



Authentic Leadership: A Theoretical Thematic Analysis of the Contemporary Brazilian Leader's Speech

Maria Isabel de Campos¹  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5949-1583>
Fabián Javier Marín Rueda¹  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5173-0802>

Abstract: Authentic leadership has been prominent in research of organizational behavior since the beginning of this century. This study aimed to investigate the congruence between the theory of authentic leadership, in the form as condensed by some scholars of the area, and the discourse of the contemporary Brazilian leader. Ten professionals with experience in leadership positions participated. This is a qualitative study that used a structured interview for data collection and theoretical thematic analysis for the treatment of the data. The testimonies allowed to discriminate typical discourses of authentic and non-authentic leaders in a congruent way to the theory, regarding the definitions of the components of authentic leadership. We concluded that the findings contribute to the evolution of the construct and provide insights for the continuity of research in the area, suggesting a focus on longitudinal studies.

Keywords: leadership, organizational behavior, qualitative research

Liderança Autêntica: uma Análise Temática Teórica do Discurso do Líder Brasileiro Contemporâneo

Resumo: A liderança autêntica tem se destacado em pesquisas do comportamento organizacional desde o início deste século. Este estudo objetivou investigar a congruência entre a teoria da liderança autêntica, na forma como condensada por alguns estudiosos da área, e o discurso do líder brasileiro contemporâneo. Participaram dez profissionais com experiência em cargos de liderança. Trata-se de um estudo qualitativo que utilizou entrevista estruturada na coleta de dados e análise temática teórica no tratamento dos dados. Os depoimentos possibilitaram discriminar discursos típicos de líderes autênticos e não autênticos de forma congruente à teoria na que diz respeito às definições dos componentes da liderança autêntica. Concluiu-se que os achados contribuem para a evolução do construto e fornecem *insights* para a continuidade de pesquisas na área, sugerindo-se foco em estudos longitudinais.

Palavras-chave: liderança, comportamento organizacional, pesquisa qualitativa

Liderazgo Auténtico: un Análisis Temático Teórico del Discurso del Líder Brasileño Contemporáneo

Resumen: El liderazgo auténtico viene destacándose en investigaciones del comportamiento organizacional a comienzos de este siglo. Este estudio propone investigar la congruencia entre la teoría del liderazgo auténtico, como algunos estudiosos del área la condensaron, y el discurso del líder brasileño contemporáneo. Participaron diez profesionales con experiencia en cargos de liderazgo. Se trata de un estudio cualitativo que utilizó entrevista estructurada en la recolección de datos y análisis temático teórico en el tratamiento de los datos. Las declaraciones posibilitaron discriminar discursos típicos de líderes auténticos y no auténticos de forma congruente a la teoría, en lo que se refiere a las definiciones de los componentes del liderazgo auténtico. Se concluyó que los hallazgos contribuyen a la evolución del construto y aportan *insights* para seguir con las investigaciones en el área, con la recomendación de enfocarse en estudios longitudinales.

Palabras clave: liderazgo, comportamiento organizacional, investigación cualitativa

¹Universidade São Francisco, Campinas-SP, Brazil

Paper derived from the PhD thesis of the first author under supervision of the second, defended in 2018, in the Graduate Program in Psychology, Universidade São Francisco. Support: This study obtained financial support from the Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior (CAPES), process 88887.169052/2018-00. Correspondence address: Maria Isabel de Campos. Universidade São Francisco. Psicologia. R. Waldemar César da Silveira, 105, Jardim Cura D'Arç (SWIFT), Campinas-SP, Brazil. CEP 13.045-510. E-mail: isabel@isabelcampos.com.br

For over a century, the phenomenon of leadership has been the subject of scientific research in Psychology and is still a field that presents several unanswered questions (Avolio & Walumbwa, 2014; Hernandez, Eberly, Avolio, & Johnson, 2011). Although the theme attracted philosophers from ancient Greece and China, the first scientific study in Psychology concerning it was published in 1904, by Terman (as cited in Popper, 2012), conducted with children in an educational environment.

Since then, several theories about leadership have been developed and some have stood out for their contribution to the understanding of the theme, such as the trait theory, the behavioral, the situational, and the theory of transformational leadership (Cutler, 2014). According to Hernandez et al. (2011), a broad understanding of the distinctions among theoretical lines can be achieved in the light of the locus (the source from which the leadership emerges) and the mechanism (the process through which the influence is exercised).

Among many formulated theories, Authentic Leadership (AL) has conquered the interest of academics and organizations from the first decade of the 21st Century (Avolio & Walumbwa, 2014). This interest is motivated by a need for changes and development of the profile of organizational leaders, given that since the end of the 20th century corporate scandals have propagated and their occurrences have promoted economic crises with consequent health and well-being injuries to individuals in a globalized manner.

These types of occurrences lead organizations and society in general to claim for a new kind of leader. A leader that the theory of authentic leadership describes as someone who can achieve the objectives of the organization by maintaining the strictest precepts of ethics, a transparent relationship with their followers and with the various stakeholders within the organization in which they exercise leadership, an ability to make decisions considering and respecting the views of others, as well as a genuine interest in developing new leaders who achieve a similar way of thinking and acting, which demands awareness of themselves and of others (Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans, & May, 2004, Avolio & Walumbwa, 2014; Gardner, Cogliser, Davis, & Dickens, 2011).

It is under this context that Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing and Peterson (2008), based on previously existing theoretical developments (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May, & Walumbwa, 2005; Ilies, Morgeson, & Nahrgang, 2005) define authentic leadership (AL) as a leader's behavior standard. Under this standard, the authentic leader (ALD) takes as basis and promotes positive psychological capacities and a positive ethical climate. He occupies himself with his positive self-development, while also stimulating the development of his followers. The authors clarify that the positive climate of ethics is one of the points that can differentiate the ALD from other types of leaders, for example, the transformational leader, for which moral management would be an implicit and non-focal component to the theory. They also affirm that the ALD does not exert manipulative actions on his followers, aiming to achieving his or the organization's desired goals, remaining faithful to his internalized values, these values being of a positive nature and never manipulative.

AL is understood as a high-order multidimensional construct that encompasses four components (Avolio & Walumbwa, 2014). The first, self-awareness, refers to the ability of the ALD to demonstrate understanding about his strengths and weaknesses and the multifaceted nature of the self, which includes achieving insights through exposure to others and being knowledgeable of the impact he causes on other people. The second component is called relationship transparency, and

refers to the presentation of an authentic self to others, rather than presenting one that is fake or distorted, promoting trust through the sharing of information and the expression of true thoughts and feelings (Walumbwa et al., 2008).

The third component of AL, balanced processing, refers to the demonstration by the leader that he objectively analyzes all relevant data before making a decision. Thus, such a leader requests, of others, points of view that can challenge their deepest and safest positions. Finally, the internalized moral perspective, fourth component of AL, refers to an internalized and integrated way of self-regulation, guided by internal moral standards and values, not by pressures from the group, organization, or society. This results in the expression of decision-making and behavior that are consistent with internalized values (Walumbwa et al., 2008).

Gardner et al. (2011) reported that up to 2008, when the first measurement instrument of AL was published, most of the studies on the subject aimed at constructing and strengthening the theory, and the theorists were mostly American. From then on, studies with an empirical focus emerged, aiming to verify and improve the theory, the quality of measuring instruments, and the construction of a nomological network. These authors considered it not feasible to understand an ALD as being someone totally authentic. For them, the ALD can be seen as a leader who is more or less authentic, i.e., who can be described as someone who behaves more (or less) closely to the behavior standard defined as that of an authentic leader. These authors also defended the need for more conclusive studies, so that the construct could be considered as consolidated and encouraged academics to develop more critical publications to the theory and new ways to evaluate AL, using different methods from those applied until then.

Regarding the theoretical context, in fact, criticisms emerged about how authenticity or inauthenticity were being approached by theory. Algera and Lips-Wiersma (2012) argued that inauthenticity is inevitable, that authenticity requires the creation of an individual's own meaning and that its existence does not imply congruence of objectives and values, nor it is intrinsically ethical. They suggested that the focus of the studies should change from the leader to understanding the conditions under which all members of an organization behave in an authentic way.

A similar view had already been published by Ford and Harding (2011), who argued that the ALD, as described by the theory, is someone so fully absorbed by the organization that he turns out to be an object lacking in subjectivity and that his role as leader would be to ensure that the followers themselves were no more than objects, with all claims of subjectivity subjugated at the service of the collective values of this leader and of the organization. This would not be a leader/follower relationship, but rather a domination/suppression relationship, which would lead an ALD to create a diseased organization.

Johnsen (2018) also criticized the way proposed to differentiate the authentic leader from the unauthentic. He argued that the concept of AL would be more appropriate considering how ethics can occur when the ALD is able to reflect critically about the commitment to his own

values. This reflection would be more appropriate than the assumption that ethics would result from adherence to central values, which would aim at achieving the common good. This is because, according to him, the commitment to values can hinder the occurrence of ethics, which would allow to understand that some leaders commit unethical acts because they are seduced by their own commitments to their values and not because they lack them.

Hopkins and O'Neil (2015) considered that the theory developed neglects the evaluation of how AL applies to women. They affirm that there is a double dilemma inherent to this issue, which obliges women to make a choice between acting in accordance with gender normative behaviors, or with the behavior expected from the leadership role. They consider that organizations are gender entities, which require women to fit into an environment dominated by men and that the weight given to the true individual self, as opposed to the self in relation to others, continues to position them as strangers to leadership, due to the focus on the aspect of individual leadership actions of a traditionally masculine nature. The authors propose that these three issues should be explored and integrated into ongoing investigations, expecting AL to become an inclusive concept and an ideal that can be pursued by all leaders.

In addition to these purely theoretical criticisms, an empirical finding that also represents criticism to aspects of the AL theory was presented by Banks, McCauley, Gardner and Guler (2016). Using 100 samples of empirical studies, which counted with more than 25 thousand participants, the authors performed a meta-analysis and found high-magnitude correlations between AL and transformational leadership (TL). According to the authors, neither AL nor TL presented incremental validity on the other construct. These results were understood as indicators of redundancy between the constructs and evidence that the theory of AL, which is posterior to the theory of TL, still lacks evolution in some of its discriminatory concepts.

In Brazil, studies in the area begin to be found from the current decade onwards. Some examples are: Sobral and Gimba (2012), who correlated measures of personal values and AL; Cavazotte, Duarte and Gobbo (2013), who analyzed the influence exerted by AL on the safety performance of workers in the petroleum industry; and Cervo, Mónico, Santos, Hutz and Pais (2016), who analyzed the invariance of a measurement instrument of AL to populations in Brazil and Portugal.

Among the works of Brazilian researchers are also literature reviews (Campos & Rueda, 2018; Esper & Cunha, 2015). These reviews present a common understanding: AL theory is not yet consolidated and new studies are needed for its development. Noting that most empirical studies on AL published between 2000 and 2013 used quantitative research methods,

Esper and Cunha (2015) recommended qualitative studies to be carried out, which should explore experiential data and contribute to theoretical consolidation.

According to Campos and Rueda (2018), the focus on quantitative research, however, remained in the following years. The review performed by them indicated the publication, between 2014 and 2016, of only eight articles in which an exclusively qualitative approach was adopted. The studies aimed at: investigating AL in school environments (Glowacki-Dudka & Griswold, 2016; Greenier & Whitehead, 2016; Shapira-Lishchinsky & Levy-Gazenfrantz, 2015); analyzing gender issues and AL (Liu, Cutcher, & Grant, 2015); proposing AL for specific environments such as strategic planning (Rhine, 2015); analyzing paradoxes of authenticity in the practice of leadership (Nyberg & Sveningsson, 2014); and analyzing AL in nursing practices (Shapira-Lishchinsky, 2014; Waite, McKinney, Smith-Glasgow, & Meloy, 2014). None of the studies, therefore, investigated the congruence between the leader's discourse and the AL theory, aiming to enlarge it and/or contribute to its consolidation.

Thus, this study was devoted to conduct a qualitative research based on theoretical thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The aim was to investigate the congruence between the theory of authentic leadership, in the form as condensed by some scholars of the area (i.e. Walumbwa et al., 2008), and the discourse of the contemporary Brazilian leader. The study is based on experiences lived and witnessed by individuals who exercise or who have exercised leadership roles.

Method

Participants

Seven men and three women participated in the study. Of the total, seven people were occupying and three had already occupied, in the past, leadership positions in organizational environments, characterizing the exercise of the role of leader. The age of the individuals ranged from 30 to 67 years ($M = 45.40$, $SD = 11.48$) and the time of experience in leadership jobs ranged from three to 41 years ($M = 19.40$, $SD = 13.48$). Of the participants, eight resided in the state of São Paulo, one in Rio de Janeiro, and one in Santa Catarina. All had at least higher education diplomas. Two of the participants acted in the public sector, seven in the private, and one in nonprofit organizations. Sample size was defined according to the concept of information power (Malterud, Siersma, & Guasora, 2016).

To maintain confidentiality regarding the participants, each of them received a code through which they can be identified in this study. Table 1 shows information concerning their profile.

Table 1
Participants' profile

ID	Sex	Age	Time	Direct	Indirect	Work performance
R1	F	45	20	5	10	Industry
R2	M	49	30	15	90	Trade
R3	F	51	28	5	10	Nonprofit organization
R4	M	30	7	5	40	Services
R5	M	40	3	12	40	Services
R6	M	31	6	20	30	Services
R7	M	50	30	8	875	Public sector
R8	F	55	25	15	300	Industry
R9	M	36	4	30	10	Public sector
R10	M	67	41	9	130	Services

Note. Time = years of experience in leadership functions; Direct = number of people who report (or reported) directly to the leader; Indirect = number of people who report (or reported) indirectly to the leader.

It can be observed that most leaders are from the service sector. It is also noticeable that in only one of the situations the number of direct followers is greater than the number of indirect followers, and this circumstance is linked to the public sector.

Instrument

Among the instruments that can be used in a qualitative study is the structured interview, which can

be performed orally or in writing (Braun & Clarke, 2006; González Rey, 2005). Thus, in this study, a structured interview was used, developed according to Hoffman, Shadbolt, Burton and Klein (1995). The interview aimed to verify the interviewees' understanding of the role of the leader, as well as acquire information about real situations and challenges experienced in the practice of leadership. Given the importance of the content-generating questions as part of the thematic analysis process (Braun & Clarke, 2006), the questions used are presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Content-generating questions

Question
1 When is it possible to consider someone a leader?
2 Thinking of your description in the previous question, answer: are you a leader? (options: Completely; Partially) Please clarify the reasons for selecting this option.
3 According to your experience as a leader, what are school (at any level), books, and courses not able to teach about leadership?
4 Please describe a typical situation or challenge that you experience as a leader.
5 Thinking about the recent past, could you tell us a little bit about a challenging experience you experienced as a leader? a. situation or challenge; b. how did you act (and/or what did you decide); c. result achieved; d. your opinion on the outcome; e. what other alternatives did you have in this situation that you did not choose?
6 Please describe a challenging situation or experience about which you have heard and that was experienced by another leader. a. situation or challenge; b. how did the leader act (and/or what did he decide); c. result achieved; d. your opinion on the outcome; e. what other alternatives did the leader have in this situation that he did not choose?
7 Thinking about your daily life and the most varied experiences you live, what are the most frequent criteria you usually evaluate in decision-making situations as a leader?
8 What criteria in decision-making do you know other leaders use, but you have not yet adopted?

continued...

...continuation

Question

9 Please give examples of frequent challenges faced throughout your experience as a leader regarding the following aspects:

a. Financial; b. relationship with clients (internal and external); c. Processes (operational, business, regulatory, etc.); d. people in the organization (employees, collaborators, partners, etc.).

10 Please read the excerpt below and give your opinion on it, addressing any aspect that it has led you to consider (agree, disagree, question, raise doubts, etc. Describe what the text made you think).

The definition of AL was presented in a similar way to what is present in the introduction section of this article, according to Walumbwa et al. (2008): “The authentic leader bases himself on and promotes positive psychological capacities and a positive ethical climate, to promote greater self-awareness, an internalized moral perspective, a balanced information processing and relationship transparency on the part of the leaders who work with the followers, stimulating positive self-development. The positive ethical climate is one of the points that can distinguish the authentic leader from the transformational leader, since the latter can possibly exert manipulative actions on his followers, aiming to achieving the goals desired by him or by the organization”.

Procedure

Data collection. The participants were invited by e-mail and through social networks by one of the researchers, or by members of their network. The interviews, which were initiated with the acceptance of the informed consent form, occurred from February 2 to March 5, 2016. They were answered in Google Forms, or in a standard Word file exchanged by electronic messages. There was no control over the response time, and each participant chose their best place and time to provide the information.

Data analysis. The data were interpreted based on the theoretical precepts present in the studies by Avolio and Gardner (2005), Gardner et al. (2005), Ilies et al. (2005), and Walumbwa et al. (2008), and following the six phases recommended by Braun and Clarke (2006). Phase 1, familiarization with the data, occurred through a matrix organization of the collected data. First, all the answers from each respondent were evaluated for all questions, then all answers obtained for each question, regardless of the respondent. This type of reading was repeated until an in-depth perception of the overall picture was achieved.

Phase 2, initial coding, counted with a new reading, this time accompanied by the marking of excerpts in different colors, which represented codes. For example, excerpts like “in the middle of last year we had to perform a large team cut to align costs and expenses in the company” (R4) and “the dismissal process of 70% of the team in crisis situation of the company” (R8) were marked with the same color and encoded as “critical situation - dismissal”.

Phase 3, search for themes, was performed manually with the creation of summarized maps for each question, considering the codes already defined. A partial example of the map created for question 1 can be seen in Figure 1. Phase 4, review of themes, counted with a critical analysis of the results classified until then. We sought to eliminate themes that were

not compatible with the initial objectives of the analysis, focusing on AL (or on its absence) in the leaders’ discourse.

In phase 5, definition and naming of themes, we sought to make connections between the selected content and the categories originated from AL theory and also its antagonisms, e.g., transparency versus manipulation, balanced processing versus authoritarianism, etc. In this sense, previous categories were established and named as follows: High-order AL (HO), which covered the promotion of positive psychological capacities, self-development, and development of followers; self-awareness (SA); relationship transparency (RT); balanced processing (BP); and internalized moral perspective (MP). Categories that could demonstrate antagonisms to the theoretical categories were also added. They were identified as NHO, NSA, NRT, NBP, and NMP, considering the word “no” before the defined acronyms.

It is also important to note that, according to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is a method that can be used to reflect reality or to undo or unravel the surface of reality. This implies that the data can be used aiming at a realistic, constructivist, or, combining both even with different weights, contextualist analysis. Thus, this study, although characterized as a theoretical thematic analysis, aimed to detect not only themes that highlighted the theoretical categories (e.g. values, ethics, transparency), but also contexts that could elicit meaning areas.

For González Rey (2005), a meaning area characterizes moments in which different manifestations of what is studied acquire intelligibility, opening possibilities for different type of deepening regarding the theoretical construction. The consideration of new meaning areas allowed the creation of the others category (OT) during data analysis.

Finally, phase 6, last of the listed by Braun and Clarke (2006), refers to the production of the report that presents the findings of the investigation. This is, therefore, the phase exposed in the next sections of this article.

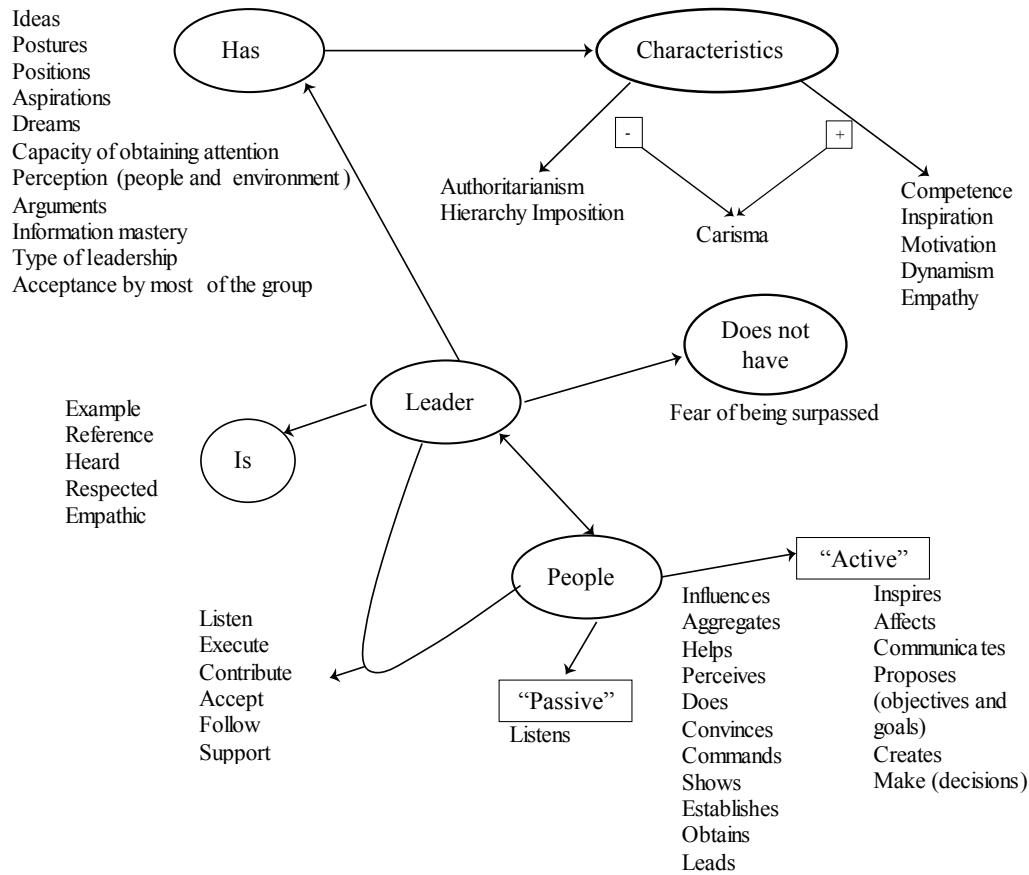


Figure 1. Example of the map created for question 1.

Ethical Considerations

This study was submitted to the analysis of the Research Ethics Committee of Universidade São Francisco. It was approved under CAAE protocol 51356515.1.0000.5514.

Results

The analysis of the answers allowed us to find excerpts from the leaders' discourses that demonstrated congruence with the

investigated categories. Table 3 presents some of these excerpts. We sought, whenever possible, to select at least one excerpt per leader and at least one response excerpt for each of the questions.

We observed that it was possible to find signs of congruence in all the investigated categories in the discourse of different respondents and in various questions. Still, only R5's answers did not provide any excerpt in which themes inherent to AL stood out.

We also found excerpts that indicated the sense of incongruence with some of the investigated categories. Some of these excerpts are shown in Table 4.

Table 3
Findings that indicate congruent behaviors to AL theory

Theme(s)	ID	Question	Excerpt
HO	R3	1	When he is an example, when he inspires people, aggregates, creates a collaborative environment and not merely competitive, creates a collective spirit in which the individual does not disappear and has freedom of expression, when he helps each one to discover the best in themselves and realizes where they work best. A leader helps people to become better and is not afraid to be surpassed.
MP and BP	R10	2	From my first experiences of leadership I sought to lead by example, ethics, by the sense of justice, balance, knowledge, and respect for followers and peers. I tried to be attentive to the expectations of the groups and listen to them in various situations...
MP	R2	3	Moral values and empathy.

continued...

...continuation

Theme(s)	ID	Question	Excerpt
SA and HO	R9	3	... it is necessary that the leader keep in mind that each individual of his team has different qualities, faults, fears, frustrations, training, family raising, and so many other aspects ... By having this understanding, it becomes easier for the leader to identify the qualities of each follower, highlighting them and taking advantage of them in the best way throughout the organization's process... understanding, it becomes easier to cope with adverse situations.
RT	R8	4	... The relationship of trust with the team is essential to do and demonstrate that you are making the right decision.
SA, MP, RT, and BP	R4	5	... In addition to the impact on the dismissed people, it was important to be able to explain and convince people that it was the right thing to do and that, with that, everyone's prospects increased. ... We decided on a "humanized" approach. We created conditions to help in the relocation of those who were being shut down. Before announcing the cuts in the team, we announced the cut of 50% in the compensation of the company executives*, to make clear that we had exhausted other options. The day before the cuts, we called the leaders of several teams to communicate the situation and the decision we had made, as well as take feedback on how we would perform the cuts on the next day. ... my perception was that the team that remained became more focused and committed to the success of the company. I think there are things we could have done better, but I was satisfied with myself and with the team's response. ... At the beginning of the process, we were considering performing the cuts 'at once'. Although we rationalized this, as something that did not create expectations, it was actually a way to lessen the impact of the dismissals on those who were performing them, rather than lessening the impact on those who were being dismissed.
RT and BP	R10	6	... He gathered the directors and managers and exposed the situation. We were with a technical limitation for expanding the customer base. We discussed, presented alternatives so that we could overcome this limitation, while at the same time there were several opinions in the sense of acceptance of the purchase offer. Analyzing the situation and pondering on the alternatives, it was decided that we would go ahead not accepting the purchase offer. ... The most comfortable alternative would be to sell the company.
MP	R6	7	Ethics. Operational and financial sustainability. Loyalty to the purpose of the company. Alignment with the plan presented to shareholders.
RT	R4	9	Effective communication. Trust (in us).
MP	R1	10	I did not mention the ethical question so far because it appears to me as super necessary. ... Generally speaking, ... Without ethics, you do not have a leader.
HO	R9	10	I completely agree. A true leader does not need to give orders. He emphasizes the positive aspects of each of his collaborators to stimulate people. Stimulated people do not need orders. They understand the importance of their role within the organization, and understand that by collaborating for their growth, they are collaborating for their own growth, because the organization depends on their collaboration and vice versa.

Note. In this case, the "executives of the company" are only the partners (owners).

Table 4

Findings that indicate incongruent behaviors to AL theory

Theme(s)	ID	Question	Excerpt
NMP	R8	2	There are moments in the management of people in which imposition is necessary. Specially when the leader answers to a higher level organization (e.g. board of directors, VPs*, etc.).
NRT and NMP	R7	5	... The first is the lack of willingness to change, due to political reasons (it is better to stay like this because I can beat) or due to personal reasons (now I have to work?). The second is the defense of barns and fiefs (I'm the boss here and that is fine). ... The ability of the mean administration to veto projects that are not of interest is much greater than I expected and the subterfuges used for this are disproportionately unethical.

continued...

...continuation

Theme(s)	ID	Question	Excerpt
NRT and NMP	R10	5	Disconnect myself from the company, because in my personal case, I only knew if I would continue in the company or if I had a job a few hours before the merger was effected. Wait for decisions to be made, getting a more passive role in the process, with less exposure to risks (defensive position). Negotiate my position first and then take care of the group. Give in to the pressures exerted by the executives of the new company to fill the best positions with their followers.
NRT	R1	7	Little time, impact on business, impact on people's lives, impact on my image.
NBP	R1	8	Authoritarianism.
NBP and NMP	R2	8	Coercion.
NBP	R3	8	There are more autocratic decisions, but I would not adopt them, it is not in my nature.
NMP	R5	8	Petty politics.
NMP, NHO, and NSA	R2	10	The manipulative action can be validated in case there is a lack of consciousness on the subject.

Note. VP = the acronym for vice-president.

It is possible to observe that most of the antagonistic themes to AL indicate the respondent's vision or perception regarding behaviors alternative to their own (answers to questions 5 and 8). The exceptions are R8's answer to question 2, R1's to question 7, and R2's to question 10.

In addition to the findings referring to the previously established categories, some excerpts of the statements resulted in meaning areas to be eventually investigated along with AL theory. The first of these is part of R3's answer to question 9: "To serve a client without giving up the principles or simply deciding not to serve him (e.g., making a didactic material for an evangelical group who wanted to put creationism and forget evolutionism)".

The second statement to be considered consists of links between R4's answers to questions 2, 8, and 10. In question 2, R4 said that he considered himself partially a leader and justified: "I still cannot guarantee alignment of vision (goal/direction) among all (or even most) of the people who are under my responsibility. There is much waste/entropy in communication", which can indicate SA. In question 8, his answer was "I usually consider only the short-term risk, cost, and return. Many leaders I admire have the ability to evaluate these three factors for a distant future". His answer to question 10 was: "I believe that in the text the concept of leadership is mixed with Morals. A leader does not have to be GOOD to be effective. History is full of effective leaders who should not be copied. An effective leader who is, at the same time, a good person, from what I understand, is what the text defines as an 'authentic leader', but I am concerned with the use of qualitative words to name the different types".

Discussion

This article aimed to investigate the congruence between the AL theory, as condensed by Walumbwa et al. (2008), and the contemporary Brazilian leader's speech, through a theoretical thematic analysis. Following the method described by Braun and Clarke (2006), who understand that under this form of qualitative analysis, there is no rapid and concrete response to the question of which proportion of the data set needs to display evidence of the theme so that it is considered a theme, it was possible to affirm that there were indications of congruence and incongruence among the behavior reported by the leaders and the behavior predicted or verified in the literature of the area (Avolio et al., 2004; Avolio & Walumbwa, 2014; Esper & Cunha, 2015; Gardner et al., 2011; Walumbwa et al., 2008).

Indications of incongruence showed that the interviewees perceive, in other leaders, different behaviors (that they would not adopt), or that they distinguish circumstances in which they would not behave as what is expected of authentic leaders. These were the cases of R8's answer to question 2, demonstrating that, in certain circumstances, it is acceptable to give in to the pressures of higher-level leaders, and of R2's answer to question 10, declaring that manipulation is acceptable in certain situations. Both attitudes are described by Walumbwa et al. (2008) as examples that would not be adopted by an authentic leader (ALD). It was also the case of R1's answer to question 7, indicating "impact on my image" as a criterion in the decision-making process, which may indicate a process that masks the self, according to Avolio et al. (2004).

There were also indications that there is room to broaden and deepen AL theory. R3, answering question 9, for example, indicated a challenge concerning decision-making addressing the doubt between meeting the interests of the company (answering the specific request of a customer), or following her personal values. At first glance, the excerpt leads to the understanding of an internalized moral perspective (fidelity to values), according to Walumbwa et al. (2008). However, as in a new meaning area (González Rey, 2005), which could lead to the enlargement of the AL theory, it could also lead to the understanding that self interests (doing things in the way one believes to be right) could eventually surpass common interests (of the organization and the team, in an attempt to fulfill the professional role as a leader that creates results). Such behavior could be contradictory regarding the ethics of the profession and AL theory itself.

The question that emerges from this context is linked to Walumbwa et al. (2008). When these authors state that the MP is guided by internal moral standards and values and not by pressures from the group, organization, or society, what seems to be implied is that the leader's values, when positive and of a non-manipulative nature, should overlap other values. Thus, the question to be answered by the theory is: what should happen when all values in question (personal, organizational, and social) can be considered positive and/or neutral and are contradictory?

Johnsen's understanding (2018), in his criticism of the form used by AL's theory to differentiate authentic from non-authentic leaders, which can be found, for example, in Avolio and Gardner (2005), could contribute and propose an answer to this question. The author suggests that the leader's capacity for critical reflection concerning his commitment to his values should be considered in the context of authenticity, which adds behavioral aspects that could enrich AL theory and broaden how, currently, we try to differentiate authentic and non-authentic leaders.

R3's answer to question 9 also refers to Hernandez et al. (2011), when they indicated that the AL locus is found in the leader-followers dyad, failing to consider the context when establishing it. Walumbwa et al. (2008) presented the same understanding, stating that AL theory expects the behavior of the leader to be aligned with his values and beliefs declared over time and in the face of different challenging situations. Regarding this aspect, only Avolio and Walumbwa (2014) mentioned that AL can also be influenced by the context. These inconsistencies need to be further investigated, since organizational results can depend on better clarity concerning the alignment of leader's values and the organizational values, and also considering that Avolio et al. (2004) are clear in stating that AL, by itself, is not sufficient to ensure the achievement of the results desired by the organization.

Finally, the challenge presented by R3 (question 9) also allows us to refute Ford and Harding's view (2011) in their criticism, since the leader's subjectivity is present in this issue and it is not contradictory to the AL theory. The theory, in reality, does not declare the expectation for a totally authentic leader, which also responds to the criticisms by Algera and Lips-Wiersma (2012), rather by more authentic leaders,

considering as one of the components of this authenticity the fidelity to personal values and, not necessarily, to those of the organization, commonly manifested through their organizational culture (Avolio et al., 2004; Gardner et al., 2011; Walumbwa et al., 2008).

Regarding R4's testimony, when considering himself partially a leader, the respondent indicated that he understands to be in development in this sense ("I still cannot"), and since the development of AL is one of the main objectives of research in the area (Avolio et al., 2004; Avolio & Walumbwa, 2014; Gardner et al., 2011; Walumbwa et al., 2008), this type of perspective demands analysis.

In question 8, R4 presented an additional reason for his prior evaluation ("I consider only... short-term ... leaders I admire... for a distant future"). Moving forward, in the answer to question 10, which presented the theoretical definition of AL, he differentiated the ability of a leader to obtain results with the moral behavior accepted as good and indicated that to be effective, a leader does not need to "be GOOD". These understandings, arising from the practice of leadership, deserve to be considered in investigations about AL, since theorists expect the ethical behavior resulting from an internalized moral perspective, which would count only with positive values (Avolio et al., 2004; Walumbwa et al., 2008), lead to better organizational results.

The vision of this leader promotes a question to be answered by the AL theory: eventually, could the ability to act not only to obtain short-term results, but also long-term results, be a differential of the ALD and become one of the factors that would avoid the repetition of unacceptable behaviors, according to the cases mentioned in the literature (Avolio et al., 2004; Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Avolio & Walumbwa, 2014)?

With findings and analyses, this study evidenced the possibility of differentiating authentic from non-authentic leader, verifying that it is possible to find in their discourse signs of congruence and incongruence with the AL theory. Such evidence contributes to validate the theory's current propositions, without the use of measuring instruments, as expected by the theorists (Avolio & Walumbwa, 2014). Thus, the study also contributed to enable organization professionals to apply the method and even the interview presented in it to several practice processes, such as recruitment and selection, promotions, pre- and post-training and development intervention analyses, among others. This possibility meets the interest expressed by the organizations since the beginning of the development of the AL theory and also to the call made by Gardner et al. (2011) for new studies that enabled the evaluation of AL by different methods from those used until then.

For a possible evolution of the theory, the study contributes with considerations, based on the leader's discourse regarding disparities concerning the hierarchy of values (personal, organizational, and cultural) and between short- and long-term visions. Longitudinal studies that could accompany the development of leaders and their modus operandi regarding the achievement of short-, medium-, and long-term results could contribute to clarify whether the temporal vision adopted by the leader should possibly constitute a new component of AL.

A component that would better differentiate this style from others, such as Banks et al. (2016) indicated to be necessary. Similarly, a hierarchy definition covering the personal and organizational values in case of conflict and positivity of both could help to broaden the theoretical scope, regarding the MP component of AL.

This study has several limitations. We highlight the fact that all respondents belonged to the authors' contact network. Other limitations are inherent to the chosen method and the difficulty of proving the appropriate sample size, thus not allowing generalizations. However, although they cannot be generalized, some of the evidences found are useful in generating insights to continue the research.

Among them, we reinforce the need for comparative longitudinal studies between the level of results achieved by authentic and non-authentic leaders, or, better said, by leaders who may be characterized as more or less authentic. Furthermore, no mentions of gender issues were found in the responses provided by the participating leaders concerning the challenges they face, therefore, it is also suggested that specific research be conducted to investigate whether the criticisms made by Hopkins and O'Neil (2015) can be empirically proven.

References

- Algera, P. M., & Lips-Wiersma, M. (2012). Radical authentic leadership: Co-creating the conditions under which all members of the organization can be authentic. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 23(1), 118-131. doi:10.1016/j.leaqua.2011.11.010
- Avolio, B. J., & Gardner, W. L. (2005). Authentic leadership development: Getting to the root of positive forms of leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 16(3), 315-338. doi:10.1016/j.leaqua.2005.03.001
- Avolio, B. J., Gardner, W. L., Walumbwa, F. O., Luthans, F., & May, D. R. (2004). Unlocking the mask: A look at the process by which authentic leaders impact follower attitudes and behaviors. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 15(6), 801-823. doi:10.1016/j.leaqua.2004.09.003
- Avolio, B. J., & Walumbwa, F. O. (2014). Authentic leadership theory, research and practice: Steps taken and steps that remain. In D. V. Day (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of leadership and organizations* (pp. 331-356). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Banks, G. C., McCauley, K. D., Gardner, W. L., & Guler, C. E. (2016). A meta-analytic review of authentic and transformational leadership: A test for redundancy. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 27(4), 634-652. doi:10.1016/j.leaqua.2016.02.006
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101. doi:10.1191/1478088706qp063oa
- Campos, M. I., & Rueda, F. J. M. (2018). Evolução do construto liderança autêntica: Uma revisão de literatura. [*Evolution of authentic leadership construct: A literature review*]. *Revista Psicologia Organizações e Trabalho*, 18(1), 291-298. doi:10.17652/rpot/2018.1.13473
- Cavazotte, F. S. C. N., Duarte, C. J. P., & Gobbo, A. M. C. (2013). Líder autêntico, trabalho seguro: A influência da liderança sobre o desempenho em segurança. [Authentic leader, safe work: The influence of leadership on safety performance]. *BBR-Brazilian Business Review*, 10(2), 97-123.
- Cervo, C. S., Mónico, L. S. M., Santos, N. R., Hutz, C. S., & Pais, L. (2016). Authentic Leadership Questionnaire: Invariance between samples of Brazilian and Portuguese employees. *Psicologia: Reflexão e Crítica*, 29(1), 40. doi:10.1186/s41155-016-0046-4
- Cutler, A. (2014). *Leadership psychology: How the best leaders inspire their people*. London, United Kingdom: Kogan Page.
- Esper, A. J. F., & Cunha, C. J. C. A. (2015). Liderança autêntica: Uma revisão integrativa. [*Authentic leadership: An integrative review*]. *Navus-Revista de Gestão e Tecnologia*, 5(2), 60-72. Recuperado de <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/descarga/articulo/5168664.pdf>
- Ford, J., & Harding, N. (2011). The impossibility of the 'true self' of authentic leadership. *Leadership*, 7(4), 463-479. doi:10.1177/1742715011416894
- Gardner, W. L., Avolio, B. J., Luthans, F., May, D. R., & Walumbwa, F. O. (2005). "Can you see the real me?" A self-based model of authentic leader and follower development. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 16(3), 343-372. doi:10.1016/j.leaqua.2005.03.003
- Gardner, W. L., Cogliser, C. C., Davis, K. M., & Dickens, M. P. (2011). Authentic leadership: A review of the literature and research agenda. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 22(6), 1120-1145. doi:10.1016/j.leaqua.2011.09.007
- Glowacki-Dudka, M., & Griswold, W. (2016). Embodying authentic leadership through popular education at highlander research and education center: A qualitative case study. *Adult Learning*, 27(3), 105-112. doi:10.1177/1045159516651610
- González Rey, F. (2005). *Pesquisa qualitativa e subjetividade: Os processos de construção da informação. [Qualitative research and subjectivity: The processes of information construction]*. São Paulo, SP: Cengage Learning.
- Greenier, V. T., & Whitehead, G. E. (2016). Towards a model of teacher leadership in ELT: Authentic leadership in classroom practice. *RELC Journal*, 47(1), 79-95. doi:10.1177/0033688216631203

- Hernandez, M., Eberly, M. B., Avolio, B. J., & Johnson, M. D. (2011). The loci and mechanisms of leadership: Exploring a more comprehensive view of leadership theory.
- Hoffman, R. R., Shadbolt, N. R., Burton, A. M., & Klein, G. (1995). Eliciting knowledge from experts: A methodological analysis. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 62(2), 129-158. doi:10.1006/obhd.1995.1039
- Hopkins, M. M., & O'Neil, D. A. (2015). Authentic leadership: Application to women leaders. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 6, 959. doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2015.00959
- Johnsen, C. G. (2018). Authenticating the leader: Why Bill George believes that a moral compass would have kept Jeffrey Skilling out of jail. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 147(1), 53-63. doi:10.1007/s10551-015-2968-7
- Ilies, R., Morgeson, F. P., & Nahrgang, J. D. (2005). Authentic leadership and eudaemonic well-being: Understanding leader-follower outcomes. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 16(3) 373-394. doi:10.1016/j.leaqua.2005.03.002
- Liu, H., Cutcher, L., & Grant, D. (2015). Doing authenticity: The gendered construction of authentic leadership. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 22(3), 237-255. doi:10.1111/gwao.12073
- Malterud, K., Siersma, V. D., & Guassora, A. D. (2016). Sample size in qualitative interview studies: Guided by information power. *Qualitative Health Research*, 26(13), 1753-1760. doi:10.1177/1049732315617444
- Nyberg, D., & Sveningsson, S. (2014). Paradoxes of authentic leadership: Leader identity struggles. *Leadership*, 10(4), 437-455. doi:10.1177/1742715013504425
- Popper, M. (2012). *Fact and fantasy about leadership*. Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar.
- Rhine, A. S. (2015). An examination of the perceptions of stakeholders on authentic leadership in strategic planning in nonprofit arts organizations. *The Journal of Arts Management, Law, and Society*, 45(1), 3-21. doi:10.1080/10632921.2015.1013169
- Shapira-Lishchinsky, O. (2014). Simulations in nursing practice: Toward authentic leadership. *Journal of Nursing Management*, 22(1), 60-69. doi:10.1111/j.1365-2834.2012.01426.x
- Shapira-Lishchinsky, O., & Levy-Gazenfrantz, T. (2015). The multifaceted nature of mentors' authentic leadership and mentees' emotional intelligence: A critical perspective. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 44(6), 951-969. doi:10.1177/1741143215595413
- Sobral, F. J. B. A., & Gimba, R. F. (2012). As prioridades axiológicas do líder autêntico: Um estudo sobre valores e liderança. [*The axiological priorities of the authentic leader: A study of values and leadership*]. *Revista de Administração Mackenzie*, 13(3), 96-121. doi:10.1590/S1678-69712012000300006
- Waite, R., McKinney, N., Smith-Glasgow, M. E., & Meloy, F. A. (2014). The embodiment of authentic leadership. *Journal of Professional Nursing*, 30(4), 282-291. doi:10.1016/j.profnurs.2013.11.004
- Walumbwa, F. O., Avolio, B. J., Gardner, W. L., Wernsing, T. S., & Peterson, S. J. (2008). Authentic leadership: Development and validation of a theory-based measure. *Journal of Management*, 34(1), 89-126. doi:10.1177/0149206307308913

Maria Isabel de Campos is a PhD in Psychology of the Universidade São Francisco, Campinas-SP, Brazil.

Fabian Javier Marin Rueda is a Professor of the Universidade São Francisco, Campinas-SP, Brazil.

Authors' Contribution:

All authors made substantial contributions to the conception and design of this study, to data analysis and interpretation, and to the manuscript revision and approval of the final version. All authors assume public responsibility for the content of the manuscript.

Received: Feb. 01, 2017

1st Revision: Mar. 31, 2018

2nd Revision: Jun. 18, 2018

3rd Revision: Aug. 05, 2018

Approved: Oct. 10, 2018

How to cite this article:

Campos, M. I., & Rueda, F. J. M. (2019). Authentic leadership: A theoretical thematic analysis of the contemporary Brazilian leader's speech. *Paidéia (Ribeirão Preto)*, 29, e2924. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/1982-4327e2924