

# Answering a Call For Clarity: Responsible Transparency

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## **Abstract**

The use of transparency appears in many multi-context dimensions. Transparency appears in defining types of leadership (i.e., authentic, ethical, servant). Organizations today continue to increase their use of the word *transparency* via vision, mission and value statements, annual reports, and press releases. Compliant organizations are subject to fines for not meeting required transparency guidelines. In this study, the concept of responsible transparency is developed and addressed to ensure maximizing influence and information for the greater good. This dissertation draws from literature focusing on the transparency of leaders and their impact on followers. The findings demonstrate a need for additional research to understand further where the line resides concerning responsible transparency and what information is appropriate for leaders to share. This study focuses on leader self-awareness and leader/follower attribution relating to trust and psychological safety. Through a series of open-ended interviews, leaders and followers provided a unique context for data collection. This study developed a formulary for responsible transparency through both leader and follower lenses, responding to calls for more focus on the transparency concept and contributing to the existing body of literature.

Keywords: transparency, authentic leadership, transformational leadership, ethical leadership, trust

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

## ***Answering a Call: Need for Responsible Transparency***

There is a need for responsible transparency within the role of leaders. However, multiple experts define the term transparency differently (Roelofs, 2018). Currently, there is no single definition of transparency, yet the value of transparency is implicit in the fact transparent disclosure of information should provide relevant and reliable information. The word is used everywhere, and there are implications in its use. For example, the term *transparency*, as defined by the *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary*, includes the descriptors “clarity,” “clearness,” and “translucence” (Oxford University Press, n.d.-d). The definition expands further to include “free from pretense or deceit,” “readily understood,” and “characterized by visibility or accessibility of information especially concerning business practice.” To the average individual, transparency implies openness, communication, and accountability.

More than ever, there is a strong need for leaders to share openly, honestly, and responsibly. With the onset of a global pandemic and other recent events, leaders were forced to make historical and new decisions relative to information sharing. What is the right amount of information leaders need to share to maximize influence for the greater good? What do leaders need to consider when sharing the right information and what factors impact the shared information? Responsible transparency is positive information sharing through the process of understanding

positive impact. Information transferred to improve the greater good is responsible transparency.

Leadership is the ability to lead and influence others. Studies in leadership explore behaviors and traits of leaders to increase their influence. Other leadership research investigates the influence process between leaders and their follower groups (Augustsson et al., 2017; Eberly et al., 2013; Mendenhall et al., 2018). Leaders possessing more “authentic” or values-based traits, including honesty and openness, have demonstrated more influence over their follower groups (Greenleaf, 2002; Kelleher & Thelen, 2019). Greenleaf (2002) was one of the first to consider behaviors and values-based traits such as honesty in leaders with his research on servant leadership. The goal of the servant leader, in Greenleaf’s theory, is to serve the follower.

### **Transparency significance**

Greenleaf (2002) was also one of the first to consider follower impact relative to values-based leadership behaviors. A servant leader puts the follower’s needs first and focuses on the development and performance of the follower. Leaders need to measure themselves and understand followers’ perceptions to know the right amount of information to share to maximize impact and ultimately communicate at the highest impact levels, maximizing responsible transparency. O’Connor (2013) claimed Oprah Winfrey and Starbucks CEO Howard Schultz believe “the currency of leadership is transparency” (p. 2). The currency of leadership, given its impact on

trust, may be transparency, but how much transparency is needed to maximize trust? What are the factors impacting transparency? What factors should leaders consider to avoid sharing too much, leading to irresponsible consequences? In an interview, Boyatzis emphasized the importance of leaders knowing what to share to maximize influence and stated that “leaders become emotional contagions, inflicting positive or negative feelings on others, whether it’s family members, friends, colleagues, or subordinates” (De Smet, 2020). Leaders must know their role and feel confident and safe communicating to others so they understand what to convey. Boyatzis also claimed,

Although sometimes leaders may want to induce some stress into a situation to insert new energy and momentum, most of the time, it’s better to engage people in positive pursuits to retain a higher level of creativity, productiveness, and engagement. (De Smet, 2020)

For leaders, the concept of transparency presents opportunities and challenges. These challenges may include gaining the trust and acceptance of the workforce. However, upon overcoming this type of challenge, many leaders will find new opportunities presented that assist in pursuing success. Transparency increases trust, which increases performance opportunities (Boies et al., 2015). The more leaders understand the factors driving responsible transparency, the better the organization is set up for success. Many leadership scholars stress the critical factor driving influence is the relationship with followers, and leader behaviors and traits impacting the relationship (Avolio et al., 2004; Stedham & Skaar, 2019). Trust is the link between the known and the unknown and drives greater results within organizations (Boies et al., 2015;

Norman et al., 2010). Information shared impacts trust levels and, ultimately, organizational outcomes.

When looking at any organization, the need for responsible information sharing becomes evident (Carton et al., 2014). According to Carton et al. (2014), sharing organizational purpose and outcomes improves overall performance. One leader who posits the need for complete transparency is Alan Mulally (former CEO and President of Ford Motor Company and Boeing Commercial Airplanes and former president of Boeing Information, Space, and Defense Systems). Mulally writes, “You cannot manage a secret... everyone is included in the plan: every stakeholder from supplier, investors, to the owners, to the factory workers. There is no issue of sharing too much; it (the information) sets you free” (A. Mulally, personal communication, October 9, 2020).

Conversely, Kotter (1995) points out sharing too much or saying too little could lead to disastrous results. When too much information is shared, adverse outcomes include stress, fatigue, exhaustion, and future avoidance of information (Soroya et al., 2021), which impacts engagement and productivity. Still, other scholars (Adil & Kamal, 2016) suggested transparency is essential in the workplace, noting leadership practices incorporating transparency encourage positive work behaviors to increase employee happiness and engagement. Other experts find a significance in

transparency producing authentic, values-based leaders (Adil & Kamal, 2016; Avolio et al., 2004; Jung & Avolio, 2000).

#### When transparency does not exist

The role of openness may be underestimated, as evidenced by findings on the absence or abuse of transparency (Copeland, 2016; Tastan & Davoudi, 2019). Scholars argue a lack of leadership transparency has increased corruption and mistrust (Copeland, 2016; de Freitas & Routledge, 2013; Tastan & Davoudi, 2019). Leaders and followers who tend not to engage transparently or, conversely, engage in knowledge hiding, tend not to grow or thrive at work (Grailey et al., 2021). Knowledge hiding is deliberate when information is withheld or concealed (Grailey et al., 2021), leading to ineffective cultures and significant losses in productivities. However, experts have found that too much transparency can alter the productiveness of employees as leaders become lax in their leadership abilities when the employees know too much or are involved with all decision-making abilities (Koehn, 2019).

Initial action(s) of leaders impacts followers' responses. These actions and behaviors ultimately impact the overall change in the organization (Oreg & Berson, 2019).

Clear, upfront communication on the current state and long-term vision will influence positive behavior. Convoluting messaging as well as talking too much but saying too little (Kotter, 1995) may lead to disastrous results. In a study of government agency, Byrne (2014) found employees experienced a fear of communication, lack of

transparency, and low accountability measures. These initial issues led to problems rife with unethical behavior and corruption.

Leaders who are fully aware of the factors driving and impacting their messaging to maximize their relationships with followers are implementing responsible transparency. Multiple scholars have noted the benefit of transparency, yet there is a need to explore the responsible transparency concept relative to leader awareness and leader-follower relationships. Adil and Kamal's (2016) findings are essential, pointing towards leadership practices that incorporate transparency variables and encourage positive work behaviors to increase employee happiness and engagement in the workplace. The authors noted the critical aspect of leader transparency for the organization's overall prosperity and the importance and significance of authentic leaders, and they encourage more work around psychological states within authentic leaders (and other values-based leaders) to improve specific awareness of conditions that may impact transparency levels. Scott et al. (2018) explored leadership's role to impact team working relationships in high-performing organizations. The authors argued future examinations should consider integrating multiple perspectives (i.e., leader and follower) within a singular leadership theory.

### ***Purpose of the Study***

The purpose of this research, given these extraordinary times of uncertainty, is to further explore transparency to provide greater clarity on responsible openness for all leaders. It is important to note the initial notion of purpose for the topic resonated

before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, as the pandemic spread, the researcher watched multiple organizations, institutions, and leaders challenged with the same questions based on the knowns and unknowns of the deadly virus. Leaders asked themselves,

- What do I tell my employees regarding the organization and the pandemic?
- How much information should be shared?
- What do we, as leaders, keep to ourselves?

The responsible transparency formula includes identifying the leader's values-based characteristics and creating a construct to contain the precursors to responsible

transparency: What are the awareness factors relative to communication and messaging that impact the relationship between leader and follower, and how can a leader have more significant influence by managing transparency more effectively?

According to the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, the word *formulary* originated from the word *formulaic* and is defined as "a particular method of doing or achieving something" (Oxford University Press, n.d.-a). The formulary outcome for responsible transparency includes identifying the consequences of organizational trust on transparency: What awareness factors must be considered to manage trust responsibly?

### **Calls for clarity: Further research needs**

As the use of "transparency" as a business term has surged through the decades, calls for clarity around transparency and its multiple complexities have been identified

(Gatling et al., 2017; Liu et al., 2015; Salazar, 2017). First, as Salazar (2017) noted, “It is imperative that researchers work towards developing a cogent definition of transparency” (p. 24). Another gap in existing literature relates to transparency in the sharing of information and how it impacts trust between leaders and followers:

While engaging in open communication, including sharing of relevant information and feedback, develops the trust in a leader-follower relationship, over-communication may hurt... Such research can provide insight on the communication that leaders should engage in, and further enrich our understanding of the effects of leader’s (relational) transparency on followers. (Gatling et al., 2016, p. 181)

Additional scholars also indicated further research is needed on values-based leaders (i.e., authentic, ethical) to gain an understanding of trust, psychological safety, and transparency between leaders and followers (Liu et al., 2015; Rawlins, 2008). More recent studies with a focus on leader awareness, trust, and leader mindfulness call out that “very little is known about the relationship between specific leader behaviors and trust and leader effectiveness” (Stedham & Skaar, 2019, p. 2).

### ***Goal and Research Question***

This study aimed to develop a standard definition of responsible transparency and a leader-follower formulary, which values leadership development within organizations. Gatling et al. (2017) say that “from a practical standpoint, such future studies can also provide explicit guidance on the leaders’ communication behaviors, which can be used for training and promotion purposes” (p. 181). Understanding the dimensions that impact transparency should help communication between leaders and

followers, ultimately benefitting both groups (leaders and followers), their organization, and the greater community.

Transparency is not a single dimension, and therefore the question is, “What is the definition of *responsible transparency* and what factors impact responsible transparency?” The following research questions guided the current study:

1. How much information is the “right” amount of data (information) to be shared?
2. Where is the demarcation between sharing too much and not sharing enough?
3. What factors need to be considered between leader and follower?

### **Structure**

The following provides a brief description of the content of chapters to follow.

Chapter 2 provides an in-depth overview of the literature on the definition of transparency from a leadership perspective, leadership traits of transparent leadership, and the significance of psychological safety and organizational trust relative to leadership transparency. Chapter 3 lays out the research design, methodology, and tools for this study. Chapters 4 and 5 provide the results, findings, study implications/limitations, and suggestions for future research.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

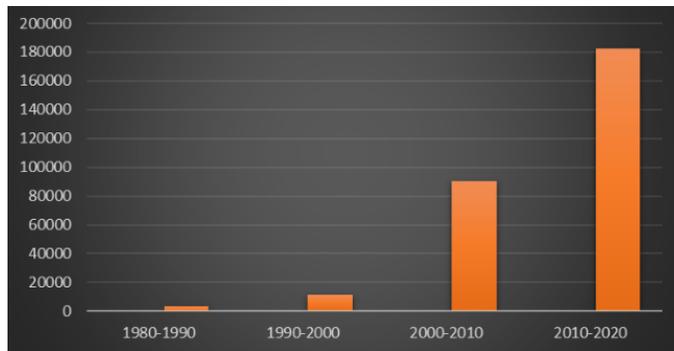
### ***Introduction***

This chapter will review the evolution of transparency relative to leadership and discuss the relationships of values-based leadership and trust to responsible transparency. Vogelgesang et al. (2020) describe transparency in the context of leadership as “sharing relevant information, being open to giving and receiving feedback, being forthcoming regarding motives and the reasoning behind decisions, and displaying alignment between words and actions” (p. 43). Transparency in leadership consists of a combined understanding of those in charge of others to lead openly and honestly with actions and decisions within the workforce (Han, 2017), a fundamental behavior of values-based leaders. Further, transparency ties into behavioral integrity, specifically leader-follower credibility, and awareness (Augustsson et al. 2017; Roelofs, 2018). The word *transparency* aligns with translucence and holds a context of completely “see-through” across multiple entities. Openly sharing without awareness of potential harm is irresponsible. The process of communicating with intended positive impact is responsible transparency. It is the information exchanged helping and focusing on the greater good.

### ***Evolution of Transparency***

The use of the word *transparency* has increased and expanded throughout the last several decades, yet leadership scholars vary on interpretation and implementation of the word. To understand the multiple perspectives on the word and further develop

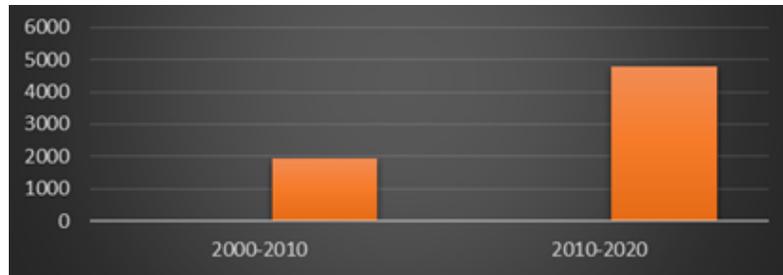
the responsible transparency concept, a literature search of the last forty years of writing on transparency was conducted. The EBSCO database utilized includes academic journals, magazines, trade publications, news reports, published dissertations, books, biographies, government documents, and other credible sources. A search on the word *transparency* from the years 1980 and 1990 yielded 3,509 results; searching between 1990 and 2000 yielded 11,154 results. A search between 2000 and 2010 produced 90,447; and between 2010 and 2020 produced 182,370 results. The prevalence of the word *transparency* in the database has increased exponentially over the last four decades. Given such a rise in the use of this term—as well as transparency’s impact on trust—a need exists for a common understanding of responsible transparency within leadership (Figure 1).



**Figure 1. Transparency Trends: Search Results**

When searching *transparency and leadership* as a phrase, a similar trend exists. A search using the same EBSCO database yielded 1,935 results during the years between 2000 and 2010. A search for the phrase’s use between 2010 and 2020 found over 4,800 works were developed on topics related to transparency in leadership and

leadership transparency. Nearly 2,800 of these same results (close to half) were published within the most recent five-year period (2015-2020), indicating use of the word *transparency* within organizations and leadership has grown considerably (Figure 2).



**Figure 2. Transparency Trends: *Transparency and Leadership* EBSCO Search Results**

### ***Transparency and Values-Based Leadership***

There is a tremendous call today for leaders to be transparent. In an interview, Edmondson discussed the need and demand for such transparency, stating, “As a leader in this point in time, you don’t want to be faking your emotions. There is an enormous need for genuineness and transparency” (De Smet, 2020). It is thus essential to understand further values-based leadership theories and models that hold transparency within the construct. Experts claim there is overlap in these models—that is, transparency is an overlapping feature of ethical, authentic, and transformational leaders (Effiyanti et al., 2021). Other studies also demonstrate the positive effectiveness of ethical, authentic, and transformational leadership styles in contemporary business contexts (Madanchian et al., 2017). Such values-based

leadership models include leadership traits (Hoch et al., 2019; Lemoine et al., 2018), which resonate with the responsible transparency concept.

### **Leadership types and transparency**

Experts point to key common traits within the same leadership types where transparency may resonate. These traits include role modeling, ethical decision-making, altruism, moral management, authenticity and self-awareness, integrity, and focus on vision, values, and intellectual stimulation. Altruism centers on acts of selflessness. Integrity has a focus on honesty. Role models include leaders who influence others. Ethical decision-making and moral management require a review of options and indicate fairness and responsibility. Authenticity, self-awareness, along with vision, value, and intellectual stimulation, acknowledge followership. These leadership characteristics positively impact transparency to the followers and the culture they helped build with the leadership and further support the responsible transparency concept. Specific to responsible transparency and leadership, the focus is on those leadership characteristics that promote greater good, the “TAE” (transformational, authentic, and ethical) leaders, and how they develop responsible transparency. The acronym, TAE, created by these words has the context of “great” in the Korean language; a similar connotation exists in a Chinese cognate as well (Rogers, 1994).

Table 1 demonstrates the leadership traits that transformational, authentic, and ethical leaders hold independently and collectively (Madanchian et al., 2017). Many scholars have correlated these leadership traits to greatness within and for the greater good

(Hoch et al., 2019; Lemoine et al., 2018; Madanchian et al., 2017) because they center on the greater good of others or the organization, aligning with the responsible transparency concept.

**Table 1. Ethical, Authentic and Transformational Leadership Characteristics**

<b>Leadership Trait</b>	<b>Ethical Leadership</b>	<b>Authentic Leadership</b>	<b>Transformational Leadership</b>	<b>Ethical, Authentic, Transformational, Leadership</b>
Altruism	X	X	X	X
Ethical Decision Making	X	X	X	X
Integrity	X	X	X	X
Role modeling	X	X	X	X
Ethical leaders—Moral Management	X			X
Authentic Leaders—authenticity and self awareness		X		X
Transformational leaders emphasize vision, values, and intellectual stimulation	X	X	X	X

*Source:* Brown and Treviño, 2006

A more in-depth discussion into these three specific leadership theories is offered to explain the development and process of responsible transparency.

### Authentic leadership

Authentic leadership emphasizes the leader earning legitimacy by developing follower relationships built on trust, shared ethical foundations, and the value of reciprocity (Prince et al., 2019). Authentic leadership describes a simple form of direction and supervision through which leaders remain true to their values and convictions, display consistency between their words and deeds, and thereby garner high levels of trust and performance from followers (Guenter et al., 2017).

However, scholars studying authentic leadership do not wholly align on the concept of authenticity; some believe it is a leadership style, others think it is a trait. The majority believe it is a values-based characteristic that may be established and advanced over time (Ehret, 2018). Ehret (2018) recognized prior scholars for advocating “honesty, transparency, genuineness, and ethically-based leadership,” which they referred to as authentic leadership (p. 15). Ehret (2018) also acknowledged prior scholars, pointing to a need within values-based leadership relative to transparency, describing “a need for a theory-driven model identifying the specific construct variables and relationships that can guide authentic leader development and suggest researchable propositions” (p. 15).

### Responsible transparency in authentic leadership

Transparency is a crucial concept within leader authenticity, and a critical skill for leaders is knowing how and what to share (Lemoine et al., 2018; Ehret, 2018).

Leaders need to be aware of themselves and their climate to determine the right

information to share at a level appropriate to the greater good. Information shared should have a positive impact on individuals and the greater organization.

Responsible transparency is reflected in the positive information sharing and process of understanding the positive impact information has; information that is conveyed to help others versus hurt them demonstrates responsible transparency.

Authentic leaders tend to be positive people who build upon an ethical foundation (Prince et al., 2019), and authentic leadership builds on those leaders' honest relationships with followers and the workforce. Authentic leadership describes a simple form of leadership through which leaders remain true to their beliefs and values, display consistency between their words and deeds, and garner high levels of trust and performance from followers (Guenter et al., 2017). Sharing authentic leadership within a group is called shared authentic leadership and is evaluated congruently in groups containing shared mental models and team trust (Guenter et al., 2017).

#### Shared authentic leadership and transparency

To observe the effectiveness of shared authentic leadership and productivity, Guenter et al. (2017) surveyed 142 research teams. Three hypotheses were tested to evaluate shared authentic leadership by looking at specific variables of self-awareness, transparency, processing, and moral perspectives. The mediating factors included shared mental models, trust, and coordination, and output was measured as performance and team satisfaction. Findings indicate shared authentic leadership

influenced teams; however, if teams shared too much of their authentic leadership mentality and the shared mental model, they may collectively hit an arrogance level, which may be counterproductive. Teams with high trust and an increased mental model of the group were less productive overall. The authors concluded that there needs to be a balance within the shared authentic leadership dimensions of self-awareness, relational transparency, balanced processing, and moral perspective. Further, understanding performance outcomes is also essential, beginning with cognitive awareness within authentic leadership as it relates to transparency.

#### Transparency outcomes through authentic leadership

Emotional intelligence is the ability to recognize, understand, and influence one's own emotions, along with the emotions and feelings of others (Lemoine et al., 2018). Emotional labor is the energy and effort of managing one's emotions and feelings at the workplace. Emotional intelligence and emotional labor are found to connect to transparency through authentic leadership (Lemoine et al., 2018, Vogelgesang, 2020). Vogelgesang et al. (2020) validated that leaders who demonstrate high transparency levels show high behavioral integrity, which directly correlates to high levels of performance and engagement. Information is processed in a balanced way before making decisions, regardless of the sentiment or viewpoint. Authentic leaders often incorporate their internalized moral perspectives, which guide decision-making and behaviors (honesty, altruism, kindness). A further understanding of authentic leaders' trust, leader-follower perception, and awareness signifying responsible transparency is identified through relational transparency.

### **Responsible and relational transparency**

Experts describe authenticity as a function of one's true center and outline four components of authenticity: awareness, unbiased processing, action, and relational transparency (Kempster et al., 2019; Rego et al., 2021). Relational transparency is a crucial component in authentic leadership (Gatling et al., 2017), emphasizes trust, and is achieved through a leader's self-discourse, information sharing, and self-expression; it is a shared perception between the leader and the follower of the leader's willingness to become forthcoming (Iqbal et al., 2018). A characteristic of relational transparency includes the distribution of relevant information (Iqbal et al., 2018). Further, relational transparency is the leader's assurance to the follower to see their true self. Vogelgesang et al. (2020) demonstrated a leader's relational transparency is positively related to followers' perception of a leader's behavioral integrity. Awareness of perceptions is a relevant factor within responsible transparency for both leaders and followers.

### **Transparency, perceptions, and behavioral integrity**

Responsible transparency aligns activity to communications, assuring there is integrity behind the words, which will result in the follower's further strength to receive the communication positively and perceive the communication as authentic and transparent. Perception is the center of transparent communication, relative to the consistency of the actions aligned to the words (Lee et al., 2021; Vogelgesang et al., 2020). Several scholars discuss behavioral integrity (relative to transparency) as keeping promises (Vogelgesang et al., 2013). A transparent leader participates in

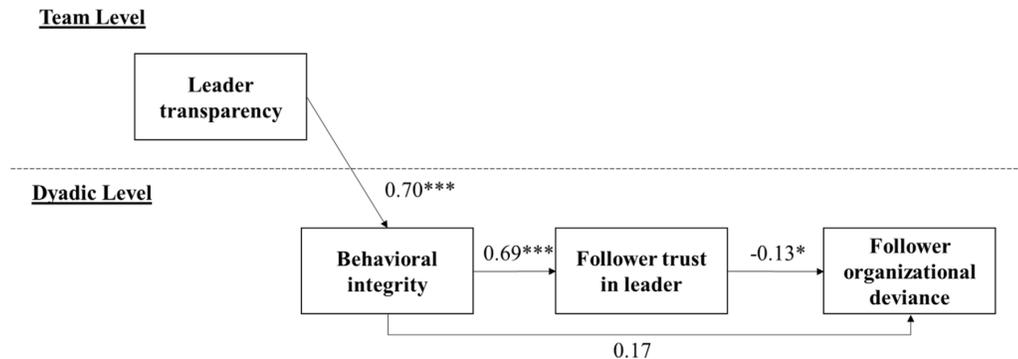
open dialogue, gives and receives feedback, and shares pertinent information. These experts describe how a leader follows up and what actions the leader takes related to behavior integrity. Leaders drive their actions' attribution by impacting a follower's perception through words, follow-through, and explanation (Gatling et al., 2017).

### **Behavioral integrity influences and antecedents**

Gatling et al. (2017) assessed the role of leaders' relational transparency on follower organizational deviance through the followers' perceptions of their leader's behavioral integrity and the followers' trust. They demonstrated when leaders were not open in communication, employees were likely to engage in behavioral deviance, supporting the significance of leader relational transparency and their behavioral integrity relative to developing trust and confidence in the leader-follower relationship. They also demonstrated that followers' trust is negatively related to followers' organizational deviance, described as the negative emotional response when there is discontent with the leader (Gatling et al., 2017). Behavioral integrity comes before trust, and thus relational transparency is an antecedent to behavioral integrity and necessary for trust. Understanding the impact of perceptions and behavioral integrity is crucial given that the outcome of responsible transparency is for the greater good of organizations.

Figure 3 was included in Gatling et al.'s (2017) study on organizational deviance and leader transparency. Data were collected from 236 students in the United States working in hospitality organizations. Surveys were administered to identify

managers' leadership styles and leadership perceived behaviors. The authors reported relational transparency positively impacted organizational commitment through behavioral integrity and trust in the leader.



Source: Gatling et al., 2017

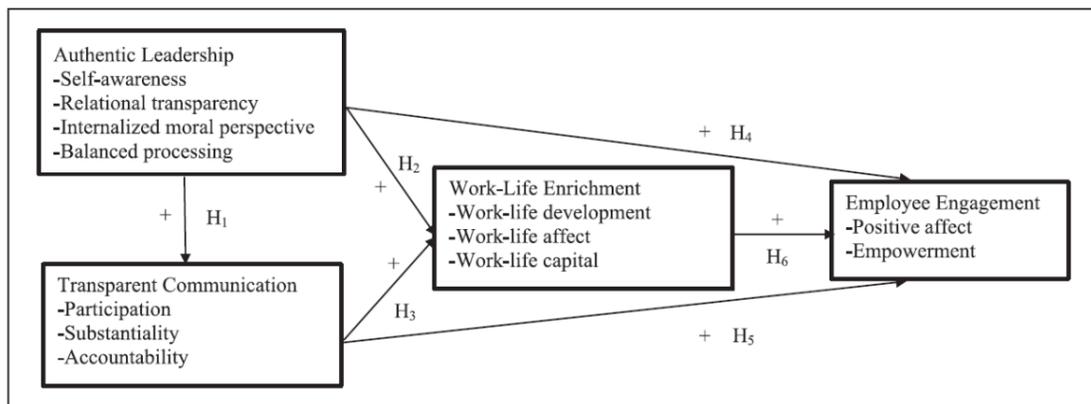
**Figure 3. Transparency and Organizational Deviance**

### **Authentic leadership outcomes through transparency**

Jiang and Men (2017) correlated authentic leadership to transparent organizational communication and found it essential for creating an engaged and satisfied workplace. They proposed authentic leadership, an enriched work-life, and transparent communication are three factors impacting engagement amongst employees. The authors began from Walumbwa et al.'s (2008) theories relative to authentic leadership and relational transparency. These scholars found the only way leader transparency is meaningful to followers is when applicable, significant information related to its actions and activities is provided (Jiang & Men, 2017;

Walumbwa et al., 2008). Additionally, credibility and accountability are associated with the start and source of information.

Figure 4 displays Jiang and Men’s (2017) conceptual model of transparency relating to leadership type and communication relative to outcomes. A sample of 391 random employees was selected from industrial sectors across the United States. Social exchange theory and the job demands resource model were used to frame the participant reflections and study findings. The surveyed participants reported on authentic leadership, transparent organizational communication, and work-life enrichment.



Source: Jiang and Men, 2017

**Figure 4. Authentic Leadership, Transparency, and Employee Engagement (Conceptual Model)**

For Jiang and Men (2017), work-life enrichment referred to the satisfaction gained personally through performance and workplace satisfaction. They found authentic leadership with transparent communication increased work-life enrichment. Their

study highlights the tremendous impact of authentic leadership and transparent communication and stresses the significance of encouragement and reassuring communication for overall follower well-being and the importance of focusing on the greater good. It is vital to note the authors did not find a direct effect between employee engagement and authentic leadership, though they found the positive mediating impact of transparent organizational communication relative to employee engagement. The managerial implications of the authors' findings included the importance of investment in leadership programs focusing on responsible leader behavior and communication. The authors stated,

Organizations should build a transparent communication culture or climate that ensures the free flow of truthful, complete, relevant and substantial information in a timely manner, facilitates upward communication and listening, and welcomes employee participation and comments regardless of whether they are commenting, criticizing, or complaining...collaborative efforts between communication professionals, organizational leaders, and human resource managers are critically needed. (Jiang & Men, 2017, p. 16)

Jiang and Men's (2017) work illustrated transparency variables effectively aided organizational efficiency; however, their study also demonstrated room for future research regarding transparency's impact on organizational factors.

#### Additional transparency outcomes through authentic leadership: Work-life and engagement

Experts also found transparency positively connects with employees' increased autonomy and engagement (Osborne & Hammoud, 2017). The authors explored workplace engagement utilizing a sample of 500 university teachers in Iran to examine authentic leadership's impact on job-related well-being and employee

engagement (Decuyper & Schaufeli, 2019). Decuyper and Schaufeli (2019) reported authentic leadership positively impacted followers' psychological capital by increasing their reported well-being and engagement within the workplace. The authors noted transparency was essential for ensuring employees felt included in decisions, had psychological empowerment to make their own decisions (autonomy), and felt supported by management. Their findings on psychological capital connected transparency to follower autonomy through transparent, responsible information sharing. Follower autonomy is one of several positive impacts and outcomes of conscious information sharing by the leader.

#### Transparency outcomes: Social responsibility

Iqbal et al. (2018) assessed the relationship between organizational behaviors and social responsibility, as demonstrated through authentic leadership and the leader's transparency. The study expands knowledge and stresses the importance of employees' authentic leaders' perceptions of corporate social responsibility and the significance of responsible transparency. The authors argued the findings would represent authentic leaders' positive impacts on organizational citizenship behavior and corporate social responsibility and suggested followers who perceive leadership behavior as reasonable are more likely to perform duties for the organization's greater good, above and beyond their assigned duties. They found a correlation between the positive perception of the authentic leader and corporate social responsibility. Iqbal et al.'s (2018) study is key, as it emphasizes the importance of employee perception relative to authentic leadership and corporate social responsibility, and it notes

organizations should measure follower perception, which is essential for responsible transparency.

Emotional labor is a way leaders can ultimately manage follower perception.

Kempster et al. (2019) examined transparency by exploring authentic leadership and emotional labor. The authors' exploration provided a narrative inquiry of leadership practices performed through transparent behavior. Genuine authentic leadership traits, such as increased workplace transparency, ensure employees feel supported and included in workplace decisions. Kempster et al. (2019) also noted transparency plays a crucial role in mediating employees' authenticity. Employees who view a leader as transparent towards objectives, changes, and decisions are more likely to feel the leader is emotionally committed to their behavior and performance. Leader-follower dynamics and views are a critical component within responsible transparency.

### **Transformational leaders and transparency**

Transformational leadership is another key to the context of responsible transparency because these leaders transform and heighten the self-awareness of both the leader and follower (Rooke & Torbert, 2005). Transformational leadership was initiated by Burns (1978), who developed the term to differentiate between leaders who are motivated through reward (transactional leaders) and those who inspire followers to achieve goals (transformational leaders) (Hamed, 2021). Transformational leadership is more of a process between leaders and followers, resulting in a positive change in individuals. Transformational leadership is one of the first theories that focuses on

follower motives (Burn, 1978, Bass 1985), and when implemented, improves morale, performance, and motivation of followers through several processes (Ellen, 2016).

Studies show four characteristics comprise the transformational leader: charisma, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Lemoine et al., 2018; Northouse, 2019). Moral and ethical standards are other key traits of the transformational leader (Northouse, 2019). There is a conscious component of getting all member input and getting the team to look or approach things differently (Northouse, 2019); this stems from an awareness factor where the leader is mindful of the follower. Further, a leader will consciously and intellectually stimulate followers as they try new approaches and develop innovative ways of dealing with organizational issues (Northouse, 2019).

Transformational leaders frequently reach out to their employees directly. Such leaders will hold skip-level meetings: discussions where a senior leader meets directly with those who report to their own direct report, without that direct report in attendance. In these meetings, subordinates can engage with the senior leader to feel their voices heard and give feedback to improve overall teams. This type of stimulation develops and motivates followers, allowing for multiple dialogues at different organizational levels, and enhancing the perspective and perception of both leader and follower. Further, transformational leadership's strength depends on leaders' abilities to shape followers' emotions (Berkovich & Eyal, 2017) through the

development of self-awareness. This individual holds a clear vision, attainable goals, and end goals, which positively impact the organization and motivate teams.

### Vision

A leader needs to share a clear vision with attainable goals to positively motivate teams. Communicating a clear vision further supports the transparency and responsible transparency context by permitting followers to evolve and grow towards a shared vision. Transformational leadership can change an organization, where the entire organization morphs into something more significant (Sun & Leithwood, 2012). By communicating goals and sharing vision, the leader is seen as an authentic leader, and follower perceptions of the leader improve during follower growth. According to Sun and Leithwood (2012), transformational leadership extends an organization's members' aspirations into an organizational community. They also found transformational leadership relies on developing new leadership and perspectives from all followership levels, so they engage all followers regardless of the level of following. Transformational leaders can shape and impact emotions at all levels through mindfulness of their followers and self-awareness (Carleton, et al., 2018).

### The development of the transformational leader and self awareness

Rooke and Torbert (2005) discussed the evolution and maturity of the transformational leader. The authors stated, "Leaders are made, not born, and how they develop is critical for organizational change" (Rooke & Torbert, 2005, p. 67). The importance of leadership self-awareness and development was stressed. Rooke

and Torbert (2005) further described the transformation of a leader starting with the opportunist phase, characterized by distrust and egocentrism. The second through the sixth phases include the diplomat, expert, achiever, individualist, and strategist (Rooke & Torbert, 2005).

Rooke and Torbert (2005) discussed these phases relative to a leader's "internal 'action logic'—how they interpret their surroundings and react when their power or safety is challenged" (p. 67). The strategist and alchemist (the seventh and eighth categories) are both described as transformational leaders; however, alchemists can transform themselves in all situations. They can speak to all levels of the organizations and integrate themselves in different situations. Alchemists are typically charismatic and mindful individuals who live by high moral standards. Alchemists "focus intensely on the truth... they're able to catch unique moments...creating symbols and metaphors that speak to people's hearts and minds," (Rooke & Torbert, 2005, p. 72). Development of the alchemist's charismatic trait improves responsible transparency given that the leader has heightened self-awareness and global awareness of the follower.

#### Experiences lead to learning and self development

Experiences leading to transparency development were recognized by Kolb's (2005) active learning theory. The four cyclical stages of this theory include concrete experiences, reflective observations, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. Much of Kolb's (2005) approach focuses on the individual's

internal intellectual and cognitive process-ability. He suggested learning is the process of gaining and absorbing new and different concepts where flexibility is applied in a wide variety of situations: (i.e., cultures, boundaries, traditions, organizational followership), and new experiences may be the catalyst for new concepts and ideas. A transformational leader is aware of follower development and stays attuned to these processes when sharing information. This is essential for responsible transparency.

Hofman and Strobel (2020) also explained how effective learning occurs when a person progresses through four stages, starting with a substantial concrete experience. The second includes a reflection on the occurrence, after which the development and construction of abstract concepts (analysis) and generalities (conclusions) occur. The final stage incorporates testing a theory in future situations, resulting in new experiences. These experiences will impact how the leader interacts and how much they share with the followers. Understanding how and why one learns, and their experiences will eventually affect how much and what is communicated effectively, positively impacting the organization through a ripple effect.

#### Positive outcomes of transformational leadership

Avolio (2018) explained transformational leadership becomes inspirational by changing the situation and bringing all participants together so that all stakeholders can participate in one common goal. As the leader learns and becomes more aware of his or her experiences, they begin to identify closer to self and the followers.

Therefore, leadership develops a more intimate relationship between leaders and followers as they transform. These empowering leaders encourage followers to transcend their desires for the organization's good and attain the organizational vision collectively. As a result, transformational leadership positively affects job performance, loyalty, and overall satisfaction (Anderson, 2017).

#### Positive transparency through transformational and authentic leadership

The findings of Elrehail et al. (2018) provided foundational work for demonstrating transparency within transformational research and illustrating the positive effect upon organizational strategies. Elrehail et al. (2018) explored the relationship between transformational and authentic leadership in higher education organizations for efficient knowledge sharing. The findings demonstrated a positive effect between leadership styles that are transformative and based on innovation. The authors noted transformational leadership elements are ideal, as they encourage transparent communication, positively associated with creation. Their findings provided deeper work for demonstrating responsible transparency within transformational research and illustrated the positive effect upon organizational strategies, which include long-term planning and vision. An additional leadership style influencing responsible transparency is ethical leadership.

#### **Ethical leadership**

Ethical leadership is a process of awareness, of appropriate and inappropriate behavior and conduct mode, based on a universal standard of moral behaviors (Kapur, 2018). The concepts of honesty, integrity, trust, and fairness are all critical to ethical

leadership. Oswald and Mascarenhas (2019) discussed the components of ethical leadership in three categories: the leader (himself/herself), the direction (behavior), and the part of the followers. Within each of these categories, there are actions, behaviors, beliefs, and characteristics. Behaviors and beliefs are critical to the topic of ethics (and charisma). Several cases highlight the importance of all three factors. Oswald and Mascarenhas (2019) demonstrated ethical leadership is positively related to employees' trust in leaders, and it is negatively related to employees' destructive behavior towards an organization and or leader. Trust must exist for responsible transparency to occur; therefore, ethical leaders are part of the responsible transparency formulary.

### Charisma

Charisma is viewed as a credible signal of a person's ability to solve a coordination challenge requiring urgent collective action from group members (Grabo et al., 2017). It is inherent in transformational and ethical leadership. Early writers on the subject of charisma perceived it as "God's gift." Many feel transformational leaders' appeal and positive influences are traits, or an "innate foundation" (Castelnovo et al., 2017). These charismatic leaders' impact on followers and the organization is also significant. Those with more charismatic traits are more likely to have more positive results versus task-based management, given a stronger relationship with the potential of greater trust between leader and follower. Understanding further the development of such leaders enables more successful responsible engagement to include transparency between leader and follower and improvement in organizational results.

### Ethical leadership development

Fayyaz et al. (2019) considered the factors contributing to ethical leadership development and found individual circumstance is critical when considering moral and ethical leader antecedents: “The personality and situational antecedents have been underlined” (p. 1). They further supported additional scholars, noting that ethical leadership is developed from four constructs: transparency, justice, responsibility, and humanity. The authors emphasized the significance of building an ethical culture. According to their research, ethical culture is developed through the following:

- Clarity
- Congruency of supervisor
- Congruency of management
- Feasibility
- Supportability
- Transparency
- Discuss ability
- Sanction ability

Ethical leadership will mediate the relationship between the organization’s culture and employee performance similarly to relational transparency. Transparency as part of the organization’s culture is key to employee performance. Clarity also is tied to transparency and, thus, is key within the construct of ethical leadership.

### Positive outcomes and influences of ethical leadership

Wells and Walker (2016) suggested the impact of transparency in ethical leaders was relative to organizational change and revealed the significance of employees' perceptions as it relates to the openness of ethical leaders. Positive perceptions of leaders' corporate justice stances correlate positively to their influence on positive organizational change. Wells and Walker (2016) encouraged transparency when communicating organizational changes and promoted the inclusion of critical ethical leaders and stakeholders within the decisions. If the followers' perceptions of the leader are positive, these essential stakeholders may help infuse a ripple effect and positive awareness towards the leader, resulting in positive organizational change.

### **Situational awareness: Transparency and the situation**

Ehret (2018) attributed transparency to a higher level of followers' confidence in the leader. He identified situational awareness as the need for the leader to flex communication (style) from situation to situation, impacting what and how things are shared. Ehret (2018) demonstrated higher levels of follower confidence were needed from the leader for greater levels of leader transparency to exist, stating they "impact how expressions of transparency impact follower confidence. Thus, situational awareness and situational leadership are critical competencies for leaders to use transparency effectively" (p. 1).

A leader's openness, genuineness, and validity are significant, similar to the leader's ability to be authentic, ethical, and transformational. A leader needs to be able to

understand a situation and the needs of followers. A leader needs to know how much information should or should not be communicated to maximize followership (Ehret, 2018). Avolio and Luthans (2006) indicated a leader who purposely demonstrates high morality, ethics, and values usually develops greater trust and confidence with their followers.

### **Transparency and trust**

Transparent leaders and their followers appear to have higher levels of trust than those who are not as transparent (Walumbwa et al., 2008). Trust from leaders to followers—and followers to leaders—impacts responsible transparency. Openness and transparency are essential to leadership's effectiveness, and leaders' confidence and fear-avoidance impact communication. Norman et al.'s (2010) exploration is a fundamental illustration of the role of transparency and trust. They discovered that a leader's level of positivity (which could vary based on the leader's psychological safety with externalities) and transparency impacted followers' trust perceptions as well as followers' evaluations of leader effectiveness.

### One-way versus two-way trust

Many types of leadership show the importance of follower trust in a leader. However, until recently, there has not been a significant amount published on mutual or two-way trust. However, Kim et al. (2018) discussed the significance of two-way trust versus one-way trust; that is, leader to subordinate and subordinate to leader, versus follower to leader alone. They also noted the importance of social exchange and leaders practicing leader-member exchange (LMX) to be aware of followers'

perceived trust, which correlated to perceived communication and transparency. Through multiple questionnaires of individuals, both males and females, the authors determined confidence in a leader and ‘felt trust’ are necessary to substantiate mutual trust; they also measured task performance to determine outcomes relative to the amount of mutual trust.

It was demonstrated that the more mutual trust existing between employees and leaders generated improvement in task assignments. Thus, the higher the trust levels, the better the result. Several others also have indicated the more elevated the transparency levels, the higher the team outcome (Hofman & Strobel, 2020; Prager et al., 2019). Positive results come with trust, leaders, and followers around high-performance results, engagement, and retention (Enria et al., 2021; Roelofs, 2018).

### ***Literature Review Perspectives***

The literature review process began by understanding the factors impacting transparency: types of leaders and the role of the leader versus a follower. Key factors, including trust impacts, were also evaluated. Finally, the evolution of transparency to highlight its significance relative to leadership and leadership development were explored. The literature review findings were relative to leadership traits and behaviors and, along with the implications of trust, aided in developing and framing the open-ended questions for the study.

Understanding the evolution of transparency was first. A complete database search was conducted to fully comprehend the increased use of the word *transparency* relative to leadership. The search outcome resulted in a positive trend-line over the last decade. Transparency discussions within leadership were on the rise. The findings demonstrated transparency was essential to organizations. While reviewing the literature on the topic, it also became clear there were opportunities to refine the transparency context and explore more, given the heightened focus on its implications relative to trust and organizations. Through this analysis, there were calls for further research, ranging from further understanding cognitive behaviors such as trust and transparency in values-based leaders (i.e., authentic, transformational, and ethical) to clarity calls on understanding better the relationship between leaders and followers (Rawlins, 2008; Stedham & Skaar, 2019). At the crux of these calls was the transparency component and hence the desire to discover more.

### **Transparency in values-based leaders**

Having identified opportunities for transparency, the types of leaders and leadership behaviors where transparency existed were intentionally explored. Three values-based leadership styles containing transparency were quickly identified: authentic, transformational, and ethical (Avolio et al., 2020; Ehret, 2018; Guenter et al., 2017; Madanchian et al., 2017; Vogelgesang et al., 2020). These types of leaders build solid and trustworthy relationships with their followers. They remain true to their values, and more importantly, their words (Guenter et al., 2017), improving confidence and trust with followers and optimizing outcomes. Teams with shared authentic

leadership positively influenced teams and improved productivity (Avolio, 2007). Too much confidence and trust negatively impacted productivity (Guenter et al., 2017). In addition to productivity, leaders with authentic leader traits also improved the satisfaction of employees. Leaders with higher emotional intelligence were found to connect to transparency through authentic leadership. (Kempster et al., 2019; Rego et al., 2021).

The research questions became clearer relative to transparency and its impact. There appeared to be a literature gap on the right amount of responsible, reliable information to be shared. Scholars noted that when too much trust and information was shared, information overload occurred, resulting in unfortunate outcomes, productivity, and engagement (Guenter et al., 2017; Kotter, 1995). Conversely, the literature demonstrated that too little information and little trust do not result in optimal outcomes (Ehret, 2018; Grailey et al., 2021).

A critical concept of values-based leaders is knowing what and when to share. The concept of responsible transparency, an essential idea for leaders, was then developed. Through the literature review process, the questions to explore around information sharing grew. What was the right information to share? What was the right time for details to be shared? These were the key questions to be answered in the formulary for responsible transparency.

## **Cognitive behavior and transparency impact**

The role of the follower and how information was received was also considered during the literature review. Perception was a key component: How the message was received was most important relative to what was said. Perception is the consistency of actions aligning with the words (Lee et al., 2021; Vogelgesang et al., 2020). Behavior integrity, the follow up to the commitment made, was most significant to followership (Vogelgesang et al., 2013) and came before trust (Gatling et al., 2017). Scholars demonstrated significance was placed on transparency related to trust-building (Gatling et al., 2017), and if there was a lack of “responsible transparency,” trust was minimized, and followers chose a less positive path for the organization. The data demonstrated the need to further understand the factors intersecting with transparency and trust.

### Trust development

The impact of trust between leader and follower and understanding transparency were key variables in the equation. One of the original scholars around transparency and trust (Walumbwa et al., 2008) noted leaders and followers have better trust when transparency exists. Another foremost scholar (Norman et al., 2010) averred the trust factor and perception of followers who had trusting relationships impacted the overall evaluation of leader effectiveness. This fact further verified that transparency drives trust and that understanding the elements of transparency will benefit leadership. Also noted were several types of trust, including one-way trust and two-way trust (Kim et al., 2018). It was crucial in the study that both the leader and follower perspectives be

gained. Often studies of trust centered on the leaders or followers, so an opportunity existed to synergize both perspectives. Relative to responsible transparency, an awareness level was needed to determine both the leader and follower. The open-ended questions in the research helped define awareness of leaders, followers, and leader-follower relative to their leadership styles (authentic, transformational, and ethical) and their trust components. Current models suggest that followership, the act of following a leader and leader influence, will only occur when trust exists (Stedham & Skaar, 2019). Awareness was a topic explored deeper towards the end of the research based on the outcomes of the questions. Included was leader awareness to trust and follower awareness to leaders.

Awareness is thought of as knowledge or perception of a situation or fact. It can also identify concerns for a particular entity in a position or condition. Awareness is considered as a “consciousness” of involvements. Another conscious cognitive behavior correlating to awareness is mindfulness. Given the correlations between awareness and mindfulness and the synergies of awareness to responsible transparency, mindfulness is an impactful link to further understanding a formulary of responsible transparency.

#### Mindfulness in leadership

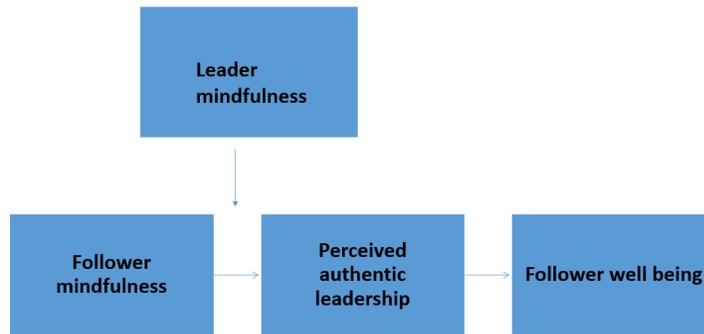
Mindfulness is discovering space in mind without judgment, allowing a larger perspective of self and others. Stedham & Skaar, 2019) noted mindfulness as a state of being present and aware internally within oneself. The authors contended that

mindfulness inheres also being present externally within one's surroundings. There is a significant amount of research noting the benefits of mindfulness (Zhang et al., 2019, Stedham & Skaar, 2019).

Mindfulness also is a mental state achieved by concentrating on the present moment. Within leadership practices, mindfulness means being without criticism and intentionally holding awareness in the present moment (Zhang et al., 2020). For responsible transparency to occur, mindfulness within leaders and followers needs to take place. This is critical given the daily interaction of workers and followers (Zhang et al., 2020). Therefore, intentional leadership needs to happen.

Many studies confirm mindfulness relieves stress and promotes well-being, even in the workplace (Zhang et al., 2020, Stedham & Skaar, 2019). Multiple organizations, including Procter and Gamble, Google, and General Motors, conduct workplace engagements on mindfulness to enhance productivity and engage employees (Zhang et al., 2020).

In recent years, several authors have applied learnings from the transparency impacts on trust to mindfulness. Zhang et al. (2020) expanded the values-based leadership and transparency models and similarly used mindfulness as prior researchers worked with trust and transparency. As outlined in Figure 5, the authors evaluated follower mindfulness (awareness) by considering authentic leadership as a mediator.



Source: Zhang et al., 2020

**Figure 5. Value-Based and Transparency Model**

### ***Thoughts Forward***

A call for clarity exists on the word and concept of transparency within the leadership field. While transparency occurs for leaders who express different leadership styles, there is not a unified consensus within the leadership area on the definition. Further, transparent behavior typically is a positive action (Han, 2017; Kelleher & Thelen, 2019), yet a leader practicing responsible transparency must understand how to communicate effectively for the organization’s greater good. To understand and further develop leaders into responsible, transparent leaders, identifying where transparency typically occurs is needed first (i.e., values-based leadership).

Multiple scholars have pointed to authentic, ethical, and transformational leaders who are commonly perceived and know to be transparent (Salazer, 2017). Other experts felt leaders needed to have established a leadership role with the follower(s) (Enria et al., 2021; Tepper et al., 2018). These experts also noted that positive perception(s)

and relational transparency between follower and leader need to be in place (Lee et al., 2021; Shen et al., 2017). The follower's information needs to be relevant to their role and the organization (Shen et al., 2017). Finally, the leader needs to have a robust metric of self-awareness and psychological safety of themselves and externalities.

## Chapter 3: Methodology

### ***Introduction***

This chapter describes the research methodology and approach to the research. Today, multiple organizations are forced into transparency (financial institutions, healthcare associations, airlines), but are they sharing information for their best interest and the interest of their stakeholders? Leader-follower views and perspectives are needed to gain further clarity on transparency and the concept of responsible transparency. To better understand the concept of responsible transparency, the researcher chose the path of qualitative research, specifically grounded theory. There is limited leadership research focusing on transparency itself. Listening to the perspectives of leaders and followers was a way to build a foundational understanding of transparency from the leader and followers lenses. A series of open-ended questions about transparency was developed and posed to leaders and their follower groups to gain further perspective on the concept of responsible transparency relative to leadership. According to Creswell and Poth (2018),

Qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The process of research involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participants' setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data. (p. 4)

Further, Charmez (2014) stated interviewing has become a common source of qualitative data. Finally, from a constructivist perspective, Creswell and Poth (2018)

noted relative to research design and questioning, “the more open-ended the questioning, the better” (p. 8).

### ***Purpose of the Study***

The purpose of this research was to explore transparency further to provide greater clarity on responsible transparency and openness for all leaders. The researcher considered how leader self-awareness and leader/follower attribution define responsible transparency and the resulting contextual interpretation.

Through a series of open-ended interviews, leaders and their followers provided a unique framework for data collection relative to explaining a formulary and definition of responsible transparency. Responding to Gatling et al.’s (2017) call for further research on transparency and the types of communication in which leaders should engage, interviewee responses helped in the formulary development of responsible transparency (as a construct for leadership), utilizing leadership, and followers. The researcher also considered additional calls for further research when developing the current study, which centers on leader-follower communication and leader self-awareness barriers (Gatling et al., 2017; Liu et al., 2015) and a standard definition for transparency within leadership (Salazer, 2017).

### ***Research Questions***

The research questions center around leaders’ and followers’ interpretations of transparency:

1. How much information is the “right” amount of data (information) to be shared?

2. Where are the lines of demarcation between sharing too much and not sharing enough?
3. What factors need to be considered between leader and follower?

The expected outcome of the research is to have an impact on both leader and follower. Therefore, the research included the leader and follower perspective.

### ***Methodology and Research Design***

For this study, fair and respectful insights and perspectives from both leaders and their followers were captured. The literature review findings around authentic, transformational, and ethical leaders and the follower impact on transparency demonstrated the need to focus on these leader behaviors and types. The literature review also suggested the follower group should be explored in parallel with these leaders when further examining transparency. Interview questions were designed to capture such perspectives between leaders and followers.

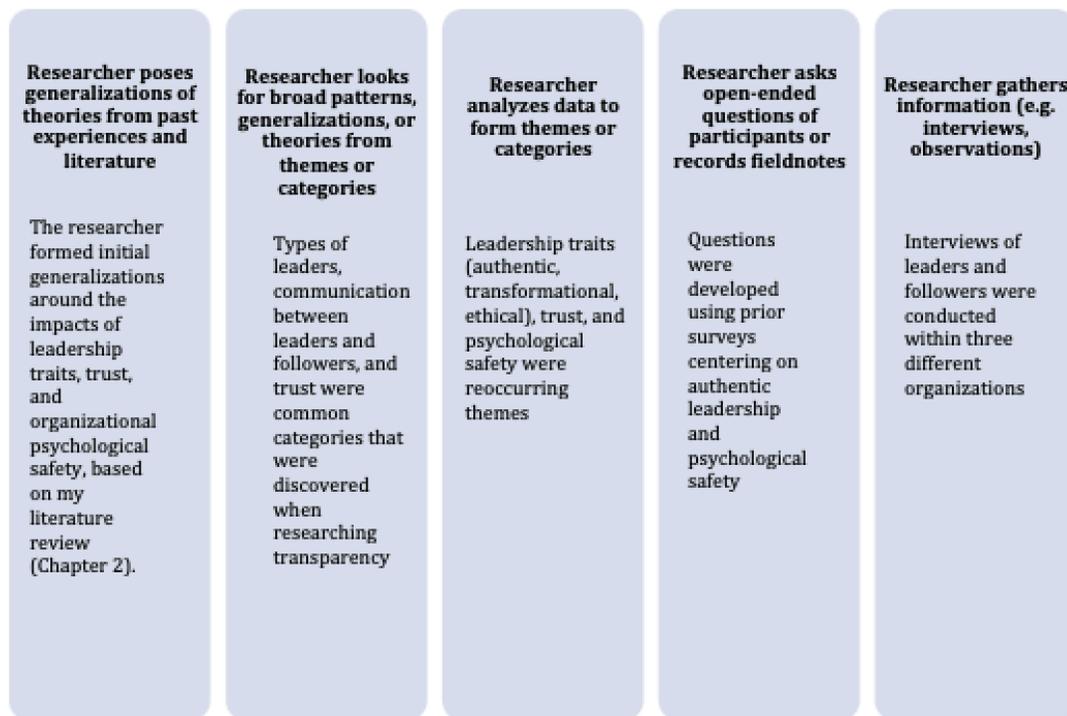
To fully appreciate the different views of these leaders and followers, several different organizations were selected. In addition, the researcher implemented thirty-six separate interviews with leaders and followers to fully understand various perspectives within divergent organizations. The association between these influences called for a qualitative and generative approach in answering the research and interview questions. The generative approach was used to “generate” a deeper understanding of the leader-follower perspectives. The individual responses captured individual views and perspectives. As with many qualitative studies, the knowledge

discovered in this study was intended to be contextual and allow for varying viewpoints and the subjective realities between participants.

### **The qualitative research design: (Inductive) logic as a starting point**

The design for this study followed Creswell and Poth's (2018) five states of inductive research logic, given the goal of developing a formulary for responsible transparency.

Utilizing this as a basis, the researcher outlined the process of gathering data. Figure 6 outlines the research logic.



*Source:* Creswell and Poth, 2018

**Figure 6. Inductive Logic Figure**

### Research design process

During the literature review on transparency, the researcher found several reoccurring themes that could impact how much is shared:

- Trust, leadership behaviors (authentic, ethical transformational), psychological safety, hierarchy, and leader-follower granting (positions) were several reoccurring themes.
- The researcher developed open-ended questions, centering on these themes using prior surveys on authentic leadership, ethical leadership, and psychological safety as baseline (Edmondson, 2018; Walumbwa et al., 2008) given that transparency existed within these themes.
- The researcher utilized grounded theory methods to “gather” data, further explained later in this chapter.
- The researcher conducted the research at three unique organizations to acquire different perspectives and views.

All observations, thoughts, and reflections were captured in the interview notes.

### **Theoretical framework: Grounded theory**

The framework underpinning the current study was grounded theory. Grounded theory allows for a systematic approach for collecting qualitative data to construct ideas and theories (Charmez, 2014). The purpose of the research, which is to provide further clarity to responsible transparency, is to construct a responsible transparency formulary. A systematic open-questioned approach was used to gain leader-follower perspectives, and such an approach provided the logic and rationale for using

grounded theory. The researcher needed to understand common viewpoints and why views were similar or dissimilar. As the researcher searched for the factors impacting transparency between leaders and followers, the researcher could look for common thoughts, themes, or concerns relative to transparency amongst the leaders and followers and compare those thoughts with other leaders and followers in a different organization. Further, a grounded theoretical approach acknowledges concepts and themes emerge from the discussion(s) (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The researcher had the flexibility and freedom to evaluate the impact of leaders on their followers by looking directly at the leaders' answers and perspectives versus followers' answers and perspectives. According to Marshall and Rossman (2016), the benefit of collecting data through in-depth, individual interviews is to capture personal perspectives of the experience. Grounded theory research was chosen because it facilitates the development of a theme for a single phenomenon shared by others (Charmez, 2014): This was perfect for creating a definition for responsible transparency.

#### Grounded theory and comparative analysis

The grounded theory methodology provides flexibility to make links and associations between the questions, the interview answers and perspectives, and the analysis to develop a formula. The formula for responsible transparency evolved through a series of comparative studies of both leaders and their followers in three completely different organizations. Glaser and Strauss (1967) provided a positive perspective for using grounded theory methodology with comparative analysis, as it further enables the researcher to identify emerging concepts and or theories and provides apparent

differences and distinctions to the evidence. The researcher felt focusing on only one organization's perspective might limit findings to a particular culture, so three completely different organizations were selected to ensure multiple viewpoints. By design, each organization varied in size, location, industry, and number of employees. The differences in organizations allowed multiple perspectives around transparency to emerge. The researcher followed a semi-structured interview protocol.

### **Population and sample selection**

The researcher chose to recruit participants from several organizations that were selected in highly regulated industries where communication and compliance matter. The organizations included a healthcare institution (hospital), a nonprofit organization, and a large, public, for-profit products-and-service offering organization. The nonprofit chosen serves a section of society that has been marginalized.

Given a person is a function of their environment (Lewin & Regine, 2000), it was significant and essential to choose several different settings to gain richer perspectives. In addition, the researcher intentionally selected organizations that varied with regard to work environment, where some worked from their offices, while others worked remotely from home.

### Organization selection

Rubin and Rubin (2012) claimed organizations or cases selected for a research study are chosen for several reasons:

- They are relevant to the research problem.
- They are accessible.
- They allow you to test (or contrast) explanations.
- They help determine whether findings apply elsewhere.

This research took place in the middle of a pandemic. Most people the researcher met (other than the hospital employees) were working at home. The researcher noted the location limitation may influence some perspectives, which will be further addressed in a later chapter. Approval from each organization was granted prior to any recruitment of participants.

The first organization is an 80-bed hospital system located in a suburb outside of a major city. It has service areas in nine locations offering various healthcare services ranging from emergency medicine, obstetrics, psychiatry, laboratory, surgery, and intensive care, and the hospital employs nearly 900. The second organization is a nonprofit focusing on service to individuals and families experiencing need as a result of a travesty. The organization is centered in the Midwestern United States and employs approximately 500 people. The third organization is one of the most prominent for-profit products and service organization within its industry. They have approximately 30,000 employees around the globe. Individuals selected for participation included leaders, followers, and leader-followers. Table 2 represents the number of employees for each organization from which the researcher recruited from with the location, vision, and focus relative to present and future.

**Table 2. Organizational Demographics**

<b>Organization/Industry</b>	<b># of Employees</b>	<b>Employee Location</b>	<b>Vision Focus</b>	<b>Locations</b>
Healthcare Institution	900	In office	Today & future	Centrally located
Nonprofit Services	500	In office	Future	US based
For-Profit Large Organizations	30,000	In office & remote	Today	Global

### **Participant recruitment**

Participant selection was intentional and purposeful (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019).

Participants were pulled from industries known for compliance and heavily regulated industries (i.e., healthcare, financial, food), where transparency is often referenced (patient outcomes, labeling, economic outcomes). In addition, given the research questions' direct focus centering on responsible transparency and leader communication with followers, the qualitative inductive approach was used with an intentional lens and view.

For the purpose of participant selection, leaders were defined as having sole leadership. Leaders were not considered a follower (i.e., CEO) if they did not hold direct report responsibilities (other than a board of directors). A follower was defined as being solely a follower, with no direct reports. A leader-follower reported to

another leader and held direct reports. Leader-follower groups consisted of leaders with more than one direct report.

A participant recruitment email, which outlined the research goal, was sent to the leader of each organization (Appendix B). A one-page overview of the study and study background detail was included with the email as an attachment (Appendix B). The goal with the communication was to make it turnkey: A leader could easily forward it to their team members and quickly contact the researcher directly to schedule the interview. This kept things straightforward and anonymous.

An overview of the study, organizational selection criteria, and the question content described above were in an informed consent form. (Appendix A). Before each interview confirmation, interview details and an informed consent form were provided to participants. The interviewee was also assured that participation would not affect any organizational responsibilities. Once accepted, the interview began with the leader to negate any positive or negative bias from a follower or follower group. This process also enabled another individual, leader, or follower to easily invite other leaders and their followers. For example, an initial email was sent to the hospital CEO. He then forwarded the information to his direct reports. Their direct reports could then contact the researcher directly to set up the interview and then forward the email to their team of direct reports.

For participants willing to take part, all steps necessary to fully safeguard participant anonymity were implemented to include each participant's autonomy to drop out of the study at any time. Bloomberg and Volpe (2019) explained assuring anonymity means excluding any participant identifying information within the study (i.e., name, address, email address, etc.). Also, the study cannot reveal or link any response to an individual's identity (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019).

Participating organizations and individual interview participants were given a non-descriptive pseudonym for protection within this study's written documentation. Participants were identified by a letter (i.e., A, B, C) and then either an L for leader, an F for a follower, or L-F for leader-follower. No personal information (such as SSN or HIPPA data) was collected of any type. Further, within the confidentiality section of the consent form given to the interviewees, the participants were informed the interview would be recorded and kept confidential. They also were notified the interview was part of a dissertation research study and the data may be used in publication or conferences; however, personal identity and organizational identity would not be disclosed under any circumstance.

Thirty-six participants responded (Table 3). Three individuals were leaders who did not report to someone higher within their organizations; these individuals were defined as leaders (L). There were eighteen individuals across the three organizations who were both leaders and followers, meaning they reported to another leader and

had followers (L-F). These individuals were typically at the vice president or director levels within the organization. Finally, the researcher had fifteen followers (F); these individuals were in individual contributor roles, such as analyst, consultant, or something similar. Among the total participants, there were twelve males and twenty-four females. All participants had nearly ten years of post-college work experience. Those organizations with a male as the senior leader had more male than female leaders within their organizations. Those organizations holding a woman as the senior leader had more women as leaders.

**Table 3. Participant Demographics**

	<b>Number</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Experience*</b>
Leaders	3	1	3	9+ years
Followers	15	3	12	9+ years
Leader-Follower	18	8	9	9+ years
*Tenured Leaders & Staff	36	12	24	

### ***Data Collection***

The process of data collection was the next step to be implemented. First, the top influencing leader of each organization was contacted. Second, the interviews were conducted (via Zoom). The discussions were transcribed and then coded utilizing methodologies developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967), which will be further explained later in this chapter. Organizations were chosen through a convenience sample of industries known for compliance and heavy regulation (i.e., healthcare,

finance, food), where transparency is often referenced (patient outcomes, labeling, economic outcomes) frequently in a day. Governing bodies heavily regulate all three organizations' day-to-day operations. Senior leaders of these organizations were approached and asked for their willingness to participate in the study. A cross-functional selection of leader and follower participants was identified based on organizational recommendations that included senior leadership.

### **Note on researcher view: Constructivist**

The researcher's views aligned with those of a constructivist, as constructive researchers often address the interactions among individuals. They also focus on the specific contexts in which people live and work in order to understand the historical experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 8) Given the research purpose of further understanding responsible transparency, which includes the communication dynamics and processes between leaders and their followers, the researcher's view aligned with a constructivist.

### ***The Interview***

All interviews were conducted via Zoom, interviewing first the leader and then the respective individuals within their follower groups (the interview questions are notated earlier in this chapter and within the appendices). Most of these discussions were conducted using cameras to better capture emotion with facial and other body expressions. All interviews were recorded in the same way via Zoom technology for consistency. Open-ended interviews were utilized to gather insights and perspectives

to formulate the definition and outcomes of responsible transparency. Interview techniques followed by Bloomberg and Volpe (2019) included:

- Engagement with participants
- Context-rich personal accounts, perceptions, and perspectives
- Data gathering in natural settings
- Unstructured, structured, or semi-structured interviews
- Explanation and description of complicated interaction and processes
- Discovery of distinctions in culture (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019)

Questions centered around leader and follower interpretations of transparency.

- The leader's understanding of transparency and what determines how much they share
- The followers' interpretations of transparency and whether they perceive the leader to be transparent
- Context questions on leadership types to determine whether the leader holds traits consistent with values-based leadership (authentic, transformational, ethical)
- Questions to both the leaders and followers about individual levels of trust (i.e., psychological safety)

### **Leadership traits and transparency questions**

Many scholars tie specific behaviors (authentic, ethical, and transformational) to transparency (Avolio & Luthans, 2006; Ehret, 2018; Gardner et al., 2011; Kernis, 2003; Luthans & Avolio, 2003; Vogelgesang et al., 2013), and thus a need existed to capture and identify such behaviors during the interview. Questions to leaders probed

leadership approach and values content to help identify authentic, transformational, and ethical types of leadership. Several scholars have developed instruments measuring leader styles (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Northouse, 2019; Walumbwa et al., 2008), and these tools were considered when developing questions. For consistency and accuracy, semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions were designed, starting with basic open-ended questions indicating authentic, transformational, and ethical leadership styles, which helped determine values-driven traits within leaders and leader types.

#### Organizational trust and transparency questions

Because trust levels impact transparency, trust through a psychological safety lens was considered as well. Leader-follower trust is significantly relevant to transparency (Norman et al., 2010). Psychological safety is one way of understanding trust: “The term psychological safety describes a climate in which people feel free to express relevant thoughts and feelings without fear of being penalized” (Edmondson, 2012, p. 77). Insights around trust, psychological safety and communication were gathered through open-ended questions considering trust and psychological safety. Scholars have developed tools measuring organizational safety (Edmondson, 2018), and some of these tools were also considered when developing questions.

#### Examples of leader and follower open-ended questions

The following are examples of leader and follower open-ended questions posed to the participants. A full list of leader-focused interview questions is included within Appendix D, with follower-focused questions found in Appendix E.

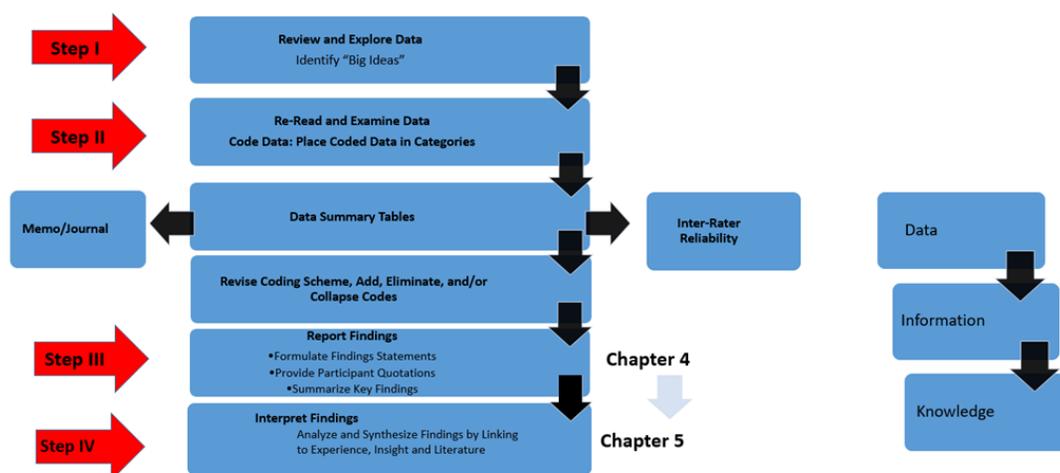
1. What does the word transparency mean to you?
2. How do you determine what is shared with your teams?
3. Describe how you let others know who you are as a person?
  - a. Are there times you present a “false” front to others? Why?
  - b. Do you admit your mistakes to others? Why?
  - c. If you admit a mistake, do you think it is held against you? Can you give me an example?
4. Without being humble, please tell me about when one of your employees asked for help. What was it about the environment that made them feel comfortable coming to you?
5. Do you consider yourself transparent to your followers?
  - a. Do you openly share your feelings with others, and how do you share?
  - b. When making decisions, do you seek to understand or validate? Explain.
  - c. Can you give an example of a team member bringing up a problem or tough issue, and what the resolution was?
6. Tell me about a time you needed to make a decision regarding an employee/team member and making this decision would impact the overall team performance
7. Describe how you are valued as a leader, and has there ever been a time one of your team members diluted your efforts?
8. Can you tell me about a time that you encouraged a team member to take a risk?
9. How does your team know the end goal of a project, and describe how they will be rewarded for their work?

- a. How is feedback given?
- b. How do you help others find meaning in their work?

## **Data Analysis**

Bloomberg and Volpe’s (2019) Road Map for the Process of Qualitative Data

Analysis was used to report the findings. The researcher used Creswell and Poth’s (2018) Six-Step process, as shown in Figure 7 below, to analyze the data once the interviews were completed.



Source: Bloomberg and Volpe, 2019

**Figure 7. Road Map for Process of Qualitative Data Analysis**

With these tools, the researcher created an excel workbook to keep the process organized.

Tab 1: Research Question

Tabs 2 and 3: Questions for Leaders and Followers

Tab 4: Basis for the Questions

Tab 5: Process: Volpe and Bloomberg's Roadmap

Tab 6: Demographic Details of Interviewees

Tab 7: Code Book

Tabs 8 (a, b, c): Level 1 Coding of Each Organization

Tab 9: Level 2 Codes

Tab 10: Frequency of Level 2 Codes

Tab 11: Dimensions

Tab 12: Outcomes-Model

A complete workbook view, including segments from supporting tabs, is found in the appendices.

### **Transcription**

To prepare the recorded interviews for transcribing, the data were first organized for analysis. This involved transcribing interviews, optically scanning material, typing field notes, or sorting and arranging data by the sources of information (i.e., leader, follower, leader-follower). A double transcription method was used for complete accuracy, first utilizing the transcription service supplied through Zoom and then uploading the recordings to REV.com, a web-based transcription service. The use of double transcription provided a cross-check relative to accuracy. Both services also generated full interviews in time-stamped statements for ease of reference (Figure 8).

00:00:31.590 --> 00:00:34.110		Time Stamp
<b>Theresa: How do you determine what [is] shared with your teams.</b>		

00:00:35.940 --> 00:00:47.610  
**yeah what's shared with my teams is information that will directly impact them  
or their role in some capacity so.**

**Figure 8. Example of Time-Stamped Transcriptions**

Next, the researcher read through all the data to obtain a general sense of the information and to reflect on its overall meaning and determine the general ideas of what the participants were saying, the tone of the ideas, and impressions of the overall depth, credibility, and use of the information (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher read through each transcription several times, watched the videos, and centered on two questions as a starting point: What is the definition of transparency? How do you determine what is shared? These two central questions were continually revisited as the researcher read and reread the transcriptions to capture key themes and ideas. These themes later became initial-level coding and second-level coding, detailed below.

### **Coding**

The researcher began the coding process with a detailed analysis involving the data gathered during data collection, segmenting sentences or images into categories, and labeling those categories with a term, often based on the language of the participant. (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The coding process was used to generate a description of the setting or people and categories or themes for analysis. Bloomberg and Volpe (2019) described coding as “a system of the classification—the process of noting

what is of interest or significance, identifying different segments of the data, and labeling them to organization contained in the data” (p. 239). Data were transcribed utilizing coding methods recommended by Strauss and Corbin (1990), who described such methods in three different steps within the coding process: open, axial, and selective coding. Concepts and categories were identified and applied during the first two steps, as Strauss and Corbin (1990) outlined.

First-level or “open codes” for each interview were created utilizing Vivo software. The software created a codebook in which comments which were coded uniformly. The codebook (Appendix F) stored all common/standard codes in one file, allowing for better organization. The researcher had a description for each first-level code and tied it back to each initial question. There were 61 initial first-level codes identified.

Figure 9 shows an abbreviated view of the codebook:

CODING TRANSPARENCY		
Questions	Codes	
	Initial Codes	Description
Describe how you let others know who you are as a person: If you admit a mistake to you think it is held against you, give me an example?	Actions Compromised	Actions Compromised-/Actions Held Against
Describe how you let others know who you are as a person: If you admit a mistake to you think it is held against you, give me an example?	Actions that have been held against_(admitting mistakes)	Actions Compromised-/Actions Held Against
Describe how you let others know who you are as a person: Do you admit mistakes?	Admit mistakes	Does the leader / follower admit mistakes (authentic-ethical leadership)
Do you Admit Mistakes	Authentic Person	True honest self
Do you consider yourself transparent to your followers?	Being transparent with employees	Transparency with employees
Do you consider yourself transparent to your followers?	Being transparent with followers	Does a person feel they are transparent with their peer or follower group
How does your team know the end goal of a project and describe how they will be rewarded for their work	Communicating end goal	How does a leader communicate accomplishment
How does your team know the end goal of a project and describe how they will be rewarded for their work	Compensation	rewards

**Figure 9. Abbreviated View of Code Book**

## **Findings**

The first step in the process of extracting findings was to explore and explain how the description and themes will be represented in the qualitative narrative. The most popular approach is to use a narrative passage to convey the findings of the analysis. Afterward, the researcher made an interpretation or meaning of the data, asking what lessons were learned. These lessons could be interpretations, couched to understand what the inquirer brings to the study from their own culture, history, and experiences. Most of the findings and discoveries are addressed in the upcoming chapters. The intermediary step prior to addressing findings will be discussed next.

## Memoing

Memoing is a concept referred to by Strauss and Corbin (2019) that involves writing notes and occurrences or sentences vital for theme development. Memos can trigger thinking processes and are written versions of an internal dialogue during the research. By recording what is going on, the researcher can capture new descriptors as they emerge (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). Part of the memoing included color-coding standard initial-level codes together in addition to capturing central ideas via note-taking. Steps five and six will be described in further detail in upcoming chapters.

## Triangulation

Triangulation is a systematic cross-checking, which uses different sources and methods to include peer reviews and examination (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). Peer

participants are engaged relative to the study's findings to ensure consistency, credibility, and trustworthiness. Triangulation encompasses various forms, including methodological (use of multiple methods), data triangulation (searching for as many data sources as possible to examine various perspectives), and collaborative research activities.

Numerous levels of coding were performed, along with a visual analysis to ensure consistent trends. Having more than one organization aided in efficiently gaining broader perspectives, though there were moments of challenge with over 4000 lines of data. The codebook helped keep codes consistent. This also was an effortless way to test and implement Glaser and Strauss's (1967) rule for constant comparison, which suggested, "While coding an incident for a category, compare it with the previous incidents in the same and different groups coded in the same category" (p. 107). Responses with the same codes could easily be checked for consistency utilizing the definitions within the codebook.

The researcher participated with two other colleagues in regular collaboration sessions where coding definitions, interpretations, and data were cross-checked. These sessions were recorded. Finally, the researcher met routinely with fellow research colleagues, committee members, and the committee chair to review the data, codes, and methodology. A transcription excerpt of these sessions is included in Appendix L.

### **Security of data**

Throughout the course of the study, the recorded interviews were stored on a password-protected computer. The data were further backed up on a cloud-based, password-protected, encrypted-storage Google Drive. Hard copy interview notes were locked and stored in the researcher's private home office and shredded after use. At the conclusion of the project, all remaining data will be transferred to Dr. Gus Gustafson, Dissertation Chair and Leadership Scholar-in-Residence, Center for Values-Driven Leadership at Benedictine University, for secure and ultimate disposal after a period of seven years.

### ***Anticipated Results: The Formulary***

Given the number of calls for clarity with a focus on consistent definition impacting leader and followers (Gatling et al., 2017; Liu et al., 2015; Salazer, 2017), the researcher anticipated findings on responsible transparency would center not only on the content shared, but also on the perception, trust, and psychological safety of another leader and follower. Walumbwa et al. (2008) indicated the correlation between trust and transparency and the influences and impacts of transparency on trust. Further, Edmondson (2012) suggested the significance of psychological safety, communication, and positive outcomes within organizations. The formulary's goal is a workable, implementable solution for responsible transparency for both leader and follower groups. A meaning of the word *formulary* includes "a fixed method" (Oxford University Press, n.d.-a); the research goal is to develop such a method for leaders and followers. Finally, given that the current study also focused contextually

on values-based leadership, the researcher hopes to contribute to existing research related to transparency in leadership displays of value to organizations, which can contribute to leader development programs.

## **Chapter 4: Results**

### ***Introduction***

Chapter 4 presents findings from the research. As this research aimed to develop a formulary for responsible transparency, data collection and coding were used to determine thematic data analysis findings. The information was obtained from thirty-six leaders and their followers through semi-structured interviews. These interviews, conducted within the three organizations, were reviewed for common opinions, perceptions, and ideas. The common perceptions from the participants were extracted through data analysis, described as themes, and used to answer the posed research questions.

This chapter includes a description of the extracted themes and presents additional findings relative to transparency and leadership beyond the six dimensions, which evolved as the dimensions developed. The collective results informed the final formula for a responsible transparency formulary. Throughout this chapter, the researcher provides examples of where and how these themes were developed from the data and how the dimensions support the desired formulary of responsible transparency.

### ***Process of Analysis***

#### **First-level analysis**

First-level, or open codes, for each interview were created utilizing NVivo software.

Coding is the process of organizing the data by bracketing chunks or text or image segments and writing a word representing a category in the margins (Creswell & Poth, 2018). An example of this is shown in Figure 10.

I- <b>it's not a problem for me to say like</b> , hey, that was wrong, I did it wrong, or... we- <b>we all can learn</b> so. There's no way I would know everything I'm doing and the way I'm supposed to be doing it <b>correctly, so</b>	Admit mistakes
but if I feel like that mistake is something that I can't fix or is gonna hinder something, then that would definitely be something that I would have to like <b>get help with or bring it up</b>	Admit mistakes
I do. Yeah, I do. 'Cause you know, I'm, uh, you, you know, I'm not perfect. No one's perfect. And, um, you know, my, my motto is, um, <b>everything's fixable, you know, you gotta, you, you fix it.</b> And, um, you know, you have to realize that we all are human. And, um, you know, I, I ended up being in the middle of a lot of, uh, legal situations and, you know, I feel it's absolutely fine to tell someone, "You know, I don't know I'm gonna have to do some research on this," um, because you know, we will encounter things that we don't know.	Admit mistakes
<b>They admit that they made a mistake. And like I said, my, my, my philosophy is we make mistakes, we fix them.</b>	Admit mistakes
But, um, but you know, I think for the most part, it's been something pertaining to payroll or benefits were not, um, someone wasn't enrolled in benefits and now they're beyond their, their window of time to enroll, and <b>how are we going to fix it.</b> So, uh, so usually it's those type of situations that my <b>staff will come to me with</b>	Admit mistakes
Absolutely. Absolutely I do admit my mistakes to others	Admit mistakes
I've been told since we do, uh, use ABA therapy, I've been told by man- several clinical directors that I <b>apologize too much when I do make a mistake that they want to write a program so I would stop that</b>	Admit mistakes
But yes, I <b>don't hesitate to take responsibility.</b> I'm not saying I don't get nervous and- and I'm scared that I'm gonna <b>get in trouble but I do admit my mistakes.</b>	Admit mistakes
I try to. And I, yeah, I think I do. I think I fall on swords for other people too, som-sometimes. And I, you know, I, because, you know, I know they say, shit rolls downhill. But like, yeah.	Admit mistakes

**Figure 10. Example of Bracketing and Word Representation**

### **Level-one codes and values-based leaders**

Values-based leadership themes associated with the behaviors and leadership theories of authentic, transformational, and ethical emerged throughout level-one codes.

Level-one codes also provided perspective into the importance of trust between leaders and followers. A level-one code commonly demonstrated that a values-based leader behavior was “admitting mistakes.” This also aligns and triangulates back to the literature used to develop the questions. The following responses were coded:

- No one's right 100% of the time...I learned that admitting mistakes makes you human, and people respond to that favorability. (Code: Admit mistakes, Leader: Transformational/Authentic, L-F-B3)
- But yes, there probably are times that I don't tell everything I know, because after all I think human nature is to don't quite tell everything, especially if we don't need to know and you look really bad. I got to be honest, I'm probably not going to share that (Code: Admit mistakes, Leader: Authentic, L-A1)
- You know some people would probably say no, but uh, that's probably because you know um, you know I, you know, obviously we make mistakes all the time right, so, um, sometimes we make decisions, um, and they don't turn out to be right, but you know you, you know you just kind of let people know that you making decision based on the information you had at the time and you trying to go with what you felt was the best decision at that time (Code: Admit mistakes, Leader: Transformational, L-F-R1)
- There's no trying to hide and say, oh, don't do this, just lay it on the table. You know? Sometimes that's hurt, but more often than not, I say it helps, you know? (Code: Admit mistakes, Leader: Authentic, L-F-B2)
- So I open up to feedback (Code: Admit mistakes: Leader: Transformational, L-F-R2)

As determined by the literature, a values-based leader (transformational, authentic, ethical) demonstrates ethical decision-making, altruism, and integrity (Copeland,

2016), and these leaders tend to build on moral foundations of honesty (Elrehail et al., 2018). These types of leaders also intentionally build trust between their followers (Walumbwa et al., 2008). The level-one coding confirmed values-based leadership existed within the selected organizations.

### Trust and level on codes

The importance of trust between leaders and followers also emerged as a theme in level-one codes.

- I would think you have transparency first and then you gain trust (L-F-R1)
- When it comes to um, any type of a change. Um and making sure that even though I am, should be trusting of someone that is, has had those, or that they've had those communications with the right people, might not necessarily have. And so, making sure that I'm also following up with those key players so that I know for a fact, they're aware and they're in agreement. Before I rely on, solely on somebody else telling me that they are. (Code: Actions compromised, F-M3)
- I, and I've talked to (my boss) about this, and it felt like she didn't trust me enough to explain why everything was happening the way it was. It was a weird, it was a very bizarre situation. (Code: Actions compromised, L-F-MJ3)
- Because some of it is because of the level that I am, I have to trust what they're telling me. Um, and I don't know everything. So I— I have to rely on, you know, their truth (Code: Actions compromised, L-F-B3)
- So it's easy to share things that, that... So the first thing is basically, I trust my teams, and I trust my leaders, and I trust people who are working with me, um, to

have the best intention... ’cause I feel like that is required of me to keep... to earn and keep their trust. (Code: Determining what is shared, L-F-P1)

- I, I enjoy knowing that they just trust me to get it done (Code: Emotion: Trust, L-F-L1)
- I try to disclaim in control. That control of going, because to me, it not only, serves them understanding, but maybe it’s a little selfishly, it’s a form of creating trust. (L-F-B1)

Once interviews were completed and coded, the researcher described and defined each code and tied (the codes) back to each initial question. Nearly sixty initial first-level codes emerged. Developing a codebook showing the initial codes (Table 4) was an effective way to test and implement Glaser and Strauss’s (1967) rule for constant comparison: “While coding an incident for a category, compare it with the previous incidents in the same and different groups coded in the same category” (p. 107).

**Table 4. Initial Code Example**

<b>Code</b>	<b>Description</b>
Authentic person	True honest self
Culture hierarchy psychological study	Do people feel safe to communicate (does the organizational culture support)
Decision making process	How are decisions determined?
Determining what information is shared	Process for what information is shared

Code	Description
Disposition transparency	Definition
Emotional transparency	Showing emotion

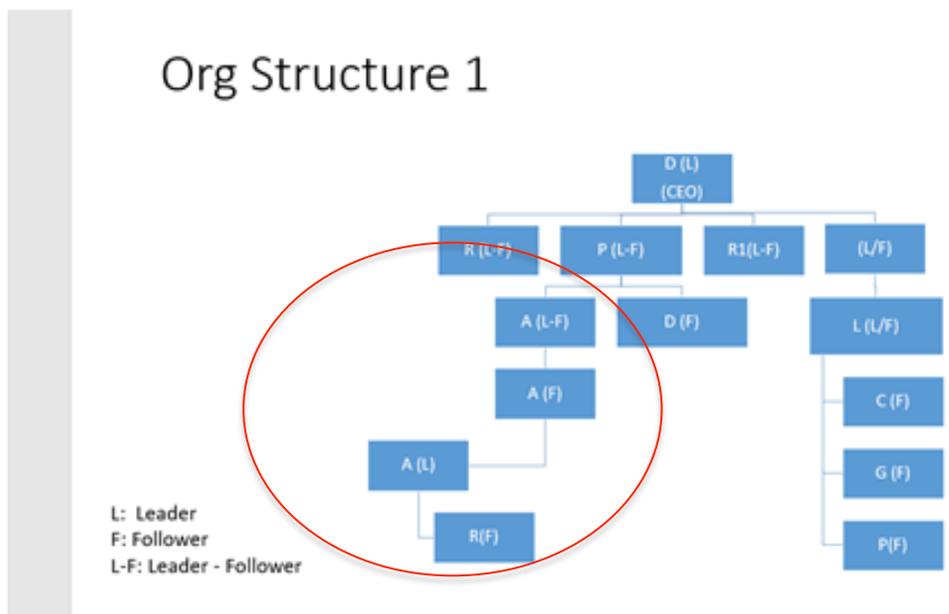
The codebook allowed responses with the same code to be checked and compared for consistency. For most of the codes, multiple perspectives were gained: leader, follower, and leader-follower. This coding transparency is shown in Figure 11. As interviews were conducted, level-one codes evolved.

CODING TRANSPARENCY		
Questions	Initial Codes	Description
Describe how you let others know who you are as a person: If you admit a mistake to you think it is held against you, give me an example?	Actions Compromised	Actions Compromised-/Actions Held Against
Describe how you let others know who you are as a person: If you admit a mistake to you think it is held against you, give me an example?	Actions that have been held against_(admitting mistakes)	Actions Compromised-/Actions Held Against
Describe how you let others know who you are as a person: Do you admit mistakes?	Admit mistakes	Does the leader / follower admit mistakes (authentic-ethical leadership)
Do you Admit Mistakes	Authentic Person	True honest self
Do you consider yourself transparent to your followers?	Being transparent with employees	Transparency with employees
Do you consider yourself transparent to your followers?	Being transparent with followers	Does a person feel they are transparent with their peer or follower group
How does your team know the end goal of a project and describe how they will be rewarded for their work	Communicating end goal	How does a leader communicate accomplishment
How does your team know the end goal of a project and describe how they will be rewarded for their work	Compensation	rewards
Do you consider yourself transparent to your followers/What does the word transparency mean	Complete Honesty	Displaying honesty
Multiple	Credibility	Building credibility-trust
Multiple	Culture_Hierarchy_psychological safety	Do people feel safe to communicate (does the organizational culture support)
How do you determine what is shared with your teams/Tell me about a time you needed to make a decision regarding a an employee/team member; making this decision would impact the overall team performance	Decision making process	How are decisions determined
Multiple	Demographics	
How do you determine what is shared with your teams/Tell me about a time you needed to make a decision regarding a an employee/team member; making this decision would impact the overall team performance	Determining what information is shared	Process for what information is shared
What does the work transparency mean to you/Do you consider yourself transparent	Disposition Transparency	Definition

**Figure 11. Coding Transparency**

Once the entire transcription was coded, the codes and data were converted into an Excel file. Separate Excel files existed for each interview as well as a workbook for each organization. Each Excel sheet contained the page number and the comment scope that supported the code. All thirty-six interviews were stored in separate Excel file sheets, allowing for easy sorting, comparison, and the development of common themes.

All individual interviews were aggregated. One worksheet existed for each organization. The researcher exemplified capturing each position (“L” Leader: “F” Follower L-F), individual, comment scope, and level-one code, again to compare codes for consistency in meaning. This aggregated data is exhibited in Figure 12 and shows the reporting structures and sequencing utilizing the organizational charts.



Role	Interviewee	Page	Line	Comment scope	Codes	
L-F	A		11	14	My CFO, for example he's the one that made a decision that ended up making me look bad in front of a client Oh, absolutely. Yes. Not the little girl sitting here with me, but I had in the last couple of years, I was given a group of people to lead that I only worked in that area a year over 20 years ago. So I was given this group and I have found them, there are three, four different work groups in that group. I have found that one of those work groups is very toxic and I have never truly had that level of toxicity before. I find that very difficult.	Actions compromised
L	A		3	21	So of course, if I might say to that group, the sky is a really pretty blue today. Isn't it? They would say blue, it's not even blue today it's gray she doesn't know her colors. So regardless of the importance of what I have to say, I feel it's diluted with that group.	Actions compromised
L	A		3	25	Okay. Um, maybe but maybe not, um, because I'm usually pretty sensitive to this.	Actions compromised
F	A		11	3	But I have a, I have a curious mind, and so I put things together. For instance, this post, post-COVID thing, you know?	Actions compromised
F	A		11	3		Actions compromised
Role	Interview	Page	Line	Comment scope	Level 1 Codes	
L-F	B		1	30	Where I think sometimes people tend to want to measure out information and measure it out, oftentimes, to achieve a goal that isn't on the table	Actions compromised
L-F	B		2	14	Maybe the older I get, the more I go, my God are we lawyering up and everything getting so crammed up that we can't be open because we're afraid of the unintended consequence of those activities?	Actions compromised
L	M		7	34	So yes, sometimes, but I don't feel like it's being like, I'm lying or it's being inauthentic. It's just kind of like, you know, kind of like, a need to know thing.	Actions compromised
L	M		9	10	Um, and uh, but I also, do hold other people accountable too. And there are some people that, you know, feel like, they're just freaking Teflon and nothing sticks to them. And, and like, they'll just blame everybody else and never admit, you know, their own, you know, mis-mistakes. So when you try to, you know, point it out to them gently, oh, it's like, no, you know. So I mean, yeah. So I do try to.	Actions compromised
F	S		5	20	when he would- he would- well, for example, he would send me an email and praise me about something, and then I could count, sit there and count and I knew within a minute I was gonna get an email putting me down about something. So during that time, I didn't flourish at XX at all. Um, it was a very, very hard time for me.	Actions compromised
F	S		5	31	I felt like I couldn't do anything right for that person. And- and that- part of that is- is my fault. Because I don't like to mess up, and um, so when I mess up, I'm almost sometimes, I've worked on this a lot over the past few years, but I become my own worst enemy and then I question even stuff that I can do with my eyes closed	Actions compromised
Leader / fc	Interview	Page	Line	Comment scope	Codes	
L-F	B		5	18	so we were rolling out a new time in labor process. Um, which HR owns. And through a different stream of communication, I discovered a peer in another business area was communicating with the executives inaccurate information. And why? I didn't know why. So, I had set up a call with this individual and- and my approach again was very collaborative, hey, this came across my desk. I think we need to do a better [00:15:00] job of partnering because some of the information is inaccurate. Um, and that became very- it became a debate, because that individual became argumentative which I think I probably responded to poorly as well. Uh. So, uh, uh, ultimately, through a series of emails and conversations, I think we're gonna end it in the right place, but it was simply this peer operating in a lane that they didn't- they didn't need to. Um, [00:15:30] and it created a lot of- it created a lot of confusion amongst our business partners, uh, and that was my source of frustration because it generated a bunch of questions of, I'm confused, you said this, but now I'm hearing this.	Actions compromised
F	C		5	32	I just think that sometimes people want to stifle some of the things that we may want to do, um, [00:13:00] or the actions that we might want to take in that space, um, because they don't necessarily feel we're all ready for it, or they're not ready for it as a leader.	Actions compromised
F	C		6	5	I just feel like I just have to, um, renegotiate a little bit, be a little bit more flexible, meet them where they're at, and then still figure a way to drive my agenda or to, to move forward with my work.	Actions compromised
F	K		5	23	I can't think of a time.	Actions compromised

Figure 12. Aggregated Data

### ***Coding: Thematic Development***

The researcher used a color-coding system to organize and sort to stay consistent with Strauss's rule for comparison. The first codes were grouped based on common themes, as shown in Appendix G. The researcher color-coded each level-one code according to the larger category. The critical categories included the following:

- The negative impact when actions are compromised/actions held against
- The positive impact when psychological safety exists (admission to mistakes: followers asking for help)
- The intentional leader (examples of authentic, transformational, ethical leader traits)
- Decision making: How leaders and followers determine what is shared
- Emotional formula: Outcomes with use of emotion
- Transparency: The different definitions of transparency
- Finding meaning: How do leaders help their people find meaning
- Horizontal-structure-position-experience

Based on first-order content review, first-order (level-one) codes were assigned to one of the key categories. The extensive and complete level-one codebook used for each of the three organizations can be found in Appendix F. The level-one codes were narrowed to key categories where themes began to emerge. Through the note-taking process (memoing), reoccurring themes and ideas were captured. Given the quantity of data, the color-coding system also assisted in the theme development process

(memoing), providing the ability to sort standard codes and themes through the color codes quickly.

### **Level-two codes**

The researcher then took the coding to the next (second) level, known as axial coding, by looking at key themes, responses, and categories that seemed to relate to one another. As Charmez (2014) stated, “Axial coding specifies the properties and dimensions of a category” (p. 147). Axial coding organizes large amounts of data. Charmez (2014) further claimed that axial coding answers questions such as ‘who, what, where when, why, how’ (p. 147). The researcher started with 4001 lines of coded data.

### **A note on frequencies**

The frequency of each essential category was evaluated (Appendix I). Key concepts were grouped and then aggregated, showing each key concept by the individual organization. The frequencies were then assessed collectively. This process aided in developing the themes making up responsible transparency. Frequencies were then aggregated and compared across all three organizations.

### ***Findings***

Each theme was extracted using the process discussed above and in Chapter 3. The level-one and -two coding analyses in addition to the frequency analysis produced the following themes: the affective why, timing, and organizational comfort develops responsible followers. Each of these themes produced sub-themes shown in Table 5:

**Table 5. Themes and Sub-Themes**

Theme	Sub-Theme
Theme 1: The affective why	Balance & emotional connection
Theme 2: Timing	Readiness perception
Theme 3: Organizational comfort develops responsible followers	Space and organizational comfort
Theme 4: Responsible followers	Leader awareness
Theme 5: The intentional leader	Place: Position impact

**Theme 1: The affective why**

The researcher looked to frequencies to identify where key themes emerged, first combining “Transparency: What does it do?” and “Decision making: Determining what is shared” and named it the “transparency abstract” category. The affective why message meaning was the first emergent theme. The timing of message delivery was also important to leaders and followers.

Leaders and followers must effectively communicate “the why” behind the message. The message meaning and impact on the greater organization need to be spelled out. This is essential to the individual stakeholder. This communication must resonate with the receiver. The content of the communication must affect the individual, causing emotion with the follower (or leader) and therefore drive impact. LF-MJ3 stated, “Why [is] something being done a certain way or for what reason?” L-D1

mentioned, “Transparency to me is understanding the Whys (and) the background to things.” F-A1 claimed, “What ‘Whys’ do they need to know: what we do not need to know.”

It is also noted beyond “the why,” leaders need to provide context or paint a picture to followers of the organizational plan. As F-A1 commented, “I feel like I have most of my responsibility to the patients who walk in the door... and so (I) try to explain to them how I see the whole illness and treatment and educate within that.” Word clouds were used to help further analyze the data to visualize key essential themes of the grouped codes. Appendix M contains word cloud examples developed using software from wordclouds.com to validate thematic findings further. The responses in this category were loaded into the software, creating a visual based on keyword counts.

As previously noted, several scholars point to visual imagery to help frame contextual meaning (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). There are separate sets of questions to consider about the image to help determine meaning:

- Where, when, and why was the image made?
- Who made it?
- Does the form of the image reconstitute those identities and relations?
- What is being shown?
- Where is the viewer’s eye drawn to and why?
- What do the different components of the image signify?

- How do different audiences interpret this image?

From these visuals and the category responses, keywords surfaced with the cloud development:

- Affect
- Complete (i.e., complete picture)
- Need (i.e., follower's and leader's need of information)
- Understand
- Complete
- Explain

#### Theme 1. Sub-theme 1: Balance and emotional connection

Authentic leaders have “positive psychological capacities and a highly developed organizational content, which results in...positive behaviors on the part of the leaders and associates, [thereby] fostering positive self-development” (Luthans & Avolio, 2003, p. 243). The four dimensions of authentic leadership include relational transparency, balanced information processing, self-awareness, and an internal moral perspective (Walumbwa et al., 2008). The balanced information includes information without bias, stating the message exactly and directly and assuring the “whys” include all follower views, such as, “I understand the business needs and what we need to do and the why.” One leader-follower said, “I feel like (laughs) X, Y, Z person here isn't looking at it the same way” (L-F-L3). Leaders need to ensure they understand what is important to the followers when communicating the why, and

consider “If I were a receiver of this information, what would I want to know about the why? You know, what is at the core of the communication? Why was that decision made” (F-C3)?

Emotional (affective) connection is also essential when communicating the whys, “And I think that’s probably another reason why I’m feeling the way I’m feeling lately, is that I don’t have the engagement from my leadership” (F-CL3). Affective commitment refers to workers’ emotional attachment to their organization (Meyer & Kirby, 2010). Duarte et al. (2021) concurred, stating, “Leaders’ authenticity can influence employees’ emotional attachment to their organization, so authentic leaders may also inspire feelings of affective commitment” (p. 2). Research shows authentic, ethical, and transformational leaders improve employee performance when the followers feel authorized to act more freely within the parameters of their jobs given, they know and understand more (the why) (Kim et al., 2018). When followers such as staff are exposed to positive emotion, these feelings will have a long-term impact on individual and organizational performance (Avolio et al., 2004). Leaders’ affective reason should instill positive motivation for the followers, increasing their emotional attachment and commitments to the organization, a critical component when evaluating what to share and what not to share. The affective why is the message communicating the “why behind the what.” It connects the message recipient (follower or leader) closer to the organization.

## **Theme 2: Timing**

When considering transparency, participants claimed they “think about [it as] sharing what I can when I can with those who need that information” (LF-C3). Both leaders and followers across organizations openly admitted there were times they chose to be more transparent than others. A leader-follower (LF-R2) explained,

Sometimes I am transparent, sometimes I am not. And, and I, and I pick and choose my battles. The influencing factors relative to timing [on what to share] typically were who they were I’ll need to meet with a, uh, director or a manager on a personnel matter) and or if they were “ready” to share the information.

### Theme 2. Sub-theme 1: Readiness perception

Timing is specific to readiness, and transparency includes those elements people share when they are ready to share. “So that’s what that means to me: it’s readiness” (LF-S3). “Different information regarding a project may be shared responsibly at other points in time” (LF-S3). “It is vital for organizations to continuously work towards open communication about the vision for the organization, you know, and really for different intervals of time” (LF-B2). A leader needs to be fully aware of such timing. Transformational leadership is a process between leaders and followers. A transformational leader guides followers through individual development by identifying needs and focusing on the follower’s development (Avolio, 2018). A responsible leader will be aware and mindful of follower’s needs, and accountable communication may vary depending on the follower’s growth and development. The word cloud that was developed (Appendix M) highlighted “need,” and “readiness”

and explained why. The word cloud was developed from the leader-follower responses, focusing on the timing elements.

Leadership is about influencing others' behaviors (Bass, 1985; Avolio et al., 2004; Brown, 2012; Brown et al., 2005). The leader needs to be mindfully present, here and now. Oxford University Press (n.d.-b) associated the term *mindfulness* with awareness. Existing research correlates mindfulness to authentic and transformational leaders (Lemoine et al., 2018). In responsible transparency, the leader (or follower) should be aware of the “readiness” of the recipient. Within responsible transparency, the leader needs to be mindful and understand more about how the timing of the news impacts the follower development, reactions, perceptions, and organizational effectiveness—and less about the organization's readiness: “Whether it's good or bad, we like to let people know when we know” (LF-A1), stated one leader-follower.

### **Theme 3: Organizational comfort and developing responsible followers**

Based on a similar coding process and frequencies, the following three categories were created: actions compromised/action held against, unmasking, and emotional formulas with trust-acceptance. Because multiple comments coincided with trust and psychological safety categories, these three categories were grouped. In addition, the researcher also analyzed the contrary codes to trust and psychological safety (actions compromised/action held against) to compare several different perspectives to similar questions. The question, “Do you admit mistakes?” was a good example. This example yielded answers including the following:

- If I make a mistake, I definitely need to own up to it. (F-C3)
- You need to be vulnerable; you need to be honest, and you need to show that you're just like everyone else. We all make mistakes, and that's how we're gonna learn. And so, I definitely do that on my own as well. (F-C3)
- I was thinking of people who I put a false front to... I think sometimes those are the same people that I've admitted mistakes to in the past, and they were not responsible with that information, in my opinion. (F-J3)
- Somebody from (another) team went and kinda, I, what I, describe as back-doored, and went to somebody else. (LF-A1)

It is important to note initially, the focus primarily was on the followers and leader-follower responses, given that part of transparency is the perception and reception of the message. As Avolio et al. (2004) indicated, relational transparency is a shared perception between the leader and the follower on the leader's willingness to become forthcoming (Avolio et al., 2004). Zhang et al. (2020) noted follower perceptions significantly impact their well-being. Leaders must be fully aware of those perceptions for the greater good of the organizations.

### Theme 3. Sub-theme 1: Space, organizational comfort, and safety

Several leader-followers relayed that the need for comfort in their environment was critical; when mistakes or risks occurred, they were

Comfortable enough in my position that unless I'm doing something that's completely fraudulent, uh, that, you know, if I, if I mess

something up, as long as we can get it fixed and, and, uh, go and fix it going forward then, uh, I mean, there's not, I mean, there's not anything that would jeopardize myself. Employees need to be able to "fix" it forward: My, my philosophy is we make mistakes, we fix them. (LF-B3)

Within the formula of responsible transparency, a security message should be conveyed. Leader-follower LF-J2 shared, "I like to know that there is some security because I like to know things are okay." Tying directly to Edmondson's (2012) research on psychological safety and trust: A leader must develop an environment enabling learning, investigation, and experimentation. Within responsible transparency, there needs to be space for clarity and a space for followers to seek to understand and grow. As LF-LA3 said, "They trust so much, and they give me such a big space." A leader's awareness of this clarification space is essential for follower growth. If a plant is not given an area, it cannot grow. Likewise, a follower needs space to think and grow.

There is much research on components and the benefits of trust: Several scholars have identified trust as a must in terms of leader and leader effectiveness (Jung & Avolio, 2000). One L-F (LF-LA3) demonstrated the value of trust by claiming, "I've always had great leaders who have invested in me and trusted me, um, and created safe spots for me." The connection between the unknown and known is viewed as trust (Stedham & Skaar, 2019). An environment allowing questions to be asked was beneficial for leaders and followers to feel safe. As one LF-B3 noted, "The ability to

ask questions creates ‘safety’: It’s hard as you’re going to the top to figure out who’s on your side and who’s competing... It keeps me in a place where people feel safe.”

#### **Theme 4: Developing responsible followers**

Leaders and followers across all three organizations were quick to note they want to be accountable and honest. Several participants claimed they don’t hesitate to take responsibility. There was a collective voice in many of the followers and leader-followers demonstrating accountability. Leaders need to be aware of the follower’s perspective; this piece further emphasizes the affective why. Communication content should include follower-specific edicts as indicated by follower F-A2 who commented, “She knows she can trust me; she knows that if she tells me to do something, it is going to be done, and there is no question about having to follow-up on it.” Another leader-follower (LF-BR2) commented,

I think it’s important for organizations to always work towards open communication about what is the vision for the organization.... what’s the vision and, and our objectives for really the legacy of the organization.

What is going on in your world? These are the things I need to communicate with you. And then at the end of that call is it’s more of them showcasing what are they working on to move the business forward outside of the tactics, so more of the strategy piece, um, and allow them to, I guess, showcase the work that they’re doing.

The followers wanted to understand the vision and their individual goals and objectives for overall organizational improvement: “Our goal was one of the first things we talked about” (F-R1). In addition, followers want to demonstrate their work relative to the organizational goals. Leaders need to allow followers to “showcase”

their goals and accomplishments. Within the word clouds created (Appendix M), “goal” is one of the most prominent words, representing a collective, responsible focus from both leader and follower perspectives.

#### Theme 4. Sub-theme 1: Leader awareness

Leader awareness of follower needs is crucial. Unfortunately, leaders are not wholly aware of this aspect and sometimes, the harsh reality is that leaders want followers just to do their job. One leader (L-M1) directly stated, “I don’t think they had any idea...I don’t want them to, you know, I want them to do their job.” Some messages conveyed are more transactional versus transformational.

It’s really easy for me to fall in love with, uh, people in different parts of our organization, especially when they’re trying and they’re going for a job. And they’re building their brand, and they’re doing ... They’re taking risks for others. (LF-LA3)

Brown et al. (2007) explained that “awareness is the conscious registration of stimuli, including the five physical senses...and...that awareness is our direct most immediate contact with reality” (p. 212). One leader-follower demonstrated how he assures his team’s perspectives were followed, stating,

You know, when I, when I am thinking a certain way, uh, we have established a really good workflow, to where we pre-call, plan, we post-call plan, we communicate, we call each other out, we bounce, I bounce, bounce ideas off of each other, and so I reach out to her and say, uh, I’m thinking about this... How should we, how should we improve this? You know, what should I do. (LF-R2)

Understanding follower perspectives assures all voices are heard and leaders are aware of the followers’ growth position. Transformational leaders are considered

leaders who lead followers to raise one another to higher levels of morality and motivation. Followers want to be heard and, more importantly, want to partner and grow with their teams and their organizations. Leader-followers and followers were open to say admitting mistakes enabled overall growth. To build more vital partnerships, employees need to understand goals and objectives, and it needs to be called out when they hit those goals,

I mean, I can say, “Oh, you’re doing a good job.” But, when you can show them concrete evidence that because of the work you’ve been doing, we were able to move this number from way up here to down here to meet what the target of the organization is. So, they understand how their work contributes to the goals of the department and- and the organization. (LF-R1)

In addition to wanting accountability and growth, appreciation is also essential to followers; this will be further addressed in the intentional leadership section,

I trained my manager. Um, so that was a little odd. But she too has been, been very, very grateful back and, and says things about it. So, so I think we’re a very vocal group. We all tell each other all the time what a good group we have and how we all appreciate each other. (F-A2)

### **Theme 5: The intentional leader**

Based on frequencies and similar coding, three categories were identified: meaning, authentic self, and intentional leader. Leadership is about influencing behaviors (Brown, 2012). It is intentional influence through relationship-building behaviors and trust-building, that is, trying to identify ways to help build rapport and build a trusting working relationship. A theme resonated through the interviews from the leaders and leader-followers about the importance of relationship building to influence: “Often

times I recommend we should be more centered around the further development of the relationship” (LF-B2). Some leaders (and leader-followers) were stronger than others on intent, though the theme remained strong: “Through communication and my relationship with people, and I feel that, um, you know, uh, words have meaning and, and you need to stick to those words” (LF-B3). Across the three organizations, this group of leaders and leader-followers intentionally and authentically assured when you work for your people, your actions must match your words.

Follower perceptions of leader authenticity are often formed as follow-up action is taken by the leader on what they communicated initially. Employee or follower perception of any leader is a crucial attribute to the success of leaders, moreover any organization. LF-B3 concurred, saying, “Through communication and my relationship with people, and I feel that, um, you know, uh, words have meaning and, and you need to stick to those words.” If leaders do what they say they are going to do, employees typically believe in the leader.

Further, if the leader is not consistent with actions and words, differing perceptions of the leader will exist among followers, leading to potential misfortune. Minimally, a lack of cohesive followership will take place (Vogelgesang et al., 2013). Within groups or teams, unified perceptions amongst the members are essential to those leaders with high behavioral integrity. Perceptions are two-way, between leader and

follower, through the follower's perception of the leader, and crucial to behavioral integrity (Vogelgesang et al., 2013).

Other intentional behaviors to building trust include respect, appreciation, and intentionally showing care. This was reflected in statements such as, "I genuinely care about them. They know that I'm a, a partner, and they know that I invest in them. And that I want 'em to win" (LF-S3). Other participants stated that they "respect the people [they] lead or respect leaders enough or the people supported enough to have the honest conversation and handle the tough questions" (LF-B3). A third agreed, claiming, "I'm bigger at the over gestures. But sometimes, just a simple, thank you so much" (L-M2). The final correlated comment from a participant stated, "I might just send them a thank you note in the mail, or a card that's like, 'Wow, you're amazing'"(LF-J3).

Admitting mistakes and showing trust are intentional behaviors of the transformational leader. These are all critical intentional behaviors where leaders demonstrate to followers their intention to build on the relationship through messaging. Part of the formula is a planned, deliberate, and intentional action to establish trust with followers. This leader (LF-B3) intentionally learned to understand her people:

I usually start off every conversation, it's all personal. It's like what's going on in your life, what are you doing this weekend, how was your week, things of that nature. Um, but through those, whether it be

impromptu or planned conversations, you learn about that person. You learn about what their values are. You learn about what their interests are. Um, and I think that builds trust.

Theme 5. Sub-theme 1: Place: Position impact

Within organizations, hierarchy is essential for order. How the structure is viewed and implemented by the leader is a critical element in responsible transparency. If there is awareness to firm ranking, “it will impact the approach and perhaps the overall message” (L-D1). Authentic leadership emphasizes the leader earns legitimacy by developing relationships with followers built on trust. (Prince et al., 2019). A core component in authentic leadership (DeRue & Ashford, 2010), is role accepting with leader and follower. Table 6 demonstrates the impact of position between the three organizations.

**Table 6. Positional Impact**

	<b>Senior Leader</b>	<b>Leader-Follower</b>	<b>Follower</b>
Organization 1	Theresa, I start at the top level, so I start with our Board of Directors, and I work my way down. My understanding sometimes is the sequencing of sharing information, who needs to hear the information first, and then do I have the ability to cascade that down through	So I hate, I hate that our organizational ranking sometimes impact my approach, but it is the reality of the situation	She is our director and then above that is vice presidents and our vice president is good. He does a nice job. He'll come down and talk to us (laughing) but then you don't ever see any of the other ones, so our VP – very sharp. And I think he does a nice job, but that's fair as the rest

	<b>Senior Leader</b>	<b>Leader-Follower</b>	<b>Follower</b>
	the organization?		of them, not so much.
Organization 2	I give trust, I get your trust back	Especially in our culture, I think our default is transparency	With (manager), gosh... I can't think of what I wouldn't share with him.
Organization 3	May the older I get, the more I go, my God are we lawyering up and everything getting so crammed up that we can't be open because we're afraid of the unintentional consequences of those activities?	I'll sit – I'll find myself questioning, um, myself instead of having that confidence level that I do know what I'm doing and-and I can handle the situations that come along. But I've gotten a lot better I feel like.	There's a lot of information that you can't share. So, you have to be very discreet, but you, I mean, you have to, you just have to take out the, the details, I guess, to paint an overall picture.

Organization 1 and Organization 3 leaders appear to have an overall awareness of position and consequences that impact both the message delivery and the follower's perceptions of sharing. Conversely, Organization 2 leaders have an approach that focuses more on the awareness and place of the relationships relative to trust. The trust is a two-way trust. The leader's awareness and mindful "place" of this trust resonates more with the followers and thus results in higher organizational outputs (Kim et al., 2018; Enria et al., 2021; Roelofs, 2018).

## **Chapter summary of findings**

The goal of this research was to understand and formulate an equation defining the elements of responsible transparency to improve leader-follower outcomes through communication by trust development. There were a number of findings supporting the formulary to responsible transparency. “Affective whys” move followers to productive action. Leaders need to demonstrate balance and emotional connection, a sub-theme of the affective why is to motivate the follower to action. Intentional leaders assure relationship building. These leaders must be aware and mindful of their followers, their responsible followers. Responsible followers are comfortable enough to let their leaders know their wants and needs. When they are comfortable, they will speak up and out. There is also a critical timing piece on message delivery, and leaders need to know when the followers are ready to receive messages.

Finally, leaders must be aware of their “place” within the organization and perceptions of their place. Place is a multidimensional concept including a leader or follower’s physical location, cognitive frame of mind, and placement within the organizational structure. The place of a leader will impact and influence the awareness of the leader and follower.

A final framework presenting this study’s emerging themes relative to the responsible transparency formulary is presented in Chapter 5. Answers to the initial research questions and future implications also are addressed in Chapter 5.

## Chapter 5: Discussion

### ***Introduction***

This dissertation journey began by understanding more about transparency related to leadership and developing a formulary for responsible transparency. Given the increased use and intrinsic implications transparency holds within leadership, the researcher focused on developing and defining elements of responsible transparency to improve leader-follower outcomes through trust development. The context of transparency is a values-based leader behavior, developed over time between leader and follower, influencing leader-follower trust and improving effectiveness and organizational outcomes (Vogelgesang et al., 2020; Ehret, 2018; Guenter et al., 2017). The term *transparency* has many definitions, including “the quality of something to make it easy to understand” (Oxford University Press, n.d.-d). This chapter discusses connections further between the posed research questions, the literature through a final framework.

### **Preliminary and emergent perspectives: Responsible transparency**

The data revealed a specific and extracted theme establishing a definition for responsible transparency. Based on a thematic analysis, responsible transparency reflected information sharing benefits the organization and maximizes outcomes through the leader-follower relationship, and trust. The word *responsible* denotes accountability for something within one’s own power to manage based on several definitions (Oxford University Press, n.d.-c). The term aligned with the quest to

determine impacting factors of transparency for organizational benefit through leaders and followers. The goal of this research was to understand and formulate an equation defining the elements of responsible transparency to improve leader-follower outcomes through communication by trust development. The literature review confirmed that transparency impacts trust, enhances relationships and communication, and improves overall business (Boies et al., 2015). Understanding and establishing factors and a formulary for responsible transparency has positive implications for all organizations, leaders, and followers.

There can be unsuccessful outcomes when too much information is shared (Kotter, 1995; Soroya et al., 2020). Information overload may result in fatigue, stress, and the discontinued use of the information (Soroya et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2020), impacting productivity and engagement. Ineffective information practices lead to weak cultures and high negative costs to organizations (Grailey et al., 2021). Leaders must share reliable, responsible information for success. As an interviewee stated, “There’s a fine line between making someone aware of something that will impact them versus giving them details or more information than had been sorted out, which could ultimately stress them out” (L-F-J3).

Given the number of calls for clarity on the definition of transparency and based on the focus for a consistent definition, the researcher expected findings to include both leader and follower perceptions. Such perceptions were expected to be based on

individual experiences with the elements of psychological safety and factors of trust for both leaders and their followers (Gatling et al., 2017; Liu et al., 2015; Salazer, 2017). There are negative impacts on psychological safety when not enough information is shared (Grailey et al., 2021). An objective for this research was to contribute to the many bodies of literature around values-based leadership, trust, and leader-follower dynamics to include communication and transparency. The research aligned and confirmed prior research on values-based leaders, trust, and the importance of the leader-follower relationship. The research also identified the significance of mindfulness with leaders and their followers and its role relative to responsible transparency.

## **Results**

The research goal was to understand and develop a formulary defining the elements of responsible transparency. Leaders are continually faced with challenges and often told what they can or cannot share. One leader-follower stated, “I find it difficult if I’m ever presented with that situation where it’s like...we can’t have you share X, Y, and Z, but we need you to be aware because it’s going to impact you or your group, and here’s maybe to the extent you can share” (L-F-L3). Responsible transparency includes awareness of factors driving and impacting messaging to maximize trusting relationships. How the message is delivered will affect the relationship, as one leader explained: “With the words that I choose, I am aware [if] certain words will come off as aggressive or not” (L-F-S3). Based on the conceptualization of the emerged data,

the researcher argued responsible transparency starts from within leaders and their followers. The leader and their follower are two critical factors within the equation.

### ***Research Question 1 Results***

The first research question asked about how much information is the “right” amount of data (information) to be shared. The right amount of information starts with the relevant information specific to the follower. The research repeatedly demonstrated this information was the “why behind the what” (L-F-C3). The message meaning and impact on the receivers needs to resonate with them. The message also should contain emotion. Emotion from the leader must inspire followers for action and affect to take place. So, as confirmed by the research, the right amount of information resides within the “whys.” If a leader can explain to the follower why action is needed, and make it meaningful for the follower, the “right” amount of data (information) has been shared. An emotional relationship is made through the leaders and followers (Duarte et al., 2021). If an emotional connection is not made, followers feel unattached, as noted previously.

Further, as supported in the literature and research, a values-based leader will understand the needs of the follower. (Luthans & Avolio, 2003). Leaders must understand the perceptions and viewpoints of their followers, as several leaders and leader-followers in this study pointed out. Understanding perception and viewpoints is an awareness factor within the responsible transparency formulary. Both the research and the literature support the awareness factor relative to the right amount of

information. Multiple authors promote awareness when building trust and sharing the right amount of information (Avolio et al., 2009; Guenter, 2017; Kempster et al., 2019; Rego et al., 2021), and the right amount of information is shared through the awareness of followers and followers' needs.

When thinking through the amount of information to share, the leader must align the message to the follower. Leaders need to be self-aware of their behaviors relative to the communication, while maintaining situational awareness (Ehret, 2018).

Perceptions are formed with behaviors following communication. The leader needs to be aware of the shared perception of the follower for the message meaning to fully transmit and resonate with the follower (Zhang et al., 2020).

As organizations continue leadership development programs, promoting self-awareness for the entire team is crucial. Leadership development programs should continue to encourage self-awareness and self-development as they relate to communication; recognizing how followers perceive and hear the information is essential. Leader awareness of follower's perspectives and perceptions is a necessary piece of responsible transparency, and awareness is the link to reality (Brown et al., 2005).

### **Research question 2 results**

The second research question asked where the demarcation between sharing too much and not sharing enough is: Responsible transparency is about sharing the right amount

of information at the right time. Timing is one factor determining the line in the sand. Data and detail can be communicated too early or too soon. Readiness or preparation is essential. Relative to readiness, a leader should consider whether the organization is fully prepared for followers' reactions, including performance outcomes and the implications of the information on trust. Another consideration is whether the follower is ready to receive the information.

Based on the research and the literature, an organization's long-term goals and plan (i.e., vision, mission) must be shared. Such goals and plans need to relate to the individual follower, enabling the follower's readiness and improving the outcome of message receipt by the follower. The research indicates followers want accountability and responsibility. Accountability is associated with the start or source of the data (Jiang & Men, 2017; Walumbwa et al., 2008), and the leader is the source of the data. Thus followers need to hold leaders accountable for their respective words and actions relative to goals, planning, and implementation for positive leadership influence to occur (Bass, 1985; Avolio et al., 2004; Brown, 2012.). If both the leader and follower are unprepared for the information to be delivered and received, less than desired outcomes will occur.

### **Research question 3 results**

The third research question considered the factors needing to be considered between leader and follower. Trust is one factor and transparency is a precursor to trust. Trust between leader and follower and understanding transparency were key variables in

this analysis. Existing research demonstrates the benefits of leader-follower trust (Kim et al., 2018; Norman et al., 2010; Walumbwa et al., 2008). Among the original scholars around transparency and trust, Walumbwa et al. 2008 noted that leaders and followers have better trust when transparency exists. Trust is formed through elements of psychological safety (Edmondson, 2012) and organizational comfort. Leaders must intentionally build trust. Leaders' intentional focus on trust-building is a contributing factor to responsible transparency confirmed and indicated by this study.

The other factor to be considered is a mutual awareness of the leader and follower. Followers need to be able to create an understanding of their own needs. A concept of place impacts awareness. The place, too, is multi-dimensional. Where an individual falls within the hierarchy of the organization is one concept. The physical location of the leader is another aspect of place. Awareness, or mindfulness of the leader and follower, is the core factor of responsible transparency. If there is no mutual awareness or mindfulness, responsible transparency cannot take place.

### **Conclusion to research questions**

As introduced in this chapter, responsible transparency is impacted by multiple dimensions and bound by an internal and external dimension defined as "place." Through this research, a discovery made was that such a "place" is multi-dimensional. Still, such a "place" of an individual leader or follower is a physical and a mental state of awareness. The physical environment or location of the individual may alter a delivery or receipt of a message. COVID-19 impacted the working

“place” of many, altering message delivery and receipt mechanisms. Virtual meetings replaced meeting rooms, and the computer screen replaced human interaction.

Leaders practicing responsible transparency must remain mindful of the different environments impacting message receipt. The place also is the literal position of an individual within the organization and will impact the message. Ideally, every leader has followership who holds enough organizational comfort to share openly—e.g., “can’t think what I wouldn’t share with [them]” (F-K2). Many cultures within organizations today hold hierarchy versus follower needs as priority, and the result impacts what is shared and the transparency, as noted by a leader-follower who said, “I hate that our organizational ranking sometimes impacts my approach, but it is the reality of the situation” (LF-A1). Leaders again must be mindful this place may impact what is shared and prioritize follower perspective by creating organizational comfort and safety.

The parameters of the individual’s place affect factors of responsible transparency, and the formulary is all predicated on the place of the leader. It considers whether leaders are focused on the here and now of the follower, or if they are in a different place. Often, a person will ask, “Where are you or where are you at?” to gauge the presence of another. Another appropriate approach suggested, “I typically start by asking questions without telling” (L-F-B3). A mindset will alter perception and

action; therefore leaders needs to be truly mindful of their place and their followers' place.

### **Responsible transparency formulary framework**

Figure 13 is a graphical depiction culminating the findings specific to the responsible transparency formulary. The two inner circles represent leaders' and followers' internal dimensions. For responsible transparency to exist, the leader needs to be present and attuned to follower needs, and the follower needs to feel comfortable communicating these needs.

Authentic, transformational, and ethical leaders all lead based on their core values along with those of their teams. (Avolio et al., 2020; Northouse, 2019). The outside dimensions feeding into the core of the figure include

- The affective why
- The intentional leader
- Timing
- The responsible follower
- Organizational comfort



**Figure 13. Responsible Transparency Formulary Framework**

These leaders are functionally aware of themselves and their team. Leader awareness enables knowing what, when, and how to share information. Similarly, followers’ strong perceptions of these leaders’ authenticity and other values-based behaviors create more vital follower self-awareness. Through the mindfulness of followers, perceptions of respective leaders are improved, as well as mutual perceptions of (responsible) transparency: “My leadership team is just all aware of everything, and

they've actually, because of that, they've been actually able to support me in a very, um, constructive manner to where... it's very transparent" (L-F-P1). Mutual trust improves as a result of improved perceptions of transparency.

The intentional leader builds trust and focuses on the follower; more so, leaders practicing responsible transparency assure that followers are aware of their focus to build trust. One leader explained this as trying "to do it enough that he knows that he's always on my mind with that but not so much that it, it seems like an obligatory action every day, so keeping the value. And then, um, just paying attention to things that he likes and sending him little reminders, um, or paying attention to his pay, paying attention to his title, just keeping him whole" (L-F-L3). These leaders deliberate in authenticity and assuring actions and follow their words as one leader noted, saying,

I am aware that there is a fine line between professional content and personal. There is through a sense that, uh, generally speaking, um, my personal life is not that interesting so there isn't much I have to like deliberately to avoid saying. Um, so it- it feels like there- it doesn't... It blurs at times. But, um, generally, how I express who I am is, I think mostly, my actions (L-F-S3).

Perceptions are developed by actions and followed up by words, which form trust. One follower noted the significance of perception, saying, "I'd have to really think about my relationship with that person, how are they gonna receive it?" (F-C3). In the same organization, a follower noted the impact of the leader's actions, noting, "When I see people like (my boss) who invests a whole lot of her time and energy into

developing me and advocating for me and wanting to work with me that, uh, shows me how valued I am as a member of the team to her, a member of the organization to her” (F-J3).

Another factor in the final formula is the responsible follower—these followers need to be open and aware of themselves to communicate their needs, which are shared when individuals are comfortable with an organization, another dimension for the final formula. As one follower commented, “I share with my boss or what I share with my peers, it’s really person-by-person, how much I trust them, and how safe I feel with that level of vulnerability” (F-J3). One leader-follower summed up the “comfort” factor of the organization, saying, “When it comes to sharing information, giving people all of the details that I have on whatever the situation may be, to the extent that it’s going to help them, you know, do their job, be comfortable with the direction...” (L-F-B2). Being able to take risks and express needs is the key to organizational comfort. As a follower pointed out, “It’s a risk in those ways, but to me, when deliberately done and strategically done, the payoff is high... she’ll really flourish” (F-K3). Timing is also a piece of responsible transparency. The leader needs to be aware when the follower is ready to receive the information: “Like, that’s what I feel like my role is, is I’m gonna help you get rid of whatever barrier you’re facing, whether it’s with a customer, a teammate, somebody else. But I’ll only do it if you want me to. Like, I’m not gonna be that person that comes in and tries to clean everything up” (L-F-MJ3).

The delivery and content of the message is the final factor in the formulary. Both leaders and followers need to share the affective why. Said simply by one who is both a leader and follower, “What do they need to know to be productive?” (L-F-L3). There is a timing component, along with an acceptance piece of the formulary, built on trust. Timing, as one leader-follower claimed, is important because “things may be explained that can’t be explained at an earlier time, which ultimately comes down to readiness” (L-F-B3). Trust levels also impact readiness and timing. Being aware of when the recipient is ready to receive the information is essential.

All dimensions are by the boundary of “place.” Zhang et al. (2020) noted that leader mindfulness is a “boundary” (p. 3) condition in the relationships between follower mindfulness and perceived authentic leadership. The formula to responsible transparency impacts the relationship between leader and follower through trust manipulation based on the factors of the responsible transparency formulary. These formula dimensions impact the mindfulness state of the leader and follower, ultimately impacting organizational outcomes.

### ***Practical Application and Contributions***

Organizations have an opportunity to incorporate awareness and mindfulness practices within their leadership development programs. They should consider selecting and developing individuals with values-based leadership behaviors to maximize the benefits of responsible transparency and trust. Incorporating awareness

and mindfulness content within leadership communication training programs will provide stronger leader effectiveness and trust and implement responsible transparency practice.

### **Contributions**

The first contribution of this study relates to the revelation that organizations should encourage awareness of the factors impacting responsible transparency given its impact on trust and trust's positive impact on organizational outcomes. The second contribution relates to mindfulness relative to transparency given the growing literature on both topics.

Short-term interventions on awareness and mindfulness have had a significant impact on behaviors such as communication (Zhang et al. 2020). The third contribution is how this could add to the overall health of individuals and global organizations. Improving responsible transparency, and likewise decreasing irresponsible transparency, ultimately reduces stress levels of individuals and organizations. Further training for leaders and followers on mindfulness should enhance the awareness and effectiveness of values-based leadership.

### **Conclusions**

Findings suggest the participants recognized a shared definition of mindfulness and the impact of mindfulness on responsible transparency. Mindfulness is a mental state described as an awareness of present moment experience, including one's sensations,

while encouraging openness, curiosity, and acceptance (Stedham & Skaar, 2019). In essence, mindfulness was present when awareness emerged, and singular preconceived thoughts were not a distraction within leaders and followers. The vision for responsible transparency includes five surrounding dimensions previously described:

- The affective why
- Organizational comfort
- Timing
- Intentional leader
- Responsible follower

Such dimensions are impacted by the physical and cognitive place of the leader relative to the position of the followers. These dimensions all lead to place and have multiple dimensions and forms. Such dimensions range from a transitive description of the position (“to put”) to an attitude gesture (“high value is placed on”) to a home (“his place”) to a position (“her place and rank”), and thus “place” in this research has a similar meaning.

Findings suggest participants recognized a shared definition of mindfulness as a state of mind with features including open, non-judgmental awareness of a present moment experience, including one’s sensations (Stedham & Skaar, 2019) while encouraging openness, curiosity, and acceptance. In essence, mindfulness was present without getting caught up with singular preconceived thoughts.

If mindful leaders and followers are not present, it results in the opposite: irresponsible transparency. Irresponsible transparency is presenting too much information and causing stress and harm to the individuals and organization. Practicing responsible transparency not only benefits the individual and organization but also avoids unproductive behaviors.

### ***Recommendations for Future Research***

Given the current pandemic, this study was conducted solely through the video web-based program Zoom or web-based technologies, which excluded observations to any onsite or face-to-face interaction where additional insights may otherwise have been captured. In addition, most participants were working remotely from home at the time of the interview and may have resulted in alternative responses than would have occurred in the office, influencing the overall results. This also may have impacted a leader or follower's response relative to their place.

Second, three separate organizations were chosen; however, additional insights may have been captured through a more extensive study and sampling of organizations.

Further research is recommended on the impact of leader-follower mindfulness.

Given the difference in organizations, using large matrix organizations with a significant focus on position (i.e., place) may inform the analysis.

Further research is suggested on the concept of place to include all dimensions previously discussed. Further study also is encouraged to identify and measure organizations' specific benefits and impacts relative to leader-follower mindfulness and transparency.

## Appendix A: Participant Informed Consent

To: Potential Interview Participant  
From: Theresa Christian  
Subject: Informed Consent to Participate in Study

Dear: Insert the name of whoever is granting you permission to access participants

My name is Theresa Christian, and I am a Ph.D. student at Benedictine University. I am researching the topic of responsible transparency within organizations. I am particularly interested in developing a true formulary for responsible transparency and understanding the line between sharing too much and sharing too little and maximizing impact for the greater good. This research will add to the body of knowledge about Values-Driven leadership, the effect of perception, and trust. This research could potentially assist with a greater awareness of psychological safety within the follower and the leader.

Thank you for your willingness to participate in the interview. Your participation is voluntary. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer. If at any time you do not wish to continue with the interview, you may decline. Your time and involvement are profoundly appreciated. The entire interview will take approximately 30-45 minutes. To maintain the essence of your words for the research, I will record the information. At any time, you may request to see or hear the information I collect. I will call you within two days to set up a convenient time for the interview.

The interview will be recorded, and the interviewer will take notes. This is done for data analysis. The recording will be transcribed by the interviewer and kept confidential in a password-protected computer. All individual identification will be removed from the hard copy of the transcript. Participant identity and confidentiality will be concealed using coding procedures. For legal purposes, data will be transcribed on to a compact disc and transmitted to a Benedictine University faculty member for secure and ultimate disposal after a period of seven years. Dr. James Ludema is the Benedictine University faculty member who will secure and ultimately dispose of the information. His information is at the end of this form.

Excerpts from the interview may be included in the final dissertation report or other later publications. However, under no circumstances will your name or identifying characteristics appear in these writings. If, at a subsequent date, biographical data were relevant to a publication, a separate release form would be sent to you.

I would be grateful if you would sign this form on the line provided below to show that you have read and agree with the contents. Please return it by email to me at [thersawchristian@gmail.com](mailto:thersawchristian@gmail.com). An electronic signature is acceptable.

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Your electronic signature above

(If you have problems with the electronic signature, please call me at (773) 852 3384

This study is being conducted in part to fulfill requirements for my Ph.D. program, Values-Driven Leadership at Benedictine University in Lisle, Illinois.

The study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board of Benedictine University. The Chair of Benedictine University's Institutional Review Board is Dr. Alandra Devall. She can be reached at (630) 829 – 6295, and her email address is [adevall@ben.edu](mailto:adevall@ben.edu). The chairperson/advisor of this study is Dr. Gus Gustafson. He can be reached at (515) 577-0198 for further questions or concerns about the project/research.

Sincerely,

Theresa Christian  
Benedictine University

## Appendix B: Participant Letter

Dear Leader:

Thank you again for your time this week and your support. As follow up attached is the one-pager to send off to your teams. If you want anything changed, tweaked, etc please let me know. Below are the headlines of the project outlined within the one-pager.

### Research Goal:

The goal of my research is to provide a formulated definition of "responsible transparency" which ideally be used in developing leadership and teams. Think about how many times a day one hears the word "transparency". Leaders know trust and transparency go hand in hand. Leaders sometimes struggle with understanding where the line sits between sharing too much, or sharing too little, to maximize benefits for the greater good. This is what "responsible transparency" is all about.

### The "Ask":

Given transparency itself is multi-dimensional, the formula for "responsible transparency" needs to come from both the perspectives of leaders and their direct reports (the followers). I will need approximately eight-follower groups, ideally with cross-functional responsibility(s). I will interview both the leaders and their direct reports via Zoom for approximately 30-40 minutes. The interviews will be completely anonymous and confidential.

My contact information: [theresawchristian@gmail.com](mailto:theresawchristian@gmail.com)

I cannot say how much I truly appreciate your help and support, thank you! Again, let me know if you have any additional comments or concerns.

## Appendix C: Recruiting Flyer

March 26, 2021

|  
**Dear XX Leaders:**

I am a Ph.D. research student from Benedictine's Values-Based Leadership program, looking for better ways leaders (and their followers) can optimize communication environments for ultimate improvement in team effectiveness and outcomes.

Think about how many times a day you hear the word "transparency." Have you ever struggled in knowing where to draw the line (i.e., sharing too much or too little) when communicating with colleagues? My research aims to provide a formulated definition of "responsible transparency." Transparency itself is actually multidimensional: as you probably know, there is a bit more to transparency than just "the what" that is communicated. Therefore, participation from both a team leader and their respective followers (direct reports) is needed. This work will increase today's knowledge about Values-Driven leadership, the effect and impact of perception(s), and trust, in addition to providing the right formula for "responsible transparency."

My grateful "ask" is participation from the XX teams (leaders and their respective team members, direct reports) to take part in a 30-40 minute Zoom session to answer a series of questions. Ideally, I am looking for approximately eight leader-follower groups. Leaders will answer questions relative to their leadership styles, and followers will answer a similar series of questions related to communication and their leaders. The discussions will be a 1:1 conversation with myself and the leader (or follower). The meeting will be voluntary, and all participant identities will remain **confidential and completely anonymous**. Once I have received notice from a leader and their team members, a letter of informed consent will be sent to each participant, reinforcing the study's confidentiality, anonymity, and security. At any time, participants may request to see the information I have collected.

**How to participate:**

If you are willing to participate with your team, please contact me by **April 10:** [theresawchristian@gmail.com](mailto:theresawchristian@gmail.com). Within 48 hours, you will be contacted to set up an interview day and time based on your schedule, along with your respective team members. I am available as well to answer any questions or concerns. Thank you each for your time and consideration, and again am grateful for the help and participation.

Warmest Regards,

*Theresa W Christian*  
Theresa W Christian



## Appendix D: Leader Focused Main Questions

1. What does the word transparency mean to you?
2. How do you determine what is shared with your teams?
3. Describe how you let others know who you are as a person?
  - a. Are there times you present a “false” front to others? Why?
  - b. Do you admit your mistakes to others? Why?
  - c. If you admit a mistake do you think it is held against you? Can you give me an example?
4. Without being humble, please tell me about when one of your employees asked for help; what was it about the environment that made them feel comfortable coming to you?
5. Do you consider yourself transparent to your followers?
  - a. Do you openly share your feelings with others? How do you share?
  - b. When making decisions, do you seek to understand or validate? Please explain.
  - c. Can you give an example of a team member bringing up a problem or tough issue, and the resolution?
6. Tell me about a time you needed to make a decision regarding an employee/team member and making this decision would impact the overall team performance.
7. Describe how you are valued as a leader. Has there been ever a time one of your team members diluted your efforts?
8. Can you tell me about a time that you encouraged a team member to take a risk?
9. How does your team know the end goal of a project? Describe how they will be rewarded for their work.
  - a. How is feedback given?
  - b. How do you help others find meaning in their work?

## Appendix E: Follower Focused Main Questions

1. What does the word transparency mean to you?
2. How do you determine what is shared with your teams and or leader?
3. Describe how you let others know who you are as a person.
  - a. Are there times you present a “false” front to your peers or manager? Why?
  - b. Do you admit your mistakes to others? How and why?
  - c. If you admit a mistake, do you think it is held against you? Please explain.
4. Tell me about a time you had a tough issue or problem. What did you do?
  - a. If you need help with something, what do you do? Describe your actions.
5. Describe your risk-taking. Are you able to take calculated risks that make sense for the business? Please share an example.
6. Have you ever felt your actions were compromised? Please explain.
7. Describe how you are valued as an employee.

## Appendix F: Full Code Book

Questions	Codes	
Questions	Initial Codes	Description
Describe how you let others know who you are as a person: If you admit a mistake to you think it is held against you, give me an example?	Actions Compromised	Actions Compromised-/Actions Held Against
Describe how you let others know who you are as a person: If you admit a mistake to you think it is held against you? Give me an example?	Actions that have been held against_(admitting mistakes)	Actions Compromised-/Actions Held Against
Describe how you let others know who you are as a person: Do you admit mistakes?	Admit mistakes	Does the leader / follower admit mistakes (authentic-ethical leadership)
Do you admit mistakes?	Authentic Person	True honest self
Do you consider yourself transparent to your followers?	Being transparent with employees	Transparency with employees
Do you consider yourself transparent to your followers?	Being transparent with followers	Does a person feel they are transparent with their peer or follower group
How does your team know the end goal of a project? Describe how they will be rewarded for their work.	Communicating end goal	How does a leader communicate accomplishment
How does your team know the end goal of a project? Describe how they will be rewarded for their work.	Compensation	rewards
Do you consider yourself transparent to your followers? What does the word transparency mean?	Complete Honesty	Displaying honesty
Multiple	Credibility	Building credibility-trust
Multiple	Culture_Hierarchy_psychological safety	Do people feel safe to communicate (does the organizational culture support)
How do you determine what is shared with your teams? Tell me about a time you needed to make a decision regarding an employee/team member and making this decision would impact the overall team performance.	Decision making process	How are decisions determined
Multiple	Demographics	
How do you determine what is shared with your teams? Tell me about a time you needed to make a decision regarding an employee/team member; making this decision would impact the	Determining what information is shared	Process for what information is shared

overall team performance		
What does the word transparency mean to you? Do you consider yourself transparent?	Disposition Transparency	Definition
Multiple	Emotional Transparency	Showing Emotion
Multiple	Emotional Support	Showing Emotion
Multiple	Expanded Scope	Transparency definition
Multiple	EQ	Emotional Quotient
Multiple	Faith and Trust	Trust and Faith topic
Multiple	Fear	Topics of Fear
How do you find meaning in work?	Find Meaning in their work	How do leaders help followers find meaning
Tell me about a time a follower asked for help.	Follower asking for help	Do followers feel comfortable asking for help (psychological safety*)
How is feedback given?	Giving feedback	How do leaders give feedback/is there reception (transformational leadership)
Multiple	Horizontal	Positions in organization
What does the word transparency mean to you? Do you consider yourself transparent?	Individualized treatment of transparency	Individual definition of transparency
Multiple	Job description	Job Description
Multiple	Knowing Expectation-leads to trust	How are expectations set
Multiple	Lateral	Place in organization relative to peer
Multiple	Leader Position	Place in organization relative to subordinate
Multiple	Leaders Reveal Who they are	How is leader show who they are (authentic leadership)
Multiple	Leadership Conflict	Conflicts amongst leadership and or subordinate
Multiple	Level of access of information	Information access
How to you determine what is shared? When making decisions, do you seek to understand or validate?	making decisions	How to leaders make decisions
Multiple	medium of communication	How is communication transmitted
Multiple	open communication	How is communication perceived
Multiple	personality traits	Traits of individuals
Are there times you present a false front to others?	Presenting False Front	False Front: Are there times
Multiple	Privacy concerns	Issue of privacy
How do you determine what is shared?	Decision Process: what information is shared	How does a person determine what they share
Multiple	psychological safety	Trust topics
Multiple	psychological issue	Confidence or trust issues

Multiple	recognizing time spent on projects	Time spent on projects/priorities
Multiple	self insight	reflection
Multiple	servant leadership	Servant leadership
Do you openly share feelings?	Sharing emotions with followers	Showing
Multiple	Showing respect	Is their respect within organizations
How is feedback given?	specifics in feedback	Feedback
Do you take/promote risks?	Taking Risks	How does leader/follower take risks (are they comfortable taking risks)
How are you valued?	valued by organization	How people see value
Multiple	verbalizing praise	How praise is given
Multiple	vertical reporting upward	Positions in organization
Multiple	Vertical reporting downward	Positions in organization
Do you admit mistakes?	What admitting mistakes do	Impact of mistakes
What does the word transparency mean to you? Do you consider yourself transparent?	What does Transparency do	What is the impact of transparency
What does the word transparency mean to you? Do you consider yourself transparent?	What does Transparency mean	Leader and or follower definition of transparency
Multiple	Work Experience	Experiences

## Appendix G: Organizational Level 1 Codes

Leader / follower	Page	Line	Comment scope	Codes
L-F-C3	6	8	And when I talked to her last week, she's like, "Thank you so much. This has been so helpful. I really appreciate it." You know, during [00:14:30] a conversation she shared a lot of very personal things that were going on, uh, health wise, family wise. She's got, you know, a family member that's getting married this year, which is gonna consume a lot of her time.	Follower asking for help
L-F-J3	8	17	So, I might just send them a thank you note in the mail, or a card that's like, "Wow, you're amazing." Or, I'll do a... I'm- I'm [00:22:30] kinda cheesy, I'm super cheesy, I'm a theater person, and I sing in a band, I- I do videos, right?	Medium of communication
L-F-C3	6	8	And when I talked to her last week, she's like, "Thank you so much. This has been so helpful. I really appreciate it." You know, during [00:14:30] a conversation she shared a lot of very personal things that were going on, uh, health wise, family wise. She's got, you know, a family member that's getting married this year, which is gonna consume a lot of her time	Psychological safety
L-F-B3	5	16	Yes. Yesterday.	Actions compromised
L-F-B3	5	18	so we were rolling out a new time in labor process. Um, which HR owns. And through a different stream of communication, I discovered a peer in another business area was communicating with the executives inaccurate information. And why? I didn't know why. So, I had set up a call with this individual and- and my approach again was very collaborative, hey, this came across my desk. I think we need to do a better [00:15:00] job of partnering because some of the information is inaccurate. Um, and that became very- it became a debate, because that individual became argumentative which I think I probably responded to poorly as well. Uh. So, uh, uh, ultimately, through a series of emails and conversations, I think we're gonna end it in the right place, but it was simply this peer operating in a lane that they didn't- they didn't need to. Um, [00:15:30] and it created a lot of- it created a lot of confusion amongst our business partners, uh, and that was my source of frustration because it generated a bunch of questions of, I'm confused, you said this, but now I'm hearing this.	Actions compromised

## Appendix H: Level 2 Codes

Leader / follower	Page	Line	Comment scope	Codes	
L-F-C3	6	8	And when I talked to her last week, she's like, "Thank you so much. This has been so helpful. I really appreciate it." You know, during [00:14:30] a conversation she shared a lot of very personal things that were going on, uh, health wise, family wise. She's got, you know, a family member that's getting married this year, which is gonna consume a lot of her time.	Follower asking for help	<b>Unmasking:</b> Psychological Safety: Admit Mistakes: Followers asking for help:
L-F-J3	8	17	So, I might just send them a thank you note in the mail, or a card that's like, "Wow, you're amazing." Or, I'll do a... I'm-I'm [00:22:30] kinda cheesy, I'm super cheesy, I'm a theater person, and I sing in a band, I-I do videos, right?	Medium of communication	<b>Decision Marking:</b> Determining What is shared
L-F-C3	6	8	And when I talked to her last week, she's like, "Thank you so much. This has been so helpful. I really appreciate it." You know, during [00:14:30] a conversation she shared a lot of very personal things that were going on, uh, health wise, family wise. She's got, you know, a family member that's getting married this year, which is gonna consume a lot of her time	Psychological safety	<b>Unmasking:</b> Psychological Safety: Admit Mistakes: Followers asking for help:
L-F-B3	5	16	Yes. Yesterday.	Actions compromised	<b>Actions Compromised- /Actions Held Against</b>
L-F-B3	5	18	so we were rolling out a new time in labor process. Um, which HR owns. And through a different stream of communication, I discovered a peer in another business area was communicating with the executives inaccurate information. And why? I didn't know why. So, I had set up a call with this individual and- and my approach again was very collaborative, hey, this came across my desk. I think we need to do a better [00:15:00] job of partnering because some of the information is inaccurate. Um, and that became very- it became a debate, because that individual became argumentative which I think I probably responded to poorly as well. Uh. So, uh, uh, ultimately, through a series of emails and conversations, I think we're gonna end it in the right place, but it was simply this peer operating in a lane that they didn't- they didn't need to. Um, [00:15:30] and it created a lot of- it created a lot of confusion amongst our business partners, uh, and that was my source of frustration because it generated a bunch of questions of, I'm confused, you said this, but now I'm hearing this.	Actions compromised	<b>Actions Compromised- /Actions Held Against</b>

F-C3	5	29	I don't know that my, my actions were compromised	Actions compromised	Actions Compromised- /Actions Held Against
F-C3	5	29	I mean, you know, we're, we're in the space where we talk a lot about diversity and inclusion. And I think that there are times when, not my actions, but I, I just, I don't think that they're shut down.	Actions compromised	Actions Compromised- /Actions Held Against
F-C3	5	32	I just think that sometimes people want to stifle some of the things that we may wanna do, um, [00:13:00] or the actions that we might wanna take in that space, um, because they don't necessarily feel we're all ready for it, or they're not ready for it as a leader.	Actions compromised	Actions Compromised- /Actions Held Against
F-M3	7	19	I-I just dealt with it. But I think some of these aspects of that roll out, um because of the switch in ownership and um, my intent with some of the um, communications um, some of the changes, was to do it in a way that was I what I interpreted was simple. Um and then once it got pretty much done and rolled out it was not interpreted as simple at all. Um and was met with a lot of um, pushback.	Actions compromised	Actions Compromised- /Actions Held Against

## Appendix I: Frequencies of Level 2 Codes

Org 1	Totals
Actions Compromised-/Actions Held Against	163
Unmasking: Psychological Safety: Admit Mistakes: Followers asking for help:	599
Intentional Leader: Demonstrating Value: Praise and Comp: Responsible-Authentic Leader	4
Decision Marking: Determing What is shared	342
Emotional Formula: Trust: Acceptance: Belonging	53
Transparency: What does it do	74
Authentic Self	30
Finding Meaning	19
Horizontal-Structure-Position-Experience	98

Org 2	Totals
Actions Compromised-/Actions Held Against	127
Unmasking: Psychological Safety: Admit Mistakes: Followers asking for help:	483
Intentional Leader: Demonstrating Value: Praise and Comp: Responsible-Authentic Leader	
Decision Marking: Determing What is shared	367
Emotional Formula: Trust: Acceptance: Belonging	38
Transparency: What does it do	103
Authentic Self	45
Finding Meaning	37
Horizontal-Structure-Position-Experience	105

Org 3	Totals
Actions Compromised-/Actions Held Against	116
Unmasking: Psychological Safety: Admit Mistakes: Followers asking for help:	543
Intentional Leader: Demonstrating Value: Praise and Comp	42
Decision Marking: Determing What is shared	269
Emotional Formula: Trust: Acceptance: Belonging	42
Transparency: What does it do	97
Authentic Self	21
Finding Meaning	33
Horizontal-Structure-Position-Experience	47

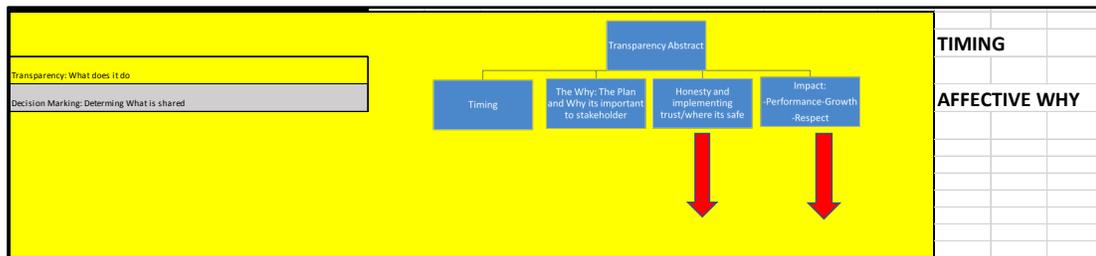
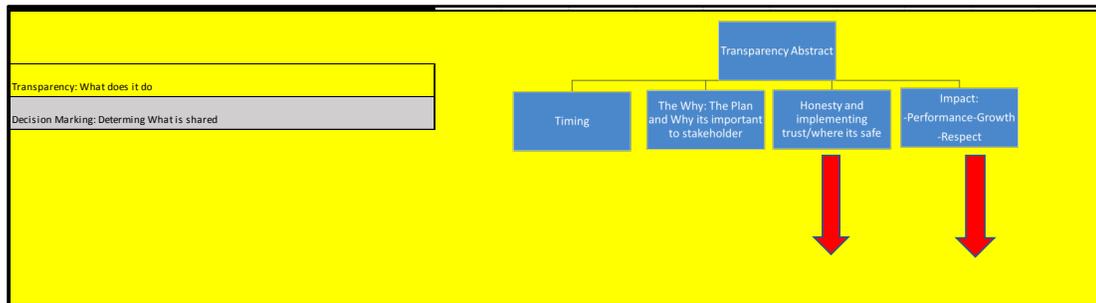
## Appendix J: Evolution of Key Themes

	Totals
<b>Unmasking: Psychological Safety: Admit Mistakes: Followers asking for help:</b>	1625
Decision Marking: Determing What is shared	978
Actions Compromised-/Actions Held Against	406
Transparency: What does it do	274
Horizontally-Structure-Position-Experience	250
Emotional Formula: Trust: Acceptance: Belonging	133
Authentic Self	96
Finding Meaning	89
Intentional Leader: Demonstrating Value: Praise and Comp: Responsible-Authentic Leader	46

Org 1	Totals
Actions Compromised-/Actions Held Against	163
<b>Unmasking: Psychological Safety: Admit Mistakes: Followers asking for help:</b>	599
Intentional Leader: Demonstrating Value: Praise and Comp: Responsible-Authentic Leader	4
Decision Marking: Determing What is shared	342
Emotional Formula: Trust: Acceptance: Belonging	53
Transparency: What does it do	74
Authentic Self	30
Finding Meaning	19
Horizontally-Structure-Position-Experience	98

# Appendix K: Themes & Dimensions

Actions Compromised-/Actions Held Against
<b>Unmasking:</b> Psychological Safety: Admit Mistakes: Followers asking for help:
Intentional Leader: Demonstrating Value: Praise and Comp: Responsible-Authentic Leader
Decision Marking: Determing What is shared
Transparency: What does it do
Authentic Self
Finding Meaning
Horizontal-Structure-Position-Experience







# Appendix L: Triangulation

```
GMT20210725-131724_Recording.transcript.txt - Notepad
File Edit Format View Help
00:32:16.620 --> 00:32:25.860
Gus Gustafson: You those you gotta write at that principle, this you know I am so so so delighted that, I think, to me, I was your idea to pull the group together.

240
00:32:26.730 --> 00:32:33.780
Gus Gustafson: One is since the three of you are all doing really similar methodologies there's so much to be learned across the board to is.

241
00:32:34.500 --> 00:32:41.100
Gus Gustafson: I hope, each one of you have heard something for one another already just today, and I certainly learned a ton on Thursday to.

242
00:32:41.520 --> 00:32:46.170
Gus Gustafson: wear a question that one of you has or a finding of one of you has applies to all three of you.

243
00:32:46.860 --> 00:33:01.170
Gus Gustafson: This is this is triangulation of the data so that's another you know something else that we weave into your methodology section, you know, in addition to coding by myself, I had a group of other.

244
00:33:01.710 --> 00:33:16.590
Gus Gustafson: scholar practitioners that helped me, you know not only make meaning from the data in the coding process, but I would hear an Aha with something that they were doing with theirs, that would be applicable to mine and it helped me.

245
00:33:17.610 --> 00:33:25.000
Gus Gustafson: It helped provide context and it helped me provide language around something that I was, I was struggling to get myself or something like that.

246
00:33:25.380 --> 00:33:32.340
Gus Gustafson: You actually leave this in and that just that makes your day even that much stronger, the more people that look at it and have insight into.

247
00:33:32.790 --> 00:33:45.330
Gus Gustafson: Helping you know make meaning from actually the better, but nobody wants to ask their friends to sit down and do what you guys just did coding right, I know my mom wouldn't do that for me um.

248
00:33:45.570 --> 00:33:46.140
Gus Gustafson: But.

249
00:33:46.200 --> 00:33:51.060
```



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