide a solution to the complex problem of crime.

The approach taken in the chapter is inductive as opposed to deductive. Although it is based upon phenomena observed by the author, it is grounded in a body of research forming a model. The chapter is structured as follows. Section one brings the chapter into focus by providing an autoethnographic account of how the chapter came into being. Section two explores the divergent pathways of crime and entrepreneurship concentrating upon the links between crime and learning difficulties and entrepreneurship and learning difficulties. This section also looks at prison entrepreneurship. Section three examines entrepreneurship as a diversion technique and social entrepreneurship as a positive influence. This section posits a model for using entrepreneurship as a diversion out of crime. The final section assesses the contribution of the chapter. Using the inspirational narratives of a new breed of social entrepreneurs to illustrate the achievability of pursuing an alternative pathway mid trajectory this chapter makes a significant contribution in highlighting the possible.

## **An Autoethnographic Account of How This Chapter Came Into Being**

As a serving police officer and academic, I first became interested in the crime-entrepreneurship nexus ten years ago whilst studying for my first degree at Aberdeen University. This theoretical epiphany came about when I was studying a course ‘Theoretical Perspectives on Entrepreneurship’ and realised that many of the traits and qualities associated with entrepreneurs were common to professional criminals and reading over a number of years into the links between crime and entrepreneurship. This course of research was conducted very much as a private interest whilst I embarked upon a Ph.D. by research into the social construction of entrepreneurship (Smith, 2006). A separate research project into the incidence of dyslexia amongst entrepreneurs rekindled my interest in dyslexia and crime. This project culminated in a book chapter ‘*Being Differently Abled: Learning Lessons from Dyslexic Entrepreneurs*’ (Smith 2008) which reported on research linking over fifty entrepreneurs with dyslexia and other learning difficulties. During this research I encountered the research of Kirk and Reid (2001) which suggested that at least 50% of the population of a Young Offenders Institute in Scotland were dyslexic. This resonated very much with my experience as an officer during which I had often encountered young men who could not read or write but were adept at hiding this. As an avid reader of criminal biographies I was aware that some major organised criminals such as Sammy ‘The Bull’ Gravano were dyslexic too. In another study (Smith 2008) I analysed the biographies of thirty British career criminals identifying an alternative reading of these biographies as entrepreneur stories. Indeed, the stories were infused with evidence of entrepreneurial life themes. The size of this biographic sample gives rise to the hope that the pathway is much broader. This pattern is believed to be replicated in the criminal careers of serious and organized criminals.

Simultaneously, from a Crime Reduction Perspective I began to consider that entrepreneurship could be used as a diversion out of crime. I was inspired in this notion by a conversation with a fellow academic at an entrepreneurship conference who narrated an account of a Polish Priest who used entrepreneurship as a medium to divert young criminals away from the clutches of crime. I was never able to find the original source of this information. Undaunted, I began to collect other examples as I encountered them. I gathered the case studies and examples which form the basis of this chapter over a period of time primarily by readings or by

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internet research. Collectively they serve to illustrate entrepreneurship and crime as divergent pathways.

### **Exploring this divergent pathway**

In traditional criminology much is made of the subjects of criminal families and criminal areas. In such families, crime is viewed as being almost hereditary and influenced by exposure to the criminogenic area (See Morris, 2003 for a discussion of criminal areas). In such areas poverty, deprivation, poor housing, ill health and lack of educational opportunities are often a feature of everyday life. Such areas nevertheless appear to be a breeding ground for what have become regarded as the criminal classes. Indeed, the link between social class, education, crime and one's eventual life chances is a fruitful field requiring further research. As criminologists we are familiar with the myth of the stereotypical working class male criminal. Although we appreciate that criminal propensity crosses all barriers of social class and gender it appears that when one factors in issues such as learning difficulties that those from the lower social classes do not get the same life chances as the more prosperous middle and upper classes. Entrepreneurship, in its many forms, provides one achievable route to improve life chances. Indeed, Fiet *et al* (2006) have researched ways of training the economically vulnerable, working poor of inner cities to make entrepreneurial discoveries. Fiet, *et al* argue that in doing so one has to overcome the challenges inherent in training the economically disadvantaged and that it is necessary to build bridges to gain trust.

### ***Exploring the link between learning difficulties and crime***

Learning difficulties such as dyslexia, Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) and Attention Hyperactivity Attention Disorder (ADHD) are believed to be hereditary in nature and are most frequently encountered in areas of social deprivation. These can be argued to correspond roughly to criminal areas. An appreciation of the role of such learning difficulties is increasing. Kerr (1973) and Morgan (1998) have highlighted the links between dyslexia and crime. Kirk and Reid (1999) conducted research at a Young Offenders Institution, testing a random sample of 50 young offenders for signs of dyslexia, using an accepted computer program. Prior to the research they had expected to confirm the accepted national average

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of between 5-10% of the population who suffer from varying degrees of dyslexia. They hoped to prove that the prison population might contain a slightly higher than average number of dyslexics. When the test results were analysed it was established that 50% of the respondents had tested positive for dyslexia and corresponding educational problems. Eighty two % of their respondents had a record of truancy; 83 % had been suspended and 50 % plus expelled. The respondents expressed bitter disappointment and a sense of feeling cheated by society for not having been diagnosed as dyslexic earlier. Many interviewees stated they knew deep down that something was wrong. Having been labeled as 'thick' by their peers and by the educational establishment they rebelled.

Similarly, Yates (2006) explored the links between dyslexia and drug dependency noting that four times as many boys than girls are dyslexic and that 40% of his respondents amongst a community of persistent offenders were dyslexic. Although there were no significant differences between dyslexics and non dyslexics in the number of crimes they committed the dyslexic respondents were more prone to excessive drug consumption and therefore to becoming repeat offenders. Dyslexia is an example of a malady that cuts across crime, entrepreneurship and rehabilitation and is but one example of a social ill which could provide a bridge between crime, entrepreneurship and a solution.

### ***Exploring the link between learning difficulties and entrepreneurship***

According to the acknowledged expert in Dyslexia and entrepreneurship Dr Julie Logan (Logan, 2001) entrepreneurs are five times more likely to have dyslexia than the average UK citizens and that as much as 20% of entrepreneurs are dyslexic. Seventy per cent of the entrepreneurs studied did not succeed at school. Conversely, managers reflected the UK national average of 4%. Smith (2008) conducted a study of the link between dyslexia and entrepreneurship and identified over 50 Entrepreneurs, CEO's and Inventors who are 'differently abled'. Some entrepreneurs such as Richard Branson from Britain and Kjell Inge Rokke from Norway had brushes with the law straying onto the path of crime. Richard Branson had a brush with HM Customs for importing records without paying the resulting duties, whilst Kjell Rokke was allegedly involved in the theft of a car.

Entrepreneurship scholar and psychologist Kathy Marshack (2007)

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heads up a research project into ADD, ADHD and Entrepreneurship devoted to turning the disorders into an asset for entrepreneurs. Marshak links the following entrepreneurial characteristics to ADD/ADHD - Someone who has a lot of great ideas, but not too many are successfully implemented; Great at delegating, but often oversimplifying the task; Full of energy, but saps everyone else's energy; Possess a sense of urgency about the latest project, but forgets about the 10 other projects they gave someone else yesterday? Marshak stresses that some experts estimate that as many as half of all entrepreneurs have ADD (either the hyperactive type or the inattentive type). Coincidentally, more and more youths are being identified with ADD as diagnosis of the disorder becomes more refined. Marshak asks if these are future entrepreneurs struggling to express their talents and comments upon the number of gifted children who drop out of high school and the high incidence of prison inmates who suffer from ADD.

Dr Logan incisively points out that traditional classroom methods of teaching entrepreneurship do not work with dyslexics. She also acknowledges the high incidence of dyslexics in prison. With this in mind it is telling that Dr Logan's research revealed that 87% of dyslexic entrepreneurs were from middle class backgrounds. This suggests that there may be an unintentional class biased system and that remedial work at lower levels of society may well 'pay dividends' to use a financial metaphor.

### ***The link between learning difficulties and the pathway to prison***

A study by the National Probation Service in 1996 found that 52% of prisoners in London may be dyslexic. A similar study by the British Dyslexia Association in conjunction with the Bradford Youth Team suggests that more than 50% of their young offenders were dyslexic. Snowling *et al* (2000) and Svensson *et al* (2001) highlight poor literacy, spelling and reading levels among juvenile offenders. The combined effect of this research has undoubtedly influenced Prison Service Policy. However, not all scholars agree that dyslexia is linked to crime and that dyslexics form a disproportionate part of the prison population. Dr Michael Rice challenges the popular belief that as many as one in two prisoners is dyslexic, indicating that his research offers no support for this belief asserting that the reading problems he encountered could be



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ascribed to social disadvantage. He is concerned that other researchers are using false assumptions and flawed methods – namely that 1) dyslexia is the unique cause of low reading attainment; 2) low attainment necessarily indicates a learning difficulty, rather than adverse environmental circumstances such as low levels of literacy in the childhood home and unstructured, inexplicit alphabetic skills teaching in the primary school; 3) that 'signs of dyslexia', such as difficulty in reading non-words and difficulty in sustaining attention, are specific to dyslexia; and 4) that, apart from offending, prisoners form a representative sample of the general population. Thus exposing inmates with dyslexia to entrepreneurship theory may not offer a universal panacea which sets them on the path to legitimacy but it is certainly a valid option.

### ***Prisons, inmates and entrepreneurship***

In Britain, Rieple (1998) surveyed / mapped numerous small business training and support Programmes in Prisons and the probation services in the U.K. Fletcher (2004) built upon this researching the provision of enterprise initiatives in English Prisons from the perspective that encouraging self-employment addresses issues of high unemployment and social exclusion amongst the offending population. Fletcher reported upon a plethora of such initiatives in British Prisons. Fletcher based his study on his (2004) report for the Small Business Service and concludes that such initiatives are characterized by a number of fundamental weaknesses. Fletcher (2004) in a report commissioned by the Small Business Service whilst conducting a literature review of prison entrepreneurship established that there is a paucity of such research. The literature can conveniently be divided into American and British contributions. See table 1 below – A literature review of entrepreneurship diversion in prisons.

Table 1- A literature review of entrepreneurship diversion in prisons

School	Researchers	Contribution
American	Jansy et al (1969)	Posited the notion of ex offenders as businessmen
	Price (1973)	Considered private enterprise in a prison as a free market economy Researched prison industries and the

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	<p>Goodman (1982)</p> <p>Washburn (1987)</p> <p>Sonfield (1992)</p> <p>Sonfield &amp; Barbato (1994)</p> <p>Sonfield et al (2001)</p> <p>Fairlie (2002)</p>	<p>prisoner as entrepreneur</p> <p>Examined the case for prisoner entrepreneurship</p> <p>Analysed the inmate as an entrepreneur</p> <p>Tested prison inmates for entrepreneurial attitude</p> <p>Built upon the previous study concentrating upon the potential benefits of self-employment training programmes</p> <p>Researched drug dealing and legitimate self-employment</p>
British	<p>Rieple (1998)</p> <p>Fletcher <i>et al</i> (2001)</p> <p>Social Enquiry Unit (2002)</p> <p>Fletcher (2004)</p>	<p>Researched the potential which offenders have for entrepreneurial activity and in particular training of ex prisoners and offenders in small business skills.</p> <p>Investigated recruiting and employment of offenders</p> <p>Conducted a survey on re-offending by ex-prisoners concluding that entrepreneurship was a viable option.</p> <p>Surveyed entrepreneurship initiatives in English prisons</p>

Another good example from Britain, is the ‘Offenders in Employment Project’ in Lancashire, United Kingdom by UCLan in conjunction with the National Probation Service, Lancashire, Lancashire and Morecambe College, and H.M. Prison Service to address the problems of ex-offenders gaining useful employment on being released from prison. This was set up in response to research which indicated that there are a variety of issues including a lack of cohesiveness and collaboration across the agencies, both statutory and voluntary and a lack of sharing of information. This project involves a mapping process to identify providers of a range of interventions across the region. One problem identified was the discrimination ex-offenders face in seeking employment. Entrepreneurship and self-employment is one distinct possibility open to ex-offenders to

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overcome this ingrained discriminatory social process.

Notwithstanding this, the most advanced model of prison entrepreneurship appears to be the American 'Prison Entrepreneurship Program'. See Case study 1 below for details.

### **Case Study 1 - The Prison Entrepreneurship Program<sup>1</sup>**

The Prison Entrepreneurship Program was conceived in May 2004 in Houston, Texas on the basis that a large percentage of inmates came to prison as seasoned entrepreneurs who had ran successful drugs rings and gangs. As such they had a proven track record of managing others and getting things done and above all are risk takers. Many inherently understand business concepts—0987654321so would it be possible to teach them how to run legitimate companies. The mission statement of the PEP is to “*stimulate positive life transformation for executives and inmates, uniting them through entrepreneurial passion, education and mentoring*”. The program engages top business and academic talent to redirect inmates’ talents via “values-based entrepreneurial training”. The aim is to return them to society as productive citizens. It is a nonprofit organization providing post-release entrepreneurial assistance to parolees. PEP positions itself as the only entrepreneurship program in the U.S targeted at inmates / former inmates. PEP provides an In-Prison Business Plan Competition, access to financing and a Reintegration Service. The latter includes work readiness programs, Executive Mentoring and Entrepreneurship school.

The list of achievements on the ‘PEP’ website are impressive:-

- The Business Plan Competition culminates in a formal graduation ceremony.
- In excess of 200 business executives participate in events such as venture capital panels.
- PEP has established partnerships with MBA programs at leading US Universities including Harvard.
- PEP has recruited Executive Mentors.

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<sup>1</sup> The case study is based on information posted on the website [www.prisonentrepreneurship.org](http://www.prisonentrepreneurship.org)

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- Two inmates have filed patents.
- A significant number of inmates (approximately 15%) have set up their own business
- Participant employment rates are 93% within 1 month of release.
- The recidivism rate is less than 3%.

The program is partially funded by appeals for donations to business community and has plans to deliver a service nationwide.

This is not the only example of successful state intervention using entrepreneurship as a route out of crime. Fernández-Stembridge and Badell (2003) comment that in Shanghai, China authorities there ran a successful programme turning ex-criminals into self-employed criminals into entrepreneurs and that as many as 4% of new entrepreneurs / self-employed were ex-prisoners. Such programmes, if properly evaluated, clearly have the potential to be replicated globally.

However, in reality there is a gap between good practice and what is achievable. Offender assessment takes place on a massive scale once offenders are sent to correctional institutions. It is of course necessary to highlight that some of the assessment may, or may not be appropriate, like omitting testing for dyslexia, but as highlighted above, the number of illiterate / learning disabled inmates is well known. The deficit between what could or should be done in theory may arise from a lack of resources to address remedial learning difficulties. Often the mentality of offenders is that they are here to do time, not go to school or learn trades. This requires to be changed for progress to be made. The purpose of this discussion is not to disparage the prison systems in individual countries but it is necessary to highlight the failure of many prison vocational training programmes. Another problem to be overcome is the opposition of labour unions to the implementation of competitive / useful vocational programmes. Entrepreneurship education should therefore always be optional and never compulsory or seen as a threat to the inmates or to the prison system. As previously highlighted, by Bolton and Thompson (2000) entrepreneurship is a life theme and as such spans many spheres of society thus individual social institutions cannot be held accountable for ingrained behavioural practices beyond their control.

The notion of productive entrepreneurship discussed above, provides an individual with a career trajectory in which they are very much in

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control of their own destiny. With this in mind, the remainder of the chapter highlights some examples of how entrepreneurship can be channelled into effective diversionary mechanisms.

### **Entrepreneurship as a diversion technique**

This section examines entrepreneurship as a diversionary strategy. It is divided into two parts. The first looks at social entrepreneurship and encouraging the proliferation of life enhancing social enterprises. Social entrepreneurship, as a paradigm for change, allows committed individuals to give back to their communities because it reverses the orientation of traditional entrepreneurship which is about 'taking between'. Social entrepreneurship is about 'giving'. Accordingly this section discusses some possible diversion strategies and highlights some case studies where social enterprises are diverting criminals onto a divergent pathway.

### ***Social Entrepreneurship in action***

The accepted paradigm of the entrepreneur has become somewhat stereotyped as if stuck in a time warp. Nevertheless, the image of the entrepreneur as a male person located primarily in the business sector is changing rapidly. Another entrepreneurial type worthy of consideration is the Social Entrepreneur. Established Social enterprises such as the "*The Kids Company*" have already made a significant impact on the lives of the communities they service. One of the fundamental strengths of a social entrepreneur is that they go beyond the immediate problem to instigate fundamental change within their communities of practice.

Social entrepreneurship as a remedy for the causes of crime is not a modern phenomenon, only the concept is. For example consider the work of the Philanthropic Society of London founded in 1788 to divert the children of recidivist criminal families away from crime. Moreover, Robb (1996: 190-203) describes the anti mafia work carried out by the Paleremian photographer, and tireless net-worker, Letizia Bataglia whom can only be described as a 'social entrepreneur'. She operates a social intervention squad of volunteers who nightly clean up the drug squalor and also campaigns in schools against the Mafia by showing photographs of the Mafias victims to children in order to break the romance and myth of the mafia. In giving back to her community, Bataglia is obviously placing her self in danger and taking risks. In his discussion of the work of Bataglia, Robb does not indicate whether Bataglia is dyslexic or not –

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however, her tireless behaviour is typical of that associated with entrepreneurs.

The entrepreneurial spirit is central to the success of all such entrepreneurial social ventures. Boschee (1995: 2) a pioneer of social entrepreneurship discusses nonprofit organizations and in particular the phenomenon of Affirmative Business. These facilitate social changes for the economically or educationally disadvantaged; the mentally ill; potential high school drop outs; recovering addicts; present or former convicts etc all of whom feature heavily in the criminal statistics of any given locality. The following case studies from England and America illustrate the type and scale of initiatives which are out there and succeeding.

### **Case Study 2 – ‘Kids Company’, London, U.K.<sup>2</sup>**

Kids Company is an outstanding charitable organization founded in December 1996 by psychotherapist and serial social entrepreneur Camila Batmanghelidjh. Camila was born in Tehran into a wealthy professional family. Aged 13 she was sent to a boarding school in England during a period of unrest in Iran. She went to university and became a psychotherapist. The Kids Company offers values based practical, emotional and educational support to profoundly vulnerable ‘hard to reach’ children and young people in inner London. The philosophy of the company is based upon the concept of emotional well-being and grounded in attachment theory. The services offered are holistic, child-centred and multi-disciplinary. It supports a paid staff of 180 and 1,500 volunteers. The staff are internationally and culturally diverse (40 different languages are spoken). It now supports over 11,000 children and young people. Many of the youths suffer mental health and emotional difficulties arising from neglect and abuse. This impinges upon their ability to become functioning adults, access education, health, housing and meaningful employment. The organization utilises multi-disciplinary teams working at street level adapting neurophysiological thinking in order to deliver a preventative and reparative therapeutic service. Ninety five % of the

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<sup>2</sup> This case study is based upon internet research and the book ‘*Shattered Lives: Children living with Courage and Dignity*’.

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children self refer themselves to the company which delivers services across London in 33 schools; a Children's Centre 'The Arches II' and an 'Urban Academy'. Many of the children and young persons at the Arches have been drug couriers, gang members or in prostitution. The majority are users of hard drugs. 57% arrive homeless. 85% have identifiable mental health problems. Sport is also an integral part of the program because it promotes self-confidence, unity, tolerance, teamwork, youth leadership and coaching. The Urban Academy caters for the needs of young people who reject or have been rejected from other educational facilities because of their complex emotional or behavioural needs. The Urban Academy provides tailor made teaching packages to students and encourage them to succeed via skills based literacy and numeracy programmes. The aim of the Academy is to prepare and divert students for other establishments including university. The Company survives by support from charitable trusts, businesses and individual donations. To continue operating Kids Company raises approximately £5 million per annum. On two occasions Camila has re-mortgaged her own flat to bridge funding gaps. Camila who is known as 'The Angel of Peckham' who won the Ernst and Young Social Entrepreneur of the year award for 2005 is severely dyslexic. Interestingly she does not concentrate upon dyslexia per se.

### **Case Study 3 – The Delancey Street Foundation<sup>3</sup>**

This case study describes the actions of Social Entrepreneur / Criminal Psychologist Mimi Silbert who in 1972 along with a prison parolee John Maher opened a drug rehabilitation house for counselling ex-offenders. They named the house after New York's famous Delancey Street where Jewish Immigrants such as her parents lived. It was initially devised as being a recycling centre for those defined by society and themselves as rejects. Maher borrowed the start up capital of \$1000 from a loanshark. The Delancey Street business Empire now has a £20 million per annum

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<sup>3</sup> This case study was put together from internet research and from readings of Boschee (1995).

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turn over. It has businesses in New York, New Mexico, North Carolina and Los Angeles. The organization is undergoing a period of expansion. Silbert prides herself that it has been achieved without public funding. She firmly believes that a spirit of independence is essential to business survival. Silbert does however accept donations. The success of the organization is that it is run solely by its residents. The work of Mimi Silbert and Delancey Street has been recognised by Journalist John Glionna of the Los Angeles Times as a 'University of the Streets' (a Harvard for losers) where the students include former pimps and prostitutes, junkies and drug dealers, armed robbers and the homeless (Glionna, 2006). Many are illiterate and unskilled. The programme has turned out 15,000 social outcasts into law abiding, self-respecting working people. Silbert rejects the conventional 'hold your hand' style of counselling in favour of active participation in the Delancey businesses which include a gourmet waterfront restaurant, a bookstore café, a health club, a cinema, a moving company and a catering company. The aim is to encourage offenders to go into business themselves, turning convicts into entrepreneurs but all employees are also ex offenders. Glionna states that employees' suits are donated by businesses such as Brook Brothers and Gap. There is a feeling of belonging amongst employees who were formerly often from opposing factions. Sex Offenders and Psychiatric patients are not eligible for the programme. There is a strict no violence, no drugs and no alcohol policy. Employees receive on the job training and general education classes and are encouraged to seek employment elsewhere. The Foundation is an example of what Boschee (1995) describes as an Affirmative Business Venture.

There are numerous other examples of entrepreneurship education in action. Boschee (1995) discusses another Affirmative Business, namely 'Cooperative Home Care Associates' founded by Rick Surpin to create permanent employment for hard to employ Black and Latino women in the Bronx community in New York. It is now a business with a \$5 million turnover employing 300 women, providing home-health care facilities. Its employees have above average pay and benefits, career mobility, profit sharing and annual bonuses. It is a truly entrepreneurial company as evidenced by the fact that six of the ten seats on the board of directors are occupied by elected employees. The company won the national Business Enterprise Trust Award in 1992 and is expanding to cover other cities.



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Boschee (1995) also discusses a direct services business venture 'Ombudsman Educational Services' founded by Jim Boyle and Lori Sweeney in Illinois. The venture is an alternative learning centre for potential school dropouts. To stay in the programme the students must undertake to demonstrate mastery in the following subjects – maths, reading, social studies and science. They have an 85% success rate. It is not a drain on public expense because it tackles the students before they drop out of the school system. It now has 37 centres operating in seven states. The company revenue exceeded \$4 million last year.

In addition the Canadian based Second Chance Employment Counselling provides access to a variety of resources and services to assist such youths to conduct successful career and job searches. Another service is the After School Program available for youth aged 13 to 24 through a variety of information and skill building workshops. Interestingly, a report (NWT Youth Business Conference 2006) on the programme talks of addressing roadblocks to youth wanting to get into business and encourage them to pursue their ideas if they have what it takes to be an entrepreneur. The Second Chance Entrepreneurship programme aims to assist 'Street Involved Youth', in starting their own business.

What the above case studies and examples have in common is that they were initiated by dynamic, motivated, enterprising individuals who used their combined social capital and life experiences to help other less advantaged people. This independence from authority is a key part of their success. In the next section, we will consider examples of initiatives instigated by authority figures. These case studies and examples also provide evidence that entrepreneurship can be utilised by society to instigate beneficial changes to the social system, and as a method for alleviating social problems and distress which occur as a result of crime. Social entrepreneurship can thus be used as a mechanism to achieve a paradigm change. It is significant that social entrepreneurship is very much in vogue in the United Kingdom with Conservative Party Leader David Cameron in a talk to the Centre for Social Justice recently called for voluntary sector entrepreneurs to help assist with problems caused by crime and drugs. Cameron called for greater flexibility in the voluntary sector to encourage visionary leaders to get involved in community work. Cameron envisaged the establishment of a  areas similar to the 'enterprise zones' set up to promote regeneration in deprived locations where a new breed of social entrepreneurs could make a difference.

These examples discussed above highlight the various roles

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government and social entrepreneurs play. Social entrepreneurs such as Letizia Bataglia, Camila Batmanghelidjh, Mimi Silbert, Rich Surpin and Jim Boyle are positive entrepreneurial role models for disadvantaged communities. However, it is ironic that a common, almost universal, theme of the successful role models discussed above is that of their refusal to accept governmental funding. Entrepreneurial propensity must germinate from within an individual. If this spark is not present then the offender is unlikely to buy into the ideology. Likewise, there is a tension between those who have the ability to become social entrepreneurs, government departments and Non Governmental Organizations (NGO's). Whilst independence of mind and operation is laudable each sector has a role to play and they need to be cooperative and not competitive. This is clearly a major problem to be overcome at present.

### **Entrepreneurship education as a diversion technique**

In the previous section we discussed the contribution of social entrepreneurs. However, there is a place for intrapreneurs within a variety of organisations connected to criminal justice systems or the voluntary sector to use diversionary techniques. Marshack (2007) cites an example of a Superior Court Judge in Seattle, Washington who instituted a program to test all first time offenders appearing before him. If they were diagnosed with ADD and qualified for probation part of their sentence was to participate in an outpatient treatment program. The program taught them about the disorder and how to utilize their strengths to learn and work more productively. The programme has had a 90% success rate. Marshak believes that if criminals with ADD / ADHD can be rehabilitated then entrepreneurs with similar issues can accomplish even greater contributions to society, if they are shown how to utilize their strengths and avoid their weaknesses. This example is unusual in that it has court sanctions attached to it.

Entrepreneurship has considerable potential as a diversion technique to wean a proportion of recidivist criminals away from a life of crime. If the entrepreneurial process were more widely understood by society, especially the marginalized; and access to it made more accessible - then perhaps the necessity to commit crime could be reduced. The author envisages that in addition to encouraging social entrepreneurs to do their own thing there is room for a planned system of inter-agency diversionary educational strategies can be used individually or together as a package to change social expectations and divert children away from the path to

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criminality. It could also be used to educate criminal recidivists, into reforming their former criminal behaviour. Table 2 below demonstrates the range of interagency intervention programmes using entrepreneurship education open to the authorities.

**Table 2 - Interagency intervention programmes using entrepreneurship education**

<b>Interventions</b>	<b>Details of intervention</b>
<b>Entrepreneurial Awareness Training</b>	Pitched at a very basic level in Primary and Secondary Schools, as a part of the learning for life curriculum in a similar manner as existing Police School Liaison lessons that teach social inclusion, social responsibility and anti-drugs messages. The child will be exposed to a very basic level to the message that entrepreneurship is a good for society. The method of delivery would utilise storytelling and case study methodologies. The case studies will consist of inspirational stories about entrepreneurs as compared to stories about criminals. As is already common practice the message could be facilitated via CD Rom and interactive learning packages. The moral entrepreneur would be presented as a socially beneficial character. By this method children will be introduced to the entrepreneurial paradigm at an earlier age, than is traditionally the case.
<b>Screening for Communicational Deficits</b>	Children who are susceptible to communicational learning difficulties such as ADD, ADHD, Dyslexia etc. would benefit from screening at an earlier age and provided with the relevant learning packages in order to maximise their learning potential. In this manner disruptive behaviour will be channelled appropriately thus preventing the children presently at risk from being pushed into escalating patterns of anti-social behaviour and eventually criminality. The

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	<p>positive and negative aspects of their communicational deficit will be explained to them properly and the positive aspects accentuated. The children should be encouraged to achieve career paths (including entrepreneurial careers) that are suitable to their abilities. Again the case study method and inspirational story telling will be a feature of the training.</p>
<p><b>Entrepreneurial Awareness Training for Young Offenders</b></p>	<p>Taking the format discussed at point one, but operating at a higher and more specialised level. The Case Study Method and Story Telling Methods will be utilised as before. Training could take place on a one to one basis or in small groups. The Young Offenders could be introduced to the power of the “<i>Entrepreneurial Dream</i>”. The benefits of an entrepreneurial lifestyles would be compared to the vagaries of a criminal lifestyle. The lesson materials will include CD Rom exercises, videos, selected passages from criminal biographies highlighting the Strong Entrepreneurial Life Themes present in the narratives. Perhaps talks from entrepreneurs and reformed criminals could also be a feature. The main aim of the programme would be to introduce the offender to the possibilities of achieving success via legitimate self-employment.</p>
<p><b>Basic Entrepreneurial Awareness Training for Adult Offenders</b></p>	<p>This would take a similar format to the scheme described above using a similar training package. The main aim this scheme would be to orientate the offender towards considering the alternative of legitimate entrepreneurial behaviour. It is appreciated that this may inadvertently improve the sophistication of the criminal’s modus operandi. This could be followed up by teaching interested students how to set up a business.</p>
<p><b>Advanced Entrepreneurial Learning for Adult Offenders</b></p>	<p>This is envisaged as a voluntary educational activity for those who show a genuine propensity and willingness to learn. This could include a correspondence course in entrepreneurial studies;</p>

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	aspects of business management; and in some instances full degrees in Entrepreneurship. If it were linked to training for freedom courses etc it would provide an incentive to learn.
<b>Entrepreneurial Learning for Reformed Criminals</b>	This is envisaged as a series of talks to non – institutionalised criminals living in the community and supported by Offender Organizations and Enterprise Agencies etc. The desire to be educated is what separates the concept of self-education from enforced education. If even a few seized the opportunity and volunteer to study entrepreneurship and other related courses taught by individuals whom they could relate to - they would benefit from it. It could compliment existing training for freedom programmes.

Reiple (1998) and Fletcher (2004) have both commented upon the fragmentary nature of the provision of entrepreneurship education in Britain and also the range of partner agencies involved. This need not be problematic (or anti-entrepreneurial) if the disparate service providers used a common model such as the tentative model outlined above at table 2. If such a coherent strategy was followed nationally then the possibility of those involved in such Criminal Justice Systems to divert even more offenders away from a debilitating life of crime would undoubtedly increase.

Nevertheless, entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial ability by its very nature emerges from societies and societal systems. Therefore, policy makers and officials involved in the Criminal Justice System cannot afford to be dogmatic and prescriptive in the provision of entrepreneurship interventions because intrapreneurs, social entrepreneurs and offenders with an entrepreneurial bent must be allowed to instigate and initiate their own diversification schemes no matter how these differ in philosophy from the officially sanctioned model. This necessitates consideration of another model. See figure 1 – An ideational map of how entrepreneurship theory can be used to divert persistent offenders away from crime. This model allows all parties involved directly and indirectly Criminal Justice System to play a part in the process. Thus central and local government, funding bodies, Non Government Organisations (NGO's) and other bodies

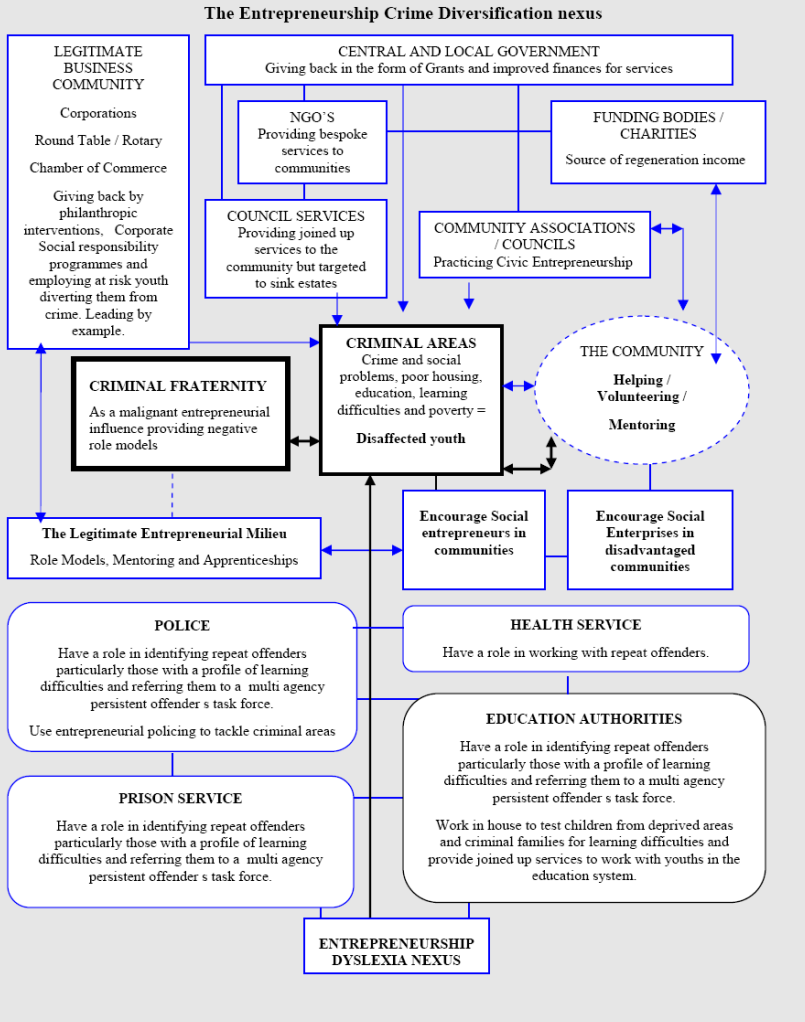
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all contribute to creating a positive entrepreneurial climate. In this model, legitimate entrepreneurs and social entrepreneurs stand together as achievable role models. However, it is also necessary to highlight that there may be possible links between the criminal fraternity and the entrepreneurial community. These links may not always be visible but may have a malignant influence in the form of providing negative role models. In this model central government play a key role in coordinating and financing efforts. Individual NGO's have a significant role in that they could provide bespoke services such as drug counseling. Local Councillors and Community Councils can help by canvassing local businesses and the local community to help, volunteer and mentor. Autonomous Social entrepreneurs should be positively encouraged as should the generation of social enterprises. The Police, Prison Service, Health Service and Education Departments could all problem solve together.

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Figure 1

## AN IDEATIONAL MAP OF HOW ENTREPRENEURSHIP THEORY CAN BE USED TO DIVERT PERSISTENT OFFENDERS AWAY FROM CRIME



## **Conclusion**

This chapter has the potential to act as an inspirational template for those working in the Criminal Justice System by making policy makers and practitioners aware of the possibilities for using entrepreneurship as a mechanism for facilitating positive change. It has the potential to influence offenders themselves because the information and ideas presented in the chapter are life changing scenarios which enable them to retain their identities and dignity by increasing their life chances. The life lessons illustrated in the chapter are not examples of entrepreneurial evangelism but real life success stories which can be replicated wherever there is a crime problem.

One drawback of the application of entrepreneurship theory as a diversion out of crime is that offenders are often entrepreneurial criminals and therefore it could prove problematic in getting some of them to pursue legitimate as opposed to illegal ventures. Indeed, entrepreneurship theory is amoral and its tenets also cover criminal activities such as drug dealing, money laundering and other acquisitive crime. Thus many offenders may need to be convinced of the virtue and practicality of legitimate enterprises. It may well be that they are not at the correct life stage or mindset to make the switch to legitimate entrepreneurial activity. It is the case that as a general rule the offender population itself and society values white collar criminals as opposed to petty thieves. Changing this mindset requires to be addressed as part of any education package.

This research has modest implications for both the educational and criminal justice systems. One of the important messages of this research is that it suggests a biological basis for the criminal predisposition of the respondent's criminality. If a progressive policy of testing every person in the penal system for such disorders was instigated a definitive statistical portrait of the problem would emerge. Remedial action could ensue. It is probably too late for the majority of those trapped in the vicious spiraling social system that is criminality. However, if lessons are learned and the tests extended to everyone entering the education system then those diagnosed early can be helped. Learning is an addictive process. It is a method of diverting criminal energy into "Doing the business" legitimately, instead of wasting it on socially divisive and personally destructive criminal activities. Although not all of those in the criminal / prison population diagnosed as dyslexic could be diverted onto the pathway of enterprise the author believes that a significant proportion could benefit from such an opportunity. In dealing with young people in



conflict with the law, the key to success appears to lie in facilitating a multi agency approach. Working together, holistically individuals acting entrepreneurially within the system have the power to make significant and lasting changes.

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