IS LEADERSHIP AN IDEOLOGY? A RESEARCH PROJECT INSPIRED BY T. W. ADORNO

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: On the assumption that leadership is a social construction driven by interests, this article presents the results of an empirical research designed with the purpose of investigating the concept of leadership.

Originality/gap/relevance/implications: The originality is the use of empirical procedures inspired by the work of an author often quoted in studies of theoretical and essayistic nature, but whose work in empirical research is little known among us.

Key methodological aspects: The methodological procedures were chosen inspired by those used by T. W. Adorno in F scale production, which was oriented to identify contradictions, opposing views and unusual aspects not usually found in general literature on this subject.

Summary of key results: It was identified that the exercise of leadership is motivated by interests – not those of one class against another, but those within the same social class – which are presented from different points of view, depending on whether the individual is or is not playing this role; there is a tendency to hide the relationship between the leadership and the exercise of power, and also that leaders that were in activity tend to hide the interests related to the exercise of this social role (such as the financial ones), as well as trying to characterize leadership as something extraordinary – characterization not recognized by many of the individuals who were no longer playing that role; and finally, that interests may be also related to the opportunity to offer training programs for the development of "leadership skills".

Key considerations/conclusions: The results allow a deconstruction of some of the speeches involving aspects usually presented as characterizing this construct and suggests new research ways to seek the understanding of this object.

KEYWORDS

Leadership. Ideology. Interests. Adorno. Negative dialetics.

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the course of the approaches taken from the beginning of the twentieth century, the object to which the concept of leadership refers has resisted being grasped. In the first extensive review of the subject, Stogdill (1948) concludes that "there are as many definitions of leadership as people who tried to surround the concept" (Bass, 1997, p. 7). Bennis and Nanus (1988) also conclude that the academy would have produced more than 350 examples of the term "leadership settings" before the 1980s. Approach optics have also multiplied since people are seeking to relate the lead with personal attributes, behavior styles, a mix of features, styles and situations, its purpose – which originated the concepts of transactional and transformational leadership (Burns, 1978) – and culture, to name a few major lines that have guided the research in nations, including Brazil (Cavazotte, Moreno & Bernardo, 2013).

What would justify the creation of a term with such a polysemic characteristic which, at different times, identifies different objects in the world of practice? This question will guide the discussion in, and is the object of, this article.

This theoretical and empirical study assumes that leadership is a power relation, whose concept was motivated by interests, as it was being built throughout the twentieth century, allowing us to see it as a social construct that characterizes an ideology. From this perspective, this study presents an empirical approach enlightened by the negative dialectics of T. W. Adorno. It is important to note that T. W. Adorno did not develop a specific theory on leadership. What will inspire this investigation are the **methods** used by that author to perform an empirical approach to social objects, whose concepts can be classified in an ideological construction.

2. A HISTORICAL APPROACH TO THE CONCEPT

Since Stogdill (1948), many historical reviews on "leadership" begin their approaches in the early twentieth century. Even when historical examples are used, these examples are chosen using criteria established in the course of discussions of the twentieth century. But one could question if it would be appropriate to apply the concept of leadership, as understood today, in another socio-cultural framework, as if the authors who write today on the subject were saying, "well, it's obvious that these people are leadership role models!".

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But if we need an appropriate place to protect the ideology, this is the obvious area (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1971). Critical authors, such as Kelly *et al.* (2006, p. 184), have raised some questions along these lines:

> In seeking to understand what is so 'special' about leaders and leadership, and how to distinguish the good from the bad, the solution to the problem, which often remains largely unexplained, is how leadership emerges as a word, a concept, or an observable practice that is employed in the world of the practitioner.

We have conducted a brief investigation on the origin of the term in Portuguese. The Houaiss Portuguese Dictionary (Houaiss & Villar, 2001) identifies the first record of the term "leader" in Portuguese around the year 1900. Gauging this information in an older Portuguese dictionary (Séguier, 1931), the word *líder* was not found. At that time, there was only the term "leader" as a term taken from the English language, meaning "the one that has more visibility in a political party".

The etymology in Portuguese is of course the English term "leader," as "something or someone that guides" (Houaiss & Villar, 2001, p. 1755). The first record in English is dated from the fourteenth century, but it was not possible to know whether the **connotation** at that time would be consistent with the existing one today. The above quote from Kelly *et al.* (2006) indicates that, for English-speaking authors, there is also doubt about how the term acquires its current connotation, questioning the "naturalness" admitted by current authors. And that leads to another question: how people in the Portuguese-speaking countries referred, until the early twentieth century, to the social situation that is meant today to be a leadership relationship, and also to the actor in that relationship that is now referred to as a leader?

One clue is the close relationship between leadership and power relations. For several authors (Sparrowe & Liden, 1997; Brass, 1984; Kilduff & Krackhardt, 1994), "leadership" involves some kind of "influence exerted by A on B", a definition also used in power relations (Clegg, 2002). Authors, like Smircich and Morgan (1982), working from the perspective of organizational culture, see leadership as something "realized in the process whereby one or more individuals succeed in attempting to frame and define the reality of others" (Smircich & Morgan, 1982, p. 258), also relating it to power. Even authors of functionalist orientation like Bennis and Nanus (1988) identify that, regardless of the many existing definitions of leadership, a common denominator for all of them is the close relationship between the concepts of **leadership and power**.

Would it be possible to establish a relationship between leadership, power relations and the late onset of the term in Portuguese – or even in other languages? The historical moment of capitalism in the late nineteenth century, when the first references to leadership are identified, may be a clue. According to Barker (2001, p. 471):

> The canon of industrial-era leadership theories is an adaptation of the hierarchical view of the universe adopted by the early Christian Church, and presumes that leadership is all about the person at the top of the hierarchy, this person's exceptional qualities and abilities to manage the structure of the hierarchy and the activities of this person in relation to goal achievement.

That is, what is meant by leadership today, in the organization's view, was built from our knowledge of social hierarchies, their command structures and control, and the power relations involved in them – which will also be the tools used for validating the theory – but the result of these constructions and validations had not been subjected to a critical analysis. The model used is war, centered on the image of a "phallic" and powerful leader at the top of a hierarchical structure who controls everything related to this structure. The **power** of the leader, in this sense, is founded on knowledge, control, and ability to win (the war) – which, transposed into capitalist organizations, means gaining market share or other assets, financial or material (Barker, 2001).

Alvesson and Sveningsson (2003, p. 379) found in their research that:

> The empirical data point to the disappearance of leadership. A closer look, which is sensitive to inconsistencies and deviations from those characteristics of leadership, shows that these dissolve. Not as speech it stands. Neither the massive presence of scripts for the articulation of leadership in contemporary organizations, provided by popular publications and business educators seem sufficient to produce a coherent treatment of this matter.

But what Alvesson and Sveningsson (2003) show is not new. Calder (1977) had already raised the possibility of the term **leadership** being just a label for what were known as interpersonal influences, to which was added the **privilege** construct –reinforced by the symbolic effects of ceremonies, selection processes and initiation into leadership (Pfeffer, 1977). That is, on the one hand, the mainstream addresses the leader and leadership as an

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unproblematic fact of reality, which, from a functionalist point of view, should be known in order to make possible actions – such as training and developing leaders and leadership, or identifying "dysfunctions" to be addressed in order to increase the effectiveness of leader and leadership. On the other hand, critical authors, such as Alvesson and Sveningsson (2003) and Calder (1977), cast doubt on the reality of leadership. Between them, interpretationist authors identify leadership as a social construction which enables us to explain its relationship with other constructs, but without addressing the reasons for its construction. An approach that seeks to address what actually occurs in these relationships should consider these various movements – thus choosing a dialectical approach to attempt to achieve this objective.

In contradiction to what occurs in positivism – for which the identification of a contradiction must eliminate the knowledge that generated it, generating another knowledge free of contradictions – the *Negative Dialectics of T. W. Adorno* (2009) admits that social reality is contradictory, since it is the result of a collective construction, and not something that is "given" by reality. In this approach, the contradiction points to a "block" of an expectation generated by reality diagnosis –which, in its turn, is historically determined. Hence, to T. W. Adorno, you may know of a social object seeking not to eliminate its contradictions but, on the contrary, seeking the contradictions within it – that is to say, a social object that is what it is not despite its contradictions, but because of them.

For Gemmill and Oakley (1992), leadership is an ideology that aims to support the existing social order, providing an explanation for disorders, such as pointing where to find guilty. And, for Adorno and Horkheimer (1971), ideology is a justification which refers to a spiritual product which has emerged in the social process as something autonomous and endowed with legitimacy. This occurs in situations where power relations are not transparent and where, in the way they are presented today, are confused with reality.

Well, if leadership is an ideology, the question to be answered is "whom does it interest?". A clue can be found in an event which occurred during a conference on leadership, as reported by Barker (2001, p. 469):

> Faculty members of internationally-known leadership education programs involved themselves in a discussion about what to call leadership: is it an art, a study, a discipline, a theoretical construct, what? The discussion was interrupted by the dinner's speaker, who inadvertently answered the question by declaring that leadership is an industry. This answer may indicate something about mounting criticism,

> that is, that selling of leadership training and education has created an *a priori* agenda in advance of research and conclusions about leadership.

If this is the case, the academy may even be interested in avoiding a precise definition that could destroy the myth that, for some individuals in society, a greater share of wealth and power would be reserved related to their abilities to lead (Barker, 2001).

The conceptual development that guided the research on leadership in the twentieth century until the 1980s assumes the superiority of a "natural" and "unproblematic" leader, dismissing any analysis of relations between leadership and power, as being "natural" and "legitimate." This functionalism discusses the exercise of power under the title of "resistance" (and not "relation of power"), which is presented as "illegitimate" and "dysfunctional" (Mintzberg, 1983; Gordon, 2002), and which allows leadership to be easily put within the criteria for the characterization of an ideology, as presented by Adorno and Horkheimer (1971).

But what about the approaches developed in the "new leadership" from the 1980s? What is clear from the analysis of Bryman (2009) is that these approaches not only have the assumption of "naturalness," but also concentrate the focus of their attention on the organizational summit. In fact, even more so than "naturalness," Bass (1997) proposes a universal transactional--transformational paradigm of leadership.

Even in models that seek to take focus off the leader, as in the dispersed and distributed leadership, which replaces the focus in the process (Gronn, 2002), power relations are ignored, regardless of what Clegg (2002) called "deep structures" maintaining the social and cultural patterns of behavior built in relation to power, naturalized to the members of that social group. These structures not only prevent the leadership proposed by these models from occurring "naturally," but also allow dominant power holders to continue to exercise it through a network over which they have some control in another exercise of power (Gordon, 2002).

However, authors identified with the mainstream for some time also identify limitations in current approaches. Gardner (1990, p. XIX) anticipates that "in the mid-21st century, people will see our present practices as primitive," and Day *et al.* (2014), in reviewing research and theory developed in the last 25 years, concluded that the field continues to be relatively immature – and, therefore, full of opportunities for theoreticians and researchers. These opportunities are the ones that this research seeks to explore.

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Reviews of research in the mainstream that take into account the complexity of the field – such as those that recognize the need to investigate from the different levels of analysis performed by Dionne *et al.* (2014) – had the sole purpose of continuing to take into account the various levels at which leadership can be found. A recent review of Avolio, Walumbwa and Webwe (2014) identifies, as future trends for the theories currently in progress, more holistic approaches involving different angles of leadership – the followers, the context, the various levels and interaction between them – as well as the process in which the leadership is taking place – trends that have already been identified in most of the critical approaches presented earlier in this paper.

Based on these considerations, we proposed a survey whose goal was the characterization of leadership relationships within a specific social group. Considering the reasons presented above, the negative dialectic of T. W. Adorno was chosen as a guide for such an investigation.

3. METHODOLOGY

As there is no systematization of methodological procedures to guide a researcher interested in an empirical approach to the social object based on the proposal of T. W. Adorno, besides his theory (Adorno, 1995; 2008; 2009; Adorno & Horkheimer, 1971), this investigation also considered the general principles that guided the research conducted for the development of the F scale (Adorno *et al.*, 1982). The space available in a paper does not allow us to present in details a methodology which, besides its sociological and philosophical foundation, has no unique formula, making it impossible to discuss relevant aspects to the necessary extent here, runs the risk of generating deadly simplifications of complex reasoning. Here we will use the best possible effort to ensure that relevant aspects of this kind of empirical research are understood. A reader interested in more details should be referred to the works of the author, as presented in references. In case of interest to know in more details the set of methodological procedures used to conduct the research, the thesis that motivated it should also be consulted (Vilela, 2012).

In conducting the research, leadership was not considered something given and natural, but a social construction whose reality is expressed by the fact that people organize themselves with this assumption. This obscures the fact that these people could organize using other chosen assumptions, often contradictory, as in other social constructions.

For the choice of empirical analysis units for the survey, a professional field was considered, because it has many associative institutions, each one relying on its own "leadership", and involving the same people – or a large number of them – in different institutions, in different positions in those institutions. In a network of organizations in a professional field, people can take on different social roles at different times –sometimes as follower, other times as leader, if the same individual is observed in the larger social structure of a network of inter-institutional relationships. In this sense, considering the leader-follower dyad that defines a particular individual in the social group, one individual should be both leader and follower at the same time.

We chose "leaders" in a network of organizations of associative character in a particular professional field and in one of the States of Brazil. Within the network, the choice criteria included holding the position of president (or chief executive officer), which is accessed through a process of political choice among peers. Although a board may have operational functions, the position of president highlights one of the directors for the exercise of representation and political activities with other institutions, making the position's role less associated with management functions and characterizing it more appropriately as a leadership position – at least, according to the concept operationalized by the mainstream.

After evaluating possible forms of expression of contradictions in the leading role in this social group, we introduced into the research – in order to induce the expression of contradictions – the observation of the evolution of the network of relationships over time, considering that today's group leaders may not be the same as in the past, as they also may not be the same tomorrow. The interviews were then conducted with two groups considered to belong to the same network and leadership typology: a group of leaders identified from the above criteria in activity at the time of the research, and a group of individuals who were in the same positions in the past and that, at the time of the survey, did not hold leadership positions in the group – occupying the lead role only **conceptually** in this social group.

The total group was composed of 33 individuals, 16 "leaders" of membership organizations in activity at the time of the research, and 17 individuals who were presidents or leaders in associative organizations, but that at the time of the survey did not perform roles in their associative groups which could be characterized as leadership. As to gender, groups were composed of 30 men and three women. The interviews formed the basis of the research, but the official texts were also used – including newspapers from that category and meeting minutes, notes of attendance at meetings. Quantitative features, such as descriptive statistics, were used only for the

purpose of supporting work with qualitative data in order to organize the data produced in the interviews. Procedures, such as U statistics, were also used for analyzing differences between groups, when needed for comparisons of numerically organized data.

The question that initiated the interview sought not to induce in the respondent an idea of the object, but to encourage to express what it is identified as such in their reality. The question merely requested: "Tell me your story related to the theme of leadership", allowing him/her to carry out the association as they wished. The assumption was that leadership was something identified and existing, but ideological, and it should exist not as something given, natural and necessary, but coexisting with its own hidden aspects to be explored. The concept of leadership – a universal one – can be understood only from individuals who participate in social relationships that they understand as leadership relationships. There was no established time: some interviews took about 30 minutes, others more than an hour – one nearly three hours – but most lasted between 40 minutes and one hour. They were recorded with a digital recorder, allowing both literal transcription and filing. Some categories for analysis were created from the interviews, organized in Excel® spreadsheets. The aspects spontaneously emerging from the interviews were gathered in each category. The result, with the generic title that characterizes it, is presented in Chart 1.

(Chart 1)

CATEGORIES CREATED FOR EACH OPENED SPREADSHEET

Spreadsheet	Category
1	Beginning of the reporting and leadership experience within the family.
2	Participation in groups in childhood and adolescence.
3	Associative and political party participation in university life.
4	Associative and political activities at the beginning of working life.
5	How he/she practices leadership.
6	Leadership concept; positive and negative examples; differences with management.
7	Age and gender.
8	The five dimensions and the 60 facets of the NEO-PI-R.
9	If not in a leadership activity, the reason for removal.

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

The next step was to transform data in nonparametric variables. Using descriptive statistics, data were presented in charts, in order to bring them closer to comparisons with the potential to highlight relevant information. They were organized in the simplest form of frequency distribution, gathering data in one group for leaders in activity, and in another for individuals who were no longer in the leadership role at the time of the research. For comparisons between these two groups, hypothesis testing was carried out, using statistical package Minitab 16®, and the null hypothesis investigated whether the groups were similar.

It is important to note that the descriptive statistics were used for the organization of data, and were not intended to generalize conclusions from statistical analysis. Not only was the number of individuals in each group insufficient to propose generalizations, but the categories were also formed by selection criteria (not random), and some "variables" have few occurrences which can be considered to belong to generalizations. The research is qualitative, using numbers for the purpose of organizing the data for **qualitative** comparisons.

For comparisons within the same group, the assessment of the average behavior of individuals intended to observe coherence with the related theory, as well as with direct research discrepancies, the unusual and the unexpected – both from the theory and in relation to its average behavior in the group. In some comparative charts produced, the existing categories did not allow comparison using U statistics (because the data were textual, or because there were few individuals in a category). In such cases, all data were arranged in the form of frequency distributions, and the distributions were compared between these two groups.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From the analysis of the interviews, we identified four aspects related to the concepts of "leader" and "leadership," which will be presented separately, but which are part of the same constellation of concepts that are dialectically integrated in sequence.

4.1. Concept formulation

There were three identified categories: 1. the perception of (non) identity between leadership and management; 2. the relationship between the

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concept and the experience of leadership; and 3. the perception of leadership as something born with the individual, or something that can be developed.

Bringing together the findings of those three categories, we may consider that: 1. the concept of leadership is not understood the same way by all members of the social group. This concept can be influenced by the relationship with the followers – whether the interests of the leader are oriented toward himself, or toward the interests of the community – a difference that offers the potential to facilitate or hinder the maintenance of the leader in leadership positions; 2. being part of a leadership activity can facilitate the realization that the concept cannot capture what it is, exactly, but may also hamper the identification of present differences in the concept – such as those between leading and management; 3. results may refer to the mixture of representative functions with management functions – individuals who only experienced the leadership role as a manager of an organization can find it harder to perceive differences between the two roles, as well as more difficult to formulate their concepts of leadership; 4. experiencing in practice the difficulties of exercising the role of leader of a social group can facilitate the realization that, if there is some innate factor (such as personality) facilitating the exercise of this paper, there will also be a component even more relevant to learning and personal development in effective exercise; 5. although not necessary, exercising leadership increases the possibility that the individual will be identified as a leader. The reverse is also true: not exercising leadership increases the possibility that an individual with a long history of leadership will not be identified as a leader; and 6. the fact that an individual who performs the role of leader is not considered a leader may be more related to factors related to the identification (or non-identification) mechanisms with other leaders of his or her social group, than to difficulties in concept formulation. In this process, the characteristics of **followers** are important both to the process of identification and to concept formulation – which points to a dialectical tension between the individual that leads and the follower in a leadership relationship.

4.2. The relationship between leadership and the exercise of power

This relationship is not clear to most respondents, having identified a contradiction in the formulation of the two concepts: during interviews, when asked to present a concept of leadership, **none** of the respondents

made direct references to the relationship between leadership and the exercise of power. However, if asked to define "power", most of them spontaneously established its relationship with leadership. References to power were immediate in some cases and in others mediated by concepts, such as influence or the "ability to alter or change reality" – concepts which are indirectly related to the relationship of power.

Other aspects of the exercise of power identified in the interviews are that: 1.power may be exercised coercively, by force or by structure; 2. it may also be exercised through influence. In this case, the individual mobilizes innate or acquired abilities to conduct a directed speech to strategically achieve his or her goal; and 3. the relationship between the exercise of power and leadership was established only by leaders who were not exercising this role – reflecting the possibility of an ideological component in the discourse on leadership, pointing to their approach to analyze the relationship between leadership and interests.

4.3. Leadership and interests

We identified in the interviews, at least, four types of interests:

- **Financial order** – in situations in which the leading position involves better pay than what the individual could earn in his/her usual activities. In this case, the findings indicated that: 1. **interests of a** financial nature are presented by individuals with experience in the leading role (active or not) as something that can affect the results of the leader's action; 2. it is possible that some leaders seek to remain in leadership positions primarily for reasons of financial survival; and 3. these two aspects point to the perception that "leadership" is actually just another activity, among others, within the social division of labor.
- **Relating to the differentiation in the social group they represent** – which may be associated with personal vanity. In this case, 1. social projection issued by the exercise of a leadership role can be considered a substitute for financial return; 2. we have not found evidence to confirm the relationship between a behavior identified as involving individual vanity and what theory calls narcissism – as seen in Vries (1990); and "vanity", in the sense of seeking social projection, was not perceived as a negative; in the sense of "low modesty" – which is related by theory to the concept of narcissism – it was perceived as something negative.

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- Opportunity **to increase their visibility to achieve other personal goals** – such as the increase of their own business activity. This aspect was mentioned verbally by inactive leaders, but observed in the behavior of active leaders in a meeting of one of the organizations.
- **Interest in the type of work performed by the "executive"** – as opposed to the "operational" work of his/her professional class. In this aspect, we have identified that: 1. the possibility that the leader seeks to find in this type of activity something that he/she does not usually find in the exercise of activities belonging to his/her professional field; 2. an interface with power relations; and 3. again, leadership in the social division of labor, strengthening what was observed in first item number 3, considering that "executive" work involves not only the top positions in the hierarchy, but also greater expected gains for these positions.

As it appeared in more than one point in the analyzed material, this aspect shall be detailed as follows.
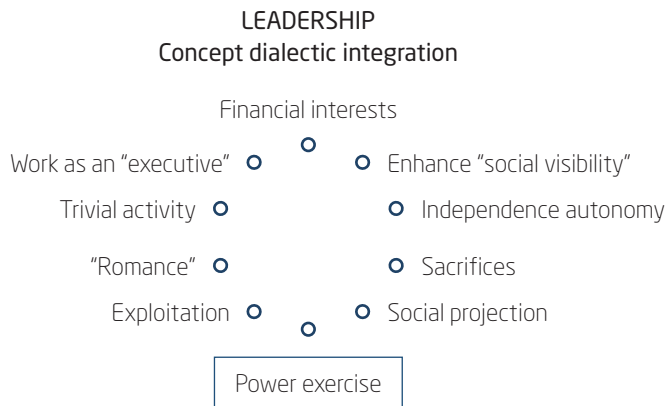
5. LEADERSHIP AND THE SOCIAL DIVISION OF LABOR

There were three different "visions" of the concept identified in this respect:

1. **Leadership as a trivial activity and the "romance" of leadership**. We observed: 1. a greater tendency for leaders who are actively employed to replicate a more "romanticized" speech about leadership; 2. in contrast, some respondents (both active and inactive leaders) spontaneously presented the perception of leadership being a non-exceptional activity like any other within the social division of labor; and 3. a dialectical approach. Leadership is common place in mobilizing resources that the individual uses in his or her usual activities and is exceptional if the skills identified as necessary for this exercise are not easily found. The both can be desired and rejected by the other.

2. **Leadership in Optical "Exploitation" and Sacrifice**. We observed: 1. a trend among inactive leaders to evaluate sacrifices from the viewpoint of "exploitation" – a feeling of being used by the followers. We perceived a resentful tone in some speeches; 2. a trend, among active leaders, to evaluate sacrifices from the viewpoint of involving romanticized visions of the role of leader – perceiving a playful tone in some speeches; and

3. opposing the previous two points, a resentful tone in the speeches of inactive leaders may be related to the perception of a "sacrifice" not recognized by the followers, while for active leaders the playful character points to the perception of this recognition.

3. **Leadership, from the perspective of autonomy and independence.** Here, the findings were that: autonomy was presented as a value by active and inactive leaders; financial independence was cited as a value only by leaders in business; and financial independence and autonomy are seen as being in contrast to financial interests – those who are oriented by financial interest can lose autonomy.

Integrating the concept dialectically, the various aspects presented must be integrated in order to include those contradictory aspects – which can be visualized in Figure 1:

Figure 1
INTEGRATING SEVERAL DIFFERENT ASPECTS IDENTIFIED IN THE CONCEPT

LEADERSHIP
Concept dialectic integration

Financial interests

Work as an "executive"   Enhance "social visibility"

Trivial activity   Independence autonomy

"Romance"   Sacrifices

Exploitation   Social projection

Power exercise

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

6. OPENING THE CONCEPT

Two questions guide the search for meaning of the concept, which was integrated in the previous section:

- What could be ideological in leadership, based on these findings?
- Considering that the history of the concept of leadership is identified only in the twentieth century, could management literature have something to do with it, as Barker (2001) suggested?

The content of courses and training for "building leaders" may be a clue. The way leadership is presented in MBAs, professional journals, seminars and consultancies may have intended (whether consciously or not) the conformation of discourse, allowing the individual to identify in his/her story situations that justify the pursuit for playing that role. It is not irrelevant to note that, in both groups investigated in the research, the confusion between leadership and management led many respondents to seek MBAs to "prepare for the exercise of leadership" – even though they had already been identified as leaders within their social groups.

But feelings of having been exploited and the perceived sacrifices required by the leadership role have not been the objects of investigation in the mainstream theory of leadership. What could be the meaning of this absence for this ideological construction?

Some degree of sacrifice and exploitation is commonly found in the exercise of different roles within the social division of labor. But, if leadership must be presented as something extraordinary, and the skills to exercise something out of the ordinary – that, therefore, should be developed or "acquired" at high cost with courses, coaching and consulting – the sacrifices appointed as proper for its exercise can even be overvalued, justifying an expectation for greater incomes.

However, the feeling of being exploited does not seem to be compatible with the exercise of an unusual and extraordinary function – in the "common sense," the leader is often seen as one that exploits, not as one of the exploited. It is not irrelevant that this aspect has been cited only by leaders who were no longer playing that role. Equating the exercise of leadership to what happens in the exercise of ordinary roles might reduce its "aura" and, therefore, the perceived value of the role of leader, lowering both the expected value for those who must pay for the exercise of leadership (as when hiring executives) and the status and social recognition associated with the role – which could reduce the incentive for the development of personal characteristics that facilitate their exercise.

The person in the leading role will either use the financial compensation to justify the sacrifices the role of leader imposes – and, if so, what is presented as a sacrifice could be a reason for gains in differentiation and

status – or will be satisfied with the social recognition of the group as expressed by the maintenance of these roles, gain in social projection, or both, which can provide a kind of social capital to his/her strategy for future earnings – again, financial and/or status. If there were perceived gains and recognition, the leader sees leadership as something playful, exercised with pleasure – albeit with the need for "sacrifices". Not realizing gains, sacrifices are identified with the feeling of being used or "exploited" by followers. In this case, he/she abandons these roles and will use his or her skills to obtain compensation (financial, social recognition or status) in other valued roles, although without the glamor brought by the leading social position – glamor that, from now on, will be criticized, or will be the subject of a rationalization that depreciates it, as perceived in interviews with some inactive leaders.

Values expressed in the autonomy and independence of the leader may be important in providing the group with a way to evaluate the adherence of the leader to common values, when the group has to choose one individual as its leader – what is defined in the literature as "leadership emergence". However, if leaders' vision for autonomy and independence will lead them to collide with the values held by the group, this group may remove the same individuals from leadership positions, since they are no longer identified as the standard-bearers of these collective values – in other words, they cannot achieve what the literature addresses as effectiveness in leadership.

In this sense, we may expect that an unquestionable adherence to values identified as collective justifies the choice and maintenance of an individual in leadership roles, as well as the perception by the group of a vision in the leader that is opposed to the same values, which could be related to the rejection of these individuals as leaders of the group. That is, it is debatable whether an individual who wishes to be effective and remain in the role of leader can sustain independent and autonomous positions.

If autonomy and independence are important for the choice, but not for the maintenance, of the leader, what can be said about the situation of revolutionary leaders – can they be understood as leaders that bind people around changes or the breaking of current values? We may consider these leaders individuals who identified values in the group that either are not recognized as such any more, or that are denied by the established leadership. And leaders that are not identified with the "new values" will either be replaced by new leaders, or will spontaneously quit the role of leader in these groups.

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In research material, leaders with "revolutionary" profiles were found in greater number among the inactive ones – perhaps because they were leaders of groups whose values have either changed, or which were not, at the time of the investigation, the most significant values for the group. This may also explain why inactive leaders address the leadership from the viewpoint of "exploitation" – because their values were not recognized as collective values by the group.
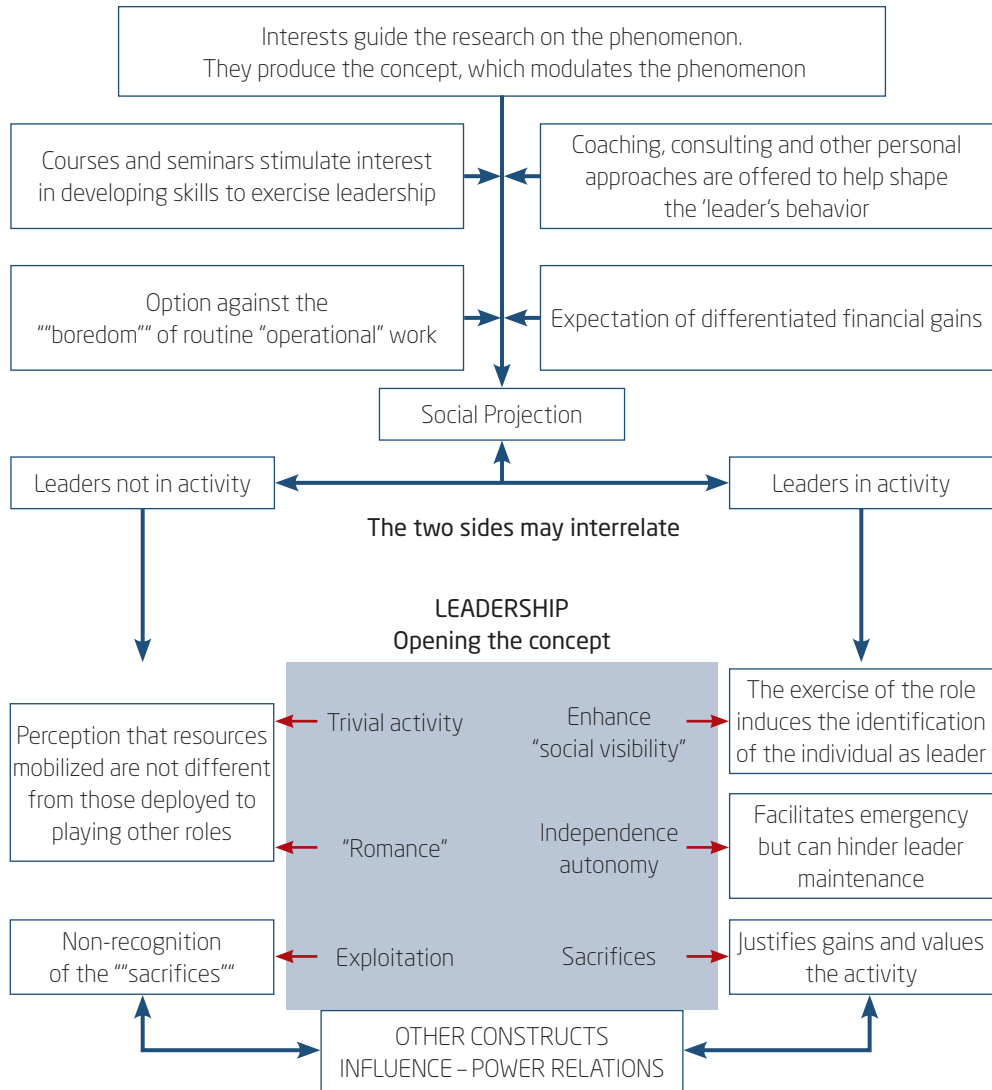
Leaders in activities that led groups with more stable values – or which were resistant to change – presented more romanticized views, in line with the mainstream, with quotes that could easily fit them into constructs as authentic leadership, transformational or effective, but whose practices could easily be framed as what has been described as "banal" leadership actions: routine management acts which relate to work as the "executive" of an organization.

Carroll, Parker, and Inkson (2010) identified a way to escape "boredom" as one motivation to pursue activities known as "leadership" – an unexpected finding of their research, in contrast to the "pursuit of challenges" and creativity, which are the motivations usually found in leaders' speeches. In our research, the closest finding for this kind of motivation was the desire for activities presented as executive functions. Considering that the investigated individuals were part of a professional group whose work (as in any professional group) involves a certain degree of routine, it is possible that some of the respondents have sought, as motivation to take on the role of leader, a solution to the boredom or dissatisfaction with their professional activity as they experienced it. But it is no simple task to separate this possibility from the interest in prime position in a power relation or from the financial gains expected for this position – which may be greater than the income one individual would earn in the execution of their usual business activities.

Making a rearrangement in Figure 1, the concept of leadership can be represented as a construct, organizing an association of interests, whose relative importance will vary in individual cases – depending on personality characteristics, expectations related to previous experiences, the social role that a leader plays in the group and other personal factors – in a schematically represented association in Figure 2.

Figure 2

OPENING THE CONCEPT USING THE IDENTIFIED INTERESTS

Interests guide the research on the phenomenon.
They produce the concept, which modulates the phenomenon

Courses and seminars stimulate interest in developing skills to exercise leadership

Coaching, consulting and other personal approaches are offered to help shape the 'leader's behavior

Option against the ""boredom"" of routine "operational" work

Expectation of differentiated financial gains

Social Projection

Leaders not in activity

Leaders in activity

The two sides may interrelate

LEADERSHIP
Opening the concept

Perception that resources mobilized are not different from those deployed to playing other roles

Trivial activity

Enhance "social visibility"

The exercise of the role induces the identification of the individual as leader

"Romance"

Independence autonomy

Facilitates emergency but can hinder leader maintenance

Non-recognition of the ""sacrifices""

Exploitation

Sacrifices

Justifies gains and values the activity

OTHER CONSTRUCTS
INFLUENCE – POWER RELATIONS

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

The final result can be understood as a constellation whose components are related not in a systemically interdependent way, but in a "looser" way, which we may use the neologism "inter**in**dependent" representing a universal whose components have relative importance to different specific cases.

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Each of the "boxes" presents a concept derived from the interpretation of the data − which can be improved, refined or modified, depending on new data sets that could modify the interpretation. Other constructs were also added − **influence** and **power relations** − which can be formed by another constellation of concepts. For the chosen social group, the analysis of the data identified a universal, formed by the constellation of concepts which, as a universal, can be applied to other social groups and modulated by characteristics found in these groups, adding or removing aspects of concept and reformulating it to a new context.

7. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ideology is often compared to a veil, something that hides reality. For Adorno and Horkheimer (1971, p. 204), however, ideology today is "the threatening image of the world" − hence the difficulty of its identification, mingling it with the **obvious**.

From the fundamentals of T. W. Adorno, we employed several procedures which are considered appropriate auxiliary tools to break the "ideological shell" of the obvious, inside and outside. It is very likely that another researcher could choose another procedure, or did not choose any of the procedure used here to break the same "shell". From the theory, the data produced, although modified, should access the same **universal** of various particulars that was the object of the research.

The results found in the empirical material provide the basis for putting leadership in the ideology category, as presented by Adorno and Horkheimer (1971), because:

- its exercise is motivated by interests − not class interest (one class against another), but the ones identified in the research object, involving individuals belonging to the same social class;
- those interests are presented from different points of view, depending on whether the individual is or is not exercising the leadership role (the social class did not change, but the position of the individual within its class);
- we observed a tendency to hide the relationship between leadership and power − the term "hide" here is associated with the fact that the relationship is recognized only when the discussed topic is power, not leadership;

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- it was also observed that leaders in activity, in addition to a tendency to hide interests related to the exercise of this role (such as financial interests), sought to characterize the leadership as something extraordinary, or out of the ordinary − which was not recognized as true by many individuals who have been in leadership roles, and who were no longer in that role at the moment of the interview;
- the interests may not only be those of individuals who will use behavioral characteristics (innate or learned), to justify a differentiation for financial gain, status or working mode in relation to their social group, but they may also justify identified opportunities to benefit from offering training programs for the development of these characteristics – supported by "search results".

The leadership construct resists a single definition, as multiple concepts that compose it can acquire relative importance at different times, to justify different uses − such as when the aim settles a privileged position in terms of earnings and status in the job market. Its proximity to other constructs, such as power and influence, can also have a use within what might be called the "politically correct", avoiding the use of a term like "power" in situations which could generate some kind of rejection – such as talking about leadership to justify a relationship that is effectively a power relation. Perhaps, because of these aspects, the term has the ambiguous character often referred to therein.

In this regard, it may be even possible to anticipate the emergence of new meanings of the concept, with the purpose of justification of any other form of social relation, marked by asymmetry in power relations and motivated by the ability of an individual to influence the behavior of his/her peers. To assess this hypothesis, we hope that this work will help to foster the development of new concepts.

SERIA A LIDERANÇA UMA IDEOLOGIA? UMA INVESTIGAÇÃO INSPIRADA POR T. W. ADORNO

RESUMO

Objetivo: Partindo do pressuposto de que a liderança é uma construção social motivada por interesses, esse artigo apresenta o resultado de uma pesquisa social empírica desenhada com o objetivo de investigar o conceito de liderança.

Originalidade/lacuna/relevância/implicações: A originalidade está na utilização de procedimentos empíricos inspirados no trabalho de um autor muito citado em estudos de natureza teórica e ensaística, mas cujo percurso na investigação empírica é pouco conhecido em nosso meio.

Principais aspectos metodológicos: Foram escolhidos procedimentos metodológicos inspirados naqueles utilizados por T. W. Adorno na produção da escala F, orientado para identificar contradições, visões opostas e aspectos inusitados, habitualmente não encontrados na literatura sobre o tema.

Síntese dos principais resultados: Foi identificado que o exercício da liderança é motivado por interesses – não de uma classe contra outra, mas dentro de uma mesma classe social – os quais são apresentados a partir de diversos pontos de vista, dependendo se o indivíduo está ou não no exercício do papel; que há uma tendência a ocultar sua relação com o exercício do poder; que líderes em atividade tendem a ocultar interesses (como os financeiros) envolvidos no exercício desse papel, buscando caracterizá-lo como algo extraordinário e que os interesses podem estar relacionados com a oportunidade de se oferecer programas de treinamentos para o desenvolvimento de "habilidades de liderança".

Principais considerações/conclusões: Esses resultados permitem a desconstrução de discursos envolvendo aspectos habitualmente apresentados como características desse construto, abrindo caminho para novas pesquisas que busquem compreender melhor esse objeto.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Liderança. Ideologia. Interesses. Adorno. Dialética negativa.

EL LIDERAZGO ES UNA IDEOLOGÍA? UNA INVESTIGATIÓN INSPIRADA POR T. W. ADORNO

RESUMEN

Objetivo: En el supuesto de que el liderazgo es una construcción social impulsada por intereses, este artículo presenta los resultados de una investigación social empírica diseñada con el objetivo de investigar el concepto de liderazgo.

Originalidad/laguna/relevancia/implicaciones: La originalidad reside en el uso de procedimientos empíricos inspirados en la obra de un autor citado con frecuencia en los estudios de carácter teórico y ensayístico, pero cuya trayectoria en la investigación empírica es poco conocido en nuestro medio.

Principales aspectos metodológicos: Se eligieron procedimientos metodológicos que se inspiraron en los utilizados por T. W. Adorno en la escala F, orientados para identificar contradicciones, puntos de vista opuestos y aspectos inusuales, que no suelen encontrarse en la literatura sobre el tema

Síntesis de los principales resultados: Se identificó que el ejercicio del liderazgo está motivada por intereses – no de una clase contra otra, pero dentro de la misma clase social – que se presentan desde diferentes puntos de vista, dependiendo de si la persona está o no está ejerciendo el papel de líder; hay una tendencia a ocultar su relación con el ejercicio del poder; que los líderes activos tienden a ocultar los intereses (tales como los financieros) que participan en el ejercicio de esa función, tratando de caracterizarlos como algo extraordinario, y que los intereses pueden estar relacionados con la oportunidad de ofrecer programas de capacitación para el desarrollo de "habilidades de liderazgo".

Principales consideraciones/conclusiones: Estos resultados permiten a la deconstrucción de discursos que implican aspectos por lo general presenta como características de esta construcción, allanando el camino para una nueva investigación que trata de comprender este objeto.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Liderazgo. Ideología. Intereses. Adorno. Dialéctica negativa.

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