

# **Community and Leadership: The Role of Humility, Rhythm, and Experiential Learning**

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*This qualitative ethnographic study explored student learning in relation to community and leadership through experiential learning at a Benedictine Monastery. As part of an elective Leadership and Community course, graduate students engaged in an intensive onsite experience of learning and participating in the monastic tradition. Student reflection papers and interviews with the course instructor contributed to themes and categories that represented gained competencies and student learning. Findings showed that humility, organizational rhythm, and experiential learning greatly enhanced individual learning, which together contributed to the development and sustainability of community. Findings also indicated that non-individualistic leadership may contribute to community and continued individual growth. Set firmly within the context of community, this paper presents emerging constructs and discusses implications for both practitioners and scholars.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

A central tenet of leadership is that leading does not occur in isolation but rather by being in relationship with those being led. This collective bond is commonly referred to as *community* (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). The concept of leadership began to emerge with the works of Lewin, Lippitt, and White (1939), and, shortly thereafter, Stogdill (1948). Their works comprised the early genesis of leadership studies. However, the term *leadership* was not coined or used until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, and it was not until late in the 20<sup>th</sup> century that leadership theory started to use the ‘non-individualized’ concepts of collaborative, collective, and shared leadership—the very terminology of community.

Similar to leadership literature, education literature expanded late in the 20<sup>th</sup> century with a greater acceptance of the social sciences. Specifically, it was Palmer (1997/2007) who first coined the phrase *authentic community* and our understanding of community has been greatly influenced by an area within education literature known as *experiential learning*. Although Kolb (1984) credits most of his work to concepts from the writings of Dewey (1938), Kolb is considered the founding father of *experiential learning theory* (ELT). While there are critics of ELT (Freedman & Stumpf, 1980; Miettinen, 1998; and

Piaget, 1973), most authors suggest modifications to the model as opposed to developing an entirely new paradigm. Kolb's theory rests on key assumptions that suggest—for the student—learning is a dialectic process that occurs within a group or community in which his/her past and current experiences, new knowledge, and understanding, when fittingly combined, result in personal transcendence.

Over time, these two relatively new areas of social research—leadership and education—have merged and have caused the demarcation between education literature and leadership literature to become less distinct. The common element between them—community—has begun to weave these two areas of social research together. Yet, within both leadership and education literature, there is little dialogue on what defines community or the elements needed for the contemporary organization to attain and maintain community. Consequently, any research that improves our understanding and appreciation of community is worthy of review.

The Monks of Saint Benedict have practiced community for over 1,500 years under the guidance of *The Rule of Saint Benedict*, or more commonly known as *The Rule*. The Rule has played an important role in guiding these monks to live in community and their experience provides us with a rich history of leadership and teaching within the context of community. As a result, a graduate leadership program in the US Northwest offers an elective, experiential course entitled “Leadership and Community”, held on-site at St. Andrew's Abbey, a Benedictine Monastery in California. This course enables students to study, participate, and experience leadership/followership and community, as practiced by the Monks of Saint Benedict. The curriculum of the course focuses on The Rule in its historical, theoretical, and experiential contexts. Students learn, not only about The Rule and basic monastic virtues, but also experience the prescribed times for common prayer, meditative reading, manual labour, and other legislative and operational functions that create intrinsic desires that honor common living—that is, create and sustain monastic community.

As a result, this ethnographic case study was designed and conducted to examine and explore student learning of community, as experienced in this graduate leadership and community course. The overarching purpose of this study was to explore the impact of living with the monks in community, and to observe the potential implications for the contemporary organization on how to achieve and maintain community. Through the analysis of student reflection papers and interviews with the course deliverer, new constructs and new relationships between constructs have been identified—thus, enhancing our collective understanding of the possible contextual elements that aid in the development and maintenance of community.

## **THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

This study requires an examination of three theoretical constructs: leadership, experiential learning, and community. The first construct to be discussed is leadership.

### **Defining Leadership**

Countless definitions of leadership exist and each characterization provides a unique emphasis. There are probably as many definitions of leadership as there are authors (Bass, 1990; Bryman, 1996; Nirenberg, 2001) and it is not reasonable to resolve the intellectual challenge of conceptualizing leadership within the boundaries of one solitary comprehensive model. However, it is imperative to provide parameters concerning the notion of leadership. Recognizing the intricacies of leadership practices, Northouse (2010) determined that leadership conceptualizations emphasize traits, abilities, skills, behaviors, or relationships in an attempt to describe a complex “influence process that assists groups and individuals...to achieve a common goal” (p. 12). Rost (1991) described leadership as “an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes” (p. 102). Yukl (2006) presented the following explanation of leadership:

Leadership is the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives. (p.3)

Yukl did not limit leadership to roles, processes, or outcomes but rather recognized that leadership is both a specialized feature *and* a social process of interaction whose nature is contextually dependent.

While Yukl appreciated the collective nature of leadership, Ladkin (2010) placed an even stronger emphasis on the communal aspects and mutual interactions within leadership processes:

Leadership is...a collective process, encompassing both those who would be known as 'leaders' and those who would be known as 'followers'...these are not static labels...leadership can readily pass between them so that leaders can act as followers and followers can act as leaders in certain circumstances...leadership...[emerges] from particular social and historical contexts. (p. 11)

This depiction acknowledges that leadership is a shared, dynamic endeavour that does not reside in one person but is, instead, readily and continually exchanged within a given social context. Expanding the concept of leadership even further to embrace the cultural landscape, Ciulla (2008) wrote,

Leadership is a human phenomenon embedded in culture, which includes art, literature, religion, philosophy, language and generally all those things that constitute what it means to live as a human being. (p. 393)

Thus, leadership can be viewed from a variety of perspectives: an individualized phenomenon, a collective venture, and even a representation of society and culture. Leadership is, however, not confined to societal roles or entities (Clegg, Hardy, Lawrence & Nord, 2006; and Parry & Bryman, 2006). Rather, it “transcends these limiting definitions to...[and is] a state of mind resulting from *inner truths and principles*. [Thus, each] person can and does participate as a leader in various aspects of life” (Abjibolosoo, 2005, p. 13). This suggests that the processes of leadership are more accurately understood by examining broader contexts of power and influence (Ciulla, 2010; Hardy, 1996; Jermier & Kerr, 1997; Moss Kanter, 1979; Kerr, 1978; Kerr & Jermier, 1978; McClelland, 1974, 1975; Nadler, 1988; Northouse, 2010; and Washbush & Clements, 1999). It also transports leadership beyond characterizations of leaders and simple group level dynamics, and intimately connects leadership to individual and group processes and interactions. The nature of these relationships covers a wide range of human exchanges. Given the seemingly vast domain of leadership, it is no wonder, then, that the task of defining leadership has been an immense, and oftentimes even a murky, mystifying challenge. Leadership is a stretched concept—and stretched concepts are difficult to pinpoint—but the point from the literature is very clear: leadership only occurs in community and, as such, is ‘non-individualized’.

### **Leadership as a Non-Individualized Conceptualization: Leader-Follower Dynamics**

The dynamic influential powers between leader-followers are comprised of multidimensional interconnecting pathways that permit information sharing, processes of influence, and the development of organizational identity and capabilities (Wheatley, 2005). Lewin's (1951) *force field analysis* model identified two opposing forces of equilibrium. *Driving forces* provide an impetus for change while *restraining forces* seek to maintain the status quo. Although this model has been critiqued for overlooking the politics of change within processes of influence, the criticism is countered with the response that clear alignment of human interaction and relational factors as either organizational constraints or positive inducements is both awkward and problematic. Interpersonal patterns within leader-follower dynamics can impede or enhance the leadership process and thereby modify processes of influence and organizational capabilities. Thus, the practice of leadership is complexified by interactive factors that can act as simultaneous driving and restraining social forces. The paradoxical nature of this realization

provides a valuable perspective that helps both practitioners and scholars appreciate the intertwined, independent, interdependent, and collective actions of individuals and groups within the leadership process. As a result, the notions of individualized leadership (style, trait, states, and the like) are limited, at best, and the need to view leadership as non-individualized is essential.

### *Leadership as a Joint Venture*

The historical reliance on leader-centric models means that scholars have sometimes missed opportunities to explore leadership as a collective practice. Although individual functionality is important and heroic feats do occur, these actions take place “amidst what is perhaps a much more complex intersection of contextual and personal factors” (Ladkin, 2010, p. 11). Yukl (2006) also drew attention to this concern and raised “the issue of whether leadership should be viewed as a specialized role or as a shared influence process” (p. 3). As the normative lens of leadership progresses, there is a growing recognition that organizations benefit when leadership processes are spread across entire organizational systems to encompass many people in multiple roles at all levels (Ogawa & Bossert, 1995). Distribution of leadership and flatter organizational structures are promoted more and more often as solutions to modern-day management challenges (Manz & Sims, 2001). Social sciences are now beginning to explore leadership regardless of where the activities originate or are manifest in collectivities. There is a strong, growing recognition that the notion of leadership can no longer be relegated to the sphere of a recognizable or entitled leader. As Bass and Avolio (1993) asserted, leadership often reinvents itself.

Collectivities that share management tasks have been said to display a “leadership role constellation” (Denis, Lamothe, & Langley, 2001; and Hodgson, Levinson, & Zaleznik, 1965). Hodgson and his colleagues hypothesized that effective constellations depend on the degree of *complementarity* among their members. Complementarity refers to both the adequate coverage of all domains of leadership activities as well as the existence of mechanisms that allow different actors to engage in their respective roles in a concerted manner. Denis et al. (2001) also suggested that achieving “a perfectly harmonious and complementary constellation may be difficult when authority relationships are diffuse and when individuals have different sources of expertise” (p. 811). This idea stands in sharp contrast to strengths-based leadership and its premise that all leaders benefit from working with associates who possess complementary abilities to offset the shortfalls of one another’s proclivities (Rath, 2007; and Rath & Conchie, 2008). Despite the divergence, both leadership role constellations and strengths-based leadership accept the benefits of multiple actors within more dispersed leadership roles (Stewart, 1991) and point the way towards leadership as a joint venture and a collective practice.

The shift to leadership as a collective or team practice first appeared in academic literature in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century when Bales (1950) introduced the *interpersonal process model* for team-building. At that time, however, bureaucracy and scientific management prevailed. Establishments did not sense a need for Bales’s ideas—the world was simply not ready for notions of shared leadership processes. More recently, however, calls for follower-centric and decentralized approaches to leadership are emerging (Baker & Salas, 1992, 1997; Bottery, 2004; Hayes, 2002; Katzenbach & Smith, 1993; Kotter, 1996; Landrum, Howell, & Paris, 2000; Robbins & Coulter, 2004; Senior & Swailes, 2007; and Yukl, 2006), and leadership has now been placed in the framework of participative, shared processes and collective decision-making. This, in turn, stimulates and leads to more effective organizational change.

The changing emphasis of leadership to encompass follower participation, human capital (Hitt & Duane, 2002; and Hitt, Keats, & DeMarie, 1998), and “collaborative production” processes (Heath, 2000) taps into unique aspects of collective undertakings that enhance functional relations between people and groups (Rothhart, 2003; and Sherif, Harvey, White, Hood, & Sherif, 1961/1988). Shared roles and concerted efforts incorporate many features of transformational leadership (Burns, 1978, 2003; Grundstein-Amado, 1999; Pearce & Conger, 2003a) and are linked to nearly all favourable organizational outcomes (Avolio, Jung, Murry, & Sivasubramaniam, 1996; Avolio, 2005; Cox, Pearce, & Perry, 2003; Csikszentmihayli & Csikszentmihayli, 1988; Ensley, Hmieleski, & Pearce, 2006; Hooker & Csikszentmihayli, 2003; Pearce & Sims, 2002; Pearce & Conger, 2003a; Pearce, Waldman, &

Csikszentmihalyi, 2006; and Shamir & Lapidot, 2003). Thus, the awareness that leadership extends beyond an individualized phenomenon is vital to organizational sustainability.

### *Distributed Leadership*

Although aspects of *decentralized leadership* (DL) were identified sporadically throughout the 1900s, the concept of DL *per se* was first introduced by Peter Gronn (2002). Other prominent academics also supported the notion (Currie & Lockett, 2011; and Spillane, 2006) and the term is often used interchangeably with coordinated leadership, delegated leadership, democratic leadership, dispersed leadership, team leadership, teams, self-managing teams, high-performance teams, and top management teams (Bennett, Wise, Woods, & Harvey, 2003; Eisenhardt, 1989; Hambrick & Mason, 1984; Harris 2004; Pearce & Conger, 2003a; Ray, Clegg, & Gordon, 2004; Spillane, 2005, 2006; and Starratt, 2001). Notions of leadership as a group endeavor also include distributed leadership, collaborative leadership, collective leadership, and shared leadership processes. Each designation emphasizes various aspects of disseminated leadership responsibilities but some of the distinctions are not clear or consistent and, at times, overlap. There is, however, an underlying consensus that in collaborative organizational cultures formal positions no longer impose strict boundaries on formerly typified leadership tasks. Instead, roles such as vision-setting, decision-making, planning, organizing, and evaluating are shared amongst organizational members in more concerted, collegial processes (Bennett et al., 2003; Hiller, Day, & Vance, 2003; Janicik & Bartel, 2003; Marks, Mathieu, & Zaccaro, 2001; Mathieu & Schulze, 2006; and Pearce, 2004). Thus, the broad, diverse literature on DL warrants further investigation (Bennett et al., 2003).

The notion of DL is accepted by both practitioners and researchers (e.g., Ancona, Malone, Orlikowski, & Senge, 2007; Burton & Brundrett, 2005; Hammersley-Fletcher & Brundrett, 2005; and Storey, 2004), yet disagreement over definitions and descriptions persists (Bennett et al., 2003; Harris, 2004; and Spillane & Diamond, 2007) and the idea of DL demonstrates considerable “conceptual elasticity” (Hartley, 2007, p. 202). There is, however, general agreement amongst scholars that directive capacities, when exercised by more than one individual in a hierarchy, take on forms that are more prone to be decentralized, collaborative, participatory, devolved, shared, or distributed (Harris, 2003; and Hammersley-Fletcher & Brundrett, 2005). Despite the fact that DL encompasses a variety of features, the concept is marked by three distinct elements (Bennett et al.):

- 1) emergence of leadership as a property of individual interactions within a group;
- 2) openness of boundaries and widening of the conventional leadership net within a given community; and
- 3) various distributions of expertise across many (not limited) organizational members.

In DL scenarios, the emergence of leadership (Kozlowski & Klein, 2000), leadership boundaries, and the distribution of expertise are altered from traditional patterns.

Despite commonalities, various forms of DL can also differ significantly. Distinctions include: 1) underlying motivating goals and values (Keyes, Hanley-Maxwell, & Capper, 1999) such as non-negotiable aims (Graetz, 2000) or accountability to outsiders; 2) social and cultural contextual factors that affect the initiation (Bryant, 2003; Kets De Vries, 1999; and Knight & Trowler, 2001), manner, extent (Mahony & Moos, 1998), and nature of the distribution of leadership roles; 3) the internal culture of the organization and its history (Brytting & Trollestad, 2000; and Coad, 2000); 4) the source of the impetus for change (Bickmore, 2001; Blase & Blase, 1999; Gold, 2003; and Garvin, Edmondson, & Gino, 2008); and 5) the organization’s structure (Bennett et al., 2003; Goodman, Baron, & Meyers, 2001; Harris 2004; Silva, Gimbert, & Nolan, 2000; and Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001). Additionally, some firms institutionalize formal structures that encourage trust and mutual support and the sharing of expertise. In these firms, distinctions between leaders and followers are blurred (Bennett et al., 2003; and Garvin et al., 2008). Some of these organizations also demonstrate a peculiar co-existence of both hierarchical and distributed forms of leadership.

Leadership as a collective, distributed effort has also been related to the activities of groups and teams. Literature about teamwork often overlaps with discussions of DL. Both concepts emphasize “collaboration, multiple and complementary strengths and expertise, and the need for all members to share a common view of both the purposes of the team and its means of working” (Bennett et al., 2003; see also Katzenbach & Smith, 1993). Team-level cognizance has also been explicitly linked to shared leadership (Burke, Fiore, & Salas, 2003; Conger & Pearce, 2003; and Vera & Crossan, 2004) and enhanced decision-making (Dayan & Elbanna, 2011). The duplicity between teams and concepts of DL is also apparent in Gronn’s (2002) argument for concertive action as an aspect of distributed leadership. Effective team processes require trust, mutual respect, commitment, active listening, constructive communication, open sharing, a problem-solving approach, and the ability to build consensus, flexibility, and active participation of team members (Are You a Team Player?, 2011; Ramos-Garza, Villalba-Morena, & Ramos-Garza, 2011). Organizations benefit when aspects of DL are integrated into team practices.

### *Collaborative Leadership*

One form of dispersed or distributed leadership that blurs the lines between leaders and followers is called *collaborative leadership*. In the early 1990s, Rost (1991) critiqued scholars and practitioners of the past century for their contracted focus on the societal norms and ideals of a regimented industrial paradigm. Rost redefined leadership as a collaborative process between leaders and followers and, a short time later, various descriptions of collaborative leadership emerged (Archer & Cameron, 2009; Chrislip, 2002; Moss Kanter, 2005; and Rubin, 2009). A “collaborative advantage” (Rost, 1994; and Moss Kanter, 1994, 2003) hinges on the awareness that critical corporate relations cannot be designated by formal organization systems but instead rely on solid, dense webs of advantageous interpersonal interactions. Accordingly, collaborative leadership emphasizes abilities and attributes required by leaders to traverse organizational boundaries. These leaders actively pursue cooperative alliances by instilling avenues for the strategic integration of respectful, tactical, productive relationships that are advantageous to the firm. Rudimentary managerial tasks involve creating, nurturing, monitoring, and replenishing relational assets (Moss Kanter, 2005). This approach emphasizes leader-centric actions and acknowledges the inherent value of people but only as a transactional benefit. Thus, transcendence is not part of the collaborative process.

Collaborative processes were also explored in *Platforms for Collaboration*, a paper issued in 2009 by Satish Nambisan at the Stanford Graduate School of Business. The paper rested on the premise that “social change [grows] in the spaces between organizations and sectors” (Nambisan, 2009, p. 44), and presented three platforms for collaboration: *exploration*, *experimentation*, and *execution*. Exploration is the process of defining problems and seeking to connect with problem-solvers to build diverse coalitions of stakeholders. Experimentation integrates ideas from stakeholders and develops and tests solution prototypes. Execution provides resources to expedite collaborative solution templates and ensure rapid acceptance of the social innovation with the customer base. Collaborative behaviours include decentralized decision-making, effective information exchange, and increased accuracy in information in team environments (Boone & Hendriks, 2009; and Friedrich, Vessey, Schuelke, Ruark, & Mumford, 2009). Like the earlier model of collaborative leadership, this process operates on the premise that collaboration serves a transactional purpose.

More recently, Roberts and Coghlan (2011a; 2011b) offered a new leadership model called “concentric collaboration” (p.1). This practice “[strengthens] the skills of the individual leader and fosters collective leadership...to create connections with others, ultimately increasing the social capital necessary to effect organizational change” (Roberts & Coghlan, 2011a, p.1). Concentric collaboration is a leader-centric model that nudges the concept of leadership beyond respectful advantageous relationships towards an early awareness of the intrinsic value of human beings and associated relational processes.

Raelin (2003, 2006) offered yet another form of collaborative leadership which rests on a fundamental humanistic principle that “when people who have a stake in a venture are given every chance to participate in the adventure, including its implementation, their commitment to the venture will be

assumed” (p. 155). In this sense, collaborative leadership takes on an image akin to participative management, organizational learning, and “leaderful” (Raelin, 2003, 2004) practice. It challenges leaders to be collective (i.e. mutually inclusive) and compassionate (Mendenhall & Marsh, 2010). Similarly, “functional leadership” (Zaccaro, Rittman, & Marks, 2001) also appreciates group dynamics—the reciprocal influences in leadership and team interactions—and the significance of member commitment to collective undertakings.

In the last two decades, descriptions of collaborative leadership have conveyed a more transactional and leader-centric focus, yet the original concept of collaborative leadership, as rendered by Follett (1924), had quite a different focus. Follett wrote that “in the behavior-process, subject and object are equally important” (p. 54-55) in the endless “circular response” (p. 63) of social (i.e. relational) processes. Openness—breaking up wholes to see both sides—integration, and continual re-evaluation are important aspects of Follett’s collaborative leadership and work together to develop a “richer understanding of the collective desires and perspectives of the group” (Mendenhall & Marsh, 2010, p. 290; see also Follett, 1925). Follett (1918/1998) believed that “[t]he individual is created by the social process and is daily nourished by that process” (p. 62). She placed individuality solidly within social context and stressed relationship. Although later models strayed from these principles and emphasized leader-centric activities that built relationships for transactional benefits, for Follett, the purpose of collaborative leadership was individual transcendence, wholeness, and the greater good.

### *Collective Leadership*

Another significant form of distributed leadership is called *collective leadership*. In the 1900s, with the rise, expansion and modernization of military-industrial powers in the United Soviet Socialist Republic (U.S.S.R) and in other countries, communism was presented by its leaders and supporters as a form of collective leadership. The goal of this form of collective leadership was to hinder the creation of a one-man domination such as that experienced under Stalin. Leadership was distributed between various governing bodies but, despite these ideals, the USSR struggled under abuses of the concept. Collective leadership was esteemed in value but violated in practice.

Collective leadership was also discussed by Friedrich et al. (2009). These researchers defined collective leadership as “a dynamic leadership process in which a defined leader, or set of leaders, selectively utilize skills and expertise within a network, effectively distributing elements of the leadership role as the situation or problem” (p. 933) warrants. A collective orientation towards leadership was also described by Driskell and Salas (1992) as “the tendency to coordinate, evaluate, and use task inputs from other group members in an interdependent manner in performing a group task” (p. 278). These definitions identify interdependent coordinated skills and actions as key features of collective leadership.

In 2001, the concept of collective leadership surfaced again as the cornerstone of the Kellogg Leadership for Community Change program (The Collective Leadership Framework, 2007). The Kellogg Foundation presented leadership as a process that emerges from relationships built around a shared dream that brings together a diverse community of people to create change (Perry, 2007b). Cultivated in stages, collective leadership 1) generates trust; 2) helps people experience fellowship and co-create a vision and strategy; 3) engages in joint action to bring about sustainable, relevant change in their neighborhoods and community; and 4) creates deep sustained shared leadership that becomes a way of life (Perry, 2007a). It is an emergent, contextually-relevant, cyclical, relational, and transformational form of leadership committed to social advocacy and community. In the past, “scholars have sometimes missed the role collective identity plays in processes” (Polletta & Jasper, 2001, p. 285) but collective leadership addresses this issue by distinguishing leadership as a shared process that helps individuals learn and grow together. It nurtures a shared identity that honors communal living (Lessons in Collective Leadership, 2005).

Collective leadership was also addressed by Baghai and Quigley (2011), two prominent Australian businesspersons, who responded to the multiple styles of leadership in the marketplace with the release of a book, *As One: Individual Action, Collective Power*. The writers analyzed sixty organizations and identified three factors that were common to the organizations that flourished. Successful collectivities exhibited:

- a high shared identity,
- a high directional intensity, and
- a high common interpretation.

A shared identity enables individuals to see themselves not as individual members of a group but as one group—a unified body with a distinctive nature. Directional intensity is a solid commitment to common purposes and goals and a common interpretation provides analogous understandings of how to work together (Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu, 2011; and Quigley & Langton, 2011). Constructive collective behaviors are evident in individuals and groups who view their organization as a unique holistic entity, share similar values and ideologies, and operate in a manner consistent with the prevailing collective values.

### *Shared Leadership*

Yet another model that distributes leadership behaviors within collective ventures is the notion of *shared leadership*. This style of leadership holds that leadership is a social process—that is, one that occurs between people. It is not so much what leaders do, as something that arises out of social relationships and, as such, does not depend on one person but on how people act together to interpret the context they are experiencing. As a result, leadership is less about one individual’s vision and more about creating a shared vision with others. Shared leadership exhibits inclusiveness and transcendence (Heifetz, 1994) of both self and others which are essential to aid in the creation of a positive emotional setting (Fredrickson, 2009; and Gastil, 1997). This, in turn, facilitates communal self-determination, equal and constructive participation, distribution of responsibility, empowerment of others, ownership of the decision-making process, learning, and respectful sharing and deliberation (Doyle & Smith, 2001; and Garvin et al., 2008). Pearce and Sims (2002) described shared leadership as “leadership that emanates from members of teams and not simply from the appointed team leader” (p. 172). Pearce and Conger (2003b) defined shared leadership as “a dynamic, interactive influence process among individuals in groups for which the objective is to lead one another to the achievement of group or organizational goals or both. This process often involves peer, or lateral, influence and at other times involves upward or downward hierarchical influence” (p. 1).

The concept of shared leadership questions more traditional leadership models (Pearce & Conger, 2003a; Pearce & Sims, 2000; and Yukl, 2006) and parallels the use of empowered teams while simultaneously levelling organizational structure (Stace & Dunphy, 2002; and Mohrman, Cohen, & Mohrman, 1995). It “calls for true collaboration so that partners work together to coordinate and agree upon various planning, implementation, evaluations, advocacy, and decision-making responsibilities” (Session 4: Shared Leadership, 2009, para. 1). Shared leadership recognizes the unique perspectives, knowledge, and capabilities offered to a team by all its members and operates under the premise that leadership is “not determined by positions of authority but rather by an individual’s capacity to influence peers and by the needs of the team in any given moment” (Pearce & Conger, 2003a, p. xi). Key features are high quality interactions regardless of formal organizational positions, open communication, a common value focused on honesty, shared ethics, and democratic processes, and a humanistic approach that seeks the common good (Crosby & Bryson, 2005; and Nemerowicz & Rosi, 1997).

This notion of leadership demonstrates consistent links with positive organizational outcomes (Avolio et al., 1996; Hooker & Csikszentmihalyi, 2003; Pearce & Conger, 2003a, 2003b; Pearce & Sims, 2002; Shamir & Lapidot, 2003; and Pearce & Manz, 2011). It also depends on the existence of self-leadership (Manz & Sims, 1991) or self-determination skills (Kouzes & Posner, 2007) such as self-motivation, self-direction (Manz & Sims, 1990) and self-efficacy. High levels of self-leadership equip team members to share leadership responsibilities (Bligh, Pearce, & Kohles, 2006; and Prussia, Anderson, & Manz, 1998) and create power distributions with natural checks and balances (Houghton, Neck, & Manz, 2003; and Pearce & Manz, 2011). Skilled self-leadership creates a foundation for effective shared leadership in which leaders are motivated by more socialized forms of power (House & Howell, 1992). This moderates

the emergence of anti-citizenship behaviour including avoidance of work, complaining, and defiance (Pearce, 1997). If left unattended, anti-citizenship behaviour can propagate deviance and become a stepping stone to more egregious behaviour, prompting a cycle where more and more serious forms of antisocial behaviour are tolerated and continue (Anand, Ashford, & Joshi, 2004; Ashforth & Anand, 2003; Badaracco & Ellsworth, 1989; and Gladwell, 2000). Therefore, shared leadership appears to be a buffer against nefarious influences within teams and tends to naturally spill over into the greater organizational setting (Pearce & Manz, 2011; and Pearce, Manz, & Sims, 2008).

If neither self- nor shared leadership are well developed, centralized leadership predominates. Furthermore, high levels of individual autonomy (Langfred, 2005) and role ambiguity (Fisher & Gitelson, 1983) have been linked to reduced levels of team performance and dysfunction in teams. Additionally, these two forms of leadership function synergistically and protect against socially irresponsible organizational actions. A well-developed, appropriate balance of self- and shared leadership mitigates corporate negligence. Shared leadership, together with self-leadership, is essential to the development and survival of a sense of community amongst a group of people.

In summary, the debate about whether leadership is an individual or collective construct has run its course. The literature clearly establishes leadership as a non-individualized endeavour and thus—regardless of whether one perceives it as a joint, distributed, collaborative, collective, or even shared venture—it can only take place within the context of community.

### **Experiential Learning: How it Shapes Epistemology and Ontological Understanding**

The second component to the theoretical framework of this study is that of *experiential learning*. Although a number of variations on experiential learning exist, Kolb's (1984) *experiential learning theory* (ELT) continues to be considered an influential model and provides the foundation for a broad range of management processes (Carlsson, Keane, & Martin, 1976; Dixon, 1994; Hunt, 1987; Lengnick-Hall & Sanders, 1997; and Sims, 1983). The epistemology of learning has been widely explored and concretely defined. Essentially, concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation (Beckman & Barry, 2007; Kolb, 1984; and Kolb & Kolb, 2005) represent four interdependent tenets, each of which is required within holistic and integrated learning processes (Beckman & Barry, 2007; Heron, 1992; Kayes, 2002; Kegan, 1994; Kolb, 1984; Vince, 1998; and Wenger, 1998). Ethridge and Branscomb (2009), who were the first to conduct a parallel study that examined children and adults and the implications of ELT, adamantly asserted that “for a transformation in learning to truly occur, direct experience must be paired with reflection to facilitate and reinforce learning” (p. 406). This is consistent with the assertion of Piaget (1973) who stated, “A parroted truth is only a half truth” (p. 106). More recently, Moore, Boyd and Dooley (2010) reaffirmed that *reflection* provides the method by which students connect theory and practice. Reflection also allows students to connect and integrate principles learned in the classroom with the context of daily life.

Thus, the real power of experiential learning is the integration of erudite scholarship with experience. This is congruent with the work of Boyer (2003) who asserted that *social learning theory* emphasized the importance of the contextual environment and the exchanges that occur between the individual, his or her surrounds, and other people. Boyer claimed that learning was not only tied to the context in which it was embedded but also to the relationship one has with others. Boyer also purported that this reality was so important that the act of knowing became mediated by the competencies that were displayed within the community where the individual resided—an assertion also supported by Wenger (2000). Furthermore, these claims are reinforced by *social cognitive theory*, which, as Bandura (2001) outlined, supports the concept that the collective agency exercised through socially coordinated and interdependent effort is of the utmost importance in the development of the individual.

### **Community and The Rule of Saint Benedict**

The third theoretical component represented in this research is that of *community*. The notion of community first arose within leadership literature just prior to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Building on the 18<sup>th</sup> century term *philosophes*, Palmer (1997/2007) was first to use the phrase *authentic community*. Since

Palmer's introduction, the notion of community, although still relatively uncommon, is emerging with a slowly growing frequency in the realms of leadership, education, and organizational literature. For example, Rochon (1998) used the term "critical communities" (p. 2) to describe groups of people that challenge conceptual movements and offer alternatives that create social change. Burns (2003) employed the phrase "community leadership" (p. 235) and thus, provided a clear linkage between community and the concept of leadership. This premise rests on the power of intellectual leadership and recognizes the crucial role of dynamic leadership within collective action. Burns also warned "efficacious leadership, whether individual or collective, can still be fragile and ephemeral in the face of brutal realities" (p. 225). Nirenberg (2001) identified himself as a consultant for the "workplace community" (p. 1) and Edwards (2011) linked the concept of community to distributed leadership. However, the most common reference within literature to community seems to be the phrase "communities of practice" (Brown & Duguid, 1998; Eckert & Wenger, 2005; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998, 2000; and Wheatley, 2005).

### *Communities of Practice*

The expression *communities of practice* was introduced by Lave and Wenger (1991), Wenger (1998; 2000), and Brown and Duguid (1998). Eckert and Wenger (2005) defined the term as "an ongoing collective negotiation of a regime of competence, which is neither static nor fully explicit" (p. 583). And, Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1998) described it as:

...an aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in some common endeavor. Ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs, values, power relations - in short practices - emerge in the course of their joint activity around that mutual endeavor. (p. 490)

Eckert and Wenger (2005) also asserted that communities of practice have "a way of doing things, as grounded in and shared by a community" (p. 583). Thus, practices are integral rhythmic features of community that cannot be separated from the context of the community. As stated by Davies (2005), "Membership [in a community is]...created and maintained through social practices (linguistic or otherwise) at a local level, rather than global categories being imposed on individuals" (p. 557). Practices link to an organization's capacity for learning, knowledge creation, innovation, and the construction of a cohesive vision (Brown & Duguid, 1991; and Wenger, 2000). Elaborating on the notion of community, Wenger described communities of practice as 'social containers' for system competencies, and thus, foundational building blocks of social learning. Fiol (1994) and others have argued that shared interpretive schemes facilitate collective problem solving and enhance organizational adaptive potential. Three essential elements of communities of practice are: enterprise (level of learning energy), mutuality (depth of social capital and deep sense of commitment generated over time), and repertoire (degree of self-awareness developed through reflection on concepts, language, tools, history, and perspective) (Wegner, 1986; and Wenger, 1998, 2000). In essence, a community of practice is a cohesive, competent, and creative collectivity.

Delving even more deeply into the concept of community, Wheatley (2005) wrote, "these communities are webs of connections woven by people to get their work done" (p. 34) and identified three conditions essential for community connectedness: identity, information, and relationships (p. 37). Identity is the basis of sense-making capacity within the community. Information is its medium, and relationships are the organizational pathways along which information is exchanged and through which sense-making occurs. Because of this context, self-awareness and reflection are essential leadership skills. Therefore, although Wheatley did not say it directly, communities do more than simply engage in practices—they incorporate a *repetition of practice* (i.e. a sense-making rhythm) into cycles of activities. Wheatley also emphasized:

Communities of practice demonstrate that it is natural for people to seek out those who have the knowledge and experience they need. As people find others and exchange ideas,

relationships develop and a community forms. This community becomes a rich marketplace where knowledge and experience are shared. It also becomes an incubator where new knowledge, skills, and competencies develop. (p. 172)

In essence, communities of practice are a form of shared leadership that offers opportunities for experiential learning in an environment of repetitive, genuine, trust-based relational practices.

### *Community and the Monks of Saint Benedict*

Within education literature, community is seen as necessary for learning; however, there is scant literature describing exactly what community is and how one goes about achieving it. Even within the organizational setting, Lenzner and Johnson (1997) stressed that institutional viability is tied to its capacity to develop and maintain community and its ability to operate in a mutually influential relationship, and that it is critical to developing the leadership that can cultivate such a mindset around communities. The importance of community is of great interest to the religious order known as the Monks of Saint Benedict. In the case of the Saint Benedict Abbeys, their mission as an organization is to enable each individual to develop a *pure heart*, which, as presented by Merton, means that the individual “has an immediate apprehension of the way things really are” (as cited in Carey & Horsman, 2008, p. 10), thus enabling the individual to transcend and become Christ-like. The values for the Monks of Saint Benedict are expressed through their vows of *stability*, *obedience*, and *conversion of life*, where: stability means to commit to stay in relationship with their community regardless of how difficult it gets, obedience means to hear the truth of the circumstances and to be open to hearing God through their community, and conversion of life means a commitment to poverty and chastity and requires the monks to be in genuine dialogue, which goes beyond collaboration, as characterized by Hall (1994). These vows are the underlying premise for the community context for all Saint Benedict Abbeys and are reinforced by the common symbols, rituals, and heroes that are consistent across all of their monasteries.

For over 1,500 years, *The Rule of Saint Benedict* (The Rule) has played an important role in shaping the monks’ understanding of community. Although referred to as a ‘rule’, it is, in essence, a text in the form of a book and, as such, the rhetoric of ‘rule’ is used as it provides direction for how to live this chosen way of living. For the Monks of Saint Benedict, The Rule outlines the suggested pattern of behavior and attitudes needed to create the desired community within a monastery. The proposed/expected actions and thoughts are in perfect alignment with the overriding values and vows of monastic life. The daily habits within The Rule are often referred to as the *Rhythm of the Monastery*, and are designed to enhance the values and mission of the Monks of Saint Benedict. The monks make a commitment to live in community and to hold one primary objective—to transcend personally and communally—which, interestingly, mirrors the objective of non-individualized leadership and education. The Monks of Saint Benedict have been living in community for over fifteen centuries in numerous diverse locations involving many different contexts and cultures. Thus, their communal lifestyle provides the world with an example of a challenging context through which to practice and serve within community. Their practices might hold countless lessons and implications that stretch beyond the confines of monasteries and apply to contemporary organizations.

### **Summary of the Literature**

The leadership literature has evolved to embrace concepts and theories of leadership that are non-individualistic, and thus, have the potential to help build communities. Communities have cultures of collaboration where leadership collectives value people to varying degrees (Jeffrey & Woods, 2003) either for their intrinsic worth, or for their contributions as part of a team (Campbell & Southworth, 1992) or a community. Community, when practiced in its purest sense, is a collectivity that creates secure, rhythmic, and psychologically safe environments (Jeffrey & Woods, 2003). Community goes to the essence of leadership, thus confirming the essential notion that leadership is truly non-individualized. The concept of experiential learning—a critical aspect of connecting theory to practice—is also important, and thus, learning and transcending are intricately connected. As a result, the purpose of this study was to

explore the impact of experiencing life in community at a Benedictine Monastery and its potential implications for: 1) how to achieve and maintain community; and 2) non-individualized leadership practice and theory.

## **METHOD**

This research applied an ethnographic approach to study the role of community and leadership. The lead author of this study was an active participant and observer in the course offered at the Benedictine Monastery. The active participant role of looking at the culture from the inside, with an emic perspective, allowed the lead author to construct knowledge contributing to cultural understanding and meaning making (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). Additionally, ethnographic research contributes to rich description and interpretation of cultural and social groups (Cresswell, 2007).

## **SAMPLE**

A purposive sample (Cresswell, 2007), consisting of six student papers and a semi-structured interview with the instructor who delivered the course on several occasions, formed the data set for this qualitative research. Purposive sampling increases the range of data exposed and maximizes the researcher's ability to identify emerging themes that take adequate account of contextual conditions and cultural norms (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993, p. 82). The purposive sample had a criterion dimension that required student papers representative of students who had completed graduate level courses in leadership and ethics, servant-leadership, and organizational leadership. This additional criterion was used in order to have a baseline understanding of student performance in other courses that develop similar constructs of community, stewardship, and ethics. Six student papers represented a viable and rich source of data. Small yet rich sample sizes are often the norm in ethnographic research and have been deemed acceptable in qualitative research given the depth and intricacies found in the description (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). This data was then condensed and open-ended survey questions were developed for the purposes of discussion with the course instructor. This process allowed for an opportunity to verify the reoccurring patterns within the students' observations.

Since this research is an ethnography case study, it is attempting to explore and develop new constructs and relationships within constructs and, as such, potential concerns around reliability are difficult to eliminate. Despite the limitations surrounding validity and reliability, Yin (2003) suggested that ethnography case studies were advantageous since they allowed the researcher to examine many variables in a given situation as one and rely on multiple sources of evidence and, as a result, the potential benefits far outweigh the stated limitations of this study. Ultimately, the question of validity rests on the extent to which there was saturation within the data set and, for the purposes of this study, the authors believe that this was achieved.

## **ANALYSIS**

The analysis used two sources of data. One source employed six student reflection papers, while the second source represented an interview with the course instructor. Both the course instructor interview and the six student reflection papers were coded and analyzed for common themes and patterns. The six papers were read several times before interpretive analysis was applied for coding. The coding process progressed through open coding, axial coding, and selective coding in surfacing overarching themes and categories (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Emerging themes from the student papers informed the semi-structured interview with the course instructor, *an expert*, and thus, provided a secondary source of triangulated data (Cresswell, 2007). This interview explored how the recurring patterns (themes and variables) found in the student papers reflected the instructor's interpretations and experiences of the students' reflection papers. The interview served as

a reflective process that contributed to the conformability and dependability of the findings derived from student papers.

## FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

Three overarching and recurring themes emerge from the student papers and course instructor interview. The first predominant theme is the concept of *humility* as an essential component for building community. The second is the importance of *rhythm* to the order of things within the community. A third overarching theme—experiential learning—traversed both humility and rhythm (see Table 1).

**TABLE 1**  
**VARIABLES OF HUMILITY AND RHYTHM WITH EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING**  
**AS AN OVERARCHING THEME**

<b>Theme # 1: Humility</b>	<b>Theme #2: Rhythm</b>
<b>Variables of Humility</b>	<b>Variables of Rhythm</b>
1) Listening	1) A rhythm to the day: prayer/meditation/reflection
2) Silence (i.e. Reflection)	2) Comfort in the structure
3) Intentionality of communication (i.e. Dialogue)	

<-----Theme #3 Experiential Learning----->

### **Humility of Community Members (Both Leaders and Followers)**

The students’ reflection papers showcase the importance of humility in developing and maintaining healthy communities, not only for leaders, but also for followers.

Some participants wrote:

Participant: I would add that I must learn to use my heart to learn humility.

Participant: The implications of humility are profound for me.

Participant: If I have a deeper understanding of humility, I will be able to set my own personal agenda aside.

Participant: I left compelled to examine my own strengths, to understand myself as unique. Completing this task required an inward reflection not only of my beliefs, but also on the perceptions of others towards me.

The practice of humility within community is supported by the writings of Nirenberg (1994/1995) who stated that community does not assume that everyone is equal. This means that some members, depending on the context, would not always get a vote on every outcome, and explains why, within Nirenberg’s work, he referred to consensus as beyond democracy and founded on the idea that multiple perspectives and dealing with dissent are needed within communities. Dysinger (1996) stated that humility allows the individual to appreciate the way things really are, or as Greenleaf (1979) claimed, it produces awareness—the first essential step in individual transcendence. Block’s (1996) Stewardship Model of Leadership also identified humility as an essential feature of empowerment and accountability amongst leaders. Furthermore, in the context of leadership theory, many researchers (e.g., Kouzes & Posner, 2003; Senge, 2006; and Yukl, 2006) highlighted the necessity of a contextual assessment and the

importance of its evaluatory accuracy. However, few researchers have drawn linkages to essential skills that aid in ensuring an accurate assessment.

This study shows that individual and collective humility allows the individual and the community to park or challenge perspectives—a capacity that encourages an accurate assessment of the context and the development of possible next steps. Additionally, this study indicates that if or when it is necessary, humility will not allow the community to breed dissention (Nirenberg, 1994/1995). Therefore, an organization that assists individuals within the community to build their own humility will greatly aid in the development of community and the benefits it brings.

This study also identifies three variables that greatly aid the development and maintenance of humility: listening, intentional silence (i.e. reflective practices), and intentionality of communication.

Some participants wrote:

Participant: Listening is a skill I must continue to master.

Participant: I definitely understand that I could be a better listener.

Participant: Silence is what strengthens a leader's ability to listen to others and their own heart.

Participant: Step nine requires a monk to control his tongue and remain silent; this is a radical restraint of speech over today's common practice.

Participant: One must monitor the inflection in the voice and this remains an area of difficulty for me.

Participant: Communication becomes a precious commodity that should not be wasted and so all start to choose words more precisely if they are needed at all.

Together, these variables—listening, intentional silence and reflection, and intentionality of communication—significantly improve the ability of the individual and the community to accurately assess their context. This ability is an essential requirement of any form of non-individualized leadership. Furthermore, this study highlights the importance of humility and its various possible constructs for the development of community.

The first implication for the contemporary organization is to create an organizational climate that fosters the ability to truly listen, that is to listen beyond the plain words to the 'intention or emotion' behind the words in order to understand the true meaning of what is said. Periods of intentional silence could be incorporated to allow reflection and meditation on the purpose of the organization (i.e. community) and the roles and responsibilities of the individuals within it. The deliberate attempt to reduce the amount of 'noise' within an organizational community ensures that members are not bombarded with excessive communication. Excessive communication is a source of distraction and desensitizes individuals to important information. The end result of incorporating these variables is less—but significantly more effective—communication.

Given the lack of discussion and research within leadership literature to date regarding the concept of humility, the implications for non-individualized leadership are significant. As a result, the contemporary organization would be well advised to ensure that there is intentionality about individual and collective humility, and that there is deliberate development of a climate that encourages a focus on attentive listening, intentional periods of silence, and significantly less, but more intentionality about effective, communication.

### **Community Rhythm**

The other common theme within the participants' reflections papers is the notion that communities have a rhythm, intentionally managed or otherwise.

Some participants wrote:

Participant: I am committed to daily prayer and Lectio Divina.

Participant: Meditation and contemplation is a worthwhile practice of servant leaders.

Participant: Lectio provides enrichment of the message while breaking down barriers and limitation. This is where the individual breaks down his or her biases.

Participant: Lectio allows for the reflective understanding of the text and material. Without this, there cannot be an inward reflection towards spiritual life.

Participant: Practising Lectio Divina allows an individual to cultivate the ability to listen – but listen deeply, contemplatively and whole heartedly. I have incorporated Lectio Divina into my daily personal life by daily readings, with the goal of cultivating the skill of listening in my personal life and organizational life. Allowing Lectio Divina to be part of one's life helped them to discover a spiritual rhythm.

The Monks of Saint Benedict practice a particular order to their day, and generally within their lives, in order for *Lectio Divina* (meditation/reflection) to occur. This rhythm is deliberately managed with the intent of supporting particular purposeful objectives. The Rule greatly aids in establishing an organizational climate that is not rushed but, nevertheless, functions with a sense of urgency, thus supporting this rhythm and promoting *Lectio Divina*. As a result, there is purpose—but not at the expense of the individual—and there is an ebb and flow between the spiritual and the natural world. In order to better manage any community, its members are well-advised to manage the ebb and flow of their daily events—their rhythm. This is also similar to Nirenberg's (1994/1995) assertion that community is a form of organization, one in which there needs to be predictability to the order of things even when expected events arise. People perform and respond better under conditions of predictability, particularly when circumstances become unstable. As a result, it would appear from this study that community is enhanced when there is a structure or rhythm for the day's events and activities.

In essence, The Rule provides guidelines and humanist elements for the purpose of intentionally managing the rhythm of the monastery. This study identifies four aspects that enhance the development and maintenance of rhythm within the community—prayer, worship, meditation, and reflection—all of which are derived from *Lectio Divina* and greatly aid in the comfort of the daily structure. Within the study, many participants observe that the organizations in which they work give little thought to the community's rhythm. As a result, there is little or no 'downtime' or 'meditation', and very little priority is given to time for reflection. This reduces the ability of the individuals within the community to be mindful or to even have awareness for mindfulness. This study identifies the benefits of a structure that integrates purposeful living, meditation on the purpose of the community, worship, gratitude for what the community provides, and reflection on the daily events (both good and bad) within the community. Rhythm or structure to the day is achieved, not for the sake of rigidity, but to establish harmony. It is within the rhythm, harmony, and daily structure that the individual can focus on the tasks and objectives of the community.

### **Experiential Learning Aids in Frame Shifting**

Kolb (1984), Kayes (2002), Ethridge and Branscomb (2009), and Moore, Boyd, and Dooley (2010) considered experiential learning as a tool to integrate the elements necessary for developing one's epistemology. The four tenets of experiential learning—concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation—represent four separate stages that need to occur in order to best facilitate the transformation of an individual's epistemology and ontology.

Some participants wrote:

Participant: Instead of defining community, I was experiencing community.

Participant: The development of community transcends the individual.

Participant: Because of the experience at the monastery, I now ensure I have opportunity to reflect and look for areas for development.

Participant: I must take opportunities to self-reflect and self-assess within community.

Participant: The community becomes your mirror of yourself when done authentically.

This study highlights the importance of reflection within experiential learning when teaching about community, particularly regarding roles within the community such as leadership. It highlights that experiential learning can integrate all four of its tenets in order to maximize the learning experience. The

participants not only studied the conceptual, The Rule, leadership, and various other readings but shared the concrete experience of being with the monks themselves and participated in active experimentation—the process of developing community with the monks and their fellow classmates. The participants' common language (rhetoric) and common experiences such as cooking, working in the courtyard, sharing religious services, and other daily activities, aided them in developing their own community.

One of the implications of this study is the realization that experiential learning is a powerful way to teach leadership and community. This finding is further supported by Boyer's (2003) assertions around social learning theory and his idea that, not only was the context important, but the relationships between the individuals were equally important. This study also confirms the writings of Ethridge & Branscomb (2009) which concluded that direct experience and reflection were necessary for learning to occur.

Participant: The experience at the monastery was genuinely humbling.

Participant: This was a journey where we experienced growth by observing others.

Participant: My husband says that I am a different person as a result of this experience.

The benefits of experiential learning are apparent within educational literature; however, within leadership literature to date, there is little dialogue on the notion of experiential learning or the intentionality of its use in the development of an individual's epistemology and ontology. Kouzes & Posner (2007) spoke of *modeling the way* and of *creating a spirit of community*; however, they did not directly link these concepts to the development of the individual's epistemology, learning, or specifically, the role of experiential learning. Much of their discussion focused on identifying one's own values and then modeling those values for others. The critical implication of this research is that modeling is, at best, only one aspect of the four tenets in the development of one's epistemology. Therefore, an organization genuinely interested in community development and maintenance, and leadership training needs to seriously consider how an individual develops his or her epistemology. This study demonstrates that experiential learning provides valuable clues about how individuals learn, and thus, an organization needs to place significant value on learning and seek to create an organizational climate that is intentional about the use of experiential learning as a means to assist individual and communal transcendence. This assertion is consistent with the notion of non-individualized leadership since it is in the relationship between the individuals and their community that leadership is consistently experienced. This assertion also highlights the importance of experiential learning to leadership theory in as much as what is being experienced is significantly more important than what is being suggested or espoused.

This study also highlights the importance for the contemporary organization to be more intentional about the development and maintenance of community. A healthy community, like that of the Monks of Saint Benedict, provides an optimal environment to enable the individuals and the community to change their epistemology. Yukl (2006) asserted that the contemporary organization that wants to learn needs to understand that knowledge alone will not be the key to the individuals' or the organization's transcendence. This study shows that having an understanding of how an individual learns and an understanding of the role of community are critical to the transcendence process. Essentially, a community or organization that is able to process knowledge and integrate the four tenets of learning will likely have more success at transforming epistemologies (reframing). Crossan, Lane, and White (1999) might call the organization that is intentional about doing this a 'learning organization'.

In summary, it is essential for the contemporary organization to have a complete understanding of how an individual's epistemology and ontology develop. The role and value of experiential learning holds significant keys to assisting communities to intentionally implement and integrate the four tenets necessary for reframing the individual's worldview. Thus, this study brings to light the need for the contemporary organization to: 1) understand how an individual's epistemology develops; 2) develop specific, intentional ways that encompass all four tenets of experiential learning; and 3) intentionally create an environment that facilitates the implementation of items 1 and 2—both of which are ontological frame shifting experiences. All of this will lead to the development and maintenance of a better sense of community within the contemporary organization.

## AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study highlights that there are gaps within existing leadership literature surrounding our collective understanding of the nature, role and importance of community. Currently, the literature speaks of the need and importance of community, yet, there little discussion on the constructs that are necessary to enable the contemporary organization to develop and maintain community. This study identifies that any area of inquiry, investigation, or research which improves our understanding of community, its constructs, and the relationships between constructs will be invaluable to our understanding of non-individualized leadership, and that there is considerable further work to be done.

This study also suggests that there is much to be learned about community and leadership from an enriched understanding of how individuals develop and maintain their epistemology (reframing) and the role of experiential learning in aiding in this process. Experiential learning integrates the four tenets of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation—all of which are considered essential for reframing one’s epistemology. Therefore, any research that expands our understanding of experiential learning and its application to leadership is worthy of investigation.

This study also identifies the importance of humility to community and three important variables of humility— listening, silence, and intentionality of communication—as experienced by the participants. Perhaps there are other undiscovered variables and if one were to link all of the possible variables of humility directly to the twelve steps of The Rule, the model might look something like this Community Humility Index (see Table 2).

**TABLE 2**  
**COMMUNITY HUMILITY INDEX**

Seriousness	Step 1
Doing God’s will	Steps 2 & 3
Patience	Step 4
Radical Self-Honesty	Step 5
Yielding to others	Steps 6, 7 and 8
Restraint of Speech	Steps 9, 10 and 11

Source: Adapted from Casey (2001) *A Guide to Living in the Truth: Saint Benedict’s Teaching on Humility*, Liguori/Trumph.

The twelfth step of The Rule is not included as it represents mastery of the other eleven steps. Therefore, any research that attempts to develop a Community Humility Index would be invaluable to further refining our understanding of community and transforming leadership.

Finally, an additional aspect of this study is the notion that every community has a rhythm to its daily activities, managed or not. Ideally, this rhythm would include structures and cycles that allow for prayer, worship (gratitude), meditation (mindfulness), and reflection. Any future study that investigates the notion of community rhythm can only improve our understanding of community and non-individualized leadership.

## CONCLUSION

This study has shown that humility is an essential ingredient for the development and maintenance of community and that there are at least three essential variables—listening, reflective silence, and intentionality of communication—that greatly aid in developing humility. This research has also shown that rhythm of the community is another essential ingredient to developing community and that there is comfort and clarity of purpose and objectives within the rhythm which can further enhance the community itself, particularly when the rhythm emphasizes the practical notions of community to which Nirenberg (1994/1995) refers. Finally, the findings have demonstrated that experiential learning can greatly aid in the development of an individual’s epistemology and is specifically achieved by ensuring

all four elements of learning—concrete experience, abstract conceptualization, reflective observation, and active experimentation—are taking place. The end result will be an enlightened sense of engagement by the individual. Consequently, the connection between experiential learning and the development and maintenance of leaders is profound.

Community members that share a strong identity, a common purpose and interpretation of the purpose, and a high directional intensity also stimulate individual and organizational learning. This generates the unique combination of stability while, at the same time, enhances organizational capacity for adaptive change and long-term sustainability (Garvin et al., 2008; and Hammersley-Fletcher & Brundrett, 2005). The Monks of Saint Benedict have demonstrated for 1,500 years that, for community to stand the test of time, the elements of humility, a consistent daily rhythm, and the use of experiential learning, particularly reflection, are essential. These components help to build and maintain community, one where a non-individualized practice of leadership exists.

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