

ARTICLES

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SOCIAL COUPLING AND DECOUPLING: PASTORS AS ENTREPRENEURS

Acoplamento e desacoplamento sociais: Pastores como empreendedores

Acoplamiento y desacoplamiento social: Pastores como empresarios

ABSTRACT

Neo-Pentecostal ministers, whose churches follow productive enterprise patterns, seem to be endowed with the ability to build new social relations—linked to the religious context—while concurrently moving away from previous links, especially those with family and friends. This coupling (the creation of and linkage to new bonds) and decoupling capacity (distancing oneself from past relationships) was first observed by Granovetter (2009) while investigating immigrant entrepreneurs. This article goes beyond the scope of his studies, where the displacement factor was ethnic-geographical, to analyze a new phenomenon of an ethical-religious nature. In order to do so, it introduces the cases of 16 pastors in the metropolitan region of Belo Horizonte, Brazil. Evidence is found of the importance of the coupling/decoupling phenomenon in the creation of new religious communities, which are widespread throughout the country. At the same time, this study makes new contributions to the field and opens up different lines of research.

KEYWORDS | Coupling, decoupling, religious entrepreneurship, neo-Pentecostal pastors, social networks.

RESUMO

Pastores neopentecostais responsáveis por igrejas cujo funcionamento aparenta seguir moldes de empreendimentos produtivos parecem ser dotados da capacidade de construir novas relações sociais – associadas ao contexto religioso –, ao mesmo tempo que se afastam parcialmente de laços anteriores, sobretudo familiares e de amizade. Essa capacidade de acoplamento – criação e vinculação a novos laços – e de desacoplamento – distanciamento de relações passadas – foi observada por Granovetter (2009) na investigação de empreendedores imigrantes. O presente artigo extrapola o âmbito de estudos desse autor, em que o fator de deslocamento é étnico-geográfico, para analisar novo fenômeno, de natureza ético-religiosa. Para isso, analisa o caso de 16 pastores da região metropolitana de Belo Horizonte. As evidências demonstram a importância do fenômeno de acoplamento/desacoplamento para a construção de novas comunidades religiosas, suscitando reflexões sobre esse tipo de empreendimento, em franca proliferação no Brasil. Ao mesmo tempo, possibilita contribuições à literatura da área, abrindo diferentes vertentes de investigações.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE | Acoplamento, desacoplamento, empreendedorismo religioso, pastores neopentecostais, redes sociais.

RESUMEN

Los pastores neopentecostales, responsables de iglesias cuyo funcionamiento aparenta seguir los moldes de los emprendimientos productivos, parecen estar dotados de la capacidad de construir nuevas relaciones sociales -asociadas al contexto religioso-, al mismo tiempo que se alejan parcialmente de lazos anteriores, sobre todo familiares y de amistad. Esta capacidad de acoplamiento – creación de y vinculación a nuevos lazos- y de desacoplamiento – distanciamiento de relaciones pasadas- fue observada por Granovetter (2009) en la investigación sobre emprendedores inmigrantes. El presente artículo extrapola el ámbito de estudios de ese autor, donde el factor de desplazamiento es étnico-geográfico, para analizar un nuevo fenómeno de naturaleza ético-religiosa. Para ello, analiza el caso de 16 pastores de la región metropolitana de Belo Horizonte. Las evidencias demuestran la importancia del fenómeno de acoplamiento/desacoplamiento en la construcción de nuevas comunidades religiosas, lo que suscita reflexiones sobre este tipo de emprendimiento, en franca proliferación en Brasil. Al mismo tiempo, posibilita contribuciones a la literatura del área, al abrir diferentes vertientes de investigación.

PALABRAS CLAVE | Acoplamiento, desacoplamiento, iniciativa empresarial religiosa, pastores neopentecostales, redes sociales.

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INTRODUCTION

Social networks have been widely researched in the literature, especially after Granovetter's work (1973, 2005). Among the possible research approaches, there is one that investigates the impact of networks on the paths of entrepreneurs. According to Slotte-Kock and Coviello (2009, p. 31), "In recent years, an interest in networks has permeated the research on entrepreneurship." According to Hoang and Antoncic (2003, p. 165), "Approximately 15 years ago, research on networks emerged as an important new area of inquiry within the field of entrepreneurship." The essence of this association is the notion that individuals are embedded in social and economic frameworks that are capable of influencing them (Correa & Vale, 2014; Sexton & Smilor, 1997; Slotte-Kock & Coviello, 2009; Starr & MacMillan, 1990). This article deals with the essence of these concepts. It analyzes the evolution and influence of the social ties of individuals from Catholic communities who became neo-Pentecostal pastors responsible for creating and guiding small independent churches.

This theme is particularly interesting in the Brazilian context, primarily for three interrelated reasons. First, due to a change in the religious profile of the country with the recent exponential growth of the Evangelical population (on this subject, see Neri, Carvalhaes, & Monte, 2011; Pacheco, Silva, & Ribeiro, 2007; Passos, Zorzini, & Rocha, 2011; Rabuske, Santos, Gonçalves, & Traub, 2012). In fact, between 1991 and 2010, nearly 30 million people became Protestants. That is 9.4 million people more than, for example, the population of the state of Minas Gerais (IBGE, 2010.). Currently, about 40 million people, more than 20% of the Brazilian population, consider themselves Evangelical.

Second, many neo-Pentecostal pastors originated from other religious communities: 70% of the population is made up of Evangelical converts, individuals from other religions (mainly Catholic) (Rabuske et al., 2012). This religious conversion led to related changes in the social networks of individuals. Third, the active and combative attitude of these churches and pastors identify them as specific types of enterprise and entrepreneur, respectively.

The entrepreneurship of the pastors derives from religious pluralism, seen in the possibility of new designations entering and gaining institutional strength in the country (on this subject, see Frigerio & Pinheiro Filho, 2008; Mariano, 2003; Passos et al., 2011; Teixeira, 2008). This emerged in part as a response to the increased competition among the growing number of churches in the country. The necessity of adopting a more active, professional, and effective attitude to survive in the market (Mariano, 2008, 2013; Pierucci, 1999, 2006, 2008) derived therefrom. According to the latest data

from the Brazilian Institute of Tax Planning (*Instituto Brasileiro de Planejamento Tributário*, 2017), in 2013, nearly 12 new churches were opened every day in Brazil—an average of one every 2 hours. "In an extremely heated 'religious market'," evident today in the country, "those churches, religions [or entrepreneurs] that do not enter the competitive process of 'soul dispute', more incisively, are 'left behind'" (Passos et al., 2011, p. 704).

However, despite the obvious relevance of this theme, it has not received the attention it deserves in the literature. This can be observed in both the international (Dougherty, Griebel, & Neubert, 2013; Frigerio & Pinheiro Filho, 2008; Iannaccone, 1995) and national contexts (Borges, Enoch, Borges, & Almeida, 2015; Seraphim & Alperstedt, 2012). In a search of some of the major databases (Web of Science, Portal de Periódicos da Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior [Capes], Scientific Periodicals Electronic Library [Spell]), journals (RAC-Revista de Administração Contemporânea, RAE-Revista de Administração de Empresas, RAUSP-Revista de Administração, O&S-Organizações & Sociedade, BAR-Brazilian Administration Review e Cadernos EBAPE.BR), and conferences in Brazil on administration (Encontro da Associação Nacional dos Programas de Pós-Graduação em Administração [EnAnpad], Encontro de Estudos Organizacionais da ANPAD [Eneo], Seminários em Administração [SemeAd] e Encontro de Estudos sobre Empreendedorismo e Gestão de Pequenas Empresas [Egepe]), no studies that discuss religious entrepreneurship were found. The search focused on keywords in the titles and abstracts of papers published in the last 20 years. There is even a lack of studies on the topic in the international context. In a search of Web of Science, only one article—by Pearce, Fritz, and Davis (2010)—was located. It focuses on a particular context: the specific investigation of a traditional denomination. The authors were not thorough regarding the micro-level entrepreneurial behavior of pastors, which is important to this study. As observed by Pearce et al. (2010, p. 228), the "role of entrepreneurial behavior in the religious context remains unexplored." This article—an innovative one in the area of administration that can be inserted precisely into this context—seeks to partially fill this gap.

We will use theoretical contributions on social networks, specifically on coupling and decoupling, to investigate the phenomenon of interest. The former signals the importance of networks with strong interactions among actors, and of trust relationships expressed through bonds capable of generating reciprocity. The latter points to the relevance of simultaneously sustaining relative distancing and detachment, which are important in certain situations. Often, such distancing is how entrepreneurs avoid excessive requests that could subvert the productive logic of their ventures.

This theoretical and empirical article occupies that space. The article is based on secondary data on ethnic entrepreneurship (Granovetter, 2009), complemented by and associated with quantitative and qualitative evidence derived from research on pastors from neo-Pentecostal churches. It presents a comparative analysis of the two types of entrepreneurship: ethnic-religious and immigrant. It aims to investigate, in an innovative way for studies of administration, the relevance of coupling/decoupling in an analysis of the dimensions of the phenomenon of religious entrepreneurship. In doing so, it sheds new light on the study of this particular type of entrepreneurship, which is growing at a significant rate in Brazil. At the same time, it makes contributions to the literature on coupling/decoupling by providing totally unprecedented theoretical interpretations.

The study focuses on the existence of gaps. The first gap is related to the association between entrepreneurship and social networks. When the literature discusses entrepreneurship associated with religion, the focus shifts to the investigation of how secularization has intensified the fierce competition among ecclesiastical agents (see, for example, Frigerio & Pinheiro Filho, 2008; Gracino Junior, 2008; Mariano, 2003, 2008; Rabuske et al., 2012; Stark, 1999; Stark, Iannaccone, & Finke, 1996). When networks are included in studies of religious ventures, they are disassociated from reflections (discussed here) on social coupling/decoupling. The second gap is associated with the lack of research on coupling/decoupling. Such themes have not received much attention from researchers in the field of administration. This is true in the international and national contexts.

THEORETICAL BASIS

Neo-Pentecostal churches seem to enjoy benefits derived from strong interactions among their members, associated with a distinctive ability to avoid interference by exploiters. In these churches, the combination of these benefits originates, on the one hand, from attributes derived from the entrepreneurial capacity of the pastors, and, on the other, from interactions among members. This phenomenon is composed of two distinct and, at the same time, complementary parts. The first relates to the fact that, after converting, individuals begin to integrate into groups with strong religious ties (Ciscon-Evangelist & Menandro, 2011). In fact, it is their “confessional affiliation [that determines] their sociability networks” (Hervieu-Léger, 2008, p. 52). Prandi (2008, p. 159) point out that the “aesthetic and behavioral limits imposed [by] religion” discourage us from participating in a group bigger than the one constrained by the church itself. (Scott & Cantarelli, 2004).

The second phenomenon derives from the first and its implications for strong ties. Due to the primacy of congregational relations, it is possible to observe how “not rarely, the new [Evangelical] ‘family’ surpasses as [in] an investment of time and affection in relation to the natural one” (Pacheco et al., 2007, p. 58). Evidence of how “religion brings similar people together and separates them from others” (Prandi, 2008, p. 159), how it performs a dual function of “social identification: internal, because it incorporates believers into a given community; external, because it separates those who do not belong there” (Hervieu-Léger, 2008, p. 27).

Such a reflection is consistent with propositions, derived from the field of social networks, on the benefits derived from a proper balance between close and distant relations. The works of Granovetter (1973, 2009), a key author, stand out. He built two pairs of concepts—strong and weak ties and coupling and decoupling—that are of interest to this study. Strong ties consist of frequent and long-lasting contacts between two or more individuals. Weak ties are characterized by infrequent relationships, created on occasions for which contacts are fortuitous or of short duration. Originating from different types of network, weak ties generate and distribute unprecedented resources, which extrapolate those available in the set of relationships in which the entrepreneur is embedded (Granovetter, 1973).

Later, Granovetter advanced his work on social ties by developing a typology of structures based on two main concepts: coupling and decoupling. While coupling indicates the presence of networks with strong interactions among actors, decoupling suggests less dense and more fragmented networks. An excessive, and insufficient, level of coupling could be detrimental to certain activities. Observing the creation of small enterprises by immigrant Chinese populations, Granovetter (2009) emphasized the importance of the balance between coupling and decoupling, and the concomitant presence of a balance between them.

While coupling generates “solidarity” and trust relationships, expressed through bonds capable of generating reciprocity, decoupling signals the possibility of distancing and disconnection, which are important in certain situations. Often, this relative distancing is how entrepreneurs can avoid “uncontrolled solidarity” and abuse derived from strong ties (personal friends, family), which could interfere in their venture in a harmful way. Free of barriers generated by excessive coupling, the individual can possess greater autonomy. According to Granovetter (2005), a strategy based on trust and limitations on obligations seems to be convenient in the creation of small prosperous enterprises.

Granovetter states that a lack and excess of solidarity both have negative impacts on the development of productive

enterprises. The author points out that successful ventures should have an adequate balance between coupling and decoupling. In fact, “as important as the intensity of the interaction is the clearly defined boundary beyond which such intensity and trust fall off sharply” (Granovetter, 2009, p. 255). Granovetter (2009) highlights that groups of entrepreneur emigrants, particularly Chinese, seem to be more likely to have such attributes than the native populations.

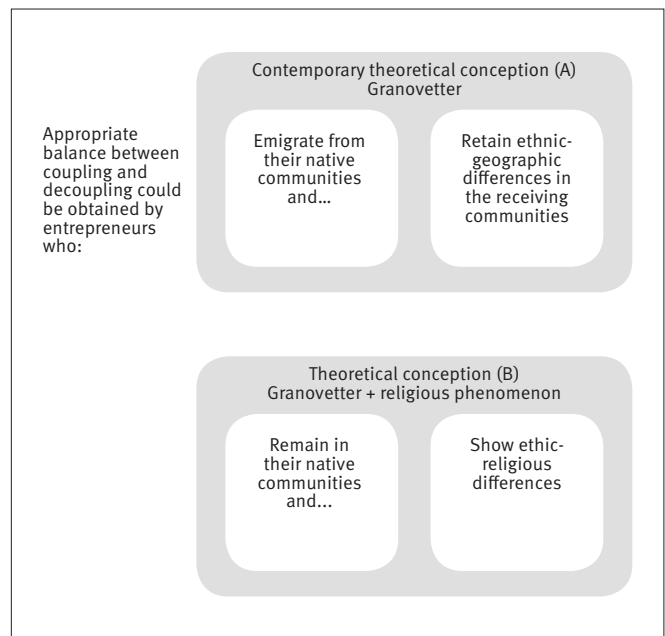
Essential to Granovetter’s (2009) conception is the notion that individuals need to decouple from their native communities and move to a new country to prevent uncontrolled solidarity. Only in this way can they get rid of excess requests coming from strong ties. In fact, “immigrants have an advantage over natives in achieving the right balance between what might be called ‘coupling’ and ‘decoupling’” (Granovetter, 2009, p. 258). Based on that, it is clear that the related analyses usually take for granted the most interesting part of the problem: the factors that make it profitable to think of the maintenance and manipulation of ethnic identity as a matter of rational choice.

Although geared to different contexts, it is possible to observe the existence of certain similarities between the works of Granovetter (2009) and those related to religious endeavors (Almeida, 2006; Ciscon-Evangelist & Menander, 2011; Hervieu-Léger, 2008, among others). As entrepreneurs, they initially, for ethical-religious reasons, joined cohesive networks that could eventually provide them with fundamental resources. At the same time, notice how both types of entrepreneur seemed partially decoupled from other actors not embedded in the same religious or geographical community. These two associations suggest that religious entrepreneurs, at least theoretically, have the ability, under certain circumstances, to benefit from the resources coming from the adequate adjustment of their coupling/decoupling, like the ethnic communities highlighted by Granovetter (2009).

However, there is something more there—something that calls our attention to a distinct finding of significant theoretical relevance. Unlike Granovetter (2009), who claims that the displacement of individuals from their native communities to another country is necessary to enjoy the benefits of the balance between coupling/decoupling, the religious entrepreneurs emphasized here theoretically do not need to move away from their countries of origin. Two distinct concepts emerge from this reflection. The first is based on Granovetter’s (2009) perspective on ethnic entrepreneurship. The second is unprecedented. It develops from the junction of Granovetter and authors focusing on the sociology of religion (for example, Almeida, 2006; Ciscon-Evangelist & Menander, 2011; Hervieu-Léger, 2008, among others).

Figure 1 illustrates the nature of this line of reasoning.

Figure 1. Views on the requirements for the development of coupled entrepreneurs



The first design (A) emphasizes the importance of spatial displacement (change of country). The second (B) suggests that religious conversion is enough to ensure an appropriate balance between coupling and decoupling.

METHODOLOGICAL BASIS

Field research was initially conducted with 23 pastors from the metropolitan region of Belo Horizonte. Of these, 16 contributed to the empirical evidence. Two interconnected criteria were employed. The first, methodological in nature, related to the fine-tuning of the data collection tools. This took place during the field research. The second derived from the first. The improved tools allowed the researchers to strengthen the quality and validity of the previous evidence.

The search strategy was qualitative, featuring appropriation and triangulation of the qualitative and quantitative evidence (Creswell, 2007; Meyer, 2001; Neves, 1996). The method used was the multiple case study approach (Yin, 2010). Evidence collection was based on the combination of two sets of criteria. The first related to the theoretical categories of interest, including: i) pastors’ entrepreneurial orientation, i.e., their ability to act as entrepreneurs; and ii) egocentric social structures relating to previous and later religious conversion periods, investigating the factors and repercussions derived

from each. For the first theoretical category, a qualitative technique was used for data collection (semi-structured in-depth interviews). For the second, two techniques were used: one, qualitative in nature (in-depth semi-structured interviews), which was considered the main one; and another, which was quantitative (structured interviews). They were designed to strengthen the previous evidence (Yin, 2010).

The second set of criteria related to the respondents' characteristics, with four theoretical criteria. First, the individuals had to be pastors. Second, they had to have been converted from another religion. Third, they had to have remained in the region where their conversion took place. Finally, they had to have created and been responsible for a small religious business. Indeed, pastors can create major religious denominations. One example is the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, considered one of the churches responsible for leading the emergence of what might be called "enterprise-churches" (Mariano, 2003, p. 120). However, according to Pacheco et al. (2007, p. 55), "pastors insert themselves into autonomous Pentecostalism, [responsible for] creating small and independent communities scattered around the outskirts of major urban centers and organized [principally] around the attributes [...] of their leaders."

The in-depth interviews were conducted using guided, but not strict, conversations (Yin, 2010). More than 51 hours of interviews were recorded. The names of the interviewees were changed for ethical reasons, with pseudonyms being chosen at random. They are Abelardo, Antônio, Benedito, Cristiano, Damião, Edmundo, Fernando, Humberto, Itamar, Jeferson, Kaio, Napoleão, Raimundo, Sebastião, Teodoro, and Ulisses. The structured interviews (Gil, 1999; Yin, 2010) were based on "social network analysis" (SNA). It was thus possible to map the egocentric structures of the pastors (Hanneman & Riddle, 2005, s/p) and understand, through sociograms and algorithms provided by Ucinet 6.480 (Hanneman & Riddle, 2005), the impact of interactions among actors (Hanneman & Riddle, 2005; Tomáel, 2007).

The structured interviews were carried out using fixed questions, which were asked in the same order for all participants. Since they incorporated a retrospective collection of longitudinal data (Elliott, 2005), they followed a two-step pattern: i) a request to the pastors to write the names of 40 people in their close circle, both before and after their conversion; and ii) the construction of a sociometric matrix. Together with the researchers, they described the interactions of the "alters", and indicated the kind of relationship, in relation to their egos. The structures of seven

respondents were mapped. There were three reasons for this: i) the pastors' lack of availability, ii) their inability to access/remember the names of contacts from before their conversion, and iii) theoretical saturation.

The qualitative data analysis consisted of the "examination [and] the tabulation of evidence" (Yin, 2010, p. 154). The strategy used was "analytic generalization" (Meyer, 2001; Yin, 2010). Sociometric matrices derived from the SNA were used in the quantitative analysis. Three of them are density, centrality, and clicks. Network density can be understood as the "average strength of the connections between us and [...] a form of closure in which the contacts are also connected" (Burt, 2000, pp. 374-375). The degree of centrality indicates the number of connections that the actors have in a given network. It is "a measure of the direct influence that a vertex has in relation to its contacts" (Freitas, 2010, p. 2). Finally, clicks refers to subsets of networks. It comprises "actors connected by cohesive relations" (Burt, 1980, p. 80), tightly intertwined with each other (Burt, 1980; Hanneman & Riddle, 2005).

The quantitative Spearman's rank correlation coefficient was employed, simultaneously, in an innovative approach for studies associated with networks. The transformation coefficient, little used in the investigation of social structures for two periods of time, together with indicators derived from SNA enabled broadening of the understanding of the influence of religious conversion on changes in egocentric networks. Siegel (1975) highlights that the Spearman correlation coefficient is a measure of association whose variables must be shown, at least in an ordinal scale, so that the objects or individuals under study may be ranked in two ordered series. In this study, the ranks were created on the basis of the number of individuals in each relationship group. The association that we investigated referred to the periods before and after conversion. To do this, the following formula was used:

$$r_s = 1 - \frac{6 \sum_{i=1}^N d_i^2}{N^3 - N}$$

where " d_i " refers to the value of the Spearman rank correlation coefficient; " Σ " to the sum; " d_i " the difference between the two ranks (before and after religious conversion); " i " to the value number 1 (one); " N " to all pairs of sample values; and $\sum_{i=1}^n d_i^2$ to the "sum of classified differences squared" (Pocinho, 2010, p. 69). Exhibit 1 details the formula, elements, and interpretation of the Spearman's rank correlation coefficient.

Exhibit 1. Breakdown of the Spearman Coefficient

Concept	Formula	Elements	Interpretation
Coefficient of Spearman's rank correlation	$r_s = 1 - \frac{6 \sum_{i=1}^N d_i^2}{N^3 - N}$ <p>When the ranks are equal:</p> $r_s = \frac{\sum x^2 + \sum y^2 - \sum d_i^2}{2\sqrt{\sum x^2 \sum y^2}}$ $Sx^2 = \frac{N^3 - N}{12} - \sum T$ $Sy^2 = \frac{N^3 - N}{12} - \sum T$ $T = \frac{t^3 - t}{12}$	<p>In which:</p> <p>r_s: correlation coefficient;</p> <p>d_i: difference of ranks.</p> <p>N: Number of sample values</p> <p>i: Indexing ranging from 1 to N</p> <p>$x = X - \bar{X}$: difference of the X scores and their mean.</p> <p>$y = Y - \bar{Y}$: difference of the Y score and their mean.</p> <p>T: Correction factor;</p> <p>t: Number of observations equal to the determined rank</p>	<p>“Measure that requires both variables at least to have an ordinal scale.” (Siegel, p. 228)</p> <p>The higher the d_i:</p> <p>a) the less perfect the association between variables;</p> <p>b) The significance test;</p> <p>The null hypothesis corresponds to the absence of correlation between “before” and “after” conversion</p>

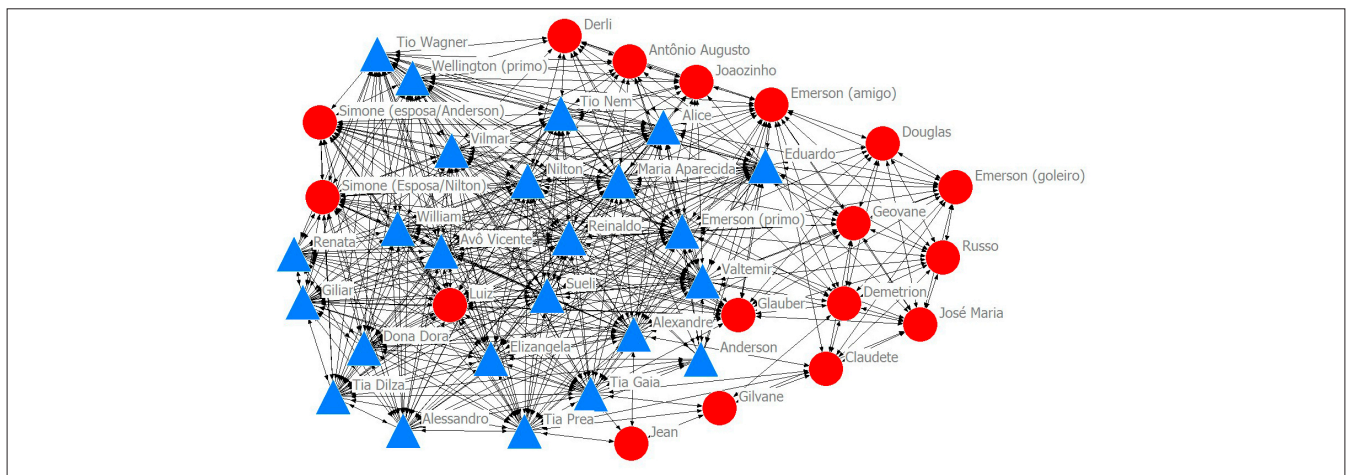
RESULTS OBTAINED

When they convert, evangelicals end up experiencing a transformation in their social structures that is characterized by the onset of two movements. The first is their estrangement from family members and close friends. Napoleão stressed that “people distance themselves from you.” “When we [...] embrace the faith, [...] it is even upsetting to say, but people avoid us” (Ulisses). “I have testimony of people who converted to the church and the family did not want to see them any more” (Edmundo). “Unfortunately, you only meet family at funerals. It’s even scary to think this. Those who preach life only find relatives in death. It’s a strange pun” (Humberto).

The second transformation is associated with the reconstruction of relational structures. After conversion, individuals begin to interact mainly with other evangelicals. In fact, “I began to relate more to evangelicals” (Abelardo). “[I made] great friendships with the brethren of the church” (Jeferson). This implies, practically, “starting from scratch. Let us re-consider another bond of friendship” (Edmundo). “It’s natural. At lunch, for example, you no longer invite the family. You invite the brothers, and other pastors” (Humberto).

Look at the case of Pastor Jeferson, for example. Figure 2 shows his egocentric social structure from the period prior to his religious conversion.

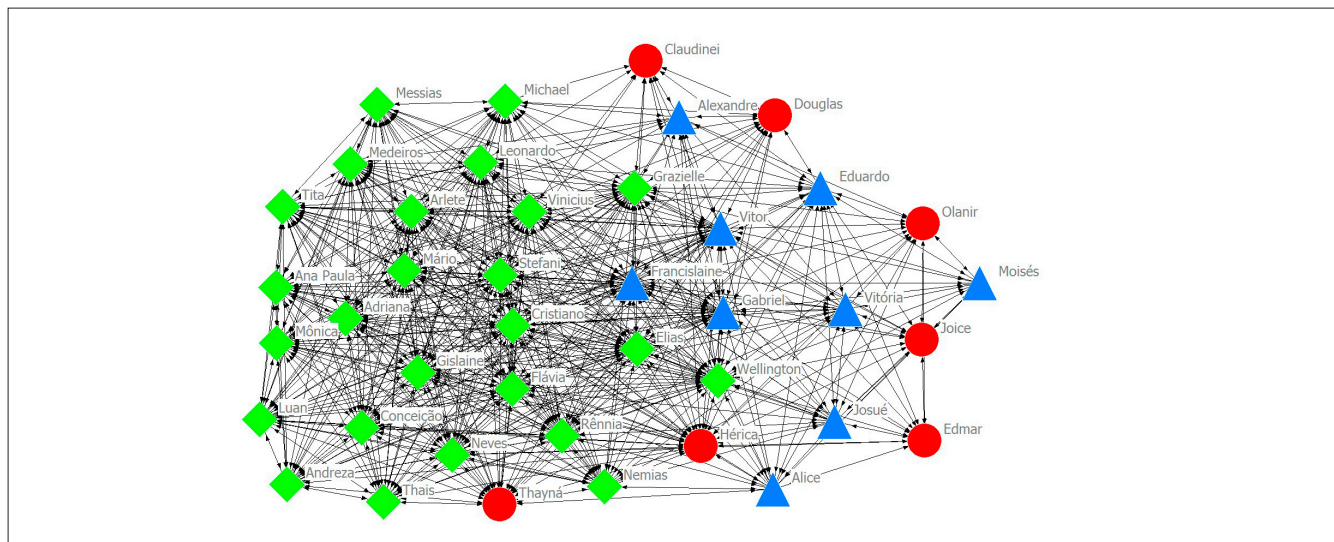
Figure 2. Graph representing Jeferson’s social structure before conversion



Note: For “relationship groups,” i) red circle = acquaintances and ii) blue triangle = family members.

Note how Jeferson was mainly related to “acquaintances” and family members. This structure was almost totally modified after his religious conversion, as can be observed from the sociogram shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Graph representing Jeferson’s social structure following conversion



Note: For “relationship groups,” i) Red circle = acquaintances, ii) green diamond = church members, and iii) blue triangle = family members.

Notice how, after his conversion, Jeferson became especially close to members of his church, dissociating himself from previous ties, including family and friends. This transformation was repeated with other pastors whose sociometric data was collected. Table 1 details the number of people for the periods before and after conversion.

Table 1 indicates how, before conversion, the interviewees’ interactions were mainly with family members (37%), friends (45%), and acquaintances (15%). Afterwards, however, members of two new social groupings—church (42%) and pastors (14%)—were jointly responsible for more than 50% of their relationships. Note, therefore, the transformation of the pastors’ post-conversion structures compared to those of the previous period. To show this, the Spearman correlation coefficient was used in addition to those indicators already discussed. The results were not significant, with

a p-value greater than 5% (Siegel, 1975). Regarding the probability of error when rejecting the null hypothesis, the lower the p-value, the greater the probability that the null hypothesis is false (Bisquerra et al., 2004). In this study, the hypothesis was $H_0 = \text{correlation} = \text{zero}$: the relationship structure before the conversion differs from that following conversion. The alternative hypothesis (H_1) was that the relationship structure before conversion does not differ significantly from that following conversion.

This indicator showed that there was no supporting evidence for correlations between the compositions of the structures before and after conversion. This indicates that individuals, after conversion, transformed their relational frameworks almost completely. This effect could be seen for all pastors and, therefore, for each interviewee. The case of Pastor Ulisses (Table 2) details the changes in his social structures.

Table 1. Distribuição percentual dos grupos de relacionamento dos pastores

Groups	A_Abelardo	D_Abelardo	A_Benedito	D_Benedito	A_Jeferson	D_Jeferson	A_Kaio	D_Kaio
Family	0%	18%	38%	40%	60%	23%	48%	55%
Friends	55%	5%	30%	30%	40%	18%	23%	8%
Acquaintances	45%	0%	33%	0%	0%	0%	25%	0%
Church	0%	73%	0%	25%	0%	60%	0%	30%

Continue

Table 1. Percentage distribution of pastors’ relationship groups

Conclusion

Groups	A_Abelardo	D_Abelardo	A_Benedito	D_Benedito	A_Jeferson	D_Jeferson	A_Kaio	D_Kaio
Pastors	0%	5%	0%	5%	0%	0%	0%	8%
Workmate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	3%	0%
Classmate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	3%	0%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Correlation Spearman (p-value)	-0.19	p=0.69	0.27	p=0.48	0.54	p=0.21	0.05	p=0.91
Groups	A_Napoleão	D_Napoleão	A_Teodoro	D_Teodoro	A_Ulisses	D_Ulisses	A_PASTOR	D_PASTOR
Groups	5%	38%	90%	43%	20%	13%	37%	33%
Family	75%	5%	10%	0%	80%	15%	45%	11%
Friends	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	15%	0%
Acquaintances	0%	33%	0%	45%	0%	28%	0%	42%
Church	0%	25%	0%	10%	0%	45%	0%	14%
Pastors	20%	0%	0%	3%	0%	0%	3%	0%
Workmate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Classmate	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Correlação Spearman;(p-valor)	0.02	p=0.96	0.09	p=0.84	0.18	p=0.68	-0.08	p=0.87

Nota: (A= antes; D = Depois da conversão)

Table 2. Spearman’s coefficient relative to Pastor Ulisses’ social structure

Before	After	Ranks Before	Ranks After	di	(di) ²
0.20	0.13	6	4	2	4
0.80	0.15	7	5	2	4
0.0	0.0	3	2	1	1
0.0	0.28	3	6	-3	9
0.0	0.45	3	7	-4	16
0.0	0.0	3	2	1	1
0.0	0.0	3	2	1	1
Total					36

Notice how the number of draws “before conversion” was five. Ergo, the correction factor (T) = (53 - 5) / 12 = 10. At the same time, only one sequence of draw positions was observed. Thus,

ΣT=10 (for X). The number of draws was three “after conversion.” Correction factor = (33 - 3) / 12 = 2 => ΣT=2 (for Y).

$$S_x^2 = (7^3 - 7) / 12 - 10 = 18$$

$$S_y^2 = (7^3 - 7) / 12 - 2 = 26$$

Therefore, the Spearman’s correlation coefficient is:

$$r_s = \frac{\sum x^2 + \sum y^2 - \sum d_i^2}{2\sqrt{\sum x^2 \sum y^2}}$$

$$r_s = (18 + 26 - 36) / (2 * ((18 * 26))^{0,5}) = 0,1849$$

Siegel points out that, for n>10, the r_s test should be the t of student, presented in the following formula:

$$t = r_s \sqrt{\frac{N-2}{1-r_s^2}}$$

When the values are replaced,

$$t = 0.1849 * \sqrt{((7-2)/(1-0.18492))} = 0.4207$$

$$P\text{-valor} = 0.69$$

Indeed, religious ties take precedence over family members after conversion. Four factors explain this. The first is the nature of evangelical interactions. For some, they have a familial character: “A brother [of the faith] is more than a relative. Often, you do more for a brother than for a relative” (Humberto). The second relates to conversion. Afterwards, the individual’s interactions with evangelicals make up for their estrangement from their family: “There was a time when I missed them. Wow! One moment there were loads of people here. Now there’s nobody. [...] I’m going to church” (Edmundo). The third is religious in nature—a manifestation of Divine Will: “For us to do the will of God, [...] we often have to deny ourselves a lot. House, family and employment are denied in order to do God’s will” (Napoleão). Finally, the fourth is associated with cooperative behavior. Converts get support from evangelicals that they do not find in the family: “At the time when I was most in need, it was not my family that helped me. It was the church” (Kaio).

When they create their own churches, pastors seem capable of stimulating a combination of three sets of attributes that are fundamental to their endeavors. The first is behavioral in nature. Pastors seem able, in the creation and development of their institutions, to act as entrepreneurs. “Six out of every ten pastors” (Anthony) are like this. In fact, Humberto stressed the existence of a corporate dimension to the churches: “Do not think that the religious institution is different from any other institution. It is not! [...] I can tell you that a church is like any other private institution.” Herein resides the utilitarian and entrepreneurial behavior of pastors. It can be observed, for example, in competitive disputes. Pastors “understand that church has another name, which is competition. It is my church which is going to take you to heaven” (Benedito). The dispute is “so strong that they tend to keep an eye on their brother’s church” (Cristiano).

In this context, “the vision is of a company” (Benedito). It is common for “big churches to want to swallow up small ones” (Edmundo). There is “competition as if it were supermarket and advertising” (Fernando). This is evident in the search for new

believers. Two main forms are found here: making disciples or proselytism. In the first, “you [convert] a person, for example, a Catholic, whom we evangelicals think will not reach salvation” (Humberto). For evangelicals, if the person “was not born again, if he did not accept Jesus, he goes to hell” (Humberto). In the second, they take members of other evangelical churches and take them “to the other, only because of the advantages [they] can bring with them” (Humberto).

The second set of attributes is relational. They relate to the pastors’ capacity to build a close relationship with the faithful. In fact, pastors and believers of the same church build and sustain, among themselves, cohesive networks based on mutual assistance. “We seek to be a family” (Napoleão). “Everyone fights the other’s fight” (Theodore). This network is based on a voluntary and unconditional dimension. Evangelicals mobilize a wide range of resources to help. “They do what they have to do” (Cristiano). “They come together and help” (Kaio). “Many prefer [to] bless rather than receive” (Edmundo). This unconditional aid manifests in the growth of the churches. In fact, this is largely a result of the resources obtained by pastors from believers. “Today, all we have achieved in the church, acquiring things, [is] through them” (Kaio). In fact, “church is not like this: I have money, I will build. [...] There must be participation of all who are committed in this work” (Teodoro).

The third attribute is the outstanding capacity of pastors to inhibit the actions of profiteers—those people who seek to enjoy the benefits without contributing. “There are opportunists everywhere” (Abelardo). They “keep an eye on out. They think the church is a source of profit.” “It’s everywhere. They see the big church, and think that it has money” (Fernando). “We see the mischievousness of the person” (Abelardo). There are two groups of usurpers. The first is made up of people outside of the ministries. “They do everything. A person arrives in front of you and cries. The person is a performer. Just like this, in front of you. [It is] common” (Itamar). The second group is made up of believers, by members of the churches. “Unfortunately, people are so hungry for money. It’s like this: the church has money, it can help me” (Fernando). “There are cases of outsiders. They say to themselves: the grass is greener here. They convert in order to stay. [...] They only want the benefits of the work” (Sebastião).

Two sets of attributes help pastors avoid profiteers, both external and internal. The first is of an active nature, carried out by the pastors in a planned way. It involves investigating need, helping only those individuals that were recommended, and postponing the delivery of aid. The second is relational, and relates to the sustained relationship structure between pastors and members of their churches. Pastors and believers interact,

almost exclusively, with members of the same congregation. They resemble “urban tribes, [whose members] only relate to each other. [...] But this is [even] clearer in the church, because it lasts a lifetime. [...] It is natural for you to think [of it] like a biological family” (Humberto).

Such a delimitation has different implications. Three of them stand out. The first is the near absence of ties between evangelicals from different ministries. “They do not mix with anyone. They are closed, private groups” (Damião). The second is a reflection of the first. It is the impossibility of other people, whether family or not, taking advantage of the resources built by the ministerial structure. These implications are directed mainly toward the members of the churches. “Many [...] think that the resources are just for them. This behavior has not changed. [...] My group is more important than the others. This causes social stratification” (Humberto). Finally, the third implication is associated with a non-assisting dimension. Pastors and believers are partially estranged from others. This enables them to suppress claims from people not embedded in their congregational structures. “If you want help, you come to the Assembly,” said Humberto. “If you go to the Foursquare Church, the pastor there helps you. I will not help you [...] in this way. [...] there is no interreligious dialogue.”

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The results obtained allow us to make some interesting observations. The first relates to entrepreneurial activities. As Granovetter (2009) affirms, empirical evidence suggests that the successful efforts are based on an appropriate equilibrium between coupling/decoupling. Excessive coupling of church members to local communities would stimulate this uncontrolled solidarity. On the other hand, total decoupling would imply a rupture between members of the churches and members of the communities, resulting in essentially occluded networks, hindering their growth. Thus, the field data obtained propose, similar to Granovetter, that the total presence and/or absence of coupling/decoupling would be detrimental to the development of productive enterprises, whether religious or not.

The second finding derives from the previous one. Like Granovetter, who supports the notion that ethnic entrepreneurs are capable of adequately adjusting their coupling/decoupling, the evidence obtained here suggests that religious entrepreneurs are also capable of doing this. Two clusters of evidence demonstrate this. The first relates to coupling. Pastors and believers build and sustain, among themselves, close structures

of mutual aid and horizontal solidarity. Built within the confines of congregational coupling, these networks are able to provide them with resources considered in many ways fundamental. To the pastors, they provide the creation and development of their churches. To the believers, they satisfy their varied needs.

The second is associated with decoupling. It unfolds into two complementary spheres. The first is familial. Pastors and believers are, after their conversion, partially decoupled from their previous ties (see, for example, Almeida, 2006; Ciscon-Evangelista & Menandro, 2011; Hervieu-Léger, 2008; Pacheco et al., 2007; Prandi, 2008; Scott & Cantarelli, 2004). This was found in this research. New converts seek to make up for the absence of family by interacting with other evangelicals. The second sphere is institutional, as is associated with the scope of the church as a whole. The congregational collectivity that couples pastors and believers in cohesive mutual aid networks also limits their borders of sociability. The research data suggest that there are pastors and believers decoupled from people who are not part of their churches. Family members and other evangelicals are included in this. This presents us with three additional findings.

The first is that decoupling is partial, not complete. Pastors and believers maintain interactions, however restrictive, with individuals outside their structures. The second is that the services provided by the churches are circumscribed. They are intended, almost exclusively, for the members of the institution. The third is a consequence of the previous one. People not engaged in congregational collectivity are unable to enjoy the resources and benefits built by ministerial structures.

It is worth noting that, like neo-Pentecostal churches, pastors and believers seem capable of obtaining an adequate balance in their social structures due to the religious-congregational collectivity they share. This finding expands Granovetter's (2009) preliminary proposal on the requirements necessary for entrepreneurs to obtain an appropriate coupling/decoupling equilibrium. The appropriate balance between coupling/decoupling, considered essential for the development of productive enterprises (religious or otherwise), can be obtained, according to Granovetter, by emigrant entrepreneurs, and also by religious entrepreneurs and neo-Pentecostal pastors, as seen in this study,

However, there is something else here that reveals a third point of considerable theoretical relevance. It is an unprecedented reinterpretation of Granovetter's (2009) concept. He maintains the necessity of displacing individuals from their native communities so that they can, in other countries, enjoy the benefits derived from the proper balance between coupling

and decoupling. However, the empirical evidence obtained here suggests that it is not fundamentally necessary for entrepreneurs to move away from their countries of origin for this. That is, it is not necessary to promote spatial changes.

Neo-Pentecostal pastors are evidence of this. They achieve, without making geographical changes, an adequate balance in their social structure. They do this by converting, partially decoupling from their ties, and then engaging in and prioritizing close neo-Pentecostal structures. In them, they become pastor-entrepreneurs and enjoy, like the ethnogeographic entrepreneurs highlighted by Granovetter (2009), a singular position regarding the nature of coupling/decoupling in their social structures. This is an important theoretical finding, incorporating a totally unprecedented interpretation of the literature on coupling/decoupling.

In addition to the above conclusions, this article makes original contributions in the theoretical and methodological dimensions, with practical implications. In the theoretical dimension, i) it extends the current understanding of coupling/decoupling (Granovetter, 2009), revealing unprecedented criteria related to its appropriate adjustment; ii) it expands Granovetter's proposition that emigrant entrepreneurs have advantages over natives in achieving a balance between coupling and decoupling to religious-entrepreneurs; and iii) it shows and expands Granovetter's conjecture that it is not fundamentally necessary for entrepreneurs to leave their countries of origin in order to achieve an adequate balance between coupling and uncoupling.

In the methodological dimension, this research was innovative because of its use of Spearman's coefficient in the analysis of social networks to investigate transformations in the social structures of individuals, based on a sociometric survey of different periods. In doing so, its relevance and use, not yet emphasized for studies of this nature, was highlighted. There are important practical implications. First, the need to incorporate themes related to social structures in entrepreneurship programs is evident. Second, the importance of administrators who understand churches as productive enterprises creating and formatting implementation and development strategies for those churches was revealed. Third, it reemphasized the prominence of the Brazilian religious context as a fertile field for research and new discoveries by researchers of administration.

New theoretical and empirical studies are necessary. They could advance the coupling/decoupling conceptualization that was merely outlined here. In this sense, we suggest i) investigating the existence of other relevant factors, in addition to those of a religious or ethnic-geographic nature, ii) using SNA in the study

of pastors' social structures and their impact on the development of churches, iii) comparing the entrepreneurial trajectories of different pastors, relating them to the evolution of their religious organizations, and iv) defining and delimiting reference criteria for entrepreneurial behavior in the religious context.

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