**Abstract:** This paper explores discourse‑material relationships in union leadership contexts. We searched several databases and journals across the social sciences, focusing on the negotiative, relational, material, and cultural aspects of union leader and rank-and-file discourse and communication. We found 33 discursive leadership studies and conducted a thematic analysis to find three material themes broadly reflected in the literature: economics (wages, benefits), bodies (gender, race), and technology (surveillance, social media, automation). We address the implications of these findings in terms of the relevancy of retaining the term ‘discursive leadership’ and the necessity for further studies on discourse‑material pairings in union contexts.

**Keywords:** discursive leadership, discourse, materiality, unions