

**Paper presented at the 7th Developing Leadership Capacity Conference
15th – 16th July 2015, hosted by Henley Business School**

Reimagining leadership development: A Rostian perspective

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Abstract

Whilst the International Leadership Association awarded J.C. Rost a lifetime achievement award in 2008, his work has largely been overlooked within management and organization studies. This may be due to the radical nature of what Rost was proposing or Rost's critical attitude towards management studies. In this paper, Rost's potential contribution to leadership development is highlighted with particular emphasis placed upon Rost's three central themes of influence relationships, real intended change and mutual purpose. Conclusions are drawn about Rost's contribution specifically in terms of implications for researching leadership development which focuses beyond leaders, developing theories in terms of a kaleidoscope metaphor and the particular relevance of Rost's writings to leadership development within public and voluntary sectors.

Introduction

This paper highlights the relevance and potential contribution of Rost's writings (1993a, 1993b, 1995 and 1997) in critically reimagining leadership development. Two decades ago, Rost (1993b:109) in *Leadership Development in the New Millennium* encouraged a radical shift within the leadership development he was encountering at that time, concluding 'my hope is that some readers may join me in making this future reality, beginning in the 1990s'. In 2008, J.C. Rost was posthumously awarded the *International Leadership Association's* (ILA) Lifetime Achievement Award and given the following commendation.

Rost's *Leadership for the Twenty-First Century* (Praeger, 1991)¹ is one of the most quoted books about leadership in print. In this book, Rost emphasized the shift in leadership/management to a more collaborative form. His work is still used extensively in leadership courses today.

In this paper, Rost's critical contribution to leadership studies is celebrated, however within specifically management and organizations studies, Rost's book is not 'one of, the most quoted' leadership books. The leadership development 'future reality' that Rost encouraged was not realized and there has not been a shift towards more collaborative leadership and/or management. Consequently, this paper revisits and reimagines Rost's potential contribution and attempts to explain why it was not adopted.

Only, Rost (1993a:37) could write 'definitions are boring to many people', with his own fascination with definitions reflected in two of his eight chapters being devoted to definitions of leadership. There was pragmatism behind Rost's definition obsession. Rost was a student of Burns (1978) who had previously criticised the intellectual mediocrity of leadership studies and Rost (1993a) knew that his new paradigm of leadership for the twenty-first century would not be possible unless scholars and practitioners could more clearly articulate the leadership they studied and practiced. Out of respect for and belief in Rost, the following definition of leadership is favoured within this paper.

Leadership is an influence relationship among leaders and collaborators who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes. (Rost, 1997:11)

As well as meeting Rost's imperative that leadership scholars should define what they mean by leadership, the definition introduces what Rost meant by leadership in particular his three central themes of influence relationships, real intended change and mutual purpose.

In the next section, Rost's critique of leadership in general and his prescription for a new paradigm of leadership as informed by his extensive review of leadership literature is elaborated upon with a particular focus upon the three central themes. The next section features multiple discourses of leadership development as identified by Mabey (2013) which offer multiple analytical lenses for understanding leadership development theories and practices. The third section revisits Rost's (1993b) *Leadership Development in the New Millennium* discussed in terms of multiple discourses of leadership development as identified by Mabey (2013), Day (2011) and Day et al's (2014) reviews of the learning development literature. Finally, conclusions are drawn about Rost's contribution specifically in terms of implications for researching, developing and practicing leadership development.

Rethinking leadership

An important ingredient in understanding Rost's (1993a) contribution to leadership studies is rooted within Burns (1978) vision of transforming leadership with Rost (1993a) dedicating his book to James MacGregor Burns. *Leadership* (Burns, 1978) gave emphasis to a differentiation between transformational and transactional leadership. This was at the heart of Bernard Bass's (1985) later influential conceptualisation of transformational leadership. However, Burns's (1978:4) vision of transforming leadership as moral leadership emerging from and always returning to '...the fundamental wants and needs, aspirations, and values of the followers' was very different from Bass's (1985) conceptualisation of transformational leadership. Management and organizations studies scholars have been very selective in their reading of Burns (1978) (see Carey, 1992 and Simola et al, 2010 for critiques). Burns large polemical and passionate account of transforming leadership is so much more than differentiating transformational leadership from transactional leadership. Bennis's (1982) favourable book review published in the *American Journal of Sociology* captured the essence of *Leadership*:

Leadership is collective; there is a symbiotic relationship between leaders and followers, and what makes it collective is the subtle interplay between followers' needs and wants and the leaders' capacities to understand, one way or another, these collective aspirations. Leadership is dissensual: that is, without conflict (peacefully managed); we would all be trapped in a false utopian dream. Leadership is "causative," meaning that - and here is where Burns makes one of his most stunning contributions-leadership can invent and create institutions (or ideas or documents or even memories) that can empower followers to satisfy their needs. (Bennis, 1982:204)

The pioneering approach of Burns (1978) encouraged greater engagement with followers (collaborators), acknowledgement of leadership as dissensual and the idea that leaders potentially invent/create (socially construct) institutions, ideas and memories. This encouragement was lost in the translation into Bass's (1985) transformational leadership, now regarded as the single most studied and debated idea of the past 30 years of leadership studies (Diaz-Saenz, 2011). Leadership studies could have taken a very different route if, Burns (1978) vision of leadership had been properly comprehended and acted upon. Rost's (1993a) strength as a student of Burns (1978) was that he read *Leadership* very differently from Bass (1985) appreciating the radical intent behind what Burns (1978) was proposing, yet still able to apply it to the detail and practicalities of leading. Rost (1993a) was critical of Bass (1985) and his managerialist beliefs as conveyed within *Leadership and Performance Beyond Expectations*. More generally Rost (1993a) was troubled by notions of an accretion of accumulated leadership knowledge. Rost (1993a:8) depicted leadership studies as a mythological narrative, explaining the apparent success of orthodox accounts of leadership as generating '...a mythological story of leadership that has been told over and over again and that almost everyone believes.' In developing the notion of a mythological narrative of leadership, Rost drew upon Edelman's (1971) symbolic theory of rewards in order to explain how leadership research and leadership scholarship were traditionally presented (see Box 1).

- 1) The system of research has been working.
- 2) The leadership scholars have been doing what they are supposed to do - increase our understanding of leadership.
- 3) There has been progress toward that objective, and as a result both scholars and practitioners can rest assured that they have an increasingly sophisticated understanding of leadership.
- 4) This better understanding of leadership will help make organizations more productive and, in the end, the United States and the world a better place to work and live.

Box 1 – The mythological leadership studies narrative

Rost (1993a) was not himself persuaded by this mythological narrative, but highlighted it as limiting alternative conceptualisations of leadership and keeping leadership studies in its outdated paradigm (see also Gemmill and Oakley, 1992). Rost believed that this mythology explained why leadership studies had taken its current path and why by implication alternative and critical accounts were and would be downplayed (ironically the mythological leadership studies narrative appeared to impede the adoption of Rost's ideas).

Rost's (1993a) critical literature review of leadership offered a means to rethink leadership and leadership development. Rost as an education academic was troubled that management literature framed societies understanding of leadership, in a manner similar to Burns (1978) dismay about the absence of artistic, intellectual, political or social leadership in processes of change. And Rost (1993a) would have been troubled by the functionalist trajectory of today's leadership development (see Mabey, 2013). Rost (1993a) envisaged a new interdisciplinary school of leadership acting both as a counterpoint to the excessive managerialism within leadership literature and offering a new paradigm of leadership for the new millennium. In this rethinking section key themes arising out of Rost's definition of leadership cited in the introduction are elaborated upon specifically the centrality of; influence relationships, real intended change and mutual purpose. These themes are revisited in the discussion section, which revisits Rost's (1993b) vision leadership development. The themes discussed here are closely related, but to aid exposition they are discussed separately.

Influence Relationships Leadership is not about big new ideas or visions of sweeping change, but 'rather, it is the capacity to convince others to contribute to processes that turn ideas and visions into reality that help to bring about change' (Haslam et al, 2011: 2). Rost regarded leadership relationships when based upon influence as being multi-directional and non-coercive. Rost was reacting to individualistic accounts he encountered within industrial paradigm leadership studies, he was not just paying lip service to such relationships, he believed that you could not have leadership without mutual purpose and that influence relationships were integral to desired real intended changes. Today the under-representation of followers within the leadership literature and research is critically highlighted (Baker, 2007; Grint, 2010; Kellerman, 2013). Rost's (1993a) extensive leadership studies literature reviewing revealed a very disparaging picture of followers (see Box 2).

- 1) Part of the sweaty masses and therefore separated from the elites.
- 2) Not able to act intelligently without the guidance and control of others.
- 3) Willing to let other people (elites) take control of their lives.
- 4) Unproductive unless directed by others.

Box 2 – Subordination of followers within industrial era leadership studies (based upon Rost, 1993a)

Rost (1993a) encountered not just followers being under-represented within leadership studies they were actively disparaged (see Box 2). More recently Abrahamson (2004: 210) has said something similar ‘leaders purportedly climb to the top of the mountain, gaze to the horizon, see the future, and come back down and share their vision with the troops who cannot see past the foothills’. Rost believed that understanding followers was crucial and he encouraged clarity with regards to the concept of followers and their influence relationships with leaders (see Box 3).

- 1) Only people who are active in the leadership process are followers.
- 2) Active people can fall anywhere on a continuum of activity from highly active to minimally active.
- 3) Followers can become leaders and leaders can become followers in any one leadership relationship.
- 4) In one group or organization people can be leaders. In other groups and organizations they can be followers.
- 5) Fifth, and most important, followers do not do followership, they do leadership, and there is no such thing as followership in the new school of leadership.

Box 3 – The emerging new leadership school view of followers (summarising Rost, 1993a)

In Rost’s radical conceptualisation of leader-follower influence relationships (see Box 3) leaders no longer have their usual role based power and authority. In specific situations ‘...followers can become leaders and leaders can become followers...’ (Rost, 1993a: 109). This is closely aligned to the centrality of ‘real intended change’ within Rost’s approach to leadership, a leader on one initiative may be inappropriate on another initiative. This is the antithesis of today’s societal belief in omnipotent leaders maintaining fixed leadership roles over many years (see Edwards et al, 2013 highlighting a critical turn away from fixed leader roles). Rost still believed power and authority were necessary, but more suitably located within fixed managerial roles than more fluid leadership roles. Power and authority were of limited value within post-industrial leadership focused upon real intended change and reflecting mutual purposes. The implication of this was that belief in leadership based upon influence relationships, real intended change and mutual purpose would require a radical rethinking of leadership and by association leadership development.

Burns (1978) belief in a symbiotic relationship between leaders and followers was cited earlier and this unifying theme was integral to Rost's (1993a) thesis. However, the semantics of followers and followership may with hindsight have impeded progress. Rost (1997) himself became disillusioned with the pejorative language of followership, which he believed connoted subordination, submissiveness, and passivity and implied a problematic and naïve belief that everyone willingly followed the leader.

I tried to redeem the word *followers* in my book by reconstructing it with new meaning. But it didn't work. Everywhere I went to give seminars or speeches, the people attending them told me that *following* was essentially a passive concept and the word followers was not redeemable. (Rost, 1997:11)

Rost (1997) subsequently chose the word 'collaborators' believing the denotation and connotation of the word fitted post-industrial values best and this less disparaging term is used subsequently in this paper. As well as, the subordination of collaborators to leaders, managers were also being subordinated beneath leaders within leadership literature. Rost (1993a:133/134) encountered a persistent tendency within the leadership literature '...to label as leadership those management processes which produce excellence in organizational outcomes and which leave the meaning of management to include all the other management processes that produce less than excellent outcomes. Leadership is excellence management; management is doing anything less than excellence'. This belief endures to this day and whilst, Rost encountered leadership being presented as good management and despite his fascination with leadership, he believed management was equally important within organizations. Rost (1993a:140) critically captured this in his concern about 'denigrating management to ennoble leadership.' Unfortunately, the role subordination of managers beneath leaders has increased since Rost (1993a) was reviewing the literature. For example, Riggio (2011:120) a respected leadership scholar writes about 'when the field of management began to make the shift from viewing those in positions of power and control as mere "managers" to viewing them as taking on higher-level "leadership" activities...' (see Ford and Harding, 2007 and Hughes, 2015 for further discussion of leader-manager differentiations).

Real Intended Change Rost's emphasis upon real intended change fits with today's organizational preoccupations with change and transformation. In Rost's (1993a) configuration, change is not just a subsequent consequence of leadership, without real intended change, leadership cannot happen. Incidentally for Rost a change may fail or succeed, but both leaders and collaborators must intend change. This emphasis upon intended change, rather than change as an outcome, is out of step with today's emphasis upon successful change and transformation. Grint (2005a: 68) highlighted an emphasis upon results (goal achievement in Rost terminology) typifying mainstream accounts of leadership to such an extent that '...those that fail to instigate change that is required or fail to stop change that is not required, are simply failed leaders.' Rost reasoned that if a leader was not engaged in real intended change they were not a leader. Rost (1993a:31) cited Avolio and Bass (1988) amongst others sanitizing, Burns (1978) concept of transformation '...to include any kind of significant change, not just changes that had a morally uplifting effect on people.' The safeguard of morally uplifting change leads into Rost's (1993a) third theme - mutual purpose.

Mutual Purpose Barker (1997:350) appears to have shared Burns (1978) and Rost's (1993a) frustrations with simplistic conceptualizations of the leader '...as a giver of direction and as a manipulator of will, who frames and solves specific management or social problems.' O'Toole (1995:15) writing at the same time was troubled by the leadership he was witnessing

in American corporations as ‘...having the will of others imposed on us.’ Bass’s (1985:4) early hopes for transformational leadership, typify how leadership within organizations was beginning to be conceived.

More quantity is no longer enough; quality must improve dramatically. Leaders may help in bringing about a radical shift in attention. For instance, groups oriented toward traditional beliefs will be shifted so that they come to value modern approaches.

Conceptualizing leadership as the imposition of the leader’s will, potentially gave legitimacy to the exercise of coercion within leadership. In one of Kotter’s early publications, he advocated coercion as one strategy for dealing with perceived resistance to change (Kotter and Schlesinger, 1979) and more recently, Burke (2014) has acknowledged coercion being used in the context of organizational change.

However, Rost’s (1993a) belief in mutual purpose directly challenged notions of leadership as the exercise of the leaders will and the potential use of coercion. Leaders and collaborators mutual purposes were to be forged in non-coercive influence relationships. Leaders and collaborators would develop purposes not goals, with intended changes reflected in, rather than realised through mutual purposes and these mutual purposes would become common purposes. In many ways, what Rost (1993a) encouraged may be regarded as a significant precursor to subsequent interest in shared, distributed and collaborative leadership (see Bolden, 2011 for a comprehensive review of this literature and differentiating this terminology).

Leadership development as multiple discourses

Day (2011:40) in the context of *The SAGE Handbook of Leadership* presented an overview of leadership development suggesting that ‘overall, there appears to be a number of promising advances in the theoretical understanding of leader and leadership development’. In his conclusions he encouraged rethinking leadership development with a need to translate ideas into action. Subsequently, Day et al (2014) reviewed 25 years of leader and leadership development research particularly focusing upon papers published in *The Leadership Quarterly*. They regarded this literature as mainly emerging over the past 10 to 15 years and emphasised the importance of differentiating leader development from leadership development, with the latter incorporating multiple individuals not just leaders. A long standing focus upon linking personality with leadership was believed to have limited leadership development. They highlighted the breadth of leadership development writings including intrapersonal and interpersonal content issues in leadership development; experience, skills, personality, self-development, social mechanisms and authentic leadership. They identified process issues within leadership development which included; 360-degree feedback, self-other agreement and self-narrative and they emphasised the importance of longitudinal perspectives and evaluating leadership development. Both Day (2011) and Day et al’s (2014) reviews reported upon an extensive leadership development literature reflecting competing philosophies, paradigms and perspectives of contributors. However, the dilemma raised for anyone engaging with this sub-field of leadership studies is the presence of competing and contradictory explanations of leadership development.

Mabey’s (2013) analysis of discursive assumptions beneath the leadership development literature between 2000 and 2011, in terms of; functionalist, interpretive, dialogic and critical discourses offered an informative way forward. This approach to leader/ship and leadership

development in terms of four discourses drew upon Deetz (1996) and Alvesson and Deetz (2000) differentiating between emergent and a-priori and dissensual and consensual dimensions. Of the 228 papers that reviewed ‘...the overwhelming majority of work addressing leadership development, either conceptually or empirically, did so adopting functionalist assumptions...The overriding consideration of the functionalist discourse is organizational performance’ (Mabey, 2013: 363). Of the other leadership development papers 24 employed interpretive discourses, 7 employed dialogic discourses and 9 critical discourses. In the following discussion each of these four leadership development discourses and their dimensions are introduced with two illustrative examples for each discourse (please see Mabey, 2013 for a more detailed account of these discourses).

Functional Discourses They were located within the consensus/a priori quadrant. These leadership development discourses emphasised performance and built upon leadership competencies and intellectual capital in order to contribute to competitiveness. For example, Holton and Naquin (2000) addressed the practicalities of implementing a performance based leadership development model suggesting that a change process was required to enhance leadership development. And Casey (2005) used an organizational learning model to demonstrate how learning needs were identified and addressed with research highlighting how evaluating leadership development required both micro and macro level analysis.

Interpretive Discourses They were located within the consensus/emergent quadrant. These leadership development discourses focused upon sense-making, ritual and symbolic aspects of leadership development. They concentrated retrospectively upon what happened. For example, Sandberg (2000) studied the sense making and investment of participants in their own leadership development. It was not the attributes of individuals which explained leadership development, but instead the meaning that they invested in their context-specific and idiosyncratic ways of working. And Currie and Lockett (2007) investigated interactions between public service leadership, institutional context and moral approaches. The co-creation and enactment of leadership at a local level was essential when designing leadership development within this context.

Dialogic Discourses They were located within the dissensus/emergent quadrant. These leadership development discourses concentrated upon activities, language and artefacts which constituted actors self-meaning, status and value. For example, Sveningsson and Larson (2006) studied potential leaders in terms of their talk, attempts to practice and create meaning. Through participation in a cultural change programme and an MBA programme developing leaders were given an illusion of an idealized vision of leadership without being endowed with substantive influence. And Gagnon (2008) studied the power dynamics shaping identities of those participating in leadership development programmes. The two leadership development programmes studied required high degrees of conformity to corporate norms with pressure applied through ranking, peer judgement and criticism, as well as, internal pressure to comply with identity as defined by local discourses.

Critical Discourses They were located within the dissensus/a priori quadrant. These leadership development discourses emphasised how programmes and activities ensured order predictability and control, whilst masking diversity and dissent. For example, Bell and Taylor (2004) were interested in uncovering ideological assumptions underpinning outdoor leadership development. They found outdoor activities detracted attention away from political and structural barriers within organizations. And Sinclair (2009) examined leadership development as a seduction with gender and power relations defining and

constraining leadership development, but also offering opportunities for experimentation and subversion.

In concluding, Mabey (2013: 376) argued persuasively that ‘...the study of leadership development would benefit from increased theoretical clarity and transparency, and that discourse provides a valuable analytic lens for this purpose’. He did not argue that different approaches were superior to one another, but rather that they were suggestive of different ways to conceive and undertake leadership development.

Discussion - Leadership development in the new millennium revisited

In the short conclusion to their informative review of leadership development cited earlier, Day et al (2014: 80) referred to John Gardner (1990: xix) ‘in the mid-21st century, people will look back on our present (leadership development) practice as primitive.’ However, Day et al (2014: 80) had to concede that based upon their review of leadership development ‘...the field is still very immature.’ At the time Gardner was imagining 21st Century leadership development, Rost (1993b) was also critically imagining how leadership development might develop in the 21st Century. Rost’s radical vision was in the spirit of rethinking leadership development and translating ideas into action which Day (2011) encouraged with Rost’s (1993b) vision still appearing relevant to leadership development today. Rost’s (1993b) paper according to Google Scholar at the time of writing has been cited 210 times suggesting that it caught the academic engagement, although given the radical nature of what was being proposed impact upon practice is far less likely. The following discussion introduces, summarizes and explains Rost’s (1993b) *Leadership Development for the New Millennium* in terms of literature cited earlier (Day, 2011; Mabey, 2013; Day et al, 2014).

Rost (1993b) introduced his paper highlighting deficiencies he perceived within leadership development. He subsequently elaborates upon these depicting the number one problem with leadership development in the 20th Century as it being equated with the development of leaders, very compatible with concerns expressed by Day (2011); Mabey (2013) and Day et al (2014). The second big problem with leadership development is the depiction of leadership understood as good management with Rost clarifying that ‘good here means effective. It does not refer to moral goodness’ (Rost, 1993b: 97). In the earlier reviews of leadership literature (Day, 2011; Mabey, 2013; Day et al, 2014) this management differentiation problem was not highlighted. Day (2011: 37) cited convincing evidence about the increasing scale of leadership development, acknowledging that ‘...it is clear that leadership development is big business.’ However, the business of leadership development appears to have benefitted from what Rost (1993a:140) critically referred to as ‘denigrating management to ennoble leadership’ (see Hughes, 2015 for further discussion about this cultural shift from management to leadership). Rost (1993b: 98) was aware of the radical nature of his proposals for leadership development.

The solution is the total transformation of our concept of leadership. We must reconstruct our definition of leadership. We must shift our paradigm of leadership from an industrial concept of leadership to a post-industrial concept.

The rethinking section of this paper introduced Rost’s (1993a) post-industrial paradigm with its emphasis upon influence relationships, real intended change and mutual purpose and it is this required paradigm shift which informs leadership development for Rost. Importantly, for

Rost activities which do not embrace all three of these themes may be more appropriately labelled as ‘management’ or ‘governance’.

1. Stop concentrating on the leader

Get rid of lists of leader behaviours, tests or inventories for leaders and get rid of the notion that we develop leaders.

2. Conceive of leadership as an episodic affair

Challenge the mythic reality that great men and women exude leadership in their very being and that they are on their leadership platform every waking moment of their lives.

Leadership is an episode in people’s lives.

3. Train people to use influence

Train people to be persuasive by using; rational strategies, political analysis, metaphors and myths and rituals. Train people to use persuasion by appealing to emotional attachments, ethical and moral stands, friendships, connectedness, relationships and communitarian ideas.

4. Develop people to work within non-coercive relationships

Leadership as a non-coercive relationship directly contradicts the essential nature of leadership as good management because management (good or bad) is essentially a coercive process since it involves the use of authority. Non-coercive means that people in the relationship are able to respond ‘yes’ or ‘no’ to attempts to influence them.

5. Help people understand the nature of real – that is, transformative change

Real change is going to become more pervasive as we move into the post-industrial paradigm. Real change is almost always political and long term. Real change has tremendous symbolic implications both positive and negative. Real change takes place, for the most part, among large groups of people.

6. Reconstruct people’s basic world view about life toward a collaborative orientation

Our background assumptions about life are basically self-interested and competitive. Leadership is going to be much more collaborative in the new millennium so our leadership development programmes must teach people how to be collaborative in leadership relationships.

Box 4 - Practical suggestions for leadership development (based upon Rost, 1993b).

In Box 4, Rost’s (1993b) practical suggestions for leadership development within *Leadership Development for the New Millennium* are summarised. In comparison with journal papers today and those cited within this paper, Rost’s paper appears very unsophisticated. His paper was supported with eleven references and two of these were self-citations. Whilst, his book (Rost, 1993a) was informed by an extensive literature review, his paper is really an opinion piece, lacking either empirical evidence or theoretical evidence in support of his polemical opinions. That said this polemical writing is so counter cultural in reimagining a very

different form of leadership and leadership development that it merits greater attention, particularly the way it questions today's erroneous assumption that the leadership of the 20th Century will serve us throughout the 21st Century. Numbering in the following discussion refers back to numbering featured in Box 4.

Rost's suggestion to *Stop concentrating on the leader* (1) has already been discussed. However, it could be argued that whilst Day (2011); Mabey (2013) and Day et al (2014) all cautioned against over emphasising leader development within leadership development they acknowledged it was a component of leadership development. Mabey (2013) highlighted how dominant functionalist leadership development literature was with its emphasis upon performance, suggesting that the majority of scholars still concentrate upon leaders within leadership development. *Conceiving of leadership as an episodic affair* (2) contradicts literature cited in Day (2011) and Day et al (2014: 79) '... theories related to the development of leaders and leadership over time...' Rost saw leadership as far more fluid and transferable; the best person to lead a real intended change was very contingent upon the real intended change, rather than any organization chart. *Training people to use influence* (3) for Rost was focussed upon leadership development, rather than leader development. Rost's emphasis upon influence relationships and mutual purpose required all collaborators to be trained in using influence, not just nominated leaders. There are overlaps here between Rost's (1993b) emphasis upon metaphors, myths and rituals and interpretive discourses of leadership development (Mabey, 2013) which emphasise the socially constructed nature of leadership development and focus upon ritual and symbolic aspects. *Develop people to work within non-coercive relationships* (4) is the most radical of Rost's suggestions aligning Rost with critical leadership development discourses (Mabey, 2013). *Helping people to understand the nature of real transformative change* (5) again aligns Rost with critical discourses in questioning the order, predictability and control of leadership development as conventionally conceived. *The reconstruction of people's basic world view about life toward a collaborative orientation* (6) is radical, but not unique. Mabey (2013: 360) cited Cunliffe (2003) when he encouraged greater reflexivity with regards to ontological and epistemological leadership development assumptions. In Bolden's (2011) review of distributed leadership literature, there was evidence of increasing evidence of and engagement with collaborative leadership.

Rost was troubled by an industrial paradigm characterising leadership over the previous two centuries, suffering from the following shortcomings; structural-functionalist view of organizations, management viewed as the preeminent profession, personalistic focus upon the leader, dominant objective of goal achievement, self-interested and individualistic outlook, male model of life, utilitarian and materialistic ethical perspective and a rational, technocratic, linear, quantitative, and scientific language and methodology. These characteristics of leadership which troubled Rost still appear prevalent today. However, hope resides amongst critical commentators questioning such orthodoxy. Grint (2005a:105) questioned current belief in leaders as people '... who construct and implement innovative solutions to organization problems on the part of their subordinates – and in turn the subordinates learn little from the process except that the responsibility for problem – solving lies with the leaders.' This equates with Rost's (1993b) desire for leadership development helping people to understand real transformative change (5) and reorient around collaboration (6).

...where the relationship between leaders and followers is asymmetrical in either direction: weak/irresponsible leaders or weak/irresponsible followers, then success for the organization is likely to be short-lived because feedback and learning is minimized. (Grint, 2005a:105)

This insight gives weight to greater emphasis upon influence relationships (3) and the need to stop concentrating upon the leader (1). In the rethinking section, Rost's (1993a) belief in mutual purpose was highlighted and Grint appears to highlight the necessity of such a corrective mechanism to deal with weak/irresponsible leaders. Haslam et al (2011:2) '...argue for a new psychology that sees leadership as the product of an individual's "we-ness", rather than his or her "I-ness"', compatible with many of Rost's hopes for a new leadership paradigm. Possibly one day leadership and leadership development will be reimagined after all we are only 15% into the 21st Century.

Conclusions – Reimagining leadership development

... Leadership is seduction not by what it says but by what it does not say, or by the undecidability of what it may be saying. (Calas and Smircich, 1991: 570).

In a manner similar to Calas and Smircich's warning about the seductive properties of leadership, leadership development appears equally seductive (see Sinclair, 2009). Storey (2011) acknowledged the range of stakeholders in leadership development and their vested interests; governments, professional agencies, in-house learning units, corporate universities, consultancies and business schools. These stakeholders are likely to maintain the seduction of leadership development in very particular ways. Consequently, Mabey (2013) revealing that the overwhelming majority of leadership development work he reviewed was based upon functionalist assumptions focusing upon organizational performance is very understandable. Equally, Day et al's (2014) conclusion that based upon their review of the literature, the sub-field remained 'very immature' makes sense given leadership development's functionalism. The mythological leadership narrative (Rost, 1993a) as discussed earlier, explains the immaturity Day et al (2014) highlighted. At present there really is no impetus/no challenge for leadership development to mature, whereas there is impetus for stakeholders to maintain the lucrative status quo (see Day, 2011 for an overview of the financial incentives). Rost's (1993b) vision of leadership development was unlikely to be embraced until a significant catalyst for change emerged. In many ways, the global financial recession of 2008 offered a catalyst for new forms of leadership development, yet this doesn't appear to have been the case.

Mabey (2013) identified other discourses informing leadership development. Interpretive, dialogic and critical discourses, rather than negating functionalist discourses they offered different analytic lens, as well as, different ways to conceive and undertake leadership development. Despite their analytical potential to help the sub-field of leadership development mature, the dominance of functionalist explanations currently makes it difficult to imagine different forms of leadership development.

If we limit ourselves to rational or scientific approaches to understanding leadership that presume cause-effect relationships, then we will exclude much of the experience of leadership. (Barker, 1997:361)

The danger within the dominance of functionalist orthodoxy of leadership development as reported here and which Barker captures with regards to leadership was that we currently exclude a large part of leadership experience from our analyses and practices. Two decades

earlier Rost (1993a) encountered this functionalist leadership orthodoxy which still endures today, he expressed his annoyance reported here. But more proactively he imagined a new paradigm of leadership for the 21st Century, which to date has not been realized. Rost (1993a:183) was not susceptible to the seductions which characterise leadership, he wrote that ‘leadership scholars in the future are going to have to think new thoughts about leadership, using post-industrial assumptions about human beings, organizations, societies and the planet earth.’ Rost (1993b) imagined a very different *Leadership Development in the New Millennium* and this paper has unashamedly revisited and reimagined such a form of leadership development. Conclusions are drawn in terms of how a Rostian perspective still helps us to reimagine leadership development in terms of how it is researched and theorised and more generally how leadership is practiced.

Researching leadership development Rost’s (1993b) visions of leadership development raises many interesting research agendas. Firstly, through action research Rost’s (1993b) approach (see Box 4) could be applied with an organizational setting and tested out in order to see if it addressed the performance demands of functionalist assumptions. Secondly, Mabey (2013) and Day (2011) and Day et al’s (2014) highlighted an overemphasis upon leader development, which Rost perceived as the greatest problem with leadership development and Edwards et al (2013) highlighted a critical agenda relating to where leadership was located, beyond the traditional leader. Rost (1993b) blurs traditional boundaries between leaders and collaborators (see Box 3) and researching evidence of such alternative configurations appears fruitful. Rost suggests that sometimes what we label leadership is really management or governance and to this we could add Grint’s (2010) differentiation between leadership, management and command. Research could explore which of these activities is required and if we are now using leadership development as a universal panacea. Beginning to engage with collaborators in real intended change reflecting mutual purposes raises a series of interesting research questions. What form does leadership take in the context of collaboration and how do you develop leaders to collaborate? What are the traditional focuses of leadership development and how do they differ from a focus upon real intended change? How might an emphasis upon mutual purpose within leadership development address leadership pathologies (Kets de Vries, 2006) and the darker side of leadership (Tourish, 2013).

Developing leadership development theories In reviewing leadership development theories the sub-field has been described as ‘very immature’ (Day et al, 2014). This conclusion is very troubling given the huge financial investment in leadership development practices and the volume of literature that Day et al (2014) were able to review. Rost (1993a) highlighted the mythological leadership narrative and Gemmil and Oakley (1992) highlighted leadership as an alienating social myth limiting any change which challenges the status quo. These insights are now over two decades old, their radicalism has been diminished with the passage of time with leadership theoretical orthodoxy negating their potency. Theorising collaborators within processes of leadership appears to be fruitful with concepts such as shared and distributed leadership (see Bolden, 2011) offering ways forward. We also need to revisit and theoretically update the mythological leadership narrative and leadership as an alienating social myth.

Borrowing from the field of organizational change studies, Hope Hailey and Balogun (2002) developed a change kaleidoscope as a metaphor for looking differently at organizational change placing an emphasis upon; rigorous analysis of context, consideration of different implementation options, and awareness of one’s own preferences and how this may limit options considered and the development of change judgement. Mabey’s (2013) highlighting

of different leadership development discourses is highly compatible with Hope Hailey and Balogun's (2002) change kaleidoscope and this metaphor may help to advance more diverse depictions of leadership development theory.

Practicing leadership It is important to acknowledge that J.C. Rost was an education academic with a passion for transforming leadership. His annoyance with leadership studies appears to have been magnified by the excessive influence the fields of management and organization studies had upon leadership studies. The implication of this reasoning is that Rost's prescriptions may prove inappropriate for leadership practices within the private sector and Rost would probably be happy with such an outcome. However, Rost's prescriptions may be more appropriate to the challenges faced by the public sector he was located within, as well as, the voluntary sector. In the face of radical change these sectors are facing an emphasis upon influence relationships, real intended change and mutual purposes appears less radical and today even appears conceivable, just don't label it Big Society.

Note

1. In this paper, references are made to the 1993 print of Rost's classic, first published in 1991.

Acknowledgement

I acknowledge and appreciated the helpful comments relating to the extended abstract which have informed the development of this paper.

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