

EXPLORING THE POLICING - ENTREPRENEURSHIP NEXUS

Robert Smith, M.A, Ph.D
Research Fellow
Centre for Entrepreneurship
The Robert Gordon University
Aberdeen
E-mail: r.smith-a@rgu.ac.uk



Summary: The policing – entrepreneurship nexus is an underdeveloped phenomenon. Indeed, the mental maps of policing and entrepreneurship seldom converge which is surprising given the fluid nature of policing and the pragmatism of police *per se*. This briefing paper discusses how aspects of entrepreneurship theory such as intrapreneurship and corporate and team entrepreneurship can be applied in a practical context to policing as a transformational practice. This briefing aims to illustrate how such theories and practices can be used in a practical context to benefit the Police Service. The author contends that entrepreneurship theory applied to policing has a role to play in combating crime for those prepared to take the risk!

INTRODUCTION - WHAT IS ENTREPRENEURSHIP?

Although the term 'Entrepreneurial policing' (EP) is currently in vogue, it is little more than meaningless rhetoric because traditionally, the term 'entrepreneur' itself lies outwith the pragmatic lexicon of policing. Consequentially, the power of entrepreneurship to act as an organisational change agent remains untapped. The intention of this paper is therefore to present some fascinating 'ideas' which may be of interest to police officers and academics alike. These theoretical ideas are presented in conjunction with practical examples to assist the reader understand the idea of entrepreneurialism in a policing context. Entrepreneurship is a complex behavioural concept and cognitive human behaviour often primarily associated with business. However, scholars of entrepreneurship have yet to agree an 'all encompassing definition' of what it is and what it entails. This complexity and lack of definition need not be a problem to practical, pragmatic people. Although most of what we have come to associate with the practice of entrepreneurship does relate to those who practice it in a business environment – entrepreneurship theory can be applied to all facets of life making it possible to talk about entrepreneurial criminals and entrepreneurial police officers. At a simple level it is perhaps best defined as being 'the undertaking of a risky venture'. Anderson (1995) defines entrepreneurship as 'The creation and extraction of value from an environment'. This definition takes its practice out of the domain of business. In this context it is about scanning one's environment and by dint of self-efficacy and persistence creating something new of value. In a policing context this may entail creating a new process or policing practice, or perhaps inventing a new product or initiating a new innovative process. Equally it could relate to enacting old practices in a different way. Value need not be monetary. It does involve the risk of failure and necessitates being different.

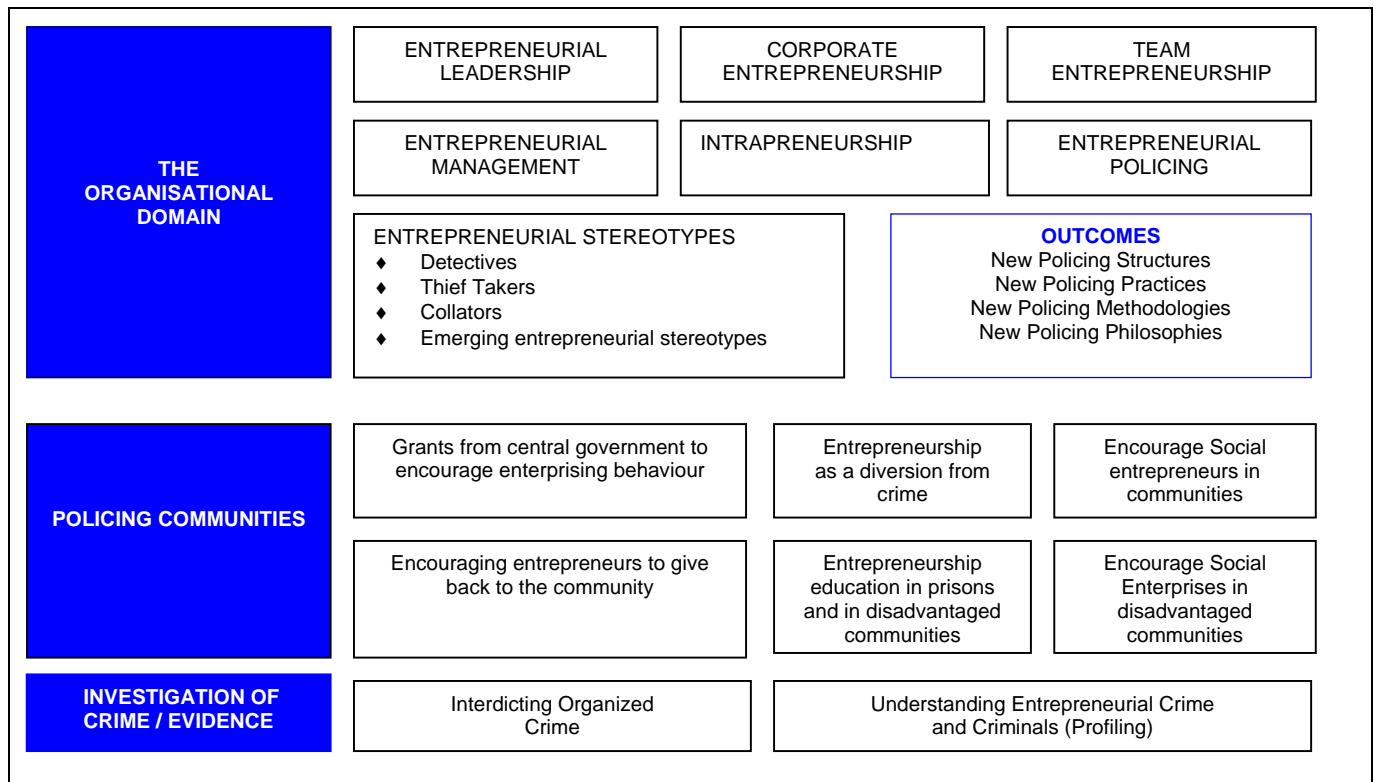
ENTREPRENEURSHIP, POLICING AND AREAS OF THEORETICAL OVERLAP

Entrepreneurship pervades everyday life as a 'Life theme' (Bolton and Thompson, 2003). Its study is a specialised area of research and few police scholars or practitioners have the necessary knowledge and expertise to tap into its potential. Entrepreneurship theory can be used in a contemporary policing environment albeit the subject is not on the mental map of most police officers. This briefing aims to change that.

Existing theories of crime and entrepreneurship overlap at many points with those of policing. This briefing covers some areas of overlap. These roughly correspond to the thematic research groups set up by SIPR, namely 1) Communities; 2) Investigation of Crime / Evidence; and 3) Organisational. These areas of overlap will be expanded upon by recourse to the concept of mental mapping (Gould and White, 1972). Although the mental maps of entrepreneurship and policing seldom converge, criminologists such as Dick Hobbs (Hobbs, 1988, 1991 and 1996) and Robin Fletcher (Fletcher, 2006) have begun to chart this neglected domain. Hobbs appreciated the entrepreneurial role played by the 'Detective', whilst Fletcher that of the 'Thief Taker' and 'Collator'. These three policing genres acted as entrepreneurs in a policing system where information was traded for results. In an Australian context, Palmer (2005) refers to the 'entrepreneurial officer'. In practical terms it is necessary to illustrate the difference between 'entrepreneurial' and 'routine' policing by recourse to a mapping process and by providing some pertinent examples.

A MENTAL MAP OF THE POLICING ENTREPRENEURSHIP NEXUS

The mental map presented below illustrates some of the overlapping concepts and practices where they relate to areas of interest to the SIPR. These include entrepreneurial management, entrepreneurial leadership, corporate entrepreneurship, team entrepreneurship and intrapreneurship, which along with entrepreneurial stereotypes emanate from the organisational domain upon which this paper concentrates. At a community wide level, entrepreneurship can be used as a diversion out of crime; to rehabilitate prisoners and help disadvantaged communities help themselves. In this model, police, central government, social entrepreneurs and existing entrepreneurs all have a part to play in encouraging enterprising behaviour. At the level of investigating crime, knowledge of entrepreneurship theory can help police understand entrepreneurial crime and criminals and interdict organized crime. Opportunities abound for enterprising officers to implement and integrate entrepreneurship theories with those of everyday policing.



Adopting an entrepreneurial ethos could lead to outcomes such as new policing practices, methodologies and philosophies not to mention new policing structures. It is only possible to discuss some of the areas of theoretical overlap discussed above. In relation to the area of Policing Organization the following concepts are of interest.

INTRAPRENEURSHIP

An intrapreneur is an enterprising person, working in a company, public body, or organization utilising entrepreneurial practices or management techniques to succeed. It is the practice of entrepreneurship within organizations (Pinochet, 1985). Its practice can be difficult in corporations whose structures stifle and prevent innovation and change but it nevertheless has considerable relevance to contemporary policing practices because enterprising officers of all ranks can practice intrapreneurship in performing their everyday roles.

ENTREPRENEURIAL LEADERSHIP

Leadership is a function associated with entrepreneurship (McGrath & MacMillan, 2000: 301). According to Casson (2000: 10) we are socially programmed to exalt leaders and entrepreneurs gain power and legitimacy from twin levels of social approval – from being a leader and an entrepreneur. For Casson (2000: 8) the supply of potential leaders is a function of demography dictated by the number of people of a suitable age, experience, education and stature. This is particularly true in relation to policing where being seen to different can be detrimental to one's career. However, entrepreneurs as leaders emerge, whereas the bureaucratic leader is appointed. Entrepreneurial leadership is associated with charisma and communicational ability. Many 'enlightened Chief Constables' and middle managers could genuinely be labelled as entrepreneurial leaders. Others may fear the 'Maverick' label which is associated with entrepreneurs *per se*.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP AS MANAGEMENT

The link between entrepreneurship and management is a fruitful field of inquiry in relation to policing. Although entrepreneurship is not a management technique, paradoxically it is a management style. This is important because management (supervision) is central to contemporary policing activity. Also, to succeed, an entrepreneur must possess managerial skills and the art of superintendence. Casson (1982: 355) is an advocate of 'Managerial Entrepreneurship'. Minkes (1987: 25) argues that management is concerned with change and possesses entrepreneurial aspects. Johannisson (2000: 368) stresses that management thrives on structure, whilst entrepreneurship thrives on process, ambiguity and action. This can be problematic in terms of the inherent Police attitudes because its deliberate introduction unleashes forces of instability / disorder, detrimental to managerial ethos, dictating that some practitioners of management may develop an in-built mistrust of entrepreneurs, or *vice versa*. Also, policing structures depend on hierarchical management frameworks and styles. According to Hjorth (2001: 202), managers represent order, whereas entrepreneurs represent disorder and the peripheral. According to Casson (1982) typical entrepreneurs are more likely to be associated with nascence than with established orders. Entrepreneurial managers view entrepreneurship as a set of recognisable behaviours, approaches and processes that can be defined, analysed, nurtured and developed. Drucker (1985: 24-6) defines it as 'systematic, purposeful, managed entrepreneurship'. McGrath & MacMillan (2000: 24) identified common features of entrepreneurship adopted by managers as entrepreneurial practices and suggest that skills, at which many entrepreneurs excel, can be learned as management practices. This is significant because entrepreneurial practices can be taught and nurtured in a police setting as an alternative style of managerial leadership.

CORPORATE ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Corporations are viewed as the antithesis of all things entrepreneurial. However, corporate entrepreneurship is the practice of entrepreneurship within and between companies or corporations at a higher and different level and different (mature) dynamic. Police Forces are comfortable with the corporate ethos but unlike true corporations are not free to hire and fire entrepreneurial talent in senior management positions. They therefore do not benefit from the necessary 'exchange of ideology between spheres' (Olsson, 2002: 145). However, Hisrich & Peters (1992: 534) sum up the guiding principle of corporate culture as 'follow instructions given, do not make any mistakes, do not fail, do not take the initiative, but wait for instructions, stay within your turf, and protect your backside. This restrictive environment is of course not conducive to creativity, flexibility, independence, and risk taking - the jargon of intrapreneurs'. Likewise, Kirby (2003: 302) argues 'large organisations often see enterprising individuals as loners (not team players), eccentrics, interested in pet projects, cynics, rebels, free spirits, responsible for sloppy work'. Donald & Goldsby (2004) highlights that viewing corporate entrepreneurs as visionaries who do not follow the status quo can be misleading because corporate entrepreneurs are often forced to walk a fine line between clever resourcefulness and rule breaking in the pursuit of entrepreneurial activity. However, entrepreneurialism need not always be a handicap for career progression in the force because a degree of entrepreneurial flair and innovativeness can help one ascend the career hierarchy providing one is not seen as being too different.

TEAM ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Entrepreneurial teams can be very effective by creating small autonomous groups within an organization. Bennis (1966) referred to these as adhocracies. By using the entrepreneurial spirit latent in its members of staff, bureaucracies benefit. Stephenson (1995: 35-52) carried out research into the formation of 'Entrepreneurial Groups', which harness the synergy between entrepreneurial collective action and bureaucracy and concluded these groups work because they push against accepted practices and struggle for legitimacy. However, when legitimised within an organization they lose entrepreneurial drive. The Police are already adept at team working.

ENTREPRENEURIAL POLICING (EP)

Dr Tim Brain, Chief Constable of Gloucestershire recently advocated entrepreneurial policing. The Chief Constable of North Wales Police, Richard Brunstrom, is regarded as an advocate of entrepreneurial policing (EP) due to the innovative nature of some of the policies and practices he has implemented. Nevertheless, at present the term lacks an authoritative definition. At a practical policing level, EP involves refusing to accept the status quo of organisational performances and capabilities. It involves making better use of available time and resources. It necessitates empowering employees at all levels to take ownership of the problems that beset communities. This requires partnership working. It can also involve aligning existing policing practices such as zero tolerance policing, problem solving policing, action plans, directed patrolling, and the use of anti social behaviour legislation with community policing. However, it must be grown from ground level and cannot be imposed from above. It is about implementing a new take on old problems such as setting up persistent offender programmes. It is a 'can do' mindset that brings results. EP need not relate to organisational structures or practices but can be operationalised in innovative ways in disadvantaged communities. For example:

- Entrepreneurship can be used as a diversion out of crime. There are also links between entrepreneurship, dyslexia and crime which could be exploited by testing for dyslexia and communicational deficiencies at an early age. Dyslexic children could be encouraged towards creativity and away from crime thus breaking the cycle of criminal families.

- Much more could be done to encourage 'Social Entrepreneurship' in our communities by helping people volunteer to set up 'Social Enterprises' or to tackle the root causes of crime in our communities by becoming 'Entrepreneurial Mentor Figures'.

This briefing has demonstrated that knowledge of entrepreneurship theory can be applied in a policing context. However, there are clearly issues that require further study before it becomes widely accepted. In Policing terms it requires enlightened Chief Constables, middle managers and enterprising officers of all ranks to take the lead.

SOURCES OF FURTHER INFORMATION

- Anderson AR, 1995. *The Arcadian Enterprise: An Enquiry into the nature and Conditions of Rural Small Business*. PhD Thesis, University of Stirling.
- Bennis W, 1966. *Changing Organizations: Essays on the Development and Evolution of Human Organization*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Bolton B, Thompson J, 2000. *Entrepreneurs: Talent, Temperament, Technique* London: Butterworth, Heineman.
- Casson MC, 1982. *The Entrepreneur*. Oxford: Martin Robertson.
- Casson MC, 2000. *Enterprise and Leadership: Studies on Firms, Markets and Networks*. Aldershot: Edgar Elgar.
- Donald KF, Goldsby MG, 2004. *Corporate Entrepreneurs or Rogue Middle Managers? A Framework for Ethical Corporate Entrepreneurship*. *Journal of Business Ethics* 55, 13-30.
- Drucker PF, 1985. *Innovation and Entrepreneurship*. New York: Harper Row Publishers.
- Fletcher R, 2006. *Management, Science and the Thief Taker: an examination of the Intelligence Gap and its impact on instinctive policing*. Working Paper.
- Gould P, White R, 1974. *Mental Maps*. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books.
- Kirby DA, 2003. *Entrepreneurship*. London: McGraw-Hill. Hisrich RD, Peters MP, 1992. *Entrepreneurship: Starting Developing and Managing a New Enterprise*. Homewood IL: Irwin.
- Hobbs D, 1988. *Doing the business: Entrepreneurship, the Working Class, and Detectives in the East End of London*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hobbs D, 1991. *Business as a Master-Metaphor: Working Class Entrepreneurship and Business Class Policing*. In Burrows, R ed. *Deciphering the Enterprise Culture*. London: Routledge.
- Hobbs D, 1996. *Bad Business*. Oxford: Clarendon.
- Hjorth D, 2001. *Rewriting Entrepreneurship: enterprise discourse and entrepreneurship in the case of re-organising ES*. PhD thesis: Vaxjo University Press.
- McGrath RG, MacMillan IC, 2000. *The Entrepreneurial Mindset*. M.A. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.
- Minkes AL, 1987. *The Entrepreneurial Manager: Decisions, Goals, and Business Ideas*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Olsson S, 2002. *Gendered heroes: male and female self-representations of executive identity*. *Women in Management Review* 17, 142-149.
- Palmer D, 2005. *State Police in a State of Change: Remaking the Entrepreneurial Officer*. Electronic Thesis, Griffith University, Australia.
- Pinchot III G, 1985. *Intrapreneuring*. New York: Harper Row.
- Stephenson K, 1995. *The formation and incorporation of virtual entrepreneurial groups*. *Journal of Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice* 19, 35-52.