Introduction

In the parade of ideas, concepts seldom march alone.
(Joseph Gusfield, 1975, p. 1)

Wherever one looks within the field of leadership studies, whether as a student or a scholar, you cannot ignore the numerous calls for the inclusion of a better appreciation of context (for example, Jepson, 2009; Osborn and Marion, 2009; Osborn et al., 2002; Porter and McLaughlin, 2006). However, the number of real in-depth considerations of leadership in context that are available in the literature remains limited. This book infers that taking a community perspective on leadership will help to develop a contextually driven focus on the subject. I have previously started a conversation around the idea of community in developing ideas about distributed leadership (Edwards, 2011) and worldly leadership (Edwards, 2012). Working within these areas, it becomes very apparent that leadership is discussed, theorized and researched largely from a Westernized and individualized perspective. Herein, I reflect on papers such as Knights and O’Leary’s (2006) consideration of ethical leadership, where leadership theory is criticized for being too focused upon the individual. Similarly, Bolden and Gosling (2006), propose that the literature on leadership and, in particular, on leadership development is based too much on competencies that pushes towards individualistic interpretations of leadership. In response, they argue that a more relational perspective is needed. During the development of this book the notion of relational leadership consistently emerges as a core theme. To this end the book reiterates those that have developed theory and empirical reflections within this field (for example, Cunliffe and Eriksen, 2011; Uhl-Bien, 2006).

Yet, a propensity towards focusing on the individual leader and the dominance of Western ideas on leadership are issues that still pervade the leadership literature. It is in response to these issues that I have attempted to develop themes on leadership from a community perspective. This book therefore is not concerned
necessarily with ‘community leadership’ in the sense of leading community projects per se, but concerned more with how theories and frameworks for understanding community can help develop our understanding of leadership. Indeed, as you might expect, the community literature picks up on the march of individualism powered by industrial capitalism and cited by numerous writers since the mid-nineteenth century including Karl Marx (for example, Marx and Engels, 1848), Henry Maine (for example, Maine, 1871), Herbert Spencer (for example, Spencer 1858) and Emile Durkheim (for example, Durkheim 1897), among others, eventually settling with Ferdinand Tönnies’s (1887) dichotomy of Gemeinschaft [community] and Gesellschaft [society] (Gusfield, 1975). From Tönnies’s perspective, society differs from community by way of deliberately formed associations for the achievement of mutual goals, such as corporations, political parties and economic contracts (society) and those naturally developing that have intrinsic and non-logical values, such as friendship, neighbourhood and kinship (community) (Gusfield, 1975). These notions have created a society-community dualism in the literature (Gusfield, 1975; Kanter, 1972). It is the contention of this book that ideas of leadership, since the early twentieth century, have been for too long bounded by ideas of Gesellschaft and that we need to reflect back upon constructions of leadership based on Gemeinschaft. In leadership terms, we have been obsessed with individualized authority leaving little space for a more emergent social phenomenon. In addition, the literature on leadership appears too obsessed with ‘assuming leadership’ (using managerial and political positions in organizations and society as a proxy for leadership) (Ahonen et al., 2012) and not enough focused on exploring how leadership is constructed through social engagement. Although the tide seems to be turning with regards to the development of social constructionist perspectives on leadership (for example, Grint, 2005a; Grint and Jackson, 2010), it is the purpose of this book to provide a complementary perspective to ideas of social construction based on a review of the community literature. Also, through this book, I hope to provide suggestions for researching leadership in more anthropological and cultural terms (for example, Edwards, forthcoming) that will enable latent ideals and lost voices of leadership, which are less defined by Westernized thought, theory and empiricism, to be discovered or rediscovered. To

From these reflections, ideas of how leadership can be conceptualized from a community perspective are developed. Some pieces of literature are drawn on in numerous areas in this book, such as Gusfield’s work, while other writers, such as Lichterman, attract specific reference in certain areas of the book only – in Lichterman’s case around areas of individualism and community. I have also discovered that while some pieces of literature promote ideas of communitarianism (for example, Etzioni, 1993), others are more sceptical and critical and therefore provide a more balanced viewpoint of community (for example, Gusfield, 1975). Hopefully I equally provide a balanced view that uncovers the inherently critical aspects of taking a community view of leadership.

In the remainder of this introduction I shall explore in greater depth the purpose of this book based on a response, as proposed above, to criticisms regarding the individualized and Westernized focus of leadership studies and research. This response particularly draws on the two perspectives of leadership that have inspired the focus of this book – distributed leadership and worldliness. I shall start by summarizing these themes and explaining the link to community.

DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP: MOVING AWAY FROM INDIVIDUALISM

‘Leadership’ is a concept we often resist. It seems immodest even self-aggrandising, to think of ourselves as leaders. But if it is true that we are made for community, then leadership is everyone’s vocation, and it can be an evasion to insist that it is not. When we live in the close-knit
I saw this quote recently when attending a conference keynote presentation by Professor Susan Madsen of Utah Valley University in the US. The quote intrigued me as it seemed to reflect some level of focus for this book. It mentions the importance of community when discussing leadership. It also mentions a critical resistance of the subject of leadership, which interests me as a leadership scholar. And last, it infers distributed leadership as an integral notion linked to ideas and the enactment of community. Within this last sentence, however, there is the inherent problem that my students often level at me when discussing distributed leadership – if everyone is leading, who is following? I remind them at this stage, as the quote alludes to above, that we must see distributed leadership in a fluid frame and from that sense everyone may be leading, but not necessarily at the same time nor for the same reasons. Similarly, everyone is following, but not necessarily at the same time nor for the same reasons. This, I believe, gives a good account of how distributed leadership may be conceptualized and enacted in a community setting.

Distributed leadership, as a concept, has had a high regard recently in the contemporary literature, with key contributions particularly by Peter Gronn (2002, 2008, 2009a, 2009b), Alma Harris (2004, 2008, 2009a, 2009b) and James Spillane (2006). Some earlier work on leadership as process by Diane Marie Hosking (1988, 2007) also contributes to this field. Reviews of the distributed field can be found in a recent journal special issue (see Bolden, 2011; Thorpe et al., 2011) and I will not replicate these here, but instead provide brief discussions of key aspects of the distributed approach.

Gronn (2009b), for instance, describes the idea of distributed leadership as a rallying point for those commentators searching for ‘post heroic’ leadership alternatives. While Gronn’s work underscored a refocus on the topic of distributed leadership, the concept is not new and stems from writings by Benne and Sheats (1948) and Gibb (1954). Other recent publications (Edwards, forthcoming; Sveiby, 2011) also point to evidence of concepts akin to distributed leadership going back further into indigenous community history. What we are witnessing in modern times may be better described as a renaissance of the idea of distributed or collective leadership in current Western societies. Having said this, though, further
developments in this area could be initiated in at least two ways. These avenues of development are lined by the need for a wider recognition of distributed leadership from a contextually driven way across differing organizations (Currie et al., 2009; Gosling et al., 2009; Gronn, 2009a; Spillane and Diamond, 2007). For example, the mainstay of the literature regarding distributed leadership appears to have a heavy emphasis on the education sector (for example, Currie et al., 2009; Gosling et al., 2009; Harris, 2008, 2009a; Leithwood et al., 2009; Spillane, 2006; Thurston and Clift, 1996). The relevance to other forms of organization, especially in the private sector, therefore remains a contested area and up for discussion and empirical investigation. There is a need therefore to understand how leadership might be distributed across differing forms of organization, based on structure and context. Discussion of the literature around community, I hope, will help develop themes along these lines.

Second, recent discussions regarding distributed leadership have intimated towards the concept being based on notions of emergent leadership. For instance, Bolden and colleagues (2008, p. 11) have commented that the collective approach to leadership ‘argues for a less formalized model of leadership where leadership responsibility is dissociated from the organizational hierarchy. It is proposed that individuals at all levels in the organization and in all roles can exert leadership influence over their colleagues and thus influence the overall direction of the organization.’ However, in a later paper by the same authors (Gosling et al., 2009), they suggest that there is a need to recognize social, political and power relations within organizations when discussing and researching distributed or collective leadership. This implies that there is a need to understand distributed leadership from within organizational context and culture. Indeed, Spillane and Diamond (2007) advise that distributed leadership is a function between leaders, followers and their situation, they go on to recommend that this is heavily influenced by organizational structure and setting. Exploration outside the context of the education sector and within differing organizational settings therefore is paramount. However, as this book explores, this could be further elaborated at the societal level by exploring notions of community. Linking distributed leadership to societal context resonates with a second area of the literature that seems relevant here: worldliness and leadership.
WORLDLY LEADERSHIP: MOVING AWAY FROM WESTERN THINKING

The worldly concept builds on the literature concerning the ‘worldly mindset’ and ‘worldliness’ (Mintzberg, 2004; Mintzberg and Gosling, 2003). ‘Worldliness’ according to Mintzberg (2004) is quite different to the idea of globalization in that it involves taking a closer look as opposed to a distant look at the world. Turnbull (2009) advocates an alternative view to ‘global leadership’ is needed owing to four limitations that have been identified, (1) global leadership is often shorthand for Western managers overseas; (2) defining a set of universal traits for leadership is impossible; (3) leadership is contextually driven; and (4) leadership can be seen as a dynamic social process (Turnbull, 2009). The worldly leadership concept addresses these shortcomings and has been defined as ‘seeing all kinds of different worlds (often worlds within worlds) from close up and taking action . . .’ (Turnbull, 2009, p. 91). From this literature there has been a push to develop an understanding of leadership in indigenous cultures (Turnbull et al., 2012). This book contends that this push towards studying leadership in indigenous cultures has been without an exploration of the knowledge that may already exist from understanding how communities work and how they can be conceptualized (see Edwards, forthcoming). While this book is not directly in the vein of ideas of leadership and worldliness, it does provide some basis for developing research and thinking in the area through a better understanding of how one might interact with communities and hence of leadership constructed in differing social settings.

WHAT IS COMMUNITY?

While the book will draw out the extensive and varied responses to this question in the main part of the book, it is important to note here some of the reflections from the literature that push towards a generic understanding of the concept. For instance, Michael Taylor suggests that community is a ‘horribly open-textured concept’ (1982, p. 2) going on to describe the many ways the term is used from communities in villages, towns and cities to monastic and utopian communities and intentional communities through to ideas such as the ‘academic community’ or the ‘business community’. Owing to
this variety of uses for the concept it is difficult to imagine an overall
definition of the concept, something we hear over and again in the
leadership literature. Taylor, however, does make reference to some
core characteristics in communities: (1) common beliefs and values;
(2) relations between members should be direct and many-sided; and
(3) reciprocity, in the sense of mutual aid, cooperation and sharing.
Taylor also describes links between community and fraternity,
friendship and sense of belonging (concepts discussed in more detail
later in the book). He also puts forward the notion that liberty is
only possible in community. While Taylor’s work sets out quite
neatly the idea of community, one may contest his conclusions for
being too idealistic and that communities may be made up of people,
for instance, with slightly differing beliefs and values.

Another author who encapsulates ideas of community is John
MacMurray (1996), whose comments on community give some level
of introduction to the concept. MacMurray appears adamant that
community is the normal state for human beings and that we can
only be human in community and community constitutes individual
personality. Still, MacMurray suggests that community cannot be
brought about by organization as it is not functional but organic. He
defines community as a group of individuals united in common life
and acting together in communion – a unity of persons as persons.
He points out, with regard to this last point, that community
assumes individuals are independent and self-contained with the
sharing of one’s life a matter of personal choice. Community, he goes
on to say, is constituted and maintained by mutual affection, not
formalized functions. The structure of community is the ‘network
of the active relations of friendship between all possible pairs of its
members’ (1996, p. 166).

While these comments give the reader an introduction to the
concept they also exemplify some of the critical issues presented
back to the reader later in this book, one critical issue being the
positivity of the concept of community – that it is inherently a good
thing. This is a perspective we might need to challenge given the level
of exclusivity that communities can create. Although MacMurray
(1996, pp. 167–8) does touch on this in his writing around the time
of the Second World War, the positive discourse associated with
community is pervasive and this will be challenged at stages in this
book. But at this stage and in light of the discussion provided earlier
in this introduction, it is important to stress the similarity of these
issues with community and the concept of leadership, in the sense that leadership has been argued to be romanticized (Meindl, 1995; Meindl et al., 1985) and is seen as an inherently positive concept (Collinson, 2012). This connectivity is the central spine of this book and it is hoped that by exploring this central spine, the book may provide impetus for future exploration of concepts relating to community in the field of leadership studies.

A GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK

When reading through the literature on the subject of community it becomes quite clear that there are similarities in the issues, problems and perspectives to those highlighted in the leadership literature. For example, in Joseph Gusfield’s (1975) concise discussion on community he accentuates, in the introduction, the ambiguity of the concept of community and its exclusive split in terms of being geographical (using geographical locations to study community – for example, urban, village, neighbourhood and so on) and relational (the quality or character of human relationships). Ambiguity has been an ongoing issue in the leadership field, where scholars for decades have been waxing lyrical with regards to the non-definition of the term (for example, Bass and Stogdill, 1990; Burns, 1978). Empathy can be held with Gusfield’s view on definition of community in respect to leadership and community, or leadership as community, in that he does not offer a definition, as to do so would limit the value to students and readers, because, as Gusfield (1975, p. xvii) states:

... concepts are best understood by seeing how they are used, by examining their historical developments, by showing their contrasting concepts and even by criticizing their claims and uses.

It is hoped that this book will provide some basis for understanding the use of the concept leadership in modern society while examining historical developments and even criticizing various claims about leadership found in contemporary society. This will be done through an exploration of perspectives of community.

The book therefore looks at a variety of differing approaches to community and explores what, if anything, these perspectives can provide us with in our understanding of leadership. These
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perspectives include a fresh look at the link between individualism and leadership in Chapter 1, a reflection on the role of leadership in developing a sense of belonging in Chapter 2, a further look at friendship, social networks and leadership in Chapter 3. In Chapter 4, the book explores the role of symbolism and aesthetics in leadership and Chapter 5 draws on ideas of liminality and social drama to discuss how they may have an impact on leadership and leadership development. Chapter 6 relates to ideas of community as communicative and discusses elements of language and ethics. Chapter 7 takes a slightly more postmodern and critical perspective and looks at issues of discourse, fluidity, finitude, love and death. Last, the concluding chapter highlights the main themes emerging throughout the book and discusses these in light of leadership learning and development and future research agendas.