

**A PRIMER ON COLLECTIVE ENTREPRENEURSHIP:  
A PRELIMINARY TAXONOMY**

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Working Paper

AEWP 2009-4

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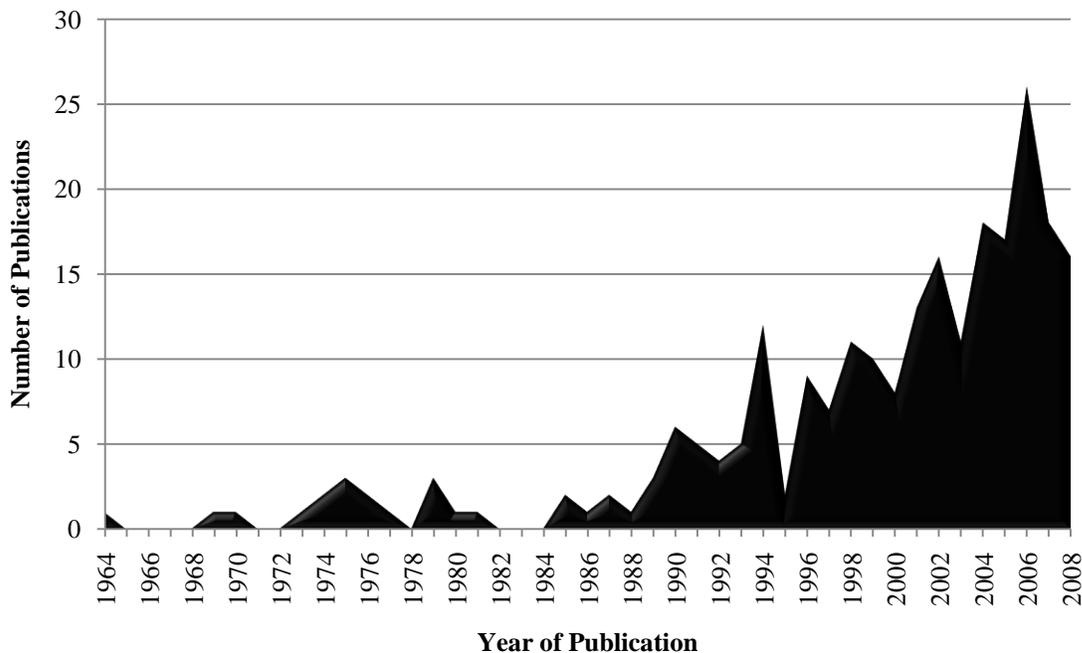
## **ABSTRACT**

We document an increasing prevalence of the term “collective entrepreneurship” in scholarly research. By examining the context in which the term is utilized, we present a framework through which to understand motivations for research in collective entrepreneurship and the variety of entrepreneurial endeavors described as collective entrepreneurship. We identify five primary motivations for research: advancement of theory, intra-organizational efficiency, inter-organizational gains, economic growth and development, and socio-political change. We find preliminary evidence collective entrepreneurs may be able to generate rents inaccessible to the sole entrepreneur. In addition, we propose mechanisms which foster entrepreneurship may differ for sole and collective entrepreneurs.

## INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship research, once predominately focused on the individual entrepreneur, is increasingly interested in the influences of group dynamics, founding teams, and collective entrepreneurial action (Aldrich, 1999; Felin & Zenger, 2007; Jonsson, 1995; Ruef, Aldrich, & Carter, 2003; Schoonhoven & Romanelli, 2001; West, 2007). We see a myriad of new directions for entrepreneurship research that explore the idea that entrepreneurship emerges as a function of collective action (Schoonhoven & Romanelli, 2001). These nascent themes consider the role of multiple actors when analyzing the entrepreneurial function, exploring such variables as network ties, path dependence, social context, local origins, community dynamics and joint conceptualization of entrepreneurial opportunities. As frameworks for analyzing entrepreneurship broaden to include mention of collective aspects, researchers and practitioners rely more heavily on the term collective entrepreneurship (Figure 1).

**Figure 1. Publications Utilizing the Term “Collective Entrepreneurship”: 1964-2008<sup>1</sup>**



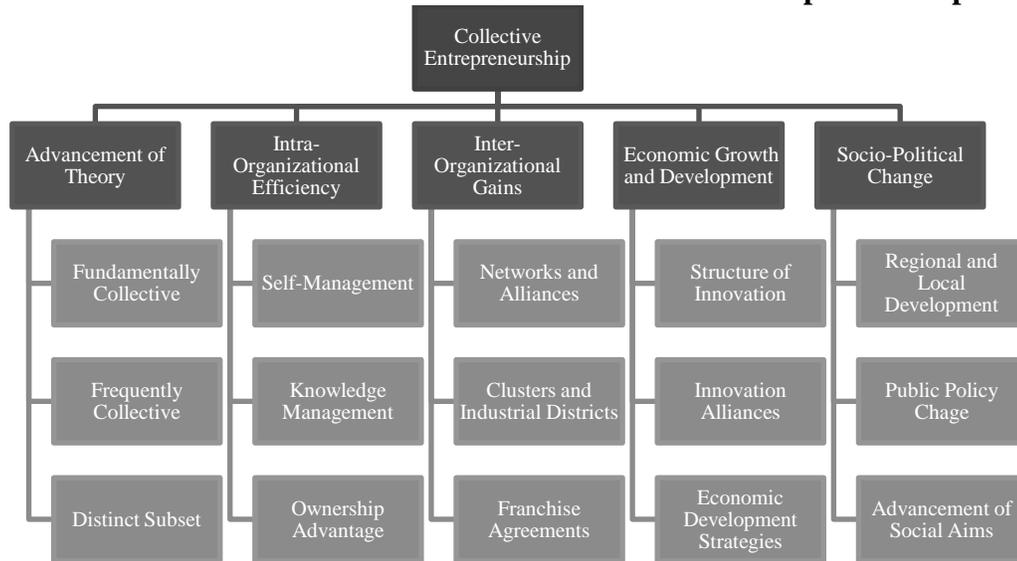
This primer on collective entrepreneurship surveys various interpretations of the term collective entrepreneurship, categorizes the theoretical and practical motivations for investigating collective entrepreneurship, and provides examples of the wide array of institutional and organizational manifestations deemed collective entrepreneurship. Although we discuss the work of authors who utilize the term collective when referring to entrepreneurship when relevant, we focus primarily on the use of the specific phrase “collective entrepreneurship.” This nuance allows us a common basis upon which to compare and contrast the use of the term itself as well as prevailing motivations for an interest in collective entrepreneurship.

To identify, categorize, and explain the various uses of the term “collective entrepreneurship,” we conducted a comprehensive, cross-disciplinary literature review. After surveying 240 articles that explicitly address the term collective entrepreneurship, we suggest the

<sup>1</sup> Publications for 2008 may be underrepresented in this sample as this data was collected in September 2008.

predominant motivations for research in collective entrepreneurship fall into five general categories: theoretical advancement, intra-organizational efficiency, inter-organizational gains, economic growth and development, and socio-political change (Figure 2). While these categories are not meant to be mutually exclusive, they allow us to present the reader with a simple framework to more readily understand the nature of current streams of research in collective entrepreneurship, their theoretical underpinnings, and their practical benefits.

**Figure 2. Predominant Motivations for Research in Collective Entrepreneurship**



**A Note on the Term “Collective”**

Wide variations in the use of the term collective entrepreneurship have left little common ground on which to build a comprehensive theory of collective entrepreneurship (Figure 3). Substantial discrepancies in the usage of the term leave researchers open to criticism that points to a lack of precise definitions or citations to the collective entrepreneurship literature (Weissert, 2002). Among the authors surveyed, we note the descriptor collective is utilized in three primary ways: 1) to recognize multiple parties engaged in entrepreneurship 2) to refer to the type of economic good generated by the entrepreneurial process and 3) to denote asset ownership (Figure 4). When collective, in fact, refers to multiple actors engaged in the entrepreneurial process, wide variation exists as to whether collective entrepreneurship is among risk-capital providers, among employees, among firms, among governments officials, among universities, or among a combination of these actors. The stage in which multiple actors become engaged in the entrepreneurial process (e.g. opportunity identification, venture financing, opportunity development) also affects whether authors choose to utilize the collective entrepreneurship label (Byrd, 1990; Tardieu, 2003).

When entrepreneurs are primarily interested in the generation of public, common pool, or club goods, we find certain authors utilize the term collective to distinguish from entrepreneurial endeavors in the pursuit of private goods<sup>2</sup> (Frederick & Henry, 2004; Vaillancourt & Chartrand,

<sup>2</sup> We expand on this notion of differences in the type of economic good created as a result of entrepreneurial action in our discussion of inter-organizational alliances and economic growth and development.

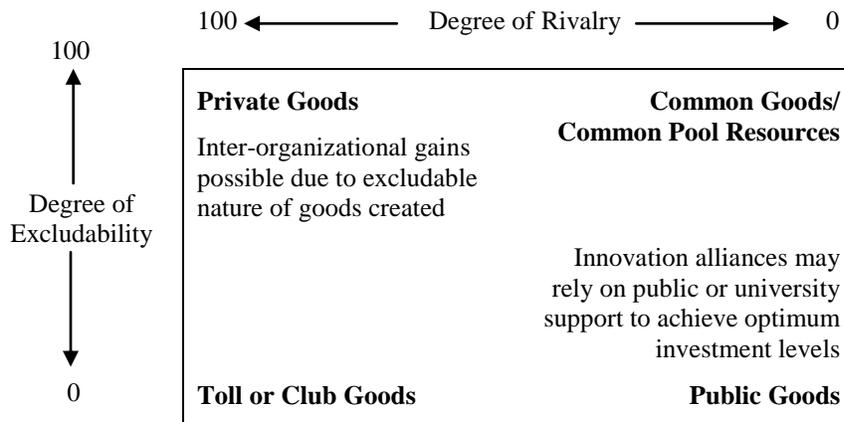
2005). This connotation of collective is most often present in the social economy and ethnic entrepreneurship literature. Several authors also couple the creation of collective goods with Hofstede’s cultural dimensions of individualism and collectivism (Hofstede, 1980). This has been the cause for some debate, however, as multiple actors can cooperate to generate a collective good without displaying cultural traits of collectivism. And, true collectivism is argued to be incompatible with basic components of the entrepreneurial process such as change and innovation (Morris, Davis, & Allen, 1994).

Finally, certain streams of literature also view entrepreneurship by socialist collectives as collective entrepreneurship. Resources are owned by the collective; the collective makes decisions with respect to the employment of these collective assets; and the collective bears investment risk (Zupanov, 1975). Thus, entrepreneurial endeavors utilizing collectively owned assets constitute another manifestation of collective entrepreneurship. This concept was explored in depth by socialist regimes in an attempt to improve worker motivation in labor-managed firms (Obradovic, 1994).

### A Note on the Concept of Entrepreneurship

Various interpretations of the word collective often constitute an initial stumbling block to opening dialogue among researchers as different interpretations of the term collective are often a direct result of stark ideological differences as to the normative role of the individual and the entrepreneur in society. These differences are compounded by differing views as to what constitutes entrepreneurship—business ownership, innovation, arbitrage, or creativity (Foss & Klein, 2005). Thus, of primary interest to scholars of collective entrepreneurship is the advancement of a theory of entrepreneurship.

**Figure 4. Economic Attributes of Collective Entrepreneurial Goods Created**



Adapted from Romer (1993) and Hess and Ostrom (2001).

**Figure 3. Example Definitions and Descriptions of “Collective Entrepreneurship”**

Motivation or Literature Base	Author, Date	Definition/Description
Advancement of Theory	(Wilken, 1979, pp. 75, 66)	“We have conceptualized entrepreneurship as a role which involved <i>combining factors of production to initiate changes in the production of goods.</i> ” “All phases of the entrepreneurial role may be carried out by one individual, they may be divided among individuals, or they may be carried out by a corporate actor—an organization. The transition from individual to collective entrepreneurship has been a major historical trend...”
	(Tardieu, 2003, p. 10)	“Collective Entrepreneurship: When both opportunity identification and opportunity development are collective, the collective domain of alertness, deliberate search and testing rely on the communication and sharing of entrepreneurial knowledge.”
	(Johannisson, 1998, pp. 11-12)	Collective forms of entrepreneurship may differ with respect to...governance structure..., the strength and/or formalization of ties between units, the fuzziness of the boundaries of the collective, and the importance of physical and social proximity.”
	(Gartner, Shaver, Gatewood, & Katz, 1994, p. 6) <sup>≈</sup>	“ <i>The ‘entrepreneur’ in entrepreneurship is more likely to be plural, rather than singular</i> ”
Intra-Organizational Efficiency	(Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2002, p. 263)	“Collective entrepreneurship, which consisted of exchanging opinions, reaching consensus at the management level, and taking risks together”
	(Yan & Sorenson, 2003, p. 37)	“Collective entrepreneurship is the synergism that emerges from a collective and that propels it beyond the current state by seizing opportunities without regard to the resources under its control”
	(Tiessen, 1997, p. 376)	“collective entrepreneurship”: innovation from the pooled capacities of individuals
Inter-Organizational Gains	(Mourdoukoutas, 1999, p. 90)	“collective entrepreneurship is about structures that afford the opportunity and the incentive to individuals both inside and outside conventional corporations as well as individuals across corporations to share and integrate technical and market information for the discovery and the exploitation of new business”
	(Mottiar & Ingle, 2007, p. 669)	“the industrial district environment can be likened to an inter-organizational network... We are calling this kind of collective entrepreneurship phenomenon <i>interpreneurship.</i> ”
Economic Growth and Development	(Auerswald & Branscomb, 2003, p. 80)	“By ‘collective entrepreneurship’ we do not mean a committee, but rather the complicated process through which inventors engage with managers and together mobilize early-stage funding from investors.”
	(Etzkowitz, 2003; Etzkowitz & Klofsten, 2005, pp. 243-244)	“This innovation capacity is largely dependent upon the construction and institutionalization of a heterogeneous network of public/private entities that can provide firm-formation expertise, gap funding, seed capital and ‘collective entrepreneurship’.”
	(Lundvall, 2007, p. 8)	“At the core of the current innovation process is collective entrepreneurship – several agents interacting and working together to introduce change.”
Socio-Political Change	(Connell, 1999, p. 19)	“Collective entrepreneurship combines business risk and capital investment with the social values of collective action. It is an event that exists when collective action aims for the economic and social betterment of a locality by means of some transformation of social norms, values, and networks for the production of goods or services by an enterprise.”
	(Roberts, 2006, p. 600)	“collective entrepreneurship draws on multiple people to husband and shape an idea through initiation, design, and implementation into a full-blown innovation”
	(Silva & Rodrigues, 2005, p. 5)	“collective entrepreneurship can be seen as the carrying on of gap filling and input completing activities.... The collective nature is connected to the fact that these actions concern sets or clusters of firms with similar productive interests and also public and semi-public agents.”
	(Wilkinson & Quarter, 1996, p. 7)	“the primary structure is an interrelated system of co-operative corporations, or what might be labeled as collective entrepreneurship”

<sup>≈</sup> The term collective entrepreneurship is not explicitly used.

## MOTIVATION 1: ADVANCEMENT OF THEORY

Of primary concern to the domain of entrepreneurship is the advancement of a coherent theoretical framework from which to base scholarly research (Low, 2001). Similarly, one of the leading motivations for the study of collective entrepreneurship is the claim that the investigation of collective entrepreneurship is necessary to the development of a theory of entrepreneurship. Authors generally base these claims on one of three leading arguments: 1) entrepreneurship is fundamentally collective; 2) entrepreneurship is often collective; or 3) collective entrepreneurship is a distinct subset of entrepreneurship that merits scholarly attention.

The concept of entrepreneurship as collective is often attributed to Schumpeter's work on the development of an entrepreneurial function and his writings on innovation (Schumpeter, 1928, 1949). Thus, authors use Schumpeter's work as the basis for research on the collective entrepreneurial function (Bottomore, 1992; Hagedoorn, 1996; Sarachek, 1980). Schumpeter, in attempting to define the entrepreneurial function, asserts that each society may fulfill this function in a distinct manner. While Schumpeter does not use the term collective entrepreneurship explicitly, he suggests the entrepreneurial function is often fulfilled cooperatively. In addition, Schumpeter argues innovation often necessitates collective action to achieve adaptation, using as his example the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the agency's role in the introduction of technology. More recent literature on interactive learning, the nature of innovation and innovating regions has supported Schumpeter's work (Etzkowitz, 2003; Lundvall, 1992; Sæther & Amundsen, 1996).

Bottomore asserts the collective entrepreneur<sup>3</sup> was ever-present at the center of Schumpeter's description of the innovation process in large-scale enterprises. In addition, he alleges that Schumpeter refrained from using the term collective entrepreneur due to "no doubt an innate aversion to such an expression" (Bottomore, 1992, p. 73). This may be the case considering the importance of the individual in Schumpeter's thought or the concern that the term collective would be interpreted from a socialist viewpoint. We found limited support of this notion, considering the usage of the term collective entrepreneurship and "kolektiv-entrepreneur" among authors referring to entrepreneurship in socialist or communist collectives (Horvat, 1975, p. 297; Zupanov, 1975). However, we were unable to document the usage of the term collective entrepreneurship with this connotation among Schumpeter's contemporaries.

Nevertheless, Mourdoukoutas (1999) mentions the same concern regarding the connotation of collective. He notes "collective entrepreneurship in large enterprises sounds similar to the concept of the failed socialist systems and that makes business strategists uneasy" (p. 9). This connotation of collective as indicative of inefficient or related to non-market strategies may have limited its use.

### All Entrepreneurship is Fundamentally Collective

The argument that entrepreneurship is fundamentally collective in nature is based on a simple observation: you can't have entrepreneurship without a market. In other words, entrepreneurship is only intelligible by analyzing the larger, collective context in which entrepreneurship unfolds. This line of inquiry most closely resembles a social constructionist theoretical viewpoint (Johannisson, 1998).

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<sup>3</sup> Bottomore uses the term collective entrepreneur to refer to either a large corporation or a central planning authority.

In this context, even the study of the sole entrepreneur may be advanced by considering the collective aspects of his endeavor. While arguments of this nature provide many new avenues for research, they may not lend themselves to the development of a succinct theory. If any and all factors within the social context may matter but we do not have a concise guide as to which factors to consider, our model may be useful for understanding instances of entrepreneurship but it is incomplete in that it may remain difficult to utilize such a theory to predict entrepreneurial behavior.

Arguing that all entrepreneurship is collective is akin to arguing that you can not analyze a firm without analyzing its industry. While industry analysis may indeed be an important level of analysis, this does not negate the value of intra-firm analysis. The extreme argument that all entrepreneurship is fundamentally collective ends in a very abstract set of factors to analyze. It is not clear that viewing all entrepreneurship as predominately a social, collective phenomenon will significantly improve researchers' ability to predict entrepreneurial behavior<sup>4</sup>.

### **Entrepreneurship is Frequently Collective**

More popular is the notion that entrepreneurship is frequently a collective, rather than a sole, endeavor. This argument for the study of collective entrepreneurship considers the probability of collective entrepreneurship is greater than the probability of sole entrepreneurship (Ben Hafaïedh, 2006b; Gartner et al., 1994). That is, the percentage of new ventures developed by a single individual is small in relation to the percentage of ventures developed through collaboration among multiple entrepreneurial actors. In this context, multiple actors seizing an entrepreneurial opportunity jointly are viewed as collective entrepreneurs. Due to the prevalence of multiple entrepreneurs acting jointly, scholars are admonished to put the lone hero myth into perspective (Reich, 1987).

The field of entrepreneurship would address a larger portion of entrepreneurial activity if the emphasis placed on scholarly research of collective entrepreneurship were to mimic its frequency in our society with regard to sole entrepreneurship. Considering this reality, scholars argue an investigation focused on the role of teams, collective ideation, collective efficacy, collective learning, collective cognition and collective action may be a better mechanism for advancing the theory of entrepreneurship than a research agenda focused on the sole entrepreneur (Branstad, 2008; Felin & Zenger, 2007; Schoonhoven & Romanelli, 2001; West, 2007).

### **Collective Entrepreneurship is a Distinct Subset**

The third argument for research in the area of collective entrepreneurship is based neither on necessity nor frequency. Authors that consider collective entrepreneurship as an important subset of entrepreneurship argue the collective nature of certain entrepreneurial endeavors has important ramifications for the process and structure of entrepreneurship (Cook & Plunkett, 2006; Johannisson, 1998; Tardieu, 2003). In addition, they argue that entrepreneurship among multiple individual actors involves distinct challenges that may not apply to the study of entrepreneurship more generally.

The distinct nature of collective entrepreneurship is based on an Olsonian view of collective action. Olson (1965) predicts "*rational, self-interested individuals will not act to achieve their common or group interests*" unless certain conditions are present: the existence of a privileged group, special incentive mechanisms, or coercion (p. 2). The idea that "groups tend to

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<sup>4</sup> See Friedman (1953) for a discussion of the importance of the predictive ability of theory.

act in support of their group interests” is inconsistent with a premise of rational, self-interested behavior (p. 1). This means researchers must not assume a rational group of entrepreneurs or an entrepreneurial team will necessarily exploit opportunities in their common interest. We can not assume a group will act in its own rational self-interest in the same manner an individual would in the absence of selective organizational design mechanisms.

Olson argues we must analyze individual motivations and the organizational arrangements that provide selective incentives if we are to understand collective action. From this perspective, the study of collective entrepreneurship is warranted to identify the distinct motivations, rent generation processes, ownership costs and governance structures of this subset of entrepreneurship.

## **MOTIVATION 2: INTRA-ORGANIZATIONAL EFFICIENCY**

A second motivation for research regarding collective entrepreneurship argues collective entrepreneurship is a powerful tool for increasing intra-firm efficiency. By reducing agency costs and collective decision-making costs, firms may be able to utilize resources more efficiently. We recognize three major streams in this category of literature: (1) literature considering the challenges of self-management, (2) literature focusing on knowledge management and (3) literature investigating ownership structure.

The management streams of literature consider firms may be able to access additional rents by increasing employee motivation, lowering intra-firm coordination costs and encouraging innovation. Early use of the term collective entrepreneur in reference to the firm stems from the concept of entrepreneurship as management (Foss & Klein, 2005). Clark (1887) describes the process of organizing and directing production as performed by owners and managers of firms who together constitute a collective entrepreneur. However, this usage was not popular as some scholars argued the entrepreneur may not exist in large, bureaucratic organizations. Loasby (1967) argues that the entrepreneur is replaced by the organization in large firms and “an organization is not a collective entrepreneur” (p. 171).

### **Self-Management**

This line of inquiry into collective entrepreneurship was revitalized, however, as sociologists and economists began to explore organizational mechanisms to increase participation and productivity in labor-managed firms and collectives (McCain, 1973; Rawin, 1976; Zupanov, 1975). Zupanov (1975) investigates the extent to which formal, organizational changes that increase democratic decision-making encourage employees to accept an entrepreneurial role within the firm. He finds that “employees, by and large, are not willing to take responsibility beyond the limits of their own job” (p. 81). Zupanov attributes his findings to social and cultural backgrounds of the employees coupled with the fact that employees he studied had “no property claims on the fruits of their entrepreneurial activity beyond their personal earnings” (p. 81).

Thus, the notion of democratic worker governance or self-management is often associated with collective entrepreneurship. This use is related to the notion of more heterarchical structures. Certain scholars reserve the term collective entrepreneurship to refer specifically to labor-owned firms or worker-owned cooperatives, as distinct from investor-owned companies (Bataille-Chetodel & Huntzinger, 2004; Chouinard & Forgues, 2002; Pérotin, 2006). In the worker-owned cooperative literature, the terms collective entrepreneurship and cooperative entrepreneurship are often used interchangeably.

## **Knowledge Management**

Reich (1987) and Stewart (1989) popularized the notion of intra-firm collective entrepreneurship as a management style in investor-owned firms. And, in some circles were able to disassociate the term from the socialist connotation that seems to have dampened its use by earlier scholars. Reich argues that firms can become more competitive by lowering levels of organizational hierarchy within the firm and adopting a more heterarchical system. By encouraging close working ties and transferring decision-making authority to employees, the firm may be able to adopt new technology or adapt to change more quickly. Reich suggests performance-based pay as a solution to the challenges Zupanov finds.

The concept of intra-firm entrepreneurship has led to a body of literature that promotes the use of collective entrepreneurial management strategies such as self-organizing shop floors, work teams and equipreneurship (Johannisson, 2004). All closely related concepts, the least common is likely that of equipreneurship which is a form of intrafirm, team entrepreneurship that underscores the importance of equality among team members (i.e. from the latin preface equi- meaning equal) (Ben Hafaïedh, 2006b). Akehurst, Comeche and Galindo (2008) alternatively suggest the term internal entrepreneurship which they define as “an emerging synergism of a collective that drives an organization to its present state, giving dimensions for opportunities without taking into account the resources available at that moment” (para. 3).

Finally, a subset of authors brings us full circle to reassert the suggestion that an organization, in this case the firm, should be considered a collective entrepreneur. Basing his argument on Schumpeter’s (1949) discussion of the entrepreneurial function, Hagedoorn (1996) argues that large companies do, in fact, engage in collective entrepreneurship by utilizing “well developed internal search routines, firm-specific skills and organizational learning” to realize innovative strategies based on tacit knowledge (p. 893). Thus intrapreneurship, and corporate entrepreneurship are also referred to as forms of collective entrepreneurship (Ben Hafaïedh, 2006b; Johannisson, 2004).

## **Ownership Advantage**

In addition to knowledge management, distinct patterns of collective ownership have been investigated as a means to increase organizational efficiency. We find scholars researching collective entrepreneurship are interested in ways in which governance mechanisms may reduce ownership costs (See Hansmann (1996) for a discussion of marketing contracting and ownership costs). Two examples of distinct ownership models found in the collective entrepreneurship literature include research in family firm ownership and producer-owned cooperatives.

### ***Family-Owned Firms***

Family firms may be able to decrease ownership costs relative to non-family firms by mitigating managerial opportunism, generating long-term organizational commitment, and communicating more effectively. Anderson and Reeb (2003) suggest the often lengthy tenure of family business executives and direct impact of family firm performance on family wealth may provide family firms with superior oversight ability and strong incentives to limit managerial opportunism. In addition, family firms may be able to sustain higher levels of organizational commitment, as those interested in preserving the firm for future generations would be interested in firm survival and exhibit a greater willingness to invest in long-term projects (Anderson & Reeb, 2003; Yan & Sorenson, 2003). Higher levels of organizational commitment and longer firm tenure also serve to reduce long-term contracting risk. Families may also achieve lower

collective decision-making costs because strong interpersonal relationships can lower barriers to effective communication and collaboration.

When examining the use of the term collective entrepreneurship among authors studying family entrepreneurship, we note that family entrepreneurship is often seen as a subtype of collective entrepreneurship. An exception to this may be Wilken (1979) who distinguishes between seven categories of entrepreneurial identity: (1) individual-collective<sup>5</sup>, (2) mainstream-outsider, (3) family-nonfamily, (4) socioeconomic origins, (5) religious orientations, (6) old-new, and (7) private-public. In Wilken's framework, collective and family are distinct variables that may lead to different outcomes with respect to economic growth and development. Wilken argues collective entrepreneurship may contribute to innovation and expansion when entrepreneurs are willing and able to sustain cooperation. On the other hand, if collective entrepreneurship is necessitated by capital requirements and entrepreneurs are unable to "act in concert" we may see a decrease in expansion and innovation (p. 66). Family entrepreneurship may lead to nonexpansion and noninnovativeness when organizations are poorly managed, nepotistic and engaged in familial self-dealing. While recognizing that strong family bonds may facilitate entrepreneurship, Wilken's prevailing hypothesis was a negative correlation between the prevalence of family entrepreneurship and expansion or innovativeness. However, in light of current research in family entrepreneurship, the opposite hypothesis can be envisioned.

Yan and Sorenson (2003) define collective entrepreneurship as "the synergism that emerges from a collective and that propels it beyond the current state by seizing opportunities without regard to resources under its control" (p. 37). The authors recognize both intra-firm and inter-firm forms of collective entrepreneurship, but their analysis deals with intra-firm entrepreneurship. They attempt to measure collective entrepreneurship and determine variables that lead to greater levels of entrepreneurial activity in family-owned businesses. They examine organizational commitment, leadership style, as well as task and relationship conflict.

Sarachek (1980) explores two types of collective entrepreneurship among families: collective family entrepreneurship and parallel entrepreneurship. Collective family entrepreneurship is used to refer to organizations in which two or more family members officially assume top-level positions and share entrepreneurial functions. Parallel entrepreneurship refers to instances where "relatives became entrepreneurs of separate enterprises within the same field of endeavor" (p. 363). Sarachek suggests parallel businesses lower ownership costs through sponsor relationships and the provision of critical resources including advice, business contacts, and loans. Thus, collective entrepreneurship within the social constructs of family has been used to investigate both intra-firm and inter-firm synergies. We continue a discussion of inter-firm synergies in the inter-organizational gains section of this paper.

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<sup>5</sup> It is important to note Wilken primarily uses the term collective entrepreneurship to refer to organizational manifestations of the entrepreneurial function. Practical examples used by Wilken include the corporation, the joint stock corporation and the Japanese zaibatsu. Wilken describes zaibatsus as multi-organizational entrepreneurship; therefore, he does not confine collective entrepreneurship to a single organization. Although he refrains from developing an exact definition, Wilken's examples of collective entrepreneurship would not preclude intra-organizational and inter-organizational forms. However, his motivation for the study is primarily to develop a theoretical framework to determine which characteristics of entrepreneurship influence innovation and adoption leading to economic growth.

### *Patron-Owned Cooperatives*

Patron-Owned organizations have also been suggested as an example of collective entrepreneurship. Discussion of the cooperative as a collective entrepreneur dates at least back to Emelianoff (1942) whose work on the theory of cooperation discusses the fundamental characteristics of collective enterprise<sup>6</sup>. As Emelianoff seeks to define a cooperative and the collective entrepreneur he comes across a problem familiar to those attempting to define collective entrepreneurship: a fundamental lack of clarity with respect to key concepts.

Some terms necessary in examination of the cooperative problem have no definite connotations in current usage, whereas others are applied to two or more dissimilar concepts and different authors use the same term with various and very often with varying meanings (p. 2)

Wide variance in the meanings attached to the single term “cooperative” may have led to what Emelianoff describes as “literature full of legends and false evaluations” (p. 3).

Emelianoff suggests the concept of a collective entrepreneur would involve 1) an income-generating organization governed by a plurality of stockholders that 2) assigns voting rights in proportion to stockholdings and 3) distributes residual income in proportion to stockholdings. Under this framework, traditional cooperatives that operate on a democratic basis would not be seen as a collective enterprise. In addition, distribution of savings or surplus distributed in proportion to use would not constitute a collective enterprise. Finally, to claim that a cooperative was also a collective enterprise, Emelianoff suggests the cooperative must generate entrepreneurial income. For example, cash surplus generated by underpayment in marketing associations or overcharges in purchasing associations is not seen as income generation according to Emelianoff’s definition.

Emelianoff’s view of collective entrepreneurship represents a stark contrast to definitions of collective entrepreneurship presented in following sections of this work that hinge on democratic governance and the subordination of the profit motive to social concerns (Chantier de l’Économie Sociale, 2005). Neither is his definition shared by authors who choose to utilize the term collective entrepreneurship in a general sense for the wide variety of activities and organizations associated with cooperatives (Stryjan, 1994; Tetzschner, 1991). However, recent work in the area patron or producer-owned cooperatives has returned to this fundamental discussion, and attempts to distinguish potential differences between collaborative, cooperative and collective entrepreneurship (Bijman & Doorneweert, 2008; Iliopoulos, 2007).

Certain concepts from Emelianoff’s analysis have been revitalized. For example, for those authors who may view only a subset of cooperatives as collective entrepreneurship, the new generation cooperative has been suggested as a model that fulfills the income generation criteria and the residual distribution criteria as proposed by Emelianoff (Cook & Plunkett, 2006; Iliopoulos, 2005). The Knightian concept of the bearing of uncertainty has also been investigated as a distinguishing characteristic of collective entrepreneurship. This criteria is a more narrowly-defined component of Emelianoff’s criteria of residual profit-loss distribution among stockholders (Cook, Burrell, & Iliopoulos, 2008; Knight, 1921).

It is important to note that “collective entrepreneurship” can assume a dual meaning in the cooperative literature. For example, authors may use the term to simultaneously refer to

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<sup>6</sup> Although Emelianoff discusses the collective entrepreneur and collective enterprise at length, the translation we worked from does not utilize the term collective entrepreneurship explicitly.

entrepreneurial action among 1) multiple patrons and 2) multiple organizations. The cooperative literature often describes this phenomenon as cooperation among cooperatives. Thus, authors investigate integration among interconnected agglomerations of cooperative firms as an example of collective entrepreneurship (Burrell, Cook, & Klein, 2008; Wilkinson & Quarter, 1996).

Finally, we should note it is often difficult to distinguish whether patron-owned organizations represent intra- or inter-firm cooperation. We may consider the cooperative to be intra-organizational collective entrepreneurship, as multiple individuals are acting jointly to establish organizations operated for mutual benefit. On the other hand, these individuals are often business proprietors in their own right, so their collaboration could be described as inter-firm. Due to the vertically integrated nature of patron-owned cooperatives, the distinction between inter- and intra-organizational cooperation can become blurred.

### **MOTIVATION 3: INTER-ORGANIZATIONAL GAINS**

The third stream of literature on collective entrepreneurship that has evolved considers mutual gains that can be achieved through dynamic cooperation and organizational hybrids in markets. Inter-organizational gains literature focuses on explicit or tacit inter-firm coordination for the purpose of rent-seeking through mechanisms such as networks and alliances, clusters and industrial districts, and franchise agreements. Although there is some mention of efficiency gains due to coordination, the literature on alliances and franchise agreements addresses the generation of rents which may be best described as positive payoffs from a game theoretic point of view. When considering collective entrepreneurship in the form of industrial districts, however, economic rent generations is more closely related to the concepts of positive externalities or agglomeration economies (Marshall, 1890).

#### **Networks and Alliances: Formal and Informal**

Mourdoukoutas describes collective entrepreneurship as a “fluid organizational structure that affords the opportunity to the hundreds or even thousands of hidden entrepreneurs scattered among suppliers, distributors, customers, and collaborators to come forward with the information they possess and to join forces for the discovery and the exploitation of new business opportunities” (Mourdoukoutas, 1999, p. 134; Mourdoukoutas & Papadimitriou, 2002). From this starting point, Mourdoukoutas includes what he labels internal and external (i.e. intra-firm and inter-firm) collective entrepreneurship in his study of the development of entrepreneurial networks.

Mourdoukoutas also makes an important contribution in distinguishing between contractual and non-contractual forms of collective entrepreneurship. This criterion can be applied across various types of collective entrepreneurship described in this article. Further investigation of the structure of collective entrepreneurship, contractual or non-contractual, formal or informal, is warranted if scholars are to understand the mechanisms and incentive structures that sustain collective entrepreneurship. Two possible avenues for development include the (1) development of a continuum from non-contractual to contractual to describe collective entrepreneurial networks and (2) an evolutionary framework that explores variations in contracting among cooperators over time (Mourdoukoutas, 1999). Collective entrepreneurs may begin cooperating under informal agreements, developing contractual arrangements over time. Or, the opposite may be the case: as parties develop familiarity and trust they may discontinue the use of formal contracts in some instances.

Central to the discussion of inter-organizational gains is the relevance of networks. In addition to supply chain networks, Mourdoukoutas (1999) views Overseas Ethnic Chinese Groups and Japanese keiretsu groups as forms of non-contractual collective entrepreneurship. Both structures rely on interpersonal relations, mutual trust and reciprocal obligations to further the advancement of business goals. Johannisson (2004) presents personal networks as a form of collective entrepreneurship suggesting that emerging entrepreneurs utilize these networks to access human and financial capital, as well as to transfer legitimacy to their ventures. Binder and Sautter (2006) agree that social capital and personal networks impact founding activity. They recognize networks as “fundamental components for developing ‘collective entrepreneurship’ in a region” (p. 149). In this context, Binder and Sautter (2006) are referring to regional clusters as collective entrepreneurs. The development of clusters of entrepreneurial activity is the basis for the next strain of research in collective entrepreneurship to be discussed: clusters and industrial districts.

### **Clusters and Industrial Districts**

Much of the research approaching industrial districts as a collective entrepreneurial phenomenon stems from Best’s (1990) depiction of the “industrial district as collective entrepreneur” (Best, 1990, p. 205; Carney, 1998; Defillippi & Arthur, 1994; Dorman, 1994; Malecki, 2000). Best develops his idea of an industrial district as a collective entrepreneur utilizing the example of North Central Italy. He outlines three traits of collective entrepreneurial industrial districts: (1) no managerial hierarchy, (2) close consultation along the production chain delivering the capacity to redesign processes and products, and (3) satellite firms established with the aid of an existing firm to fill an industry need.

The absence of managerial hierarchy in Best’s description of the collective entrepreneur is consistent with intra-firm models of collective entrepreneurship stressing reliance on flatter organizational structures. Low levels of hierarchy allow individual actors flexibility for timely adaptation in both the inter-firm and the intra-firm contexts. Production networks may allow small, independent firms to develop highly specialized capabilities. At the same time, however, they have the capability as a network to quickly respond to requests for custom products (Lazerson & Lorenzoni, 1999). Trust, reputation and frequent transactions may allow these firms to deliver services to those in the production network that would be otherwise “unavailable through market channels” (Carney, 1998, p. 457).

Best’s recognition of the establishment of satellite firms to aid the overall success of the production network is a trait of the collective entrepreneur that has been referred to by a variety of terms in the literature. This phenomenon has been described as extrapreneurship, swarming, and spawning (Chambers, 2007; Daval, 2002; Johannisson, 2004). In a related set of literature, the term collective entrepreneurship has also been used to describe entrepreneurs who, frustrated by the larger bureaucratic organization with which they are involved, break away to pursue a venture. In these instances the term collective has been used to describe (1) multiple employees or principals choosing to pursue a new profit opportunity outside the bureaucratic organization as well as (2) multiple resource providers instrumental in the establishment of the new firm: inventors, venture capitalists, and managers (Auerswald & Branscomb, 2003; Auerswald & Branscomb, 2008; Chambers, 2007).

While rents generated in clusters or industrial districts are primarily private goods, potential agglomeration economies or positive externalities to the region can be thought of as club goods that reinforce individual actors’ ability to pursue profit opportunities. Innovating regions, discussed in the following pages, are related systems that may tend to produce goods

that are less excludable. Thus, we reserve their discussion for the following section on economic development.

### **Franchise Agreements**

Whether franchising can be considered entrepreneurship depends on several elements of the definition of entrepreneurship. However, a handful of authors classify franchising as a form of collective entrepreneurship between the franchisees and the franchise system (Johannisson, 1998, 2004; Lashley & Morrison, 2000; Mourdoukoutas, 1999). Lashley and Morrison (2000) suggest that the franchisee's role may be more that of an intrapreneur within the franchise system. However, they note that from a system perspective, the endeavor may be best described as collective entrepreneurship. Johannisson (2004) notes franchising as a form of collective entrepreneurship may be more hierarchical in structure than other forms of inter-firm collaboration mentioned in this section. This underscores the importance of attempts such as Moudoukoutas' (1999) to further classify the nature of contractual arrangements governing collective entrepreneurship.

## **MOTIVATION 4: ECONOMIC GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT**

The fourth use of the term collective entrepreneurship identified in this work explores the notion that interactive, collective processes may impact innovation, commercialization, and business development. Critical to the motivation for the study of collective entrepreneurship is the claim that collective entrepreneurship has important ramifications for economic growth and local development. In the context of economic growth, collective endeavors may enhance innovation and adoption processes. In the context of economic development, collective entrepreneurship is seen as a way to reduce barriers to entrepreneurship, promote regional cooperation for global competitiveness, and improve economic opportunities for a particular geographic location. We can broadly define three areas of research in collective entrepreneurship as a growth and development strategy: the structure of technological innovation, innovation alliances, and local development strategies.

### **The Structure of Technological Innovation**

Research on the structure and organization of technological adoption as it relates to entrepreneurship stems from Schumpeter's (1928) assertion that "industrial evolution inspires collective action in order to force improvement on lethargic strata" (p. 377). While recognizing that technological achievements are often made independently or privately, Schumpeter calls attention to the fact that collective action or reorganization within the industry is often necessary to exploit technological advancement. This notion has been further developed to argue that 1) economic expansion and technological adoption rates may increase when entrepreneurship is pursued collectively rather than individually (Wilken, 1979), and 2) more radical innovations may necessitate collective action to achieve adoption and diffusion (Roberts & King, 1996). While Schumpeter uses the example of USDA's role in introducing technology to farmers, Wilken utilizes the example of lagging French development due to reluctance on the part of entrepreneurs to cooperate. The path creation literature also recognizes the collective dimension of the introduction and adoption of technology (Garud & Karnøe, 2001; Sydow, Windeler, & Möllering, 2004).

Van de Ven (2004) argues "technological innovation and economic development are collective achievements" (p. 135). He recognizes the importance of individuals in the

entrepreneurial process, but notes that in the development of new products and emerging industries, “individual firms of entrepreneurs seldom have the resources, power, or legitimacy to produce change alone” (Van de Ven, 2005, p. 365). Manifestations of collective entrepreneurship in industry development may include the development of industry standards or collaboration on complementary innovations that are necessary for commercialization. Van de Ven (2005) suggests successful innovation involves not merely technical improvements, but also the ability to coordinate actors in the commercialization of an innovation (running in packs) and the ability to build a constituency for industry emergence (political savvy). Van de Ven’s notion of collective entrepreneurship in industry development is based on inter-firm coordination among collaborating competitors and production networks. However, collective entrepreneurship has also been used to refer to the State’s role in supporting industry development and innovation (Jonsson, 1994; Mathews, 2005; Silva & Rodrigues, 2005).

In an attempt to better understand innovation and the adoption or commercialization of new technology, authors analyze the structure of collective action, describing collaboration processes and the ways in which collective action promotes technological development. In this literature, it is argued that institutions are often a necessary component of technological progress and innovation adoption. In addition, it is hypothesized that the nature of the institutions utilized in the entrepreneurial process affects innovativeness and the success of commercialization attempts. The effectiveness of these institutions may be related to the nature of the incentive system they engender (Edquist & Johnson, 1997). However, scholars caution the role institutions play in the process of innovation may be overemphasized due to a simple lack of clarity in defining institutions.

Thus, organizations (like firms, universities, state agencies, etc.) and markets are often considered to be institutions, and the concept itself is often used in a very broad way to include routines, habits, taboos, formal law, common law, etc. In other words, almost everything – at least a large part of economic behavior and many types of economic activities and processes – can be subsumed under the concept of institution. No wonder institutions are important! (Edquist & Johnson, 1997, p. 41)

The literature on innovation alliances recognizes this tendency to over-generalize with respect to the importance of institutions and, therefore, shifts the focus to explore the specific institutional actors and types of alliances formed to promote innovation.

### **Innovation Alliances**

The second stream of economic growth and development literature focuses on strategic alliances for research, development, and innovation. Although inter-firm alliances may collaborate to innovate, the present stream of literature looks at innovations that may be characterized as public goods due to low degrees of excludability and rivalry (Figure 4). In other words, some types of innovation and technology can have characteristics that make it difficult for firms to extract the full value of their invention or innovation. For example, basic research and development may be best characterized as a public good (Romer, 1993). Therefore, additional actors may become involved in the innovation process to distribute or mitigate risk, to provide public support for innovation that would be sub-optimally funded in the market, or to reduce information asymmetry (Arrow, 1962; Nelson, 1959; Zeckhauser, 1996). This set of literature differs from the inter-organizational gains literature described above both in 1) the public nature of goods being created and 2) the influence of public entities involved in the collective entrepreneurial processes described (Silva & Rodrigues, 2005).

Insert Figure 4 Here

Even with support for technological innovation, successful research and development does not ensure innovations will be commercialized or financial returns will flow to the innovators (Auerswald & Branscomb, 2008). Therefore, much of the literature on innovation alliances looks to understand how to support research and development, develop mechanisms that encourage commercialization, structure incentives for innovation, and capture residual claims from innovation at the local or national levels.

### ***Research and Development***

Auerswald and Branscomb view collective entrepreneurship as a trust- and reputation-based process by which inventors, managers and financiers bring technology projects to fruition (Auerswald & Branscomb, 2003; Auerswald & Branscomb, 2008). They argue the conversion of basic inventions to market-ready innovations often involves distinct skill sets not often present in a single entrepreneur: technical, financial, managerial. Therefore, they explore a variety of collective mechanisms that assist early-stage technology entrepreneurs in commercial development: venture funds, incubators, “niche law firms, university and government offices of technology transfer, and networks of individual or private equity” (Auerswald & Branscomb, 2003, p. 62) The existence of these mechanisms may attest to the notion that “innovation in all contexts requires a capacity of collective entrepreneurship” (Auerswald & Branscomb, 2003, p. 91).

Etzkowitz (2003) turns our attention to the importance of the entrepreneurial university in the innovation process. He argues research centers operating within universities exhibit firm-like qualities. The outgrowth of their research is often a cluster of firms with close ties to the university. As such, the university is seen as the collective entrepreneur in Etzkowitz’ model. Etzkowitz does not use the term collective entrepreneurship necessarily to refer to multiple individuals engaged in entrepreneurial activity. Instead, he views the collective entrepreneur as a group or organization that undertakes an entrepreneurial initiative. In subsequent work, Etzkowitz and Klofsten (2005) extend the collective entrepreneur to other regional innovation organizers that initiate both economic and social development.

### ***Regional Innovation Systems***

The regional innovation systems literature discusses the role public and private entities play in supporting innovation (Cooke, 2006). Researchers’ interest in the regional meta-level of analysis stems from recognition that innovation, competitiveness, and entrepreneurship may be affected certain variables unique to the regional environment. This perspective generates an interest in developing appropriate intermediary organizations to foster innovation at the regional level. This line of research is particularly interested in alternative production systems that evolve as countries transition from predominately national, industrial economies to global, knowledge economies. Collective, interactive learning is seen as a critical component of knowledge economies and innovation systems (Lundvall, 1992).

Much of the research investigating the importance of collective learning processes for research and development has stemmed from the experiences of Nordic economies (Jonsson, 1994; Jonsson, 1995; Lundvall, 1992; Wolfe, 1997). Collective entrepreneurial activities are often categorized according to the specific combination of actors involved: individuals, firms, social movements, organized interests, or government institutions (Jonsson, 1995). Researchers indicate smaller, national economies may have greater incentives to pursue collective

entrepreneurial strategies due to capital accumulation constraints, the small size of the home market, the necessity to cooperate to enter the global economy, and a degree of place attachment that simulates collective action (Fløysand & Lindkvist, 2001; Jonsson, 1994).

### **Economic Development Strategies**

The final set of literature utilizing the term collective entrepreneurship from the perspective of economic growth and development maintains a focus on the public nature of goods created. However, this literature does not aim to understand how collective action facilitates technology research, development, and innovation. Instead, it investigates how collective action supports local economic development, micro-preneurs, and entrepreneurship among ethnic groups or minorities. There is decidedly less emphasis on technological advancement as this growth strategy is associated with a higher degree of risk. The literature addressing collective entrepreneurship as a means of economic development considers intervention mechanisms to stimulate entrepreneurship among marginalized groups and self-organizing mechanisms utilized among entrepreneurial groups. Mechanisms to foster entrepreneurship may include micro-credit, incubators, and group guarantees. Also explored are self-organizing mechanisms related to cultural norms, strong kinship networks and a desire for self-sufficiency among a certain economic subgroup (Frederick & Henry, 2004; Gordon Nembhard, 2008; Sachs, 2004; Stokes, 1974).

#### ***Fostering Entrepreneurship for Economic Development***

We found several uses of the term collective entrepreneurship to refer to strategies for reducing entry barriers to entrepreneurship for small-scale producers, minorities, or marginalized groups. Resource-poor entrepreneurs have an incentive to act collectively in order to attain common goals in their economic interest. The bulk of this literature utilizes some measure of exogenous intervention to catalyze collective entrepreneurial action. Practical examples of exogenous intervention from the collective entrepreneurship literature include marketing and supply cooperatives, incubators targeted to promote business creation among a certain cultural group, and group lending associations that issue micro-loans to “solidarity” groups jointly responsible for repayment (Piturro, 1997, p. 37; Sachs, 2004; Stokes, 1974). The organization of supply and marketing cooperatives as well as credit associations may be forms of bottom-up collective entrepreneurship in certain instances. However, in the context of the developing world, cooperative and credit associations have largely been the result of top-down initiatives led by donors or government.

Township and Village Enterprise development in China has also entered the discussion of collective entrepreneurship. However, there does not seem to be consensus among scholars as to what characteristics of the organization or process constitute collective entrepreneurship. For example, certain authors use the term collective entrepreneurship to refer to the active role of the local government in fostering entrepreneurship (Pieke, 2004) while others reserve the term collective entrepreneurship for ventures that began as an outgrowth of a process of collective ideation at the village or production team level (Byrd, 1990). Finally, a subset of authors designate entrepreneurship as collective when collectively-owned assets are employed in industrial enterprises (Clarke, 1999; Clarke & Yuxing, 1998).

#### ***Boosterism***

In the 1800's and early 1900's, boosterism was a popular approach to local, urban and industrial development in the United States. Scholars have cited community efforts in the

enterprise of city building as another example of collective entrepreneurship (Abbott, 1975, 1981; Doyle, 1990; Kenzer, 1991). Through advertising and the planning of elaborate expositions or fairs, city leaders, local businessmen, and the press all worked to attract residents and businesses to their towns. Abbott (1975) notes the “success of many entrepreneurs in land, banking, commerce, and transportation was so closely linked to the prosperity of their city that they came to identify their personal fortunes with its growth” (p. 183). Similar recognition of communities of common fate is a recurrent theme in the literature on collective entrepreneurship and industrial development (Mourdoukoutas, 1999).

Boosterism has been suggested as an example of collective entrepreneurship because the strategy involved joint opportunity identification and joint investment by multiple individuals to further common economic goals. Boosters shared information about the size of their market and potential economic opportunities for the city. Successful boosters were able to define “a coherent economic program to be carried out by public and private action” (Abbott, 1981, p. 4). While individual entrepreneurship was essential to developing the local economy, boosters recognized they must make a concerted effort to coordinate their efforts as “rival cities contested for trade, industry, investors, and entrepreneurial talent” (Doyle, 1990, p. 20).

Boosters relied on inter-firm alliances to build the local economy, but they also relied on numerous other actors including city government, voluntary business associations, and local clergy. In fact, they relied heavily on the media to promote their plans for industrial growth. Therefore, it would be difficult to narrowly classify boosterism as inter-firm collaboration. As Doyle (1990) notes, “city boosting subordinated the pursuit of self-aggrandizement to the collective task of city building and demanded organized rather than individual entrepreneurship” (p. 136). The practice was competitive, however, in that it sought to proclaim the superiority of local economic opportunities, thus attracting businesses away from rival cities.

### ***Ethnic Entrepreneurship***

The term collective entrepreneurship has also been used to describe various forms of entrepreneurial activity among ethnic groups. Several researchers discuss the notion that collective entrepreneurial strategies represent a method of achieving self-sufficiency and economic independence for minority groups (Djennadi, 2006; Fass, 1986; Gordon Nembhard, 2008). Individually, minorities may not have access to credit or be motivated to pursue entrepreneurial endeavors due to feelings of disenfranchisement and alienation (Frederick & Henry, 2004). Social movements or action for the collective good may be an attractive motivator for ethnic groups to overcome these obstacles to entrepreneurship.

Gordon Nembhard (2008) suggests the ideology of economic liberation and the strategy of collective entrepreneurship were integral parts of the civil rights movement in the United States. Civil rights activists were able to establish a variety of cooperative businesses that promoted empowerment. Visionaries sought to develop a network of cooperative businesses owned by African-Americans. Thus, she argues we must reintroduce the notion of collective entrepreneurship to students as an alternative to individual entrepreneurship. Structures for collective entrepreneurship could include “worker, producer and consumer cooperatives; community land trusts; ... and other forms of worker ownership and self-management” (p. 773).

The literature on ethnic entrepreneurship suggests ethnic groups may be at an advantage in that they already possess some of the attributes that lead to successful collective entrepreneurship: a shared sense of common fate, a concern for the well-being of the collective, a predisposition for assuming personal responsibility for group products, and the communication channels and organizational structure to pull together in times of crisis (Fass, 1986; Frederick &

Henry, 2004; Mourdoukoutas, 1999; Stokes, 1974). On the other hand, there is evidence collectivist traits may thwart entrepreneurship. Ethnic entrepreneurship may encounter additional obstacles due to cultural backgrounds that suggest entrepreneurs (1) may need to gain approval of the wider community before undertaking initiatives, (2) are expected to freely give products and services to a large network of extended relatives rather than charging them, (3) adhere to a culture that does not view wealth creation as a priority, and (4) may be pressured to engage in nepotism (Frederick & Henry, 2004; Poirine, 1995).

Policies implemented to foster entrepreneurship may not translate well into various cultural contexts. Therefore, researchers and policymakers may need to explicitly address the benefits they wish to pursue through entrepreneurship policy. Considering the unique needs of entrepreneurs from a collectivist culture may challenge researchers and policymakers to explore alternative business models and financing mechanisms to support entrepreneurial endeavors in a variety of contexts.

Frederick and Henry (2003) suggest an alternative economic ideal of entrepreneurship may be the “achievement of wealth for the good of the community through co-operative enterprise” (p. 133). The stumbling block, of course, leads us back to the collective enterprise researchers who question how to achieve high levels of intra-firm motivation and innovation when there is a lack of clarity regarding the distribution of residual claims among community stakeholders (Horvat, 1964; Zupanov, 1975). This is the familiar collective action quandary that faces ethnic community entrepreneurship.

## **MOTIVATION 5: SOCIO-POLITICAL CHANGE**

The last category of research in collective entrepreneurship uses the term to refer to initiatives to affect change with respect to regional and local development, public policy, and social or cultural norms. At first glance, much of the work in local or regional development bears resemblance to discussions of economic development. However, the entrepreneurs considered are not categorized as having primarily economic objectives. While economic profit is not entirely excluded from these models, modes of development are subject to the maintenance or advancement of social, cultural, and political values. Researchers exploring collective entrepreneurship as a form of socio-political change are referring to entrepreneurial activity that integrates economic, social, cultural, and political goals (Bataille-Chetodel & Huntzinger, 2004; Chouinard & Forgues, 2002; Connell, 1999). In order to highlight the distinction between authors who focus solely on economic development and those who broaden the notion of development to include social, cultural and political factors, we have included this literature as a separate section. This conforms well to the practice of utilizing the term social entrepreneurship in reference to many of the entrepreneurial processes discussed below. Practical examples of collective entrepreneurship in the social economy literature include voluntary organizations, non-profit organizations, cooperatives, foundations, public interest groups, and social movements (Spaey, 2004).

### **Regional and Local Development**

Research in the area of regional and local development explores the notion of collective or community entrepreneurship. Many of the investigations into collective entrepreneurship focusing on regional and local development stem from initiatives and policies to support the social economy (Graefe, 2006; Laville, 2003; O'Neill, 1994; Spear, 2000). The term social economy is fraught with as many different interpretations and debates as the term collective

entrepreneurship (Mendell, 2003). Therefore, we do not wish to delve into this debate. Rather, we introduce the notion of the social economy given the close relationship between social economy and collective entrepreneurship in many contexts. By understanding what researchers refer to as the social economy, we begin to recognize additional criteria utilized to distinguish between individual and collective entrepreneurship. Fundamental to social economists' view of collective entrepreneurship is the subordination of the profit motive, governmental autonomy, and democratic governance. The following excerpt from the Chantier de l'Économie succinctly recognizes these criteria.

As a whole, the social economy refers to the set of activities and organizations stemming from collective entrepreneurship, organized around the following principles and operative rules: 1) the purpose of a social economy enterprise is to serve its members or the community rather than to simply make profits; 2) it operates at arm's length from the state; 3) it promotes a democratic management process involving all users and/or workers through its statutes and the way it does business; 4) it defends the primacy of individuals and work over capital in the distribution of its surpluses and revenues; 5) it bases its activities on the principles of participation and individual and collective empowerment. The social economy therefore encompasses all cooperative and mutual movements and associations. The social economy can be developed in all sectors that meet the needs of the people and the community. (Chantier de l'Économie Sociale, 2005, p. 17)

In addition to democratic worker governance, the literature on collective entrepreneurship within the context of the social economy includes the "development of community initiatives taking the enterprise form" (Graefe, 2006, p. 206; Laville, 2003; Lévesque, 2002; Rodrigues & Malo, 2006). Thus, several researchers specify certain conditions with respect to actors, participation, and entrepreneurial goal when defining collective entrepreneurship (Ben Hafaïedh, 2006a; Spaey, 2004)<sup>7</sup>. In other words, in addition to using the term collective refer to multiple actors, we find authors often use the term collective entrepreneurship to signify varying degrees of democratic, participatory governance practices and the establishment of entrepreneurial goals that serve community interests. Chouinard and Forgues (2002) suggest entrepreneurship may occur on a continuum from "private entrepreneurship that first and foremost satisfies the needs of the owners, to collective entrepreneurship geared towards serving the association of workers and the community's interests" (p. 79).

### **Public Policy Change**

Authors interested in collective action that seeks to affect change on local, state, national, or international policy often utilize various terms for specific subcategories of collective entrepreneurship such as public entrepreneurship, political entrepreneurship, policy entrepreneurship, epistemic communities, or supranational entrepreneurship (Connell, 1999; Johannisson, 2004; Roberts & King, 1996; Zito, 2001). These inquiries into collective entrepreneurship attempt to identify the process individuals engage in when attempting to obtain a collective good through policy change (Olson, 1965). Networked individuals engaged in collective entrepreneurship are seen as critical to policy innovation<sup>8</sup> (Casamayou, 2001; Christopoulos, 2001; Schreurs & Tiberghien, 2007).

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<sup>7</sup> For additional perspectives on intra-firm entrepreneurship, inter-firm entrepreneurship and collective entrepreneurship in the social economy, see (Ben Hafaïedh, 2006a)

<sup>8</sup> Casamayou (2001) uses the term collective entrepreneurialism.

Roberts (2006) suggests collective entrepreneurship may have several advantages over individual entrepreneurship including the ability of multiple entrepreneurs to lend diverse skill sets, extended organizational and personal networks, and increased legitimacy. Each of these advantages serves to develop a larger coalition base to overcome resistance to innovation or reform (Roberts, 1992, 2006; Roberts & King, 1996). Disadvantages cited to collective entrepreneurship include the additional effort and time required to develop strategies to satisfy heterogeneous preferences in priorities, ideology, and pace of policy change.

In her research, Roberts (2006) identifies two distinct types of collective entrepreneurship: team and functional. Team entrepreneurship is described as multiple entrepreneurs who work together through all stages of the innovation process. Functional entrepreneurship more closely resembles a process by which a series of specialists lend support to a cause at different junctures resulting in innovation. Interestingly enough, functional specialists who support the implementation of measures necessary to policy innovation may not see themselves as entrepreneurs. Therefore, it may be “*entirely possible*” to have collective “entrepreneurship without entrepreneurs” (Roberts & King, 1996, p. 179)

### **Advancement of Social Aims**

There is an additional stream of literature that seeks to understand how collective entrepreneurship may be used as a tool to advance social aims. Furthering cultural and behavioral values, advancing the status of an underprivileged or marginalized group, or challenging the status quo are examples of the non-economic goods collective entrepreneurs provide when we consider socio-political change.

Flanagin et al. (2006) consider a variety of social movements and activism groups from political campaigns to protest groups and local clubs. These forms of collective action are analyzed by their mode of engagement: from institutional to entrepreneurial. Collective action that is predominately institutional is characterized by hierarchical structures that define and control the action. Thus, individuals are left with little opportunity or responsibility to undertake collective action in the name of the institution. The authors see collective entrepreneurship as a mode of engagement on the opposite end of the spectrum from institutional engagement. Collective entrepreneurship is described as a mode of engagement in which members of the collective operate with a high degree of autonomy and “may design collective action in ways that are not sanctioned or controlled by a central authority” (p. 37). Thus, collective entrepreneurship would entail higher levels of responsibility and a greater emphasis on opportunity recognition at the level of the individual than would institutional modes of engagement.

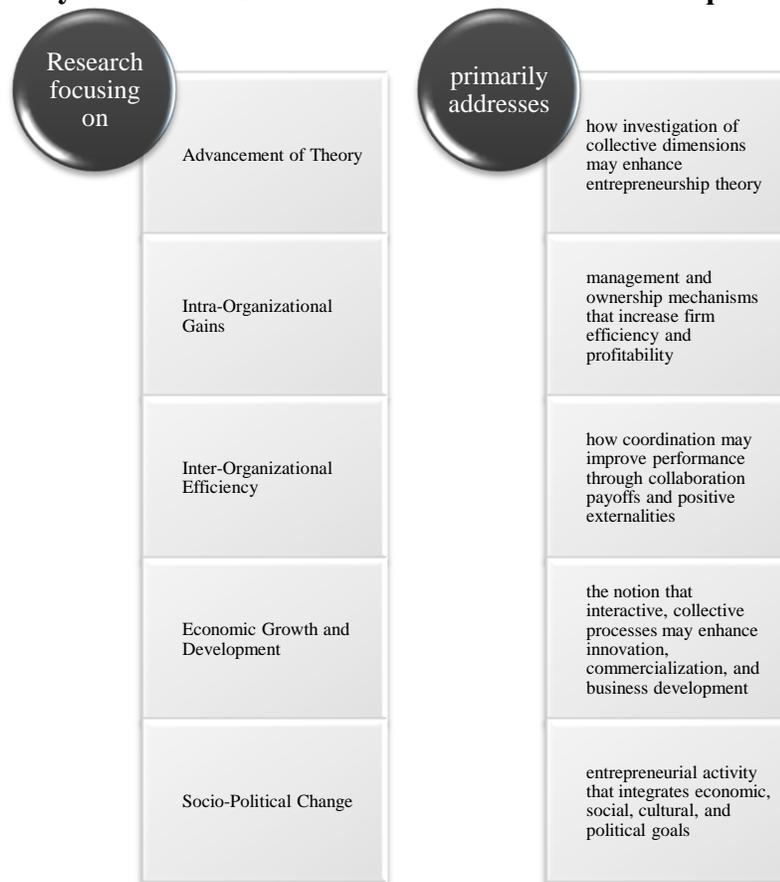
While social activism on a number of fronts has been labeled collective entrepreneurship, works investigating environmental activism were especially apt to use the term (de Bruin & Lewis, 2005; Gliedt & Parker, 2007 ). Lounsbury’s (1998) investigation of cooperation among college and university recycling coordinators popularized the use of the term collective entrepreneurship in the green entrepreneurship and eco-preneurship literature. Lounsbury found as universities began to hire full-time recycling coordinators these positions were often housed in the physical plant at the university. A difference in culture between physical plant workers and ecological activists led to a sense of social marginality among recycling coordinators. However, these coordinators were able to network with individuals in similar roles across institutions and to “construct a new occupational identity and mobilize resources to increase the status of (“professionalize”) their occupation” (para. 16). Lounsbury identifies a unique form of collective entrepreneurship: a network of employees across organizations.

Entrepreneurship undertaken to advance regional or local development, public policy change, and the advancement of social aims may gain be best described as forms of social entrepreneurship. However, the use of the term collective is pervasive due to the notions 1) that the majority of these changes can not take place due to the efforts of a single individual and 2) that radical social and policy innovations may necessitate even greater levels of coordination (Roberts & King, 1996).

## CONCLUSIONS

Entrepreneurship literature is currently experiencing an increase in the number of researchers considering the notion of collective entrepreneurship. Distinct uses of the term have evolved, however (Figure 5). A broad overview of the collective entrepreneurship literature allows the casual observer to notice distinct uses of the term collective entrepreneurship as they evolved regionally. We find, for example, that Scandinavian countries primarily use the term to describe government support of technology innovation, whereas many French authors use collective entrepreneurship to refer to labor-owned firms and egalitarian governance. Canadian sources generally utilize collective entrepreneurship to refer to a specific form of development—one that is equally focused on the advancement of social, political, cultural and economic aims.

**Figure 5. Summary of Distinct Uses of the Term “Collective Entrepreneurship”**



How we define collective entrepreneurship dramatically changes our assessment as to the rarity of the phenomenon, the goals that can be achieved through a collective entrepreneurial strategy, and to what extent policy should support collective versus sole entrepreneurship. If our definition of collective entrepreneurship includes all instances of credit or financial institutions backing sole entrepreneurs, then certainly entrepreneurship is an overwhelmingly collective phenomenon. On the other hand, if we view collective entrepreneurship specifically as an outgrowth of collectivism, one may consider the term itself to become an oxymoron given collectivistic cultures are defined as those attempting to maintain the status quo as opposed to inciting innovation. Certainly, a wide variety of definitions are plausible. However, not all definitions are equally useful for advancing the study of entrepreneurship. How we choose to differentiate among the various forms of collective entrepreneurship presented will depend upon researchers' and practitioners' views regarding the ultimate gains being sought from entrepreneurship—whether they be innovation, economic growth, regional development, or socio-political change.

We have sought to clarify what is meant by the term “collective entrepreneurship” in various contexts without sacrificing the diversity of concepts analyzed by researchers and practitioners. However, effective communication is hindered by persistent variations in use of the term collective entrepreneurship without attempts to define the concept being addressed. Our review of the literature suggests without further clarification researchers may miss the opportunity to develop complementary avenues of investigation.

More specifically, it seems all categories of collective entrepreneurship may benefit from further investigation into the economic nature of goods created as a result of the entrepreneurial process, as the nature of these goods holds important ramifications for resource management and distribution of claims (Hess & Ostrom, 2001). Across categories, collective entrepreneurship seems to require researchers to address unique considerations as to the most effective mechanisms for 1) motivating individuals to act in the interest of a group, 2) developing the notion of a collective fate among stakeholders, and 3) maintaining structures that organize individual entrepreneurial activity without succumbing to the rigidity of hierarchy.

Current publication trends suggest scholar and practitioner interest in collective entrepreneurship will continue to increase. Critical to the development of entrepreneurship theory is an investigation of collective entrepreneurship as a distinct subset as described in the section on theory advancement. Given the insights drawn from Olson's (1965) work, we can not assume that incentives and mechanisms that foster individual entrepreneurship will stimulate collective entrepreneurship. In the same manner, we can not assume the outcomes of individual entrepreneurship will mirror the outcomes of collective entrepreneurship in terms of economic growth, innovation, and social development. In subsequent work, we plan to explore the implications of Olson's premise for entrepreneurship in greater detail.

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