

Theses and Dissertations

---

2023

## Give and you may receive: examining transparent leadership through the lens of leader-follower relationships

Edward J. Piecek  
epiecek@comcast.net

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.pepperdine.edu/etd>



Part of the [Leadership Studies Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Piecek, Edward J., "Give and you may receive: examining transparent leadership through the lens of leader-follower relationships" (2023). *Theses and Dissertations*. 1456.  
<https://digitalcommons.pepperdine.edu/etd/1456>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by Pepperdine Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Pepperdine Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [bailey.berry@pepperdine.edu](mailto:bailey.berry@pepperdine.edu).

Pepperdine University  
Graziadio School of Business

GIVE AND YOU MAY RECEIVE: EXAMINING TRANSPARENT LEADERSHIP  
THROUGH THE LENS OF LEADER-FOLLOWER RELATIONSHIPS

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
DOCTOR OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

by

Edward J. Piecek

August 2023

Kevin S. Groves, Ph.D. – Dissertation Chair

This dissertation, written by

Edward J. Piecek

under the guidance of a Dissertation Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the Pepperdine Graziadio Business School in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

Doctoral Dissertation Committee:

Kevin S. Groves, Ph.D., Supervisor and Chairperson

Ann E. Feyerherm, Ph.D., Secondary Advisor

Gretchen Vogelgesang Lester, Ph.D., External Reviewer

© Copyright by Edward J. Piecek 2023

All Rights Reserved

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>LIST OF TABLES .....</b>	<b>VII</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES .....</b>	<b>VIII</b>
<b>DEDICATION.....</b>	<b>IX</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....</b>	<b>X</b>
<b>VITA.....</b>	<b>XI</b>
<b>ABSTRACT.....</b>	<b>XII</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
OVERVIEW .....	1
PROBLEM ADDRESSED .....	4
RESEARCH QUESTION(S) .....	6
SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROPOSED RESEARCH .....	7
<b>CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW.....</b>	<b>9</b>
TRANSPARENCY, DEFINITION AND BACKGROUND.....	9
<i>Overview of Research Evidence</i> .....	15
<i>Critical Assessment of Evidence</i> .....	17
LEADERSHIP THEORY .....	19
AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP, DEFINITION AND BACKGROUND .....	20
<i>Overview of Research Evidence</i> .....	22
<i>Critical Assessment of Evidence</i> .....	25
TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP, DEFINITION AND BACKGROUND.....	26
<i>Overview of Research Evidence</i> .....	27
<i>Critical Assessment of Evidence</i> .....	29

<b>CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS .....</b>	<b>31</b>
OVERVIEW .....	31
RESEARCH DESIGN AND APPROACH.....	33
<i>Study Design</i> .....	33
<i>Study Population and Sampling</i> .....	33
<i>Data Collection Methods and Instruments</i> .....	34
<i>Data Analysis Methods</i> .....	35
<i>Measures or Operationalization</i> .....	35
<b>CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS .....</b>	<b>36</b>
DATA ANALYSIS OVERVIEW .....	36
FINDINGS OVERVIEW .....	36
DATA ANALYSIS METHODS.....	38
PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS.....	42
RESULTS.....	42
FINDINGS.....	43
TRANSPARENT LEADER CHARACTERISTICS.....	46
<i>Leader Interpersonal Skills</i> .....	47
<i>Leader Personality Traits</i> .....	53
TRANSPARENT LEADER BEHAVIORS .....	57
<i>Leader Information Exchange</i> .....	58
<i>Leader Relationship Building</i> .....	62
<i>Leader Relational Transparency</i> .....	65
POTENTIAL MODERATING VARIABLES .....	72
<i>Context – Individual Level</i> .....	72
<i>Context – Organizational Level</i> .....	79
POTENTIAL MEDIATING VARIABLE .....	86

FOLLOWER OUTCOMES .....	89
<i>Follower Personal Impact</i> .....	90
<i>Follower Professional Impact</i> .....	94
<i>Follower Work Engagement</i> .....	98
TRANSPARENT LEADERSHIP .....	99
TRANSPARENT LEADERSHIP MODEL (TLM) .....	101
<b>CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION .....</b>	<b>106</b>
OVERVIEW .....	106
IMPLICATIONS FOR ADVANCING THEORY .....	114
IMPLICATIONS FOR BUSINESS PRACTICE .....	123
LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH .....	125
CONCLUSION .....	128
<b>REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>129</b>
<b>APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL LETTER .....</b>	<b>145</b>
<b>APPENDIX B: RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS .....</b>	<b>146</b>
WRITTEN RECRUITMENT LETTER.....	146
INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM.....	147
INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS .....	151

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Definitions of Transparency .....	9
Table 2. Methodological Fit of Research Plan.....	32



## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Literature Map .....	19
Figure 2. Comparisons of Dimensions.....	20
Figure 3. Structural Model with Nine Hypotheses .....	24
Figure 4. Structural Model with Nine Hypotheses .....	25
Figure 5. Structural Model with Six Hypotheses.....	29
Figure 6. Transparent Leadership Data Structure .....	41
Figure 7. Transparent Leader Characteristics .....	47
Figure 8. Transparent Leader Behaviors.....	58
Figure 9. Potential Moderating Variables .....	72
Figure 10. Potential Mediating Variable.....	86
Figure 11. Follower Outcomes .....	90
Figure 12. Transparent Leadership Model (TLM).....	102

## **DEDICATION**

First and foremost, I want to thank my family for their love and support over the past three years, particularly my wife, Roxanne, and our three children, Shannon, Meghan, and Christian. I really appreciated that you did not question why I would want to spend three years pursuing a doctoral degree and instead offered your enduring support. Roxanne put up with me working in my office for hours at a time, maybe days, and I could not have devoted the time needed to successfully complete the DBA program without her support. Thank you, Rox.

This dissertation unexpectedly turned out to be a story I needed to tell, reflecting on four decades of service in non-profit healthcare and the US Air Force. I was very pleased those similar thoughts and experiences came out in my conversations with the mission-oriented leaders I interviewed. I am so grateful that I had an opportunity to complete this dissertation, and my family truly helped make it a reality.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I have so many people to acknowledge that generously offered their time to make the completion of my dissertation possible. I will do my best to thank everyone appropriately.

First, I would like to sincerely thank my dissertation committee for their guidance and support over the past two years. Dr. Kevin Groves, my dissertation supervisor, whose amazing expertise in organizational behavior, guidance, and support has been so important to me in my DBA journey. Without him, completing this dissertation simply would not have been possible. Dr. Ann Feyerherm, my secondary advisor, has been the expert I have turned to for qualitative research guidance since I took her class in my first year in the DBA program. Her teaching resonated with me from the start and gave me the confidence to take on a full qualitative study for my research. I met Dr. Gretchen Lester, my external reviewer, when I interviewed two scholars as part of a class assignment during my first year in the DBA program. I really enjoyed reading her academic article on leader transparency, one of my favorites in my literature review, and her work has been cited more than a couple of times in my dissertation. I was very happy when she accepted my invitation to be part of my dissertation committee.

I would also like to acknowledge the Pepperdine DBA faculty who taught us how to conduct meaningful research, to “trust the process,” and, in fact, how to be a scholar. Thank you.

To my fellow 2020 cohort members, let’s just say you exceeded expectations. Thank you for being on this DBA journey with me.

Finally, I would like to express my appreciation to everyone who supported me from start to finish, helping make this dissertation a reality. From Jen and Christine, who wrote professional reference letters to allow me to get into the DBA program, to all the wonderful non-profit healthcare leaders who selflessly gave their time to share their stories with me. Thank you.

## VITA

My professional career can be summarized by describing me as a longtime non-profit healthcare leader and Air Force officer. I have worked with many wonderful people in mission-driven healthcare in the areas of revenue cycle and project management. My military logistics career has taken me across the world and helped me reach my goal of making a difference and “doing something bigger than myself.”

I most recently fulfilled the role of senior project manager at Providence St Joseph Health, a large, regional non-profit Catholic healthcare system serving seven states across the western US. In that role, I coached many executives and other senior leaders on the use of lean project planning principles and concepts while leading multiple, high-value process improvement/strategic initiatives with organization-wide impact. I earned Lean Six Sigma Black Belt and Project Manager Professional certifications during that time. I previously served as a healthcare executive at Group Health Cooperative, a medium, regional non-profit Health Maintenance Organization purchased by Kaiser Permanente in 2017, with my last role leading Specialty Services Revenue Cycle operations for the entire organization. A retired Air Force logistics officer, I served on active duty and in the Air Force Reserves and Air National Guard. I recently completed my DBA with Pepperdine University and previously earned an MBA from Golden Gate University and a BBA from the University of Minnesota - Duluth.

Ready for a new challenge, I took my energy and drive to the role of being a practitioner-scholar, devoting the last three years to a new adventure of exploring leadership theory and transparent leadership. Human behavior has intrigued me since taking my first psychology class as a college freshman. Reflecting on the Pepperdine DBA program, it has been a challenging and worthwhile journey. I appreciated the opportunity.

## ABSTRACT

Transparency is a term often used to describe a solution to many organizational problems and a fundamental quality that employees seek from their leaders, yet its definition and application to leadership theory remain unclear. This study adopted a grounded theory approach to examining transparent leadership, using semi-structured interviews to explore transparent leader behaviors across multiple contexts. The sample included 25 mid-level leaders working for six non-profit healthcare organizations in the western US. Based on analysis of interview responses, the results revealed a dynamic, reciprocal transparent leader-follower relationship distinct from existing leadership theories. As the first known empirical study of transparent leadership, this research contributes a new multidimensional Transparent Leadership Model (TLM) and definition for this emerging theory: A leader's intentional and reciprocal sharing of timely and relevant information with followers, and genuine relationship-building that cultivates follower trust and results in follower perceptions of strengthened personal value and meaningful work. The TLM comprises distinct leader characteristics (interpersonal skills, personality traits) that enable leader behaviors (information exchange, relationship building, relational transparency) to positively influence the leader-follower relationship. The results illustrate that several contextual factors moderate the leader-follower relationship at the individual (remote work, position level, length of relationship) and organizational (communication, culture, environment) levels. The TLM posits that follower trust mediates the relationship between transparent leader behaviors and multiple follower outcomes (personal value, meaningful work, performance, effort, engagement). The study highlights transparent leadership's value in addressing contemporary challenges faced by today's leaders and offers a series of recommendations for business practice.

*Keywords:* Transparency, leadership, transparent leader, relationship, follower trust

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### Overview

Transparency is an emerging topic in academic and popular literature and our society in general. It is often shared as a solution for leader and organizational problems, such as corruption, ethical lapses, accountability, and improved compliance with legal requirements (de Fine & Naurin, 2022; Essandoh et al., 2017; Estlund, 2011; Parris et al., 2016; Pozen, 2020). In the organizational setting, the perception of transparency by stakeholders is associated with positive organizational outcomes, such as increased trust, engagement, and performance (Alessandro et al., 2021; Shamir & Yehezkel, 2023; Vogelgesang & Lester, 2009). Stakeholders include those internal to the organization, such as leaders and followers, and those external to the organization, such as society and the greater public (Essandoh et al., 2017).

Schnackenberg and Tomlinson (2016) define transparency as “the perceived value of intentionally shared information from a sender” (p. 1788). Transparency is typically seen as a critical element of knowledge sharing such that its increased presence can result in improved awareness, coherence, and comprehensibility of information shared between two or more parties (Pagano & Roell, 1996). It also is often cited as essential to the trust that stakeholders place in organizations, although a clear understanding of the meaning and importance of transparency has yet to emerge in the leadership literature (Schnackenberg & Tomlinson, 2016).

Interest in transparency has risen due to distrust of corporations, social media visibility, and the increased availability of information (Alton, 2017; Garcia-Sanchez et al., 2020; Kavakli, 2021). It is important to consumers and employees alike. If a company shows that it has nothing to hide and can help consumers make better purchasing decisions, it likely will be chosen over a competitor that keeps its information secret. Most businesses have at least one social media

profile, with nearly 90% of companies now using social media marketing to engage with their customers (Alton, 2017), a world that is always active and available to most consumers. In the information age, consumers have grown accustomed to having information immediately available to them, and those expectations put pressure on businesses to provide as much information as possible, as openly as possible, to help avoid consumer suspicions.

Measuring transparency, which is a critical part of empirically revealing its instrumental value as well as the construct's multidimensionality, has proven to be extremely elusive (Bernstein, 2017). As interest in transparency has risen, so have the number of empirical studies that have adopted various measures in areas such as corporate ethics and government transparency (Alessandro et al., 2021; Grimmelikhuijsen et al., 2021; Kim & Lee, 2012), and they have advanced knowledge of the construct in many fundamental ways (Schnackenberg et al., 2020). However, transparency measures have been developed in the absence of consideration of the potentially multiple dimensions of the construct, typically because existing scales of measurement were developed before studies that address theoretical dimensions and boundary conditions of transparency. Integrity, respect for others, and openness (Rawlins, 2009), as well as the frequency of information disclosure (Albu & Flyverbom, 2019) and organizational communication (Kim, 2009), are examples of measures used for transparency.

The concept of transparent leadership is also not well understood, yet it is starting to gain the attention of the popular press and scholars (Healy & Serafeim, 2019; Hong & Ji, 2022). Research in leadership studies suggests that transparent leadership behavior includes the sharing of relevant information with employees, being open to giving and receiving feedback, and being forthright about motives and reasons behind decisions (Ji & Hong, 2022; Vogelgesang & Lester, 2009; Yi et al., 2017). Further, authentic leadership is a number of leader behaviors that advance

positive psychological capacities and a positive ethical climate to encourage the four dimensions of greater self-awareness, an internalized moral perspective, balanced processing of information, and relational transparency (Gardner et al., 2005; Jiang & Men, 2017; Walumbwa et al., 2008). Authentic leadership's dimension of relational transparency emphasizes that trust is achieved through a leader's self-disclosure, information sharing, and self-expression. For instance, leaders can build the foundation of a trusting relationship with followers by sharing timely information on the latest internal developments for an organizational restructure or how and why decisions were made on selecting a recent marketing initiative. Leadership communication literature suggests that leaders should be transparent when communicating their opinions in order to be perceived as genuine (Yim, 2019). Leader transparency can also help build up a reservoir of goodwill that can help them successfully navigate through more challenging times (Clark, 2012). Yet, even with all the potential benefits of transparency, it is essential that all stakeholders consider and understand the possible implications of greater transparency to mitigate any risks and ensure that the benefits outweigh the costs (Granados & Gupta, 2013).

Especially in today's business environment, it is time for transparency to take center stage. In light of corporate scandals such as the collapse of Enron, Volkswagen's manipulation of emission tests, and Wells Fargo's creation of fraudulent client accounts, as well as leaks and whistleblowing incidents like the Snowden and WikiLeaks cases, increased transparency in business is needed to meet the demands of critical stakeholders for increased openness in corporate and governmental affairs (Albu & Flyverbom, 2019; Healy & Serafim, 2019). Although some time has passed since Vogelgesang and Lester (2009) made the following statement, their viewpoint still appears to be very relevant: "For all its topical interest,



transparency has yet to be operationalized by a specific set of behaviors that can easily be applied to leader development” (p. 252).

### **Problem Addressed**

Many of today’s business leaders lack transparency in their everyday dealings with customers, employees, board members, and other stakeholders (Alton, 2017; Kaplan, 2018; Lavoie, 2015; Prieto-Rodriguez & Vecco, 2021; Vogelgesang & Lester, 2009). A lack of transparency can result in frequent absenteeism, higher turnover, and increased dissatisfaction (Vogelgesang & Lester, 2009). For example, the improper disclosure by Boeing leadership to regulators and other stakeholders that contributed to deadly commercial airline crashes in 2018 and 2019 and the deaths of over 300 people (Gelles, 2019) illustrates the potentially devastating consequences when there is a lack of transparency. Trust in the leader, role engagement, creativity and innovation, increased performance, and a reduction in deviant behavior are some of the follower outcomes that can be anticipated with the presence of transparent leadership (Albu & Flyverbom, 2019; Vogelgesang & Lester, 2009). If we know that transparency is important, why does leading transparently appear to be so challenging? Admittedly, leaders face many obstacles in being transparent, particularly regarding proprietary information, legal issues, or keeping outside influences from interfering with work. The current workplace environment, as well as evolving follower needs, demands that leaders place a stronger emphasis on transparency in their daily interactions with followers, the disclosure of information with stakeholders, and organizational decision-making (Schroth, 2019).

Current megatrends impacting organizations in the areas of human and technology development further underscore the current and future need for transparency in leadership. The continued improvement of communication technology and the emergence of remote work

arrangements for employees can reasonably be expected to significantly impact all organizations and leader-follower relationships (Carsten et al., 2022; Norman et al., 2020). These changes leave the question of how they will impact leader and employee relationships and what leadership strategy will be the most effective moving forward (Galanti et al., 2021; Sull et al., 2020). The rapid improvement of technology to provide robust and reliable meeting solutions for remote team collaboration and communication (e.g., Zoom, Microsoft Teams) appears to have impacted the frequency and the actual need for in-person meetings (Bernstein et al., 2020; Morrison, 2021; Reed & Allen, 2021). Before the recent fundamental transitions to the nature of work and organizations, the quality and frequency of information sharing at higher levels of the organization have been facilitated by the shorter physical distances between leaders and employees. The increased emergence of effective meeting solutions raises the question of whether that frequency of communication will continue to be the case and how leader-follower relationships must evolve to reflect shared values around transparency.

The COVID-19 pandemic quickly moved a large number of employees out of the office to a remote working environment, creating what is believed to be a new dynamic between leader and employee (Brynjolfsson et al., 2020; Dubey & Tripathi, 2020; Galanti et al., 2021). The swift and sudden change in the work environment for employees moving from a traditional office environment to working remotely has been unprecedented in our lifetime. As such, leaders and their teams have had to behave differently to make the transition successfully. From social distancing, restrictions in movement, and increased dependence on new technology to do our work, our personal and working environments have rapidly changed (Berdejo-Espinola et al., 2021; Galanti et al., 2021; Gibson, 2020). Accordingly, leaders must continue to adapt and transform themselves to be effective leaders for the growing remote and hybrid workforce to

benefit from the increased employee productivity, reduced attrition, and access to a global talent market that these arrangements have proven to deliver. This reality is despite the recent trend of some organizations to return to traditional in-person work models due to their struggles in fostering strong communication, collaboration, and team bonding (Tsipursky, 2023). This study examines how leaders engaging in behaviors that cultivate transparency is associated with leadership effectiveness and follower success.

### **Research Question(s)**

Based on these organizational and leadership challenges, this study will address the following research questions (a) What are the primary behaviors that comprise transparent leadership?; (b) How does transparent leadership influence follower attitudes?; (c) How is the relationship between transparent leadership and follower attitudes impacted by follower role/status or place in organization?; and (d) How is the relationship between transparent leadership and follower attitudes impacted by virtual or distributed contexts?

The primary behaviors that are believed to comprise transparent leadership have yet to be identified in the literature, and it is expected that those behaviors may contribute to building a foundation for a new leadership model. Determining how transparent leadership may influence follower attitudes and associated outcomes is expected to further our understanding of the relationship between transparent leaders and their followers. Discovering how the transparent leader-follower relationship is impacted by the physical proximity of followers to their direct leaders and the organizational headquarters may provide insight into how the leadership approach for such followers might need to vary. Further, discovering how a virtual or distributed context impacts the transparent leader-follower relationship may provide key insights into

potential change management strategies that could be used to effectively engage followers who work remotely.

### **Significance of the Proposed Research**

The importance of transparency has become a popular topic across many segments of our society, including business, technology, and academic research (Albu & Flyverbom, 2019; Leonardi & Treem, 2020; Shum et al., 2019). Transparency, or the intentional sharing of information, is considered to be important across each of these segments for employees and customers alike. Transparency in organizational settings can be critical for employees to help ensure a higher level of effectiveness and for customers to more likely trust the organization (Jain et al., 2020; Shafieizadeh & Tao, 2020). In an era in which many forms of collaboration are facilitated by technology, the sharing or accessibility of information can be key to effective communication and the ability to collaborate between multiple parties (Mitchell, 2021; Zhu et al., 2023). For academic research, transparency can more readily lead to a better understanding of organizational communication, as well as the impact of information sharing across the organization (Jiang & Luo, 2018; Yue et al., 2019). The increased attention on transparency is a welcome trend due to its expected benefits, but that momentum also raises a compelling question about its connection with leadership and the dynamic relationship between leaders and followers.

Transparency may be effective when used properly to assist leaders in meeting future challenges to their organizations, not only in non-profit healthcare but in a wide variety of organizational contexts. When leaders more readily share information with employees, it can communicate that they are trusted and valued by the leader and the organization (Mehta & Mehta, 2013). In turn, when information is more readily shared, it can increase trust in the leader, and followers are more likely to respond with higher levels of engagement, improved

work performance, and a greater willingness to remain with the organization (Jiang & Men, 2017; Mehmood et al., 2023; Scott, 2016). Conversely, sharing information inappropriately may lead to employee conflict, impede decision-making, breed work anxiety, and demotivate employees (Bernstein, 2014; Morgan, 2021; Ramachandran & Flint, 2018). If managed well, transparency can lead to a safe and smart organization built on trust and cooperation, so it is necessary to plan for and execute transparency with the highest level of care (De Cremer, 2016).

This research intends to contribute to both leadership theory and practice by providing a better understanding of the multidimensional nature of transparent leadership and its impact on follower engagement and follower ratings of leadership effectiveness. Further, this study will examine how the presence of transparent leadership can enhance leader-follower relationships, influence follower attitudes and their perception of leaders and the organization, and how its presence can potentially improve those relationships and follower performance. Transparency and the existing leadership models of authentic leadership (Gardner et al., 2005; Luthans & Avolio, 2003; Walumbwa et al., 2008; Jiang & Luo, 2018) and transformational leadership (Groves, 2020; Gui et al., 2020; Northouse, 2021; Yue et al., 2019) are explored to better understand how they could potentially influence leader and follower relationships. The authentic leadership dimension of relational transparency addresses the transparency construct with its description of the leader-follower relationship in the context of follower self-improvement but falls short in describing the complexity and likely multidimensional nature of the construct. The transformational leadership dimension of idealized influence somewhat addresses leader transparency with its mention of leader communication but focuses more on the character traits of the leader. This study is expected to contribute to leadership theories by advancing the understanding of transparent leadership with the addition of a new model and definition.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### Transparency, Definition and Background

In the organizational sciences, an early reference to transparency can be traced back to the lengthy accounts of organizational roles and social conformity in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century (Coser, 1961). Over the years, organizational scientists have offered many definitions of the transparency construct, depending on the study domain and or context, with varying degrees of specificity, as listed in Table 1 (Schnackenberg & Tomlinson, 2016).

**Table 1**

#### *Definitions of Transparency*

Study	Study Domain	Definition of Transparency
Akkermans, Bogerd, & van Doremalen (2004)	Strategic alliances	Sharing data regarding current order and production statuses as well as plans and forecasts with various supply chain partners
Bloomfield & O'Hara (1999)	Financial markets	The real-time, public dissemination of trade and quote information
Bushman, Piotroski, & Smith (2004)	Organizational governance	The availability of firm-specific information to those outside publicly traded firms
Eijffinger & Geraats (2006)	Monetary policy	The extent to which central banks disclose information that is related to the policy-making process
Flood, Huisman, Koedijk, & Mahieu (1999)	Financial markets	The ability of market participants to clearly see outstanding price quotes
Granados, Gupta, & Kauffman (2010)	Electronic markets	The availability and accessibility of market information to interested parties
Jordan, Peek, & Rosengren (2000)	Financial markets	The disclosure of timely and accurate information
Kaptein (2008)	Organizational culture	Ensuring visibility within the organization to allow employees to properly modify or correct behaviors
Larsson, Bengtsson, Henriksson, & Sparks (1998)	Strategic alliances	Openness toward partners
Madhavan, Porter, & Weaver (2005)	Financial markets	The ability of market participants to observe information about the trading process
McGaughey (2002)	Strategic management	The extent to which members of a population (a) have identified or are aware of an intellectual asset's existence and (b) understand the intellectual asset's underlying principles
Nicolaou & McKnight (2006)	Organizational governance	The availability of adequate information to verify or assess the data exchange taking place
Pagano & Roell (1996)	Financial markets	The degree to which the size and direction of the current order flow are visible to the competing market makers involved in setting prices
Potosky (2008)	Organizational governance	The extent to which a communication medium facilitates a clear or unobstructed communication exchange
Prat (2005)	Organizational governance	The ability of the principal to observe how the agent behaves and the consequences of the agent's behavior
Vorauer & Claude (1998)	Negotiations	The degree to which an individual's objectives are readily apparent to others
Walumbwa, Luthans, Avey, & Oke (2011)	Leadership	Leader behaviors that are aimed at promoting trust through disclosures that include openly sharing information and expressions of the leader's true thoughts and feelings
Zhu (2004)	Electronic markets	The degree of visibility and accessibility of information

These diverse applications of the concept propose that, at its core, transparency neither exists with any single domain of research nor operates within any one context of study. Accordingly, a useful definition of transparency must be broad enough to enable scholars from a variety of domains to incorporate it into their study designs and be specific enough to meaningfully inform management practice. Schnackenberg and Tomlinson's (2016) definition of transparency, "...the perceived value of intentionally shared information from a sender..." (p. 1788), combines a number of concepts from literature (a) the emerging consensus that transparency is about information and, with rare exception, is seen as a critical element of knowledge sharing; (b) most conceptualizations of transparency involve intentionally shared information; and (c) transparency is a perception of received information, although organizations may influence that perception through their information sharing behaviors. For the present study, this definition of the transparency construct was selected from a vast number available across the literature as it best matches my experiences as a practitioner and, as such, provides a solid foundation for the planned research.

Developments in the transparency literature suggest that transparency consists of three dimensions (a) perceived disclosure, the extent to which information is released rather than hidden; (b) perceived clarity, the extent to which information is understandable rather than complicated; and (c) perceived accuracy, the extent to which information is reflective of reality rather than exaggerated or biased (Albu & Flyverbom, 2019; Ananny & Crawford, 2018; Bernstein, 2017; Schnackenberg et al., 2020). These three dimensions are expected to help provide insight into how the sharing of information by a leader could be valued by a follower by better understanding the different elements of their perceptions of the communication.

Schnackenberg et al. (2020) argue that these three dimensions of transparency not only included crucial aspects of information quality in the information quality literature (Kahn et al., 2002; Lee et al., 2002; Miller, 1996) but also included the most important aspects of the construct in the transparency literature. For instance, similar terms included within the dimension of disclosure found in the transparency literature include perceived information availability, observability, and visibility (Bernstein, 2012; Granados et al., 2010; Kaptein, 2008). Related terms found within the dimension of clarity include perceived understandability, lucidity, and simplicity (Bernstein, 2017; Nicolaou & McKnight, 2006). Similar terms included with the dimension of accuracy include perceived correctness and reliability (Dubink et al., 2008; Fernandez-Feijoo et al., 2014). In the end, the three dimensions of transparency as described by Schnackenberg et al. (2020) are believed to be the essential elements of transparency and were selected for this research. With a reasonable foundation in place for the definition of transparency, we now need to define transparent leadership.

### **Transparent Leadership**

Vogelgesang and Lester (2009) state that leadership studies suggest that transparent leadership includes the following behaviors (a) sharing relevant information during interactions with followers; (b) being open to giving and receiving feedback; and (c) being forthright about motives and reasons behind decisions. They suggest that these behaviors set the groundwork for multiple positive follower outcomes, including follower trust in the leader, follower engagement, and follower performance. The key factor is that the follower perceives that the leader is transparent with such acts as just described, signifying the importance of enacting these transparent behaviors during interactions on a consistent basis (Houser et al., 2014; Yim, 2019).



The leader-follower relationship is an ongoing process, where a strong relationship of trust can be built over time (Day et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2021). Namely, leaders must be intentional in their efforts to develop those key relationships long before those relationships are tested, with every interaction, day after day. It is believed that the skills gained may be transferable across all contexts of life, professional and personal. Transparency can be a solid foundation upon which leaders can build trust in those relationships (Norman et al., 2010), and a lack of it may cause relationships to crumble or not even develop at all. For instance, organizational change can test even the strongest relationships, and if leader-follower relationships are not developed ahead of time with the necessary trust gained, it could undermine organizational efforts and potentially lead to failure.

There are three mechanisms that contribute to the impact transparency can have on employees, including the understanding of motives, the reduction of vulnerability, and insight into the leader (Vogelgesang & Lester, 2009). The idea of transparency as an indispensable component of successful leadership stems from work on authenticity and authentic leadership development, where transparency is regarded as one element of a broader concept (e.g., relational transparency). The remaining three dimensions of authentic leadership include greater self-awareness, internalized moral perspective, and balanced processing of information (Gardner et al., 2005; Jiang & Luo, 2018; Luthans & Avolio, 2003; Walumbwa et al., 2008). Both practitioners and scholars have discussed the importance of leader transparency many times in business literature (Bennis et al., 2008; Mamaril, 2021; Yi et al., 2017), yet few have actually defined or operationalized transparent leadership behaviors or acts, or direct or indirect effects on followers and organizations.

The terms transparent communication and transparent organizational communication are used interchangeably in the literature (e.g., Jiang & Luo, 2018; Jiang & Men, 2017; Yue et al., 2019), with the latter term used most often. Transparent organizational communication refers to an overall organizational communication system or climate that emphasizes information sharing and the role of organizational stakeholders in identifying organizational needs (Cotterrell, 2000). Rawlins (2009) states that transparent organizational communication includes three elements, participation, accountability, and substantial information. Participation refers to involving stakeholders in identifying information needed to make accurate decisions. Accountability holds organizations responsible for their behaviors and words. Substantial information involves providing truthful, complete, and useful information. Although not explicitly addressed by Rawlins (2009), there are presumed leadership roles across these three elements regarding stakeholders, accountability, and relevant information. Current organizational environments may place these elements of transparent organizational communication at a premium and, if taken into consideration, could be key to leadership success.

New research shows how social media channels can be effective tools to hold business and political leaders more accountable (Neu & Saxton, 2023), using a data set of nearly 28 million tweets sent between 2016 and early 2020 to examine the phenomena of social accountability. The study showed how the publication of previously private financial information touched off a Twitter-based social accountability conversation. Social media platforms such as Twitter (now X), with more than 190 million daily active users, have changed how social accountability is practiced (Gomez-Carrasco & Michelon, 2017; Saxton et al., 2021; She & Michelon, 2019). The ability for users to respond to ongoing events via social media and then

channel individual voices into a collective conversation to demand social accountability can get the attention of politicians, government, and business leaders (Butler, 2015).

One related construct regarding transparency in organizations and leader-follower relationships is research on organizational justice, which is defined as an employee's perception of the extent to which management's decisions and actions are considered fair (Fortin, 2008; Yean & Yusof, 2016). One type of organizational justice that is relevant to the proposed study is informational justice (Colquitt, 2001), described as the extent to which an organization and, by extension, a follower's direct leader, shares change-related information in a candid, thorough, and timely manner. Different communication strategies may be required based on the circumstances and employees' perceptions of whether the organization communicates adequately and in a timely fashion. The relationship between leaders and followers is likely influenced by organizational factors such as how followers perceive informational justice. For instance, at a time of significant organizational change, the relationship between job insecurity and job performance is moderated by the employee perception that their organization has adequately and honestly informed them about the change (Schumacher et al., 2021).

The level of the organization in which leaders and followers are located may impact how or if leaders demonstrate transparency. For instance, leaders may treat followers who work physically closer to them differently than those who work farther away, and their needs may also differ depending on where they work. As a result, it may be expected that followers' view of a leader's transparent behaviors as being very different depending on where they are located within the organizational structure or geographic location (Galanti et al., 2021; Sull et al., 2020; Trope & Liberman, 2010; Williams et al., 2014). For example, followers working at a healthcare company's corporate headquarters may receive more frequent and insightful information from

their direct leader compared to followers working in any number of outpatient clinics geographically dispersed across the company. The expected implications of this potential difference are that leaders may need to alter their communication strategies to proactively address any gaps created as a result.

### ***Overview of Research Evidence***

There are multiple dimensions of the transparency construct identified in the literature to be explored more closely in research, with some apparent similarities. Schnackenberg et al. (2020) assert that it appears that the time is right to critically evaluate existing scales of measurement for their ability to capture the three core theoretical dimensions of transparency, disclosure, clarity, and accuracy, and systematically advance a measure that incorporates those dimensions. Balkin (1999) states there are three types of transparency that “work together but are analytically distinct” (p. 393), including informational, participatory, and accountability. Furthermore, Rawlins (2009) advances that transparency is therefore defined as having three elements (a) information that is truthful, substantial, and useful; (b) participation of stakeholders in identifying the information they need; and (c) objective, balanced reporting of an organization’s activities and policies that hold them accountable. Transparency efforts of organizations need all three qualities to build, maintain, and restore trust with stakeholders.

Transparency and trust are believed to be positively related variables. Rawlins (2008) claims there is strong evidence that transparency and trust are positively related; that is, as employee perceptions of organizational transparency increase, so does trust in the organization. He adds that to increase trust, organizations must be more open and transparent with their communication. Schnackenberg and Tomlinson (2016) conclude that transparency influences

trust via its effect on trustworthiness perceptions and, as a result, transparency informs the extent to which an organization is regarded as trustworthy.

Transparent leadership is a competitive business advantage since it has many positive outcomes that can be linked to leaders, followers, and the organization (Vogelgesang & Lester, 2009). Business leaders can more likely steer clear of distractions that harm productivity by proactively sharing information, aggressively seeking feedback from employees, and being transparent with external stakeholders, potentially attracting greater investment. Whole Foods, W.I. Gore & Associates, Inc., and Google are just a few examples of companies renowned for their transparency. They have reaped the benefits of opening the books and being forthright about financial status, programming codes, hiring processes, employee wages, and other issues most companies consider private. Namely, Whole Foods successfully implemented a wage transparency policy, but also emphasized collaboration among their employees (Long & Nasiry, 2020). In an organizational setting, the perception of transparency is expected to increase positive organizational outcomes, including increased trust, engagement, and performance.

Schnackenberg et al. (2020) conducted an empirical study using existing scales of measurement and recent theoretical advances in the transparency literature, respondent-driven sampling, and a simulated workplace environment to ask working professionals to answer surveys on their manager's transparency. The study's goal was to determine the extent to which transparency can be modeled as a single construct and to develop items that capture the focal content area of the dimensions of disclosure, clarity, and accuracy. The results advanced the research on transparency by developing and validating a measure based on theoretical insights about its three dimensions. Evidence showed that items associated with the three dimensions (disclosure, clarity, accuracy) could be aggregated into a single transparency construct.

Rawlins (2008) used a web-based survey to test the relationship between trust and transparency with the employees of a large regional, non-profit healthcare organization. The organization's stated mission included values that suggested it appreciated trust and intended to practice transparency. The survey was sent to 1,200 employees, with 385 completed over a five-day period, for a 32% response rate, and sample demographics that approximately matched that of the healthcare organization's population. The results of the study provided strong evidence that trust and transparency are positively related. As employee perceptions of organizational transparency increased, so did trust in the organization. Additionally, the three components of trust (i.e., competence, integrity, goodwill) and three components of transparency (i.e., participation, substantial information, accountability) are positively related. In contrast, the fourth transparency component, secrecy, has an inverse relationship with the other components.

### ***Critical Assessment of Evidence***

Schnackenberg and Tomlinson (2016) propose that the definition and dimensions of the transparency construct offer managers a set of categories to increase transparency toward their internal and external stakeholders. With recent trends toward interactions governed less by face-to-face communication and more by technology-enabled exchanges of information that can develop over great distances and intervals of time, having an awareness of the meaning and dimensions of transparency should allow leaders to communicate more effectively and develop a stronger relationship with their stakeholders.

As a matter of social and political importance, Schnackenberg et al. (2020) call into question many conventional interpretations of transparency. Measuring transparency in terms of its multiple dimensions advances knowledge about how to construct truly transparent messages. Examples provided of the development of transparent and non-transparent messages (e.g., Enron

and WorldCom, plus more current examples of Wells Fargo and Boeing) illustrate the practical importance of disclosure, clarity, and accuracy across organizational settings by emphasizing the strategies organizations employ to manipulate message features and transparency perceptions. They hope that practitioners will benefit from having access to what they feel is a well-validated instrument to measure perceptions of disclosure, clarity, and accuracy, as these dimensions are at the heart of evaluations that determine organizational transparency.

Vogelgesang and Lester (2009) provide an outline of a process for becoming a transparent leader with an intact group of employees. They acknowledge that it is easier to set the conditions of transparency when a new leader is introduced to a group of employees, but believe that it is possible to change current perceptions of employees. The outline includes three main steps, including processes to (a) determine current employee perceptions of leader, potentially using 360-degree reviews to get employee feedback; (b) become transparent, sharing and discussing feedback and developing a plan forward; and (c) maintain transparency, consistently sharing relevant information and proactively seeking feedback and questions, keeping communication lines open. Taking these steps tells employees that a leader is serious about becoming a more transparent leader, that their feedback is valued, and that a leader can be successful only with their help.

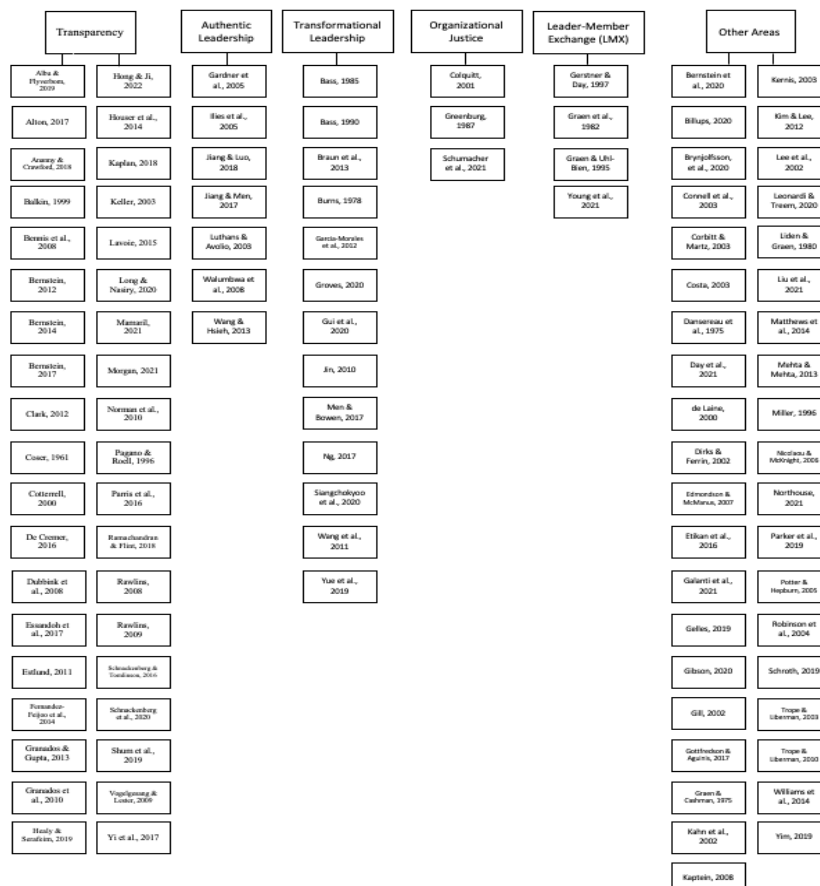
Although empirical studies on authentic leadership, transformational leadership, and transparency were included as part of this literature review, no empirical studies on a potential transparent leadership theory were identified. The goal of this research is to identify the primary behaviors that encompass transparent leadership and determine how it influences the leader-follower relationship.

## Leadership Theory

Two leadership models, along with transparency, are the primary focus of the literature review: authentic leadership, of which relational transparency is regarded as an element, and transformational leadership. Across existing leadership theories, many capture leadership influence processes that partially, but not comprehensively, address transparent leadership influence processes. The research on authentic and transformational leadership are two examples of theories that can help inform some aspects of transparent leadership. A map of the literature reviewed is separated into these three categories, as well as organizational justice, Leader-Member Exchange (LMX), and other areas (Figure 1).

**Figure 1**

### *Literature Map*

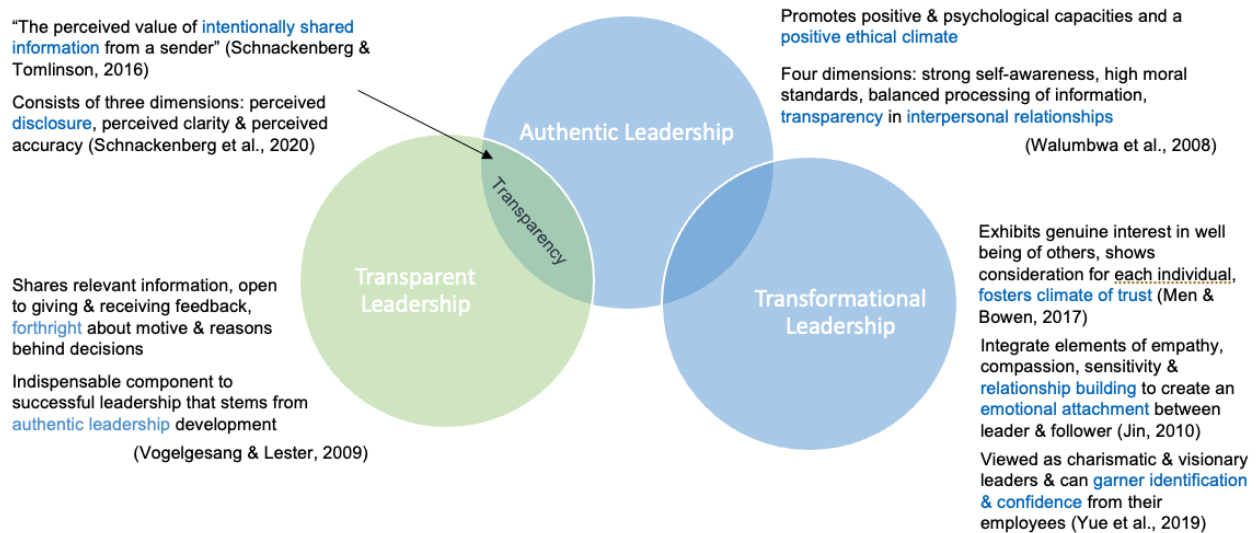




Many empirical and non-empirical studies were included in the literature reviewed, and several are briefly highlighted. A comparison of the dimensions of transparency, authentic leadership, and transformational leadership highlights the similarities and differences between the three concepts/theories, as presented in Figure 2. More specifically, the transparency dimension of perceived disclosure is similar to the authentic leadership dimension of relational transparency, where leaders present their authentic selves to others and work with their followers to encourage their self-improvement (Schnackenberg et al., 2020; Walumbwa et al., 2008), but no direct evidence of any other similarities was identified in the literature. This conclusion provides additional rationale for pursuing a measure for a potential transparent leadership theory to fill the current gap in the literature.

**Figure 2**

***Comparison of Dimensions***



**Authentic Leadership, Definition and Background**

Luthans and Avolio (2003) defined authentic leadership in organizations as a process that draws from both positive psychological capacities and a highly developed organizational context,

which results in both greater self-awareness and self-regulated positive behaviors on the part of leaders and others, fostering positive self-development. The authentic leader is confident, hopeful, optimistic, resilient, transparent, moral/ethical, and future-oriented, and gives priority to developing others to be leaders. They are true to themselves, and their exhibited behavior helps to positively transform or develop others into leaders. The authentic leader does not try to pressure or even rationally persuade others, but their authentic values, beliefs, and behaviors serve to model the development of others.

Walumbwa et al. (2008) modified Luthans and Avolio's (2003) initial definition of authentic leadership to advance a refined definition that more fully reflects the underlying five dimensions of the construct proposed by Gardner et al. (2005) and Ilies et al. (2005). Walumbwa et al. (2008) more specifically defined authentic leadership as a pattern of leader behaviors that draws upon and promotes positive psychological capacities and a positive ethical climate to foster the four dimensions of (a) greater self-awareness; (b) an internalized moral perspective; (c) balanced processing of information in ethical decision making; and (d) relational transparency on the part of leaders working with their followers, fostering positive self-development.

Relational transparency refers to presenting one's authentic self (as opposed to fake or misrepresented) to others through selective self-disclosure and a willingness to admit their mistakes (Gardner et al., 2005; Walumbwa et al., 2008). Such behavior promotes trust through disclosures that involve openly sharing information with others and expressing one's true thoughts and feelings while trying to minimize displays of inappropriate emotions (Avolio et al., 2009; Kernis, 2003).

A related construct to authentic leadership is research on LMX theory (Barbuto & Hayden, 2011; Dimotakis et al., 2023; Dulebohn et al., 2012; Yukl et al., 2009). This theory

states that the quality of the relationship developed between a leader and an employee is predictive of outcomes at the individual, group, and organizational levels of analysis (Gerstner & Day, 1997). It is generally found to be associated with several positive performance-related and attitudinal variables, especially for members, including, in part, higher overall satisfaction, greater satisfaction with their supervisor, and more positive role perceptions. This theory provides additional insight into the leader-follower relationship and potential outcomes based on the quality of that relationship, which could prove useful in this study.

LMX theory suggests that leaders do not use the same style in working with all followers but instead develop a different type of relationship or exchange with each one (Dansereau et al., 1975; Graen & Cashman, 1975; Graen et al., 1982; Liden & Graen, 1980). These relationships range from those that are based strictly on the employment contract (i.e., low LMX, or out-group) to those that are characterized by mutual trust, respect, liking, and reciprocal influence (i.e., high LMX, or in-group) (Dansereau et al., 1975).

Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) state that LMX theory is comprised of the three interrelated dimensions of mutual trust, respect, and obligation that can be adequately measured with a unidimensional measure of LMX. The relationship between leaders and followers is likely influenced by organizational factors that could impact how employees perceive the quality of that relationship. Based on prior research (Gottfredson & Aguinis, 2017; Ng, 2017; Young et al., 2021), it is believed that the relationship between the leader and the follower influences the positive relationship between transparent leaders and follower performance.

### ***Overview of Research Evidence***

Authentic leadership, transparent organizational communication, and employee engagement are often believed to be linked as independent, mediating, or dependent variables.

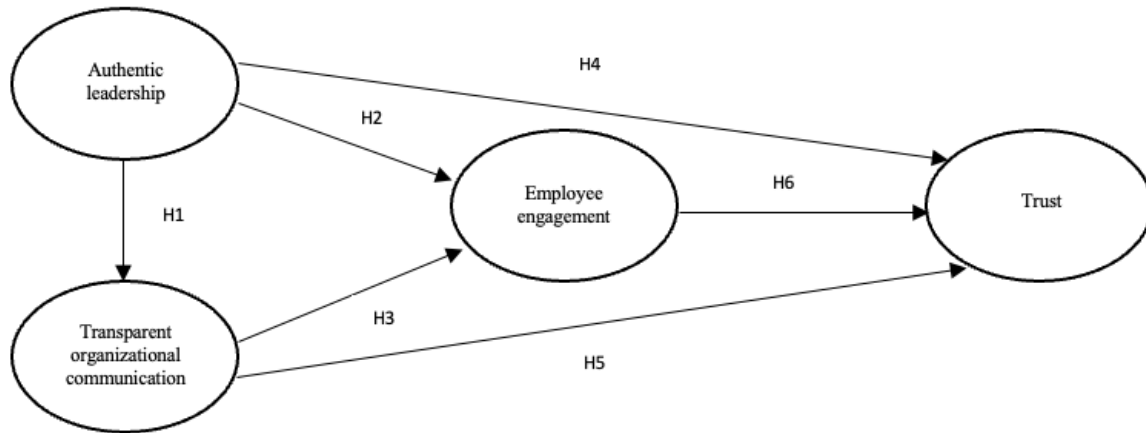
Other variables, such as employee trust and work-life enrichment, are also added to the different models in the literature. Jiang and Luo (2018) state that the three influential organizational factors of authentic leadership, transparent organizational communication, and employee engagement are linked to employee trust, and creating a motivating, nurturing, and transparent organizational environment contributes to employee engagement and trust. Jiang and Men (2017) argue that authentic leadership, transparent organizational communication, and work-life enrichment are three important contextual factors associated with employee engagement, which academic and professional literature have stated is linked to business performance.

When employees are engaged, they demonstrate business awareness and a willingness to commit extra time and effort to accomplish organizational goals. Considering the current state of employee engagement scholarship, more empirical studies are needed that investigate specific organizational features or social contextual variables associated with it (Matthews et al., 2014). Prior business and communication studies have suggested a number of factors that could drive engagement, including leadership behavior, organizational communication structure, and positive work-life interface in relation to employees' well-being (Robinson et al., 2004).

Jiang and Luo (2018) and Jiang and Men (2017) conducted empirical studies using online surveys of a random sample of employees working in various industries across the US. Jiang and Luo (2018) examined the way employee trust relates to several key organizational contextual factors. Their study found that authentic leadership, transparent organizational communication, and employee engagement directly and significantly influenced the level of trust employees have toward their organizations, as represented in Figure 3.

**Figure 3**

***Structural Model with Nine Hypotheses***



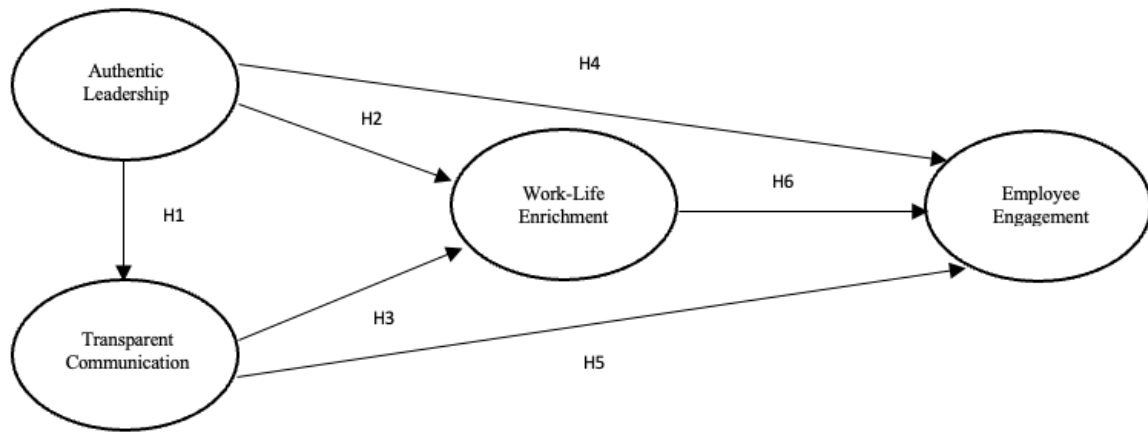
*Note.* (Jiang & Luo, 2018) (a) Direct link between authentic leadership and employee engagement was found to be statistically non-significant: H2, (b) Mediation hypotheses: Transparent organizational communication mediates the effect of authentic leadership on employee engagement & the effect of that on trust: H7, Employee engagement mediates the effect of authentic leadership & that of transparent organizational communication on trust: H8, Transparent organizational communication & employee engagement mediate the effect of authentic leadership on trust: H9

Jiang and Men (2017) tested a model that examined how authentic leadership, transparent organizational communication, and work-life enrichment were related as organizational contextual factors associated with employee engagement. They revealed that authentic leadership had a strong positive effect on transparent organizational communication, but its direct effect on employee engagement was not evident. Yet, they conclude that the mediation effects of authentic leadership on employee engagement via transparent organizational communication and work-life enrichment were strong and significant (Figure 4). Both studies concluded that authentic leadership and transparent organizational communication are linked. Yet, the explanation of the relationship between authentic leadership and employee engagement differed between the two studies. Jiang and Luo (2018) described the two variables as linked as they influence the level of trust, and Jiang and Men (2017) stated that authentic leadership and employee engagement are

strongly related only through the mediating variables of transparent organizational communication and work-life enrichment.

**Figure 4**

***Structural Model with Nine Hypotheses***



Note: (Jiang & Men, 2017) (a) Direct effect of authentic leadership on employee engagement was not found: H4, (b) Mediation hypotheses: Transparent communication mediates the effect of authentic leadership on work-life enrichment & the effect of that on employee engagement: H7, Work-life enrichment mediates the effect of authentic leadership & that of transparent communication on employee engagement: H8, Transparent communication & work-life enrichment mediate the effect of authentic leadership on employee engagement: H9

***Critical Assessment of Evidence***

Jiang and Luo (2018) informed communication managers and organizational leaders of the importance of integrating authentic leadership and communication skills, strategies, and tactics in delivering training and mentoring workshops. The findings provided further support for the four dimensions of authentic leadership, where organizations could use these indicators to develop and promote authentic leaders to create desirable outcomes at both the individual (e.g., employee engagement) and the organizational level (e.g., trust). Creating a motivating, nurturing, and transparent organizational environment contributes to employee engagement and trust.

Jiang and Men (2017) provide important guidelines and implications for communication management scholars and professionals, as well as much-needed evidence that confirms the critical roles of leadership, communication, and work-life enrichment in driving employee

engagement. They also enrich the theoretical understanding of employee engagement by addressing the growing concerns of corporate transparency and authenticity, two overused yet under-researched constructs in communication literature.

Further empirical studies are needed to explore the relationship between authentic leadership and other variables, including employee trust, employee engagement, transparent organizational communication, and leader-employee relationship. A review of the literature only identified the similarity of the authentic leadership dimension of relational transparency with the transparency dimension of disclosure, justifying the need to further explore the primary behaviors of transparent leadership and how it influences follower attitudes.

### **Transformational Leadership, Definition and Background**

Burns (1978) introduced the concept of transformational leadership when discussing the structure of moral leadership. He stated that leadership in the shaping of private and public opinion, leadership of reform, and revolutionary movements (social change events), namely transformational leadership, seems to take on significant and collective proportions historically. Still, at the time and point of action, leadership is intensely individual and personal.

Bass (1985) later expanded the scope of transformational leadership within organizational settings. He stated that superior leadership performance, in this case, transformational leadership, occurs when leaders broaden and elevate the interests of their employees when they generate awareness and acceptance of the purposes and mission of the group, and when they stir their employees to look beyond their own self-interest for the good of the group (Bass, 1990). Since then, transformational leadership has been one of the most researched leadership styles (Groves, 2020; Gui et al., 2020; Northouse, 2021; Siangchokyoo et al., 2020), including well-developed constructs that have been studied over time by many different scholars. Transformational leaders

serve as role models and exhibit a genuine interest in the well-being of their stakeholders, showing consideration for each individual and fostering a climate of trust (Men & Bowen, 2017). They integrate elements of empathy, compassion, sensitivity, and relationship-building to create an emotional attachment between leader and follower (Jin, 2010). Transformational leaders are viewed as charismatic and visionary leaders and can garner identification, trust, and confidence from their employees (Yue et al., 2019).

Transformational leadership is characterized by four features (a) idealized influence, communicating collective purposes and values, demonstrating confidence and determination, and acting as charismatic role models; (b) inspirational motivation, sharing a desirable future, motivating followers to perform at higher levels and achieve common objectives; (c) individualized consideration, serving as a constant source of emotional support and demonstrating personal care, empathy, sensitivity for the development needs of employees; and (d) intellectual stimulation, helping employees think outside the box, challenge old assumptions, and promote their intelligence, learning, and innovation (Garcia-Morales et al., 2012; Men & Bowen, 2017; Wang et al., 2011). Although transparency is not clearly mentioned as an element in any of the descriptions of the leadership model in the literature, with its communication of collective purposes and values, it is believed that the dimension of idealized influence most closely reflects transparency in its definitions.

### ***Overview of Research Evidence***

The roles of transformational leadership influencing positive employee attitudes (e.g., trust and satisfaction with leaders, organizational commitment) and behaviors (e.g., in-role performance, organizational citizenship behavior, creative performance) have been widely established in the literature (Braun et al., 2013, Gui et al., 2020; Yue et al., 2019). In addition,

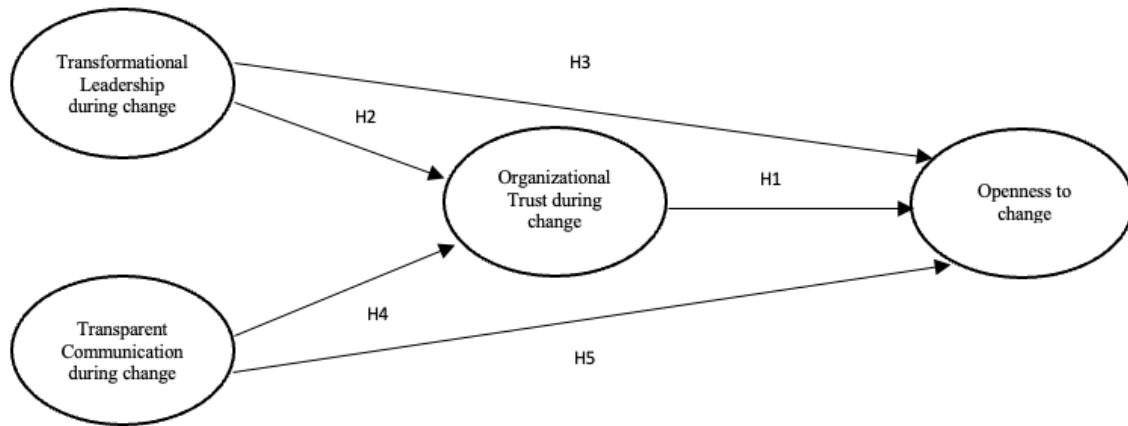


transformational leadership and communication are critical factors in the ultimate success of organizational change events. Yue et al. (2019) state that transformational leadership and transparent communication are positively associated with employee organizational trust, which positively influences employee openness to change, a perspective that has been linked to organizational performance. Additionally, Gill (2002) concludes that an American Management Association survey indicated that leadership was the top determinant of successful change, followed by corporate values and communication. Successful leadership not only develops vision, strategy, and culture for change but also empowers and motivates employees in change management.

Yue et al. (2019) used an online survey with a random sample of employees across a variety of industries in the US, examining the effect of transformational leadership and transparent organizational communication on cultivating employee organizational trust during an organizational change event. The findings suggested that transformational leadership and transparent communication were positively associated with employee organizational trust, which positively influenced employee openness to change, as represented in Figure 5.

**Figure 5**

***Structural Model with Six Hypotheses***



Note. (Yue et al., 2019) (a) Direct positive association between transformational leadership and employee openness to change was not found: H3, (b) Transparent communication was not found to be directly associated with employee openness to change: H5, (c) Mediation hypothesis – Employee organizational trust mediates the positive relationships between transformational leadership, transparent communication and employee’s openness to change: H6.

***Critical Assessment of Evidence***

By showcasing the influence of communication transparency featured by information substantiality, participation, and accountability on employee change attitudes, namely trust, during change and openness to change, the proposed study contributes to the change communication literature from an internal public relations perspective (Yue et al., 2019). Their findings provide theoretical insights into how transparent communication works in facilitating change implementation and extends the application of the strategic transparent communication strategy into the organizational change management context.

Further empirical studies are needed to further explore the relationship between transformational leadership and other variables, including transparent organizational communication, employee trust, and employee engagement. Transformational leadership literature falls a bit short in addressing the issue of transparent leader behaviors, although the dimension of idealized influence appears to invoke aspects of transparency without actually

mentioning it. A key focus of the literature is instead on the effectiveness of transformational leadership on employee outcomes across situations involving organizational change, and transparent communication is described as an essential part of that. A goal of this research is to determine whether any dimensions of transformational leadership are associated with transparent leadership.

## **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS**

### **Overview**

This research adopts a qualitative method of data collection and analysis of semi-structured interview responses to help address the research questions and establish the multidimensionality of a potential transparent leadership theory. The limited attention devoted to understanding transparent leadership behaviors in existing leadership theories represents an opportunity to inductively define and examine the multiple ways that leaders demonstrate transparency in their influence tactics with followers. Transparency has been explored across numerous research domains and contexts of study, which identifies the state of prior theory and research as mature. Further, this study will examine the nature of transparent leadership and its impact on a range of follower outcomes. The research plan closely follows the recommendations for the nascent archetype as outlined by Edmondson and McManus (2007), making it a good methodological fit (Table 2).

**Table 2*****Methodological Fit of Research Plan***

<b>Elements</b>	Give and You May Receive: Understanding Transparent Leadership Through the Lens of Reciprocal Leader-Follower Relationships
<b>Type of study</b>	Qualitative
<b>Archetype</b>	Nascent
<b>Research questions</b>	Four research questions are to be addressed in this study (a) What are the primary behaviors that comprise transparent leadership; (b) How does transparent leadership influence follower attitudes?; (c) How is the relationship between transparent leadership and follower attitudes impacted by follower role/status or place in organization?; and (d) How is the relationship between transparent leadership and follower attitudes impacted by virtual or distributed contexts?
<b>Type of data collected</b>	Interview data
<b>Method of collecting data</b>	Conduct semi-structured interviews of leaders working across a variety of non-profit healthcare organizations in the United States, focusing on mid-level leaders.
<b>Constructs &amp; Measures</b>	Interview questions will be used to help answer the four research questions and inform the measurement of transparent leadership, since a measure doesn't currently exist.
<b>Goal &amp; Techniques</b>	To better understand how transparent leadership influences the perception and behavior of stakeholders, the research study aims to draw from prior mature streams of research and explore proposed relationships between a new construct in transparent leadership and the established construct of follower attitudes.
<b>Nature of Theoretical Contribution</b>	The study will be grounded in the construct of transparency, which centers on the dimensions of disclosure, clarity, and accuracy of shared information. This research intends to contribute to both leadership theory and practice by providing a better understanding of how transparent leadership can influence follower attitudes, their perception of leaders and the organization, and how its presence can potentially improve those relationships and follower performance. The intent is that the findings would assist leaders in better understanding the nature and value of transparent leadership and communication in organizations, how they influence the perception and behavior of internal and external stakeholders, and how they can inform business strategy to improve employee trust and engagement, as well as business performance.

## **Research Design and Approach**

### ***Study Design***

The research study used a grounded theory approach to qualitative research, focusing on a group of leaders and their subjective experiences involving interactions with transparent leaders during their careers (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Grounded theory is a design inquiry from sociology that derives a general, abstract theory of a process, action, or interaction grounded in the views of participants. This process involves using multiple stages of data collection and the continued refinement and interconnection of categories of information (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2007, 2015). The intent was to identify the common factors of participant experiences, in this case, with transparent leaders, using a single phase of semi-structured interviews with the selected group of leaders. The unit level of analysis was the leader.

### ***Study Population and Sampling***

The research focused on mid-level leaders of non-profit healthcare organizations across the US. This population was selected due to the belief that because they work in mission-based organizations, these leaders may place more value on non-economic factors, such as the quality of the leader-follower relationship, compared to those working in for-profit healthcare organizations. The plan was to interview a varied sample of outpatient, inpatient, and corporate headquarters leaders. My professional network was leveraged to invite leaders who met the stated criteria to be interviewed as part of the research project, a purposeful sampling. A snowball sampling approach was also used at the end of each interview to identify other leaders that would meet the stated criteria and could be interested in being interviewed.

### *Data Collection Methods and Instruments*

Data was collected using semi-structured interviews and conducted virtually using Zoom with 25 mid-level leaders, all currently working at non-profit healthcare organizations. Overall, 39 interview invitations were sent and 31 leaders initially accepted (79.5%), but two were no-shows, four never followed through to schedule an interview, and eight never responded, resulting in a 64.1% interview rate (25/39). In addition, eight leaders were from my professional network, and 17 were referred as part of the snowball sampling approach (68%). The number of interviews were conducted depending on if and when a saturation point was reached. Ultimately, the goal was to have a large enough sample size to identify a range of opinions and then cut it off when data saturation started to occur, and the results became somewhat repetitive. That goal was achieved with the completion of the 25 interviews.

Each interview was approximately 60 minutes long with 18 open-ended questions, starting general and getting more specific as the interview progressed, with a few probing questions used to dig deeper as needed. Leaders were asked to identify the characteristics, qualities, or behaviors that constitute or comprise transparent leaders, as well as how they were impacted or influenced by transparent leader behaviors. All interviews included both video and audio recordings using Zoom, as well as written transcripts prepared by Otter.ai and then edited afterward while viewing the video recordings to ensure their accuracy. In addition, a pilot test of the interview questions was conducted with a leader who was not a part of the study to provide a sense of how the questions worked before continuing with the remaining interviews. The pilot test went well, as the interview questions functioned as designed.

### ***Data Analysis Methods***

NVivo was selected as the software to be used for the analysis of the results of the semi-structured interviews. The data were imported on Microsoft Word documents into NVivo, and the interview responses were reviewed, labeled, and coded to place each of them into their meaningful themes (categories). Content analysis was then conducted to identify any patterns in the written transcripts, such as word or phrase frequency, coding stripes, word cloud, etc.

### ***Measures or Operationalization***

An interview protocol was developed to conduct the semi-structured interviews. The protocol began with initial background questions on the leader's current position and organization and then moved to general questions regarding effective and ineffective leaders. The questions transitioned to the main body of questions, asking for the leader's insight on the topics of transparency and transparent leadership, starting at a higher level and getting more detailed as the interview progresses. The entire interview protocol can be found in Appendix B.



## **CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS**

### **Data Analysis Overview**

A thorough review of the semi-structured interview data results for 25 mid-level leaders was completed over a four-month period, including the viewing of all video recordings to edit transcripts and further understand the content of the interviews. Several iterative rounds of coding were conducted to ensure the accuracy of the results, starting with the initial terms used by the participants, followed by more rounds of coding using existing literature to continue the refinement of the first-order coding. Further coding was conducted to consolidate codes into compelling higher-level themes, followed by more selective coding to develop the codes into aggregate dimensions.

### **Findings Overview**

Analyses of the interview data revealed six primary characteristics that are present in transparent leaders. These characteristics appear to be potential antecedents to transparent leader behaviors, activating a number of transparent leader behaviors that influence the leader-follower relationship. These characteristics include elements of (a) emotional intelligence (EI), specifically emotional attentiveness; as well as (b) approachability; (c) communication skills; (d) genuineness; (e) honesty; and (f) openness to self-expression. Participants described these interpersonal skills and personality traits as emotional receptivity (Riggio et al., 2008), the ability to decode or interpret the emotional or non-verbal communication of others, followers feel comfortable going to them for information, and as a reflection of their stable personality characteristics.

In total, 10 primary behaviors that transparent leaders demonstrate were described as having a positive influence on the leader-follower relationship. These leader behaviors included

(a) shares information with others; (b) gives feedback; (c) seeks feedback; (d) connects with followers; (e) cares for others; (f) speaks truthfully; (g) behaves with authenticity; (h) displays vulnerability; (i) engages in conversation; and (j) actively listens to others. Participants described these behaviors as information exchange, relationship building, and relational transparency. Further, these leader behaviors demonstrate the continual sharing and seeking of relevant information, building relationships and getting to know followers, showing that they personally care for followers as individuals, and relational transparency in interacting with others.

The findings from the analyses suggest that the relationships between transparent leader behaviors, follower trust, and follower outcomes may be contextually dependent. In specific contexts at the individual level, these relationships are potentially influenced by (a) remote/virtual context (working outside of the traditional office environment); (b) follower place in organization (level of position/title or work location); or (c) length of leader-follower relationship (amount of time follower has worked with leader). Across specific contexts at the organizational level, these relationships could be influenced by (a) transparent organizational communication (transparent communication coming from the organization vs. leader); (b) organizational culture (beliefs, values, and attitudes); and or (c) organizational environment (internal or external forces).

Follower trust emerged from the data as linking the relationships between transparent leader behaviors and a range of follower outcomes. Participants described it as an interpersonal influence on the relationship between the leader and follower. Trust can be cultivated by the leader trusting the follower, or the follower trusting the leader, with the other responding by trusting them in return. For example, one participant likened it to the “circle of trust,” where the leader has the ability to create a circle of trust with their teams, sharing sensitive information

they need to know, and then the teams trust them in return. This is how follower trust is associated with transparent leader behaviors and the specific follower outcomes identified below.

Five primary follower outcomes were described to be as a result of the influence of transparent leader behaviors on the leader-follower relationship. These follower outcomes included (a) felt personally valued; (b) felt work was meaningful; (c) increased work performance; (d) extra work effort; and (e) more engaged in work. Participants described leader behaviors as having an impact on the followers personally or professionally, or as an influence on the level of follower work engagement. These outcomes illustrate how followers experienced a higher sense of personally being valued, that their work really meant something and that it held significant value, that they were able to perform their work at a higher level, were willing to work harder than before, and felt more invested in their work.

### **Data Analysis Methods**

Each leader interview resulted in an audio and video recording produced by Zoom, along with a written transcript of the conversation. I then uploaded the audio recordings to Otter.ai, an online software to produce additional written transcripts in Microsoft Word. I determined that creating a second version of the transcript using Otter.ai would produce a copy that more accurately reflected the details of the interviews when compared to Zoom. Each additional transcript produced was then re-identified by a sequential four-digit alphanumeric code to ensure the confidentiality of each participant (e.g., L001). I then viewed the entirety of each video recording while reviewing the written transcripts produced by Otter.ai to ensure the transcripts accurately reflected the conversations and to better understand the data, making revisions as needed to produce a clean interview transcript. During the editing process, the personal identification of myself and all participants, as well as other leaders and colleagues mentioned

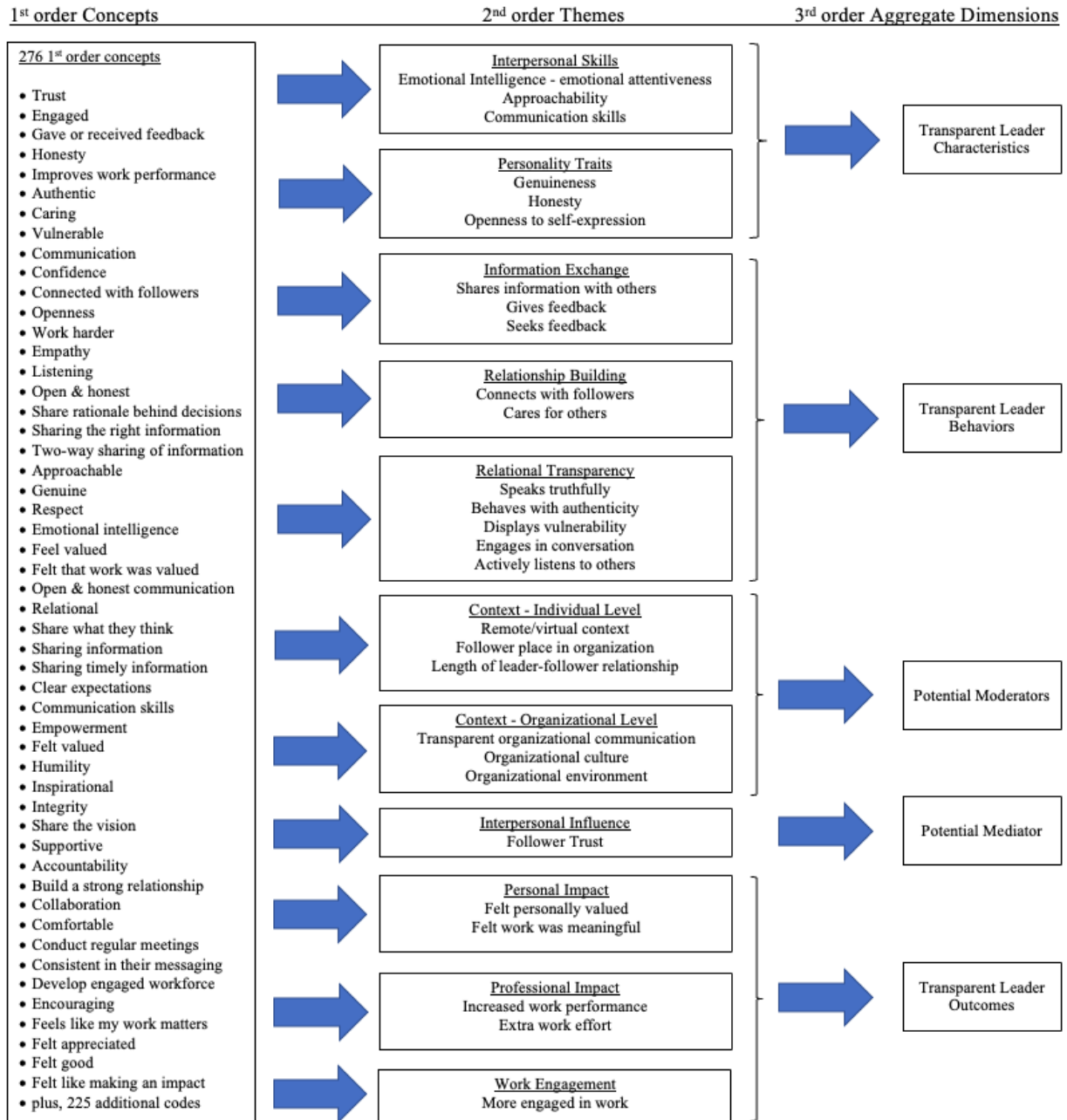
during the interview, were removed from the transcripts and replaced by a generic description (e.g., researcher, participant, current/former leader/colleague).

Once a transcript was edited, each one was uploaded to NVivo desktop software to start the coding process, with each transcript saved using a four-digit alphanumeric code. Using the approach recommended by Gioia et al. (2013) and Billups (2020), I completed the following steps. First, a first-order analysis was initiated with In Vivo coding of the raw interview data, following the voices of the participants, to explore the dimensions of transparent leadership and the influence of a number of potential variables. Second, a code book was developed by downloading the first-order coding data to a Microsoft Excel file, which allowed me to better sort and further analyze the results. Third, initial patterns were identified, described from the perspectives of the participants, followed by additional rounds of coding using existing literature to further refine the initial coding and combine similar codes. An iterative process of leveraging existing leadership theories, not limited to the literature review, was used to analyze the data. The analysis process primarily focused on transparent leadership (Houser et al., 2014; Mamaril, 2021; Vogelgesang & Lester, 2009), transparency (Schnackenberg & Tomlinson, 2016; Schnackenberg et al., 2020), authentic leadership (Gardner et al., 2005; Jiang & Luo, 2018; Walumbwa et al., 2008), transformational leadership (Men & Bowen, 2017; Wang et al., 2011; Yue et al., 2019), LMX (Dimotakis et al., 2023; Gerstner & Day, 1997; Graen et al., 1982; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995), EI (Dulewicz & Higgs, 2000; Gardner, 1993; Gardner & Hatch, 1989; Goleman, 1996, 1997; Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Wong & Law, 2002), meaningful work (Lips-Wiersma & Wright, 2012; May et al., 2004; Yeoman, 2014) and the HEXACO model of personality structure (Ashton & Lee, 2005; Ashton & Lee, 2007), as well as a variety of other theories as included in the literature review. Fourth, second-order coding was conducted with a

detailed review of the first-order coding, examining the frequency and comparability of codes, and identifying compelling codes to further consolidate into higher-level themes. Finally, selective coding was then completed to further develop the themes into more robust third-order aggregate dimensions relating to the three categories of leader characteristics, leadership behaviors, and follower outcomes, as well as any potential mediators or moderators. An overview of the results of this coding process is included below in Figure 6.

**Figure 6**

*Transparent Leadership Data Structure*



## **Preliminary Analysis**

A reliability check was conducted using a peer debriefing with two former colleagues that were familiar with the research project and the context. Both professionals were in leadership roles and had deep experience in non-profit healthcare, and neither participated in the interviews. The peer debriefing process recommended by Creswell and Creswell (2018) was followed to involve an interpretation of the initial findings beyond the researcher and thereby add validity to the data analysis. A spreadsheet including the 1<sup>st</sup> order codes, 2<sup>nd</sup> order themes, and 3<sup>rd</sup> order aggregate dimensions, along with detailed explanations of each step in the process, was emailed to each colleague. They were asked to verify the accuracy of the codes and the interpretation of the analysis findings and to return their comments/questions to me. A diagram of the data structure for the project was also attached to the emails to provide an additional perspective to assist with their accomplishment of the peer debriefing.

## **Results**

The results of the peer debriefings included feedback questions regarding revisions of the 1<sup>st</sup> order codes, as part of the process of developing the 2<sup>nd</sup> order themes. The revisions had changed the number of references that moved forward to the 2<sup>nd</sup> order themes, due to recoding some of the references. I easily explained the process used. Also, there was a question about the logic used to identify the possible moderators. This question arose due to the number of possible moderators that are not related to each other, which was clarified by me that the possible moderators do not need to be related to each other. No changes were made to the data structure as a result of the feedback received from the peer debriefings.

## **Findings**

The results of the qualitative analysis of the interview data identified several transparent leader characteristics (i.e., interpersonal skills, personality traits) and behaviors (i.e., information exchange, relationship building, relational transparency) that are associated with multiple follower outcomes (i.e., personal impact, professional impact, work engagement). A potential mediator (i.e., interpersonal influence) was identified that relates to the reciprocal interpersonal exchange between leader and follower, influencing the leader-follower relationship. In addition, a number of contextual issues (i.e., at individual and organizational levels) were discovered that potentially could moderate the influence of transparent leader behaviors on the leader-follower relationship, either considered to be at the individual level since they were considered as potentially impacting only leader and follower, or at the organizational level since they were considered as potentially impacting the entire organization.

Transparent leadership was described by the participants as being a dynamic, reciprocal relationship between the leader and follower characterized by sharing information, listening and responding to each other, speaking truthfully, and demonstrating authenticity and vulnerability. Over time, these continuous interactions between the leader and follower have the opportunity to further develop and strengthen the leader-follower relationship as they respond in return and learn to trust each other.

Participant responses in the interviews conveyed that leader characteristics serve as antecedents to transparent leadership, activating leadership behaviors that influence the leader-follower relationship. For example, a leader who is considered approachable and speaks truthfully while sharing information with the follower may expect that the follower will respond in kind, such as sharing information of their own in return, or speaking honestly to the leader.



Yet, a key observation was that there were no comments in the interviews stating that leaders behave transparently because they expect followers to respond in kind. It appears that leaders behave transparently on their own, as part of who they are, without expectations from followers.

Participants described the influence of leader traits and how it impacted them, and if a leader has the traits (characteristics) of a transparent leader, they know they can count on them to lead them successfully through the challenges facing them (L005); how they were initially influenced by the authoritarian approach of other leaders receiving praise, but by aligning themselves with the positive traits of other leaders, found more confidence in their abilities (L014); and how they were inspired to take on the positive traits of other leaders, which led to them sharing what they learned, and being more transparent with their leaders and their staff (L016). Exemplar quotes are provided:

And so in working with a leader who lives these traits, has these traits of a transparent leader, it helps me to believe that they're in my corner. Because they're not gonna let me step on a landmine. You know, they're gonna help guide me and, help me navigate through different challenges or politics within the organization. So that's why for me, it's so important, because it makes me feel like I'm an important part of the team.

Participant L005 – Executive Director, Medical Specialties

But when I came to [current organization] I had already changed how I was, or how I wanted to be, because I thought that's what was accepted. So when I came to [current organization] and I was told, ooh, you're a little bit too harsh, maybe lower it down. I was like, with pleasure. I actually want to be that person and I'm more like that person. So then I did, but I had supervisors and peers that were [held] at a high regard and they were more authoritarian. So then I felt like I needed to be more like them. So it impacted me in a way that I was highly influenced by all these leaders getting praise, they get praise for being this way [being harsh]. Maybe I should be more like that, [but] it's not how I want to be, not how I want it to be. So it definitely impacted me. I'm also a little bit stubborn and, I don't mean in a bad way, but so ... I will challenge you a little bit, like the status quo and be like, well, have you considered this other way, because this works really well for me? It started to, little by little, also bring value to what I thought was valuable. And, naturally gravitating towards leaders that I felt had those traits, and I started to look at the benefits and looking for some validation that I don't think this is the only way, I think this other way also works. And,

trying to defer to it a little bit more [new behavior] and to stay true to myself. But it was definitely impactful ... the more leaders that I found that had the same values that I did, the more I felt confident and comfortable with my skills.

Participant L014 – Corporate Officer, Community Health

So I think that the people that have been the most transparent, and that have meant so much to me, were people that I want to be like. I want to learn those traits and take them on to share them with other people so it can continue to grow. And I know that there's been many times where a staff person has to leave, or they're going to move on to a different company, because they're going to make more money, and I can appreciate that. But what matters to me is that they feel like I was part of their life, and I enriched their life. And so by being transparent with my leadership, with them, it has made a difference. And then they learn and grow from that and are looking for those type of relationships.

Participant L016 – Clinic Administrator, Natural Health Center

LMX theory asserts that the quality of the leader-follower relationship, defined by that dyadic (group of two) relationship, is predictive of outcomes at each level of analysis (e.g., individual, group, organization) (Gerstner & Day, 1997) and is connected to many positive attitudinal and performance variables. LMX proposes that leaders do not approach all follower relationships in the same way and develop each one differently (Dansereau et al., 1975; Graen & Cashman, 1975; Graen et al., 1982; Liden & Graen, 1980). These relationships may range from those treated as if simply on an employment contract (i.e., low LMX, or out-group) to those relationships that are based on mutual trust and respect, and a reciprocal influence (i.e., high LMX, or in-group) (Dansereau et al., 1975). These conclusions are consistent with the research results, as participants primarily discussed the development of personal relationships between leader and follower and that the needs and goals of each follower were treated individually.

In LMX, the domains of leadership include the leader, the follower, and the relationship between the two (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). The relationship-based approach focuses on the leader-follower relationship and identifying characteristics of that relationship (e.g., mutual trust, respect, obligation), evaluating the reciprocal influence, examining how that relationship is

correlated with outcome variables of interest and how effective leader-follower relationships can be developed and maintained. The authors posited that LMX contains the three dimensions of mutual trust, respect, and obligation and that the offer to build a partnership LMX is based on these dimensions. It is the mutual trust, respect, and obligation toward each other which empowers and motivates both leader and follower to expand beyond the formalized work contract and work roles to grow out of their prescribed positions and develop a partnership based on mutual reciprocal influence. Partners in these relationships experience reciprocal influence, mutual trust, respect and obligation, and internalization of common goals.

The results of the interviews described follower trust as influencing the leader-follower relationship, but of the two other LMX dimensions identified by Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995), only respect was indicated and just by two of the participants. Yet, although all three dimensions did not appear prominently in the data results, trust clearly had a dominant presence and appeared to similarly influence the leader-follower relationship. Participants shared that trust was their top priority and, without it, nothing else matters. As for the leader-follower relationship to work, there must be mutual trust. Further, the predominant message from the participants is that trust clearly influences the quality of the leader-follower relationship.

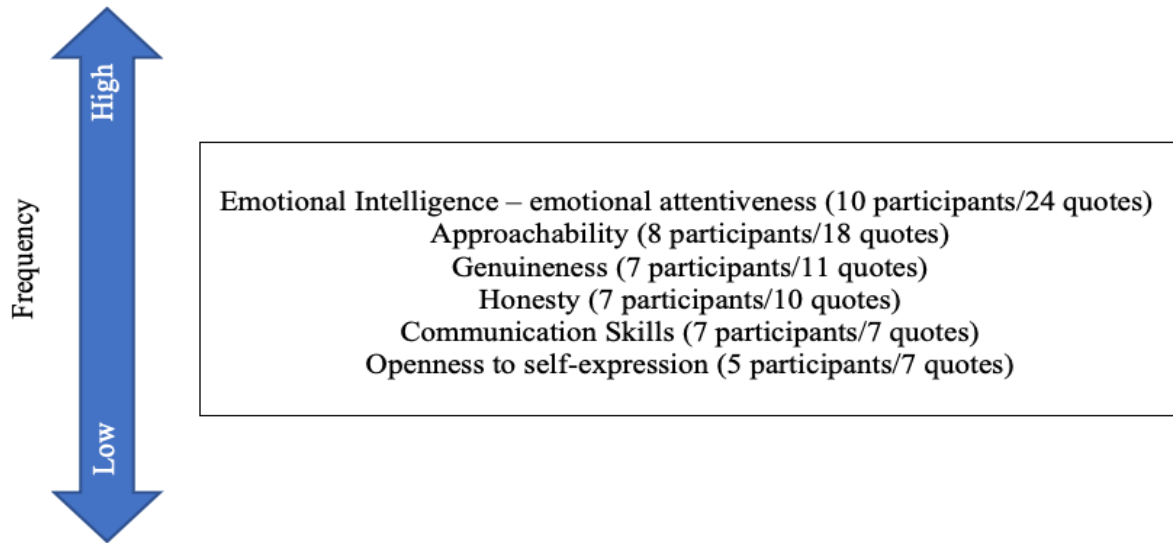
### **Transparent Leader Characteristics**

Although scholars have discussed important elements of transparent leadership (e.g., Houser et al., 2014; Mamaril, 2021; Vogelgesang & Lester, 2009), a review of the relevant literature did not reveal a clear list of characteristics that are key to transparent leadership. Instead, the few identified are typically combined with a list of behaviors or outcomes (e.g., Bennis et al., 2008; Mamaril, 2021). The results of the analyses described transparent leaders as having any of a number of key characteristics, including several elements of EI: emotional

attentiveness, approachability, communication skills, genuineness, honesty, and openness to self-expression. These characteristics were identified under the themes of leader interpersonal skills and personality traits, enabling them to develop relationships with followers and help predict future behavior. The most common transparent leader characteristics are described in Figure 7:

**Figure 7**

***Transparent Leader Characteristics***



***Leader Interpersonal Skills***

Three transparent leader characteristics were identified under the theme of leader interpersonal skills, including EI: emotional attentiveness, approachability, and communication skills. These characteristics were considered interpersonal (social) skills that leaders possess that lend themselves to connecting and building relationships with others: being able to sense the emotions of others, followers feeling comfortable going to them for information, and having the ability to effectively communicate with others.

Transparent leaders were most often characterized as having elements of EI (Gardner, 1993; Gardner & Hatch, 1989; Goleman 1996, 1997; Salovey & Mayer, 1990), specifically,

emotional attentiveness, the ability to read emotions in others, to observe how followers respond to information received or others' behavior, and intuitively adjust their behavior to help ensure a more positive outcome to their interactions. Participants described these behaviors as the ability to “read between the lines” or “read the room” and understand what followers really mean in what they say, even if they are not explicit in the words they use.

EI has yet to be linked in literature to transparent leader characteristics, but EI has been widely discussed in literature. It has been stated that EI may be an antecedent of transformational leadership. Goleman (1997) provided a useful definition of the construct of EI, including (a) knowing what you are feeling and being able to handle those feelings without having them swamp you; (b) being able to motivate yourself to get jobs done, be creative and perform at your peak; and (c) sensing what others are feeling, and handling relationships effectively. According to Goleman (1997), the third element of EI appears to be closely related to how participants described it during the interviews, with leaders sensing how followers are feeling and adjusting their behavior to help ensure a positive outcome or handling those relationships effectively. Others described elements of EI that also closely match those shared by the participants (Dulewicz & Higgs, 2000), including (a) discern and respond appropriately to the moods, temperaments, and motivations of others (Gardner, 1993); (b) recognizing emotions in others (Salovey & Mayer, 1990); and (c) recognizing and responding to people's feelings and concerns, as well as insights into other's feelings, emotions and concerns (Gardner & Hatch, 1989).

EI has been positively associated with transformational leadership behaviors (Barling et al., 2000; Brown & Moshavi, 2005; Kim & Kim, 2017; Lindebaum & Cartwright, 2010). Leaders higher in EI are more likely to engage in transformational leadership behaviors. Barling et al. (2000) conducted an empirical study that showed that EI is associated with three

dimensions of transformational leadership: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, and individualized consideration. Kim and Kim (2017) conducted a meta-analysis of 20 empirical studies and found that studies provide empirical support for the relationship between EI and transformational leadership, with similar conclusions about the connections to the three dimensions of transformational leadership. Brown and Moshavi (2005) and Lindebaum and Cartwright (2010) used applied research to identify the positive relationship between EI and transformational leadership and that the former may be an antecedent to the latter.

Several participants described EI as the ability of the leader to sense the emotions of others and “read the room.” This description of EI, emotional attentiveness, is unique and much different than what was discussed in prior research studies (Barling et al., 2000; Brown & Moshavi, 2005; Kim & Kim, 2017; Lindebaum & Cartwright, 2010), as it is centered on sensing the emotions of others, not the leader, and then reacting appropriately to facilitate the conversation and further develop relationships. The above definition of EI is focused more on the ability of the leader to perceive, understand, and manage their emotions (and that of others) to accomplish personal and collective goals (Brown & Moshavi, 2005).

Participants described their perspectives on EI and the potential impact of its use, including the ability of EI to able to see what is going on in a room, or being able to “read the room” (L003); being able to “read between the lines” (L023); and bringing to mind a transparent leader who taught them the importance of EI (L024). Exemplar quotes are included:

I'm pretty passionate about the whole idea of emotional intelligence. It's an intelligence that can grow and in leaders it needs to grow, and transparency has a big piece in that, around kind of looking. So there's transparency that might be happening all the time and people aren't paying attention to it. I can be in a leadership room and I can watch how people are interacting with data and each other and feeling. And someone else can sit right next to me and not notice or look for any of that. And some of that is about a skill set you can develop, some of it is about being a lot more intentional about here's what I see in the room, that

increases the transparency for everyone, even if they didn't see it themselves. So I think building emotional intelligence skills in your leader, and helping them feel comfortable with candor that leads with caring, and clarity, helps increase everyone's visibility to what's going on.

Participant L003 – Executive, Community Health

I think also the sharing of information, but also really listening to what people [say], how they respond to the information that you're sharing, that's another behavior. Maybe in that vein, also being skilled at reading between the lines, you know, what people aren't necessarily responding to or questioning, and kind of drawing out the individuals who might be more introverted or less likely to ask questions.

Participant L023 – Senior Systems Manager, Revenue Cycle

She definitely led with, like I said, emotional intelligence. And that was a big one, especially for me coming in, because I really had the effectiveness, I was definitely very effective. But I wasn't really impactful in that moment. And so I don't think I had the impact because I didn't have the emotional intelligence. It was, I'm given a directive, my team needs to lead in this way as well, this is what you have got to do. And it kind of, it doesn't motivate people. And so I think she was able to help me understand what emotional intelligence is. And that was able to help me, in a way I feel like [I'm being] transparent with my team and the leaders that I supervise now.

Participant L024 – Site Manager, Community Health

Transparent leaders were described as possessing approachability; followers feel comfortable going to them for information without fear of negative consequences, such as being dismissed or embarrassed. They are accessible, making themselves available with an open-door policy and being willing to take a phone call to have a quick conversation. They have an ease about themselves, sharing stories or experiences easily, and are able to naturally comfort followers through difficult conversations.

Approachability has yet to be linked in the literature to transparent leader characteristics, but may be considered analogous with agreeableness, one of the six personality trait factors of the HEXACO model of personality structure and one of the factors of the widely researched Big Five or Five-Factor models (Ashton & Lee, 2005; Ashton & Lee, 2007). In the HEXACO model, agreeableness was portrayed as patient, tolerant, peaceful, mild, agreeable, lenient, and gentle,

with a theoretical interpretation of reciprocal altruism, which is very different than what the participants shared about approachability (Ashton & Lee, 2007).

Participants shared their perspectives on transparent leaders who they describe as approachable, who have an ease about themselves, that they are comfortable with who they are and can make followers comfortable interacting with them (L002); someone who is easy to talk to and can feel comfortable going to them for the truth (L004); and someone that is available and that you can count on them to be there for you (L010). Exemplar quotes are provided:

I would describe them as, they have an ease about themselves. And I don't mean it's casual, they're just comfortable [with] being able to share information. Even if they don't know exactly what it is, because there are some things you don't know the answer to, right? Or you don't know what the future is, there might be something happening, but you don't know exactly all the details. But I think those leaders can be, what I've seen, is that they're just comfortable. And can share a story easily or comfort people, even in the next step of the decision that's being made, even if that next step is something that we all know is going to be kind of painful. But they can do that in a very professional way. It just seems to come natural to them versus a robotic response.

Participant L002 – Executive Director, Specialty Services

They're easy to talk with and work with. You don't feel that kind of trepidation or nervousness of speaking with them. It could be because it's just, it's easy. And they're going to be truthful and honest with you, you know that you're getting honesty. And if they can't tell you something, they truly can't tell you something. It's not that they're trying to hide it from you, [it's] that they truly don't know or can't tell you when they're transparent. And people want to work for them, people want to have a transparent leader. People will apply for every job that comes available, they want to be with that leader.

Participant L004 – District Director, Primary & Specialty Care

He was also very available as well, like he always made sure we understood that no matter what he was doing, if we had questions or concerns, we could always bring it to him. And I think that helped really cement, especially in retrospect, that trust that we had in him as a leader and that we knew that he was always [there] with us. He was always transparent with that, because if we had questions or concerns, he would go into it. I mean, he never communicated or acted in a manner that we felt that he was unapproachable or that if we brought something to him that we may be crossing the line, but maybe get in trouble, right?

Participant L010 – Business Director, Community Health



Transparent leaders were represented as having communication skills, described as the ability to effectively communicate with others in multiple ways (e.g., one-on-one, in large groups, email). It is the ability to share information with followers in a clear and meaningful way, having a sense of knowing how to deliver it depending on the audience and the circumstances. Communication skills have been linked to leadership in the literature (Hackman & Johnson, 2013; Jiang & Luo, 2017; Norman et al., 2020), but have yet to be linked to transparent leader characteristics. Hackman and Johnson (2013) used applied research to suggest that the development of leadership communication skills is an ongoing process, not a single event, as leadership development unfolds step by step. As leaders, we increase our leadership competence as we increase our communication skills.

Open communication or communication transparency has been linked to transparent leadership characteristics and has historically been viewed as an important ingredient for effective organizations; more open communication has been associated with higher levels of honesty, effective listening, trust, supportiveness, and frankness (Rogers, 1987). Considering the organizational context, communication openness has been defined as message sending and receiving behaviors of leaders, followers, and peers about task, personal, and innovative topics. As a result, communication openness revolves around each individual being receptive to and then responsive to the information shared by others in the organization (Norman et al., 2010). In the context of leadership research, open communication involves both leaders and followers in how they exchange information with each other and the quality of their respective relationships.

The participants recalled transparent leaders with communication skills that they have worked with as someone that is a clear communicator, ensuring followers know what is expected and that they have the information they need (L014); someone with fantastic communication

skills, using multiple forms of communication to ensure followers had the information they needed (L019); and someone with good communication skills that is able to determine the most appropriate way to communicate with followers (L023). Exemplar quotes are provided:

I guess another characteristic I will say about transparent leaders is they are clear communicators. They express what they want to see happen, or what the goal is. They're coming [out] in the communication and it's going to be among leadership, and the staff is going to be very similar, maybe it's tailored to the audience. But it's not going to be like we have the secrets that we are discussing and the rest of the world doesn't need to know. [It's] very open, very transparent. In what I know, I'm going to tell you, as long as I'm able and is legal for me to share, but I'm going to share as much as I know.

Participant L014 – Corporate Officer, Community Health

A fantastic communicator in multiple different forms. Even if the leader wasn't 100% sure that it was applicable to you [they] send it your way, just to make sure he wasn't missing anything. And then ask, if this isn't something that is meaningful to you, let me know and I won't send it to you every month anymore, that type of thing. And I felt fully informed on what was happening with the organization, where I needed to work, what my goals were, where I was falling behind, possibly. And it was done without judgment, even with constructive criticism. It was easy to take because the way it was presented was around growth and improvement. Not just hiding it in the background until springing [it] on you you're doing this wrong. And that's where the transparency piece comes in for me.

Participant L019 – Director, Rehabilitative Services

Good communication skills. So, how they're able to relay information and I think a big one too, is the format that's chosen. Do you send out an email to folks? Do you meet with them one-on-one as a group setting? Availability. So if people do have questions later on, they feel like they can come back and ask you about the information you're relating.

Participant L023 – Senior Systems Manager, Revenue Cycle

### ***Leader Personality Traits***

Three transparent leader characteristics were identified under the theme of leader personality traits: genuineness, honesty, and openness to self-expression. These were determined to be consistent and enduring characteristics that leaders possess that reflect their personality and help enable their future behaviors by always being themselves, truthful in sharing information, and willing to express their thoughts and feelings.

Transparent leaders were characterized as having genuineness, being consistently true to themselves and allowing followers to know who they are and what to expect from them. These leaders are real, not fake, and followers can take them at face value. They behave the same regardless of whether it is a one-on-one conversation or they are in front of a large group of people. Genuineness has yet to be linked in literature to transparent leader characteristics, although it may be considered as analogous to authenticity, which can be defined as owning one's personal experiences and behaving in accordance with their true self (Harter, 2002). Authenticity has also been widely researched as part of authentic leadership (Gardner et al., 2005; Jiang & Luo, 2018; Walumbwa et al., 2008), which is expressed as a pattern of leader behaviors that draws upon and promotes positive psychological capacities and an ethical climate (Walumbwa et al., 2008).

Participants shared their thoughts about transparent leaders as genuine by describing someone that is caring and empathetic (L002); sharing their observations of leaders interacting with followers (L009); and portraying a transparent leader as genuine by using an analogy, comparing it to them cooking at home (L024). Exemplar quotes are provided:

Genuine, [transparent leaders] they're genuine. They seem to be caring. There's business that needs to be done, but there's also a level of compassion at the same time. And I think ... transparent leaders are those that can show both empathy at the time, and then also share with them that we do it like this or [acknowledge] that must be hard, and here's what we need to do.

Participant L002 – Executive Director, Specialty Services

So yeah, there was a genuineness to those folks. And walking the talk was definitely something that, even in those large gatherings, how they interacted with people, how they came to meet people where they were, at their level. Yeah, I think that [quality] was a big piece.

Participant L009 – Assistant Administrator, Primary Care

I love to cook. So I'm thinking of, when you cook onions, you cook them until they're transparent, which is almost see through, so I think that is kind of what is its meaning. So I think it's a manager or supervisor or leader that you just know

what you're getting out of someone, that you can see and you know immediately what type of leader that they are. Someone that you know, here's [Participant's name] and here's I know what I'm gonna get out of [Participant's name]. I know what kind of leader she is.

Participant L024 – Site Manager, Community Health

Transparent leaders were depicted as possessing honesty, or as truthful in the sharing of information with followers. They do not just tell followers what they want to hear, they can be counted on to tell the truth. These leaders do not leave followers second-guessing, so they can act on the information they receive from them. Honesty has been defined as being open and honest about all things, dealing fairly with others, and inviting greater investment in their companies (Baum, 2005; Bennis et al., 2008; Vogelgesang & Lester, 2009). Honesty has been linked in the literature to transparent leader characteristics (Bennis et al., 2008; Yukl, 2013). Still, even when this characteristic is tied to transparent leadership, it has yet to be empirically tested.

Participants described transparent leaders as honest by sharing its importance and the challenges followers face when they work for a leader who is not honest (L011); sharing the challenges they have faced when they cannot trust what a leader has said to them (L023); and that the most important trait to their leader is honesty (L025). Exemplar quotes are provided:

If I don't trust a leader, it's just hard to fulfill my duties. I'm always going to be second guessing and sometimes I might hide something [from them]. I will work my best and I will deliver a great outcome, [but] if I work with a leader who's honest and trustworthy, they will tell me if I'm failing.

Participant L011 – Business Director, Community Health

I think the honesty is really important, because if people don't feel like the information you're sharing is true and factual, then the whole thing just sort of goes down the drain. I don't think there's much you can recover from after that.

Participant L023 – Senior Systems Manager, Revenue Cycle

It kind of goes back to my question in my interview with my boss, is what character trait is the most important to you? And I know that she had to think about it. But I resonated with it, and that was honesty. I think that one just stands above the others. You know, obviously, this is about transparency. And so how transparent can two leaders be with each other.

## Participant L025 – Director, Pharmacy Operations

Openness to self-expression was utilized to define transparent leaders, the willingness to freely express themselves, allow others to do the same and consider their thoughts, and engage in honest conversation. Followers are allowed to speak their minds, so they can feel heard and engage in meaningful dialogue with their leader. They take the time to explain topics or provide answers to questions without using an organizational script (i.e., telling followers just what the organization wants them to hear). Openness to self-expression has not been linked in the literature to transparent leader characteristics, although openness to experience is described in the HEXACO model as intellectual, creative, unconventional, innovative, and ironic, with a theoretical interpretation of engagement in idea-related endeavors (Ashton & Lee, 2007). This is much different than what was described by the participants for openness to self-expression. Openness to experience is one of the six personality trait factors of the HEXACO model of personality structure and one of the factors of the widely researched Five-Factor model, but it is not part of the Big Five model (Ashton & Lee, 2005; Ashton & Lee, 2007).

Participants described the characteristic of openness for transparent leaders and how it made them feel (L002); by sharing an example of a leader and follower freely expressing themselves (L006); and using the rolling out of a new company policy as an example of openness (L012). Exemplar quotes are provided:

Because the leader could express that I was on the right track ... you meet with them and they're transparent about it, so you can have a good dialogue back and forth about what's happening and be open about it. And maybe even with your struggles with doing something. And they can acknowledge [they hear you and] maybe if you need help, you can ask them for that, or they can give you advice. And then you just feel good about the project that you're doing or the communication that needs to happen because you've had a good interaction from your leader about it. And that interaction included being honest and open, and being able to share ideas back and forth. And then I think that translates into feeling good and valued about the work that you're doing.

Participant L002 – Executive Director, Specialty Services

I would say openness. And what I mean by that is someone who shares information or someone who listens very well. And if you take questions to him, they're going to have answers for you, or get back to you, or help you guide you to who you need to talk with. So I think openness in a leader is one of those qualities.

Participant L006 – Director, Revenue Cycle

I think it was openness, in terms of being open to questions about things and then taking the time to explain things outside of the kind of corporate political explanations I get. Like a new policy rolls out, I think part of transparency is interpreting that for people on the ground versus it just sitting there in corporate ease or legalese. So that's what stood out for me for this person.

Participant L012 – Business Director, Community Health

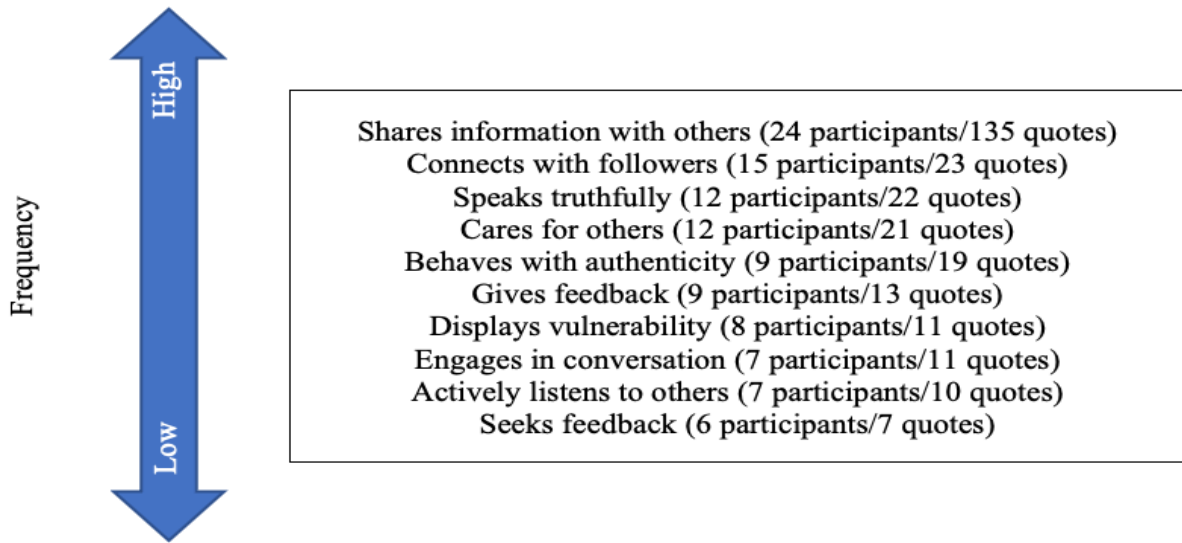
### **Transparent Leader Behaviors**

Relevant literature discussing transparent leadership identified several key behaviors of transparent leadership (Norman et al., 2010; Vogelgesang & Lester, 2009; Yi et al., 2017), such as sharing relevant information with followers, giving and receiving feedback, and openly communicating with followers. Leader behaviors are, at times, combined with characteristics or outcomes. For example, when discussing transparent leaders, Bennis et al. (2008) state that transparency encompasses “candor, integrity, honesty, ethics, clarity, full disclosure, legal compliance and all that enables us to deal fairly with each other” (p. 19), which is a list that could be considered as including characteristics, behaviors, and outcomes.

The transparent leader behaviors described by participants included shares information with others, gives and seeks feedback, connects with followers, cares for others, speaks truthfully, behaves with authenticity, displays vulnerability, engages in conversation, and actively listens to others. The most common transparent leader behaviors are shown in Figure 8.

**Figure 8**

***Transparent Leader Behaviors***



***Leader Information Exchange***

Three transparent leader behaviors were identified under the theme of leader information exchange: shares information with others, gives feedback, and seeks feedback. These behaviors describe the leader’s exchange of information with others and the impact of these exchanges on the leader-follower relationship.

Shares information with others was used to describe transparent leaders the most often, including timely, accurate, and relevant information without oversharing (i.e., too much information). They also share what they think, as well as the vision and the rationale behind decisions. The preference is for information to be shared in person, during video calls, or by phone, with one-on-one and regularly scheduled leadership forums lauded as very effective means for leaders to use.

Theories advanced by leadership scholars as part of applied research suggest that sharing relevant information with followers is one of the behaviors demonstrated by transparent leaders

(Vogelgesang & Lester, 2009; Yi et al., 2017). Thus far, even in instances where this behavior is conceptually connected to transparent leadership, it has not been empirically tested.

Participants depicted their thoughts on transparent leaders sharing information and its potential impact, including keeping each other informed so that they can minimize surprises or proactively engage with them if needed (L003); describing the challenges they have when trying to do their job without all the information they need to be successful (L004); and providing their insight into the process of how decisions are made can help make followers feel more connected to the broader organization and its goals (L005). Exemplar quotes are provided:

I'm thinking of my two regional leaders, and each one of them has something that I appreciate. I feel like, it helps our relationship that helps me know how to help them and helps me feel not surprised. One of them is really good, it's just a heads up to me. Something comes up and they're like, I think [participant name] should know about this. And so they have thought about me and they tell me whether they need me or don't need me, or when they want to talk about it, or what they're doing about it, but just thought I should know. And that may seem like a CYA type activity. But I think it's actually really respectful. And it also gives me an idea of what they're dealing with in the moment that we didn't talk about it or at huddle this week, it just happened. And it prevents me from being blindsided and it gives me an opportunity to contribute if I think that there's something I have to contribute.

Participant L003 – Executive, Community Health

If you don't have all the information, it's very difficult to be successful in any organization. And for a transparent leader, they want you to be successful. I really don't [know what] someone who is not transparent is looking for, but maybe they want the organization to be successful. But I struggle with them thinking that they're going to have their team be successful if they're hiding behind some of the information. So it's knowing, a transparent leader, they will give you the information that you need to do your job and be successful in it.

Participant L004 – District Director, Primary & Specialty Care

It's when a leader understands the environment within and the micro cultures within their team and the broader organization, or provide insight into how decisions are made in a way that makes people feel connected to the broader organization and the goals of the organization.

Participant L005 – Executive Director, Medical Specialties



Gives feedback was utilized to define transparent leaders as consistently offering constructive feedback to followers, without judgment, as well as to other leaders. They proactively share information in a supportive environment, with the intent to praise as well as help facilitate learning and growth, celebrate or improve performance, and refine organizational processes. They provide guidance and recommendations on how to make improvements or resolve outstanding issues. Giving feedback has been theoretically linked to transparent leadership and improved follower outcomes, such as increased follower trust in the leader, follower engagement, follower performance, and enhanced attention at work (Huang et al., 2014; Vogelgesang & Lester, 2009; Yi, 2017). Yet, even when this behavior is tied to transparent leadership, it has not been empirically tested.

Participants recounted their experiences of getting feedback from transparent leaders and what that meant to them, including how it helped them to contribute to the mission of the organization (L001); how getting feedback from their leader made a significant difference in how they worked together and how it developed a sense of trust in that leader (L003); and how they considered this leader a role model by her willingness to provide helpful feedback and how much they appreciated the leader for it (L004). Exemplar quotes are provided:

I would say that they were able to share the vision for the work and my role in it, and give clear feedback that was helpful in helping me achieve that. So here's why that didn't work. Here's why that did work. Here's [how] you are building that kind of knowledge base of how to show up at work, how to actually help the organization [or] Team X move forward.

Participant L001 – Director, Community Health Access

And they cared and that I was in a safe place to learn and grow. Thinking back to one of the leaders I had at [previous organization], and it's probably the first time I'd actually had a leader that had a lot of candor. What they saw in me, what they saw that was working well, but they saw, I might want to think about doing differently, there was a lot of feedback. And it was all clearly intended to help me do well. And they spent a fair amount of time sharing their thinking. And that was helpful in me understanding them, this is the way they work. This is how I can

complement or support their thinking and their work. And this is how we divide and conquer. And so there, it created a sense of trust, and of having a pretty good idea about where she was going and how I linked in with that. And that made me feel more secure.

Participant L003 – Executive, Community Health

The other thing she was really good at is providing feedback. I always knew from her when I mis-stepped, or when I could improve. And she would bring me into her office. And it was not in a way that you felt it was punitive, it was in a way that you felt you could grow. But she wouldn't hide, she wouldn't not talk about it with you, she wants you to grow and learn. She would bring me in all the time, just talk about, next time you do something like this, let's talk about how you can do it better. Next time you present, let's talk about how you can present better. I don't feel like she ever had trepidation about giving feedback like some leaders do. Some leaders really have a hard time giving feedback. And then you step all over yourself, and you don't find out until they let you go, I've never been let go, but I've seen it before, you [don't] know what you've been doing wrong this whole time. And that was not her. And I felt like that was very transparent too, and like I said, she was really one of the models, the leader model that I use, and I do the same.

Participant L004 – District Director, Primary & Specialty Care

Seeks feedback was applied to represent transparent leaders, those looking for an opportunity to learn from followers and to gain their insight. They want to know what followers think about the organization, including initiatives that will impact them, to identify any concerns or issues that need to be addressed. Applied research studies have linked receiving (seeking) feedback to transparent leadership behaviors that can create conditions to allow for creativity, advancement of implemented procedures, and could have a profound effect on a firm's bottom line (Ji & Hong, 2022; Norman et al., 2010; Vogelgesang & Lester, 2009; Zhang et al., 2011). However, behaviors that have been connected to transparent leadership have not been empirically tested.

Participants shared their thoughts about transparent leaders seeking feedback from followers, including the importance of seeking feedback from followers and taking the opportunity to learn from them too (L004); describing an example of a transparent leader reaching out to followers for their input on running operations (L009); and describing the

importance of seeking feedback from followers when implementing organizational initiatives

(L010). Exemplar quotes are provided:

I try to bring my team in and give them open and honest feedback. And I ask for it back. I know that I can learn from my team just as much as they can learn from me. So open and honest feedback, I think is very important in transparent leadership.

Participant L004 – District Director, Primary & Specialty Care

Transparency is, here's where we're sitting right now, this is a challenge. It's a really big challenge and here are some of the things we're already thinking about and we want to hear from you. What are other things we can do? So who can paint the picture and, in painting the picture, share their personal investment, their personal story, in how they're engaging to help move us to the next phase, or how they're engaging in celebration for what we've accomplished.

Participant L009 – Assistant Administrator, Primary Care

If we're making decisions on something that's going to impact [staff], like our front office personnel, before it gets even implemented, I think that it's best to go and get feedback from the personnel that's it's going to impact. Also relate to them the rationale behind it, especially if it's something that we have to do that may not be a popular decision. I'll take my concerns up and if it's still something that needs to be done, then I think transparent leadership is all about ensuring that people understand the rationale behind the decisions, how it's going to impact them. And being open to that feedback that they give.

Participant L010 – Business Director, Community Health

### ***Leader Relationship Building***

Two transparent leader behaviors were identified under the theme of leader relationship building: connects with followers and cares for others. These behaviors were considered ones that describe leaders in the development of their relationships with followers and other stakeholders.

Connects with followers was used to illustrate transparent leaders, including connecting on a personal level, sharing personal information about themselves, and opening the door to get to know a follower better as a person. They intentionally strive to build strong relationships with followers over time, with the mutual sharing of information, and strengthening the lines of

communication between leader and follower. Connects to followers has yet to be linked in the literature to transparent leader behaviors, although the predominant approach to developing leader-follower relationships is embodied in LMX theory (Dansereau et al., 1975; Dimotakis et al., 2023; Gerstner & Day, 1997; Graen et al., 1982; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995), which has extensively provided valuable contributions to the literature.

Participants expressed insights into transparent leaders connecting with followers, including sharing their insight into the importance of making a connection with followers on their teams (L005); describing why transparent leaders are more able to connect with followers than leaders who are not transparent (L012); and describing a transparent leader that they felt was very skilled at connecting with followers (L024). Exemplar quotes are provided:

So there's also the ability to connect and not overshare, but at least build a connection of what's happening in their lives, which then creates a connection and understanding of what's happening within their employees' lives. I think that's really critical to then be able to step in and understand when someone might be struggling at work. Because you have a human connection with them that isn't just work related. And that again, also leads to trust because you have that shared connection and understanding of what makes people tick and what are their challenges outside of work and how can you as a leader, help them.

Participant L005 – Executive Director, Medical Specialties

I think there's, as a leader, there's always a professional distance you have to have as a leader, but I also think that the most transparent leaders have as close a connection as possible with the people that report to them in terms of being able to understand what's going on with their team to understand who needs to ask additional questions, and clarify things versus who doesn't ... but I think it's that connection with the team that helps them be transparent versus folks who are less connected.

Participant L012 – Business Director, Community Health

She's kind of in a way a chameleon, able to adapt her style to whoever she's talking to, and find something that she's able to connect with. Whoever, no matter what background they came from, there's always something she's able to kind of connect with them on and have a little bit of a bond to build that relationship between a good leader and direct report, or even just a peer coworker in the building.

Participant L024 – Site Manager, Community Health

Cares for others was utilized to describe transparent leaders as caring on a personal level, as well as caring about the futures of all stakeholders, and wanting them to be successful. They show empathy in their interactions with others, striving to understand their concerns and how to help support them. They also want to ensure their followers and teams have what they need to do their work, including the right information, tools, and resources.

Even though cares for others has yet to be linked in the literature to transparent leader behaviors, it appears to be related to the transformational leadership dimension of individualized consideration. This dimension relates to a leader that serves as a constant source of emotional support and demonstration of personal care, empathy, and sensitivity to the development needs of employees (Garcia-Morales et al., 2012; Men & Bowen, 2017; Wang et al., 2011).

Participants described the impact of working with a transparent leader that cares about others, such as followers trusting the leader and doing their very best for them (L013); explaining its importance in helping followers be successful (L021); and expressing the personal impact of working with a transparent leader that cares about others (L025). Exemplar quotes are provided:

I think the genuine interest in the person that works for you, I think is the most important, because there is an inherent advantage in that when people know that you really care about them beyond the business, then I think they do their best and there is no measure of what my best can be once I trust you. I have a leader that I want to work for, then you have it all. It's not to measure that output to say, how productive can they be? No, once you establish that trust, the sky is the limit, that person would do their absolute best for you.

Participant L013 – Director, Surgical Specialties

I think there's that sense of trust that's granted to individuals. And in order to allow them to be successful, again, there's a, and you hate to say it, and I know some people like are like, oh, you know, that actually caring for people as individuals and wanting them to be successful? I think it's really important from a leadership standpoint, and I don't think we've talked enough about it, it's almost taboo, that there would be any kind of personal connection or relationship with

the people that you lead. We're so, you know, the whole idea of that we separate our home lives, from our work lives, and all that kind of stuff that never really existed, either. But I do think in organizations where leadership is done well, the leaders care about the success of the people that they're leading, and want to make sure that they have the information, the tools, the resources, that they need to be successful.

Participant L021 – Executive, Information Systems Solutions

I remember, even with [previous leader], when my father died, that when I shared it with her, she was very caring, and empathetic with me, and I felt safe to share a little bit about, who my dad was, and what he meant to me. And I think the beauty of that was, she got to know me better. But she also was able to support me during the grief process. You know, hey, take as much time as you need. And so I felt very safe with her. And so I was able to be even more transparent with her when things weren't going as well as I had hoped. But also celebrating the wins with that leader. He's a unique leader. There's not too many guys like him in leadership. He just loves people, and being able to work under somebody who really can understand teamwork, and family, and the importance of people. It's been huge. It's been huge.

Participant L025 – Director, Pharmacy Operations

### ***Leader Relational Transparency***

Five transparent leader behaviors were identified under the theme of leader relational transparency: speaks truthfully, behaves with authenticity, displays vulnerability, engages in conversation, and actively listens to others. These behaviors describe leaders being transparent in their relationships with others.

Speaks truthfully was a description used for transparent leaders, those who share information truthfully with others and instill confidence in the message they are delivering. They provide straightforward answers to questions, helping ensure quality interactions and opening two-way lines of communication. Followers find them believable. Speaks truthfully has not specifically been linked in the literature to transparent leader behaviors, but may be considered as analogous with candor, which has been linked in applied research literature to transparent leader behaviors (Bennis et al., 2008). Candor has been described in terms of telling the truth, encouraging people to speak the truth to power and practicing having unpleasant conversations

(O'Toole & Bennis, 2009), or being direct, open, and straightforward, often associated with sincerity and honesty (Baltzley & Lawrence, 2016). Still, even when this behavior is tied to transparent leadership, it has yet to be empirically tested.

Participants shared examples of transparent leaders speaking honestly with followers and how that communication can help them manage the business (L006); how it can help followers work through challenges that may challenge personal values (L009); and recalling a past leader that spoke honestly and how he helped them resolve issues they may have had with senior leadership (L010). Exemplar quotes are provided:

Transparent leadership to me is someone who will be honest and thorough in the communication about everything that we need to know, to manage our business. What's coming in the future? What's happening in the current state? And I think I always, something I always say is, it's not what you know, it's who you know, because no one has all the answers, but you need to be able to help close the gaps, communicate, learn, educate, by using all the resources you have at your fingertips. So transparent leadership becomes being honest about I don't have all the answers, but I'm really here to help in any way that I can. And then following through on that.

Participant L006 – Director, Revenue Cycle

So at least within the framework of working with managers ... it's that, what's most effective is when I can say to them, look, I don't agree with this either. Here's why we have to do it. And often, I will have, if it's something that I know is really hard for somebody, because sometimes it borders on people's personal, ethical issues. I will say, look, you may need to make a decision, is this still the right place for me? You know, I get it, it is the right place for me, I'm going to live with this. I don't fully agree with it. I voiced my concerns, I will, as we go through it, if there are challenges, I will voice that. If it's really that, so that level of that kind of transparency to be able to say to somebody, you need to think what's important to you. And, can you live with this? And ultimately, with any staff person, because you're being transparent about lots of different things. But the hard things are the big key things to the organization, because all of this is based on being in a healthcare organization, a non-profit that is serving lives. And that so we really are mission-driven, we're not profit-driven, we're mission-driven. And our mission is to improve the health of the community that we live in. So that, if there's a bias, that's the underneath bias. And so being able to say, you know, I hear what you're saying, this is a hard one, you may need to think about whether this is still where you want to be or not. If you want to, I'm there with you. If you're not, then I'll help you there too.

Participant L009 – Assistant Administrator, Primary Care

Sometimes you don't want to say something to your boss, but as long as we're professional about it, I mean, he was always willing to be transparent with us. And he also, I mean, if you felt that we had a good point, but that the job still needs to be done in the manner in which it was presented. That was really transparent too as a label, because even he would agree, like, you know what, I hear what you're saying. And I do agree, however, this is the reason why we have to do it this way. And maybe next time we can try a different route. But, you know, this is the way things are. And this is where we've got to get it done. So that was also that honesty in that communication was really appreciated, it really kind of cemented in my mind, is a transparent leader.

Participant L010 – Business Director, Community Health

Behaves with authenticity was applied to transparent leaders who added a personalized approach to interactions. Leaders' non-verbal cues match verbal communication when relating to others, signaling that the message is truthful and not fake. They share from the heart, at times letting true emotion affect their voice as they speak to show that they are being genuine. Behaves with authenticity has yet to be linked in the literature to transparent leader behaviors, although it appears to be like the relational transparency dimension of authentic leadership. Expressing true thoughts and feelings (Avolio et al., 2009) and presenting one's genuine self through selective self-disclosure (Gardner et al., 2005) are like the participant descriptions for behaves with authenticity, such as non-verbal cues signaling that the message is true and not fake, and sharing of the heart and letting true emotions show they are being genuine.

Participants related their views on transparent leaders behaving with authenticity by matching their nonverbal cues with what they're saying to their followers (L018); sharing the importance of a leader behaving with authenticity and its impact on followers, as well as the risk of not being genuine (L019); and expressing their thoughts on what they appreciate about a leader behaving with authenticity and recounting a positive experience with their leaders as they went through the recent pandemic together (L025). Exemplar quotes are provided:



It kind of comes back to that, they're not telling you that everything is honky dory with a giant smile on their face. Right. It's like matching their nonverbal and verbal communication. So if they're talking about something serious, or you know, they're serious in the way that they're doing it, but not in a purposely fearful way.

Participant L018 – Clinic Manager, Primary Care

Because if the people that you're leading are not engaged with you, you're not going to get anywhere with your communication, it will, for the most part, be ignored or discounted. And how do you get them to be engaged, you're genuine? They know that what you say is your truth, and that you care about them. And you can deliver not so easy things to people who know that you care, and they'll accept it much easier than if you're just one that the leader in the white tower that is putting down edicts. So you can be the most transparent as far as just information in the world, but if it's not genuine, and you don't care about the people that you're providing the information to, it's just not going to land anywhere.

Participant L019 – Director, Rehabilitative Services

I think all leaders attempt to come across confident and polished. And that sometimes can be discovered, like, you're a little too polished, you're a little too, you sound like you kind of have a little agenda. I really appreciate leaders who don't have a script. And can really dig into their own heart, be in touch with their own heart on how it matters to them. That's what comes across a message that it's from the heart. And I really appreciated them. A good example, when we were going through the pandemic, both my boss and his boss did an amazing job, just helping us through that process, because it was very fluid. As you know, a lot of changes in health care, and they did everything you can to support it.

Participant 025 – Director, Pharmacy Operations

Displays vulnerability was used to describe transparent leaders who admit when they do not know an answer or what to do, and that they may need assistance to develop a plan of action or resolve an issue. They ask for input and guidance from others to arrive at the best possible decision. They subject themselves to potential criticism as they place a higher priority on the success of the team rather than themselves, to get to the right decision. Displays vulnerability has been mentioned in literature as being linked to transparent leadership (Vogelgesang & Lester, 2009), such as a leader making themselves vulnerable by sharing relevant and possibly sensitive

information with followers, thereby revealing trust. However, even in situations when this behavior is tied to transparent leadership, it has not been empirically tested.

Further, displays vulnerability appears to be related to the authentic leadership dimension of relational transparency, in that a leader presents one's authentic self to others and is willing to admit mistakes when they are made (Walumbwa et al., 2008). This description of relational transparency is like the description used for displays vulnerability, leaders subjecting themselves to potential criticism by admitting when they do not know an answer or when they need input.

Participants described transparent leaders as displaying vulnerability by role-modeling vulnerability with their followers. These behaviors included inviting them to also be vulnerable (L003); stating that there is vulnerability in being transparent, particularly during hard conversations with followers when letting personal feelings come out (L007); and expressing thoughts about a transparent leader displaying vulnerability with followers when admitting they may not have all the answers and that they need help (L022). Exemplar quotes are provided:

I think I've seen my leaders be vulnerable about how they're feeling. And, yet it may not make it be about them, but as a way to show that it's okay to talk about those things and to be vulnerable with each other, even as we try to figure out how to lift up the rest of our staff and get them through some of that burnout and hurt that they're experiencing coming out of the last couple of years. So those are a couple of things that I think of that, that I look for and appreciate.

Participant L003 – Executive, Community Health

I think there's some vulnerability over being transparent too. Because if you're transparent with the people that you work with ... all parts [including feelings] are going to come out. You can't be completely neutral in terms of your reaction. And so I think, demonstrating vulnerability and being able to kind of show that some of your personal feelings that you may not want other people to know, may come out.

Participant L007 – Director of Operations, Primary Care

Transparency is someone that can be vulnerable, and says, hey, I don't know, I don't know what to do, but we're here for one another. And if anyone has anything that they can share about whatever the circumstance, as is, share it. But it's really, really neat and key for a transparent leader is when someone is in that vulnerable

state, and doesn't mind sharing it and letting them know, hey, I'm a human too. And then I need to be heard. And I may not know that all the answers, but we're here to support one another.

Participant L022 – Business Manager, Pharmacy Services

Engages in conversation was applied to define transparent leaders who are present in the moment, not distracted, and look to ensure others are also engaged. They show that they are interested in and can relate to what is being said. Leaders explain the details behind their thinking to help ensure understanding and are receptive to answering questions. Engages in conversation has been linked in theoretical literature to transparent leader behaviors (Schwarz, 2010; Scott, 2016), defining transparent leadership as a productive sharing of essential and valuable information with stakeholders by engaging in open and honest dialogue that helps build trusting relationships. Thus far, behaviors that have been connected to transparent leader behaviors have not been empirically tested.

Participants describe how transparent leaders show they are engaged in conversation, conveying that they are present in the moment through non-verbal and verbal communication (L010); with listening and using facial expressions that match their level of engagement (L016); and not being distracted and ensuring that followers are engaged in the conversation (L019).

Exemplar quotes are provided:

They're very much present in the moment when they're interacting with other people. Not to the exclusion of other things that are happening, but they're very much there in the conversation. Like through nonverbal and verbal communication, they help relate that what you're saying really does matter, and it matters to them.

Participant L010 – Business Director, Community Health

I think that their actions are, they're engaged, they're listening and not distracted. When you're engaged, you lean forward, you want to hear about what the other person has to say. I would say that their facial expressions react to whatever you're telling them. And what I mean by that is, that if there was some bad news, [they] have those facial expressions that they've heard what you said, and they're listening to you.

Participant L016 – Clinic Administrator, Natural Health Center

They're engaged in the conversation, they're not checking their phone or checking their email, as conversations are going on, to listen to when it's important that maybe they have more information to share, right in the topic. And they are consistently looking to make sure that you're engaged when they're presenting information. So it's not just again, throwing information out there with nothing coming back. So if information is shared, they'll ask follow-up questions about it. But engagement is a strong word for me that comes to mind when I think of a transparent leader.

Participant L019 – Director, Rehabilitative Services

Actively listens to others was used to portray transparent leaders, those who do not interrupt and truly pay attention to what is being said by the follower. A leader's body language matches their interest in the conversation and communicates that they are listening to understand, and asking questions as needed. Actively listens to others has been linked in applied research literature to transparent leader behaviors, emphasizing the point of listening to followers to learn from them, and leaders respecting and listening to followers, enabling them to set a positive tone for an organizational culture (Baum, 2005; Bennis et al., 2008). Yet, even in instances where this behavior is tied to transparent leadership, it has not been empirically tested.

Participants relay their thoughts on the importance of listening to others and that it's hard to be a transparent leader if you're not listening to your followers (L002); describing a transparent leader as someone who listens more to followers and that you can tell from their body language that they're paying attention to what is being said (L011); and sharing their perspective that a transparent leader is someone that really listens and doesn't pretend to care about what is being said (L013). Exemplar quotes are provided:

And then I think, I'm going to put listening in there. Because I think you can't, it's hard to be transparent, if you are not listening to what people are telling you. Or what they're really wanting to know and so you have to understand that.

Participant L002 – Executive Director, Specialty Services

They try to listen more. And you can see from their body language, they don't interrupt people when they're talking to them. And I can also see that this leader, that values transparency, it's not always talking, right?

Participant L011 – Business Director, Community Health

And when they listen, you know that they are not phony about that. They are not listening just to ask you a question, they are really listening to understand. So there is just something about these people that you can take them up [on] having interacted with them for a while, you will know who they are. Because they're really that, they're not going to be polishing anything for the sake of just making you feel good about it. But it doesn't really mean anything. No, they really do care.

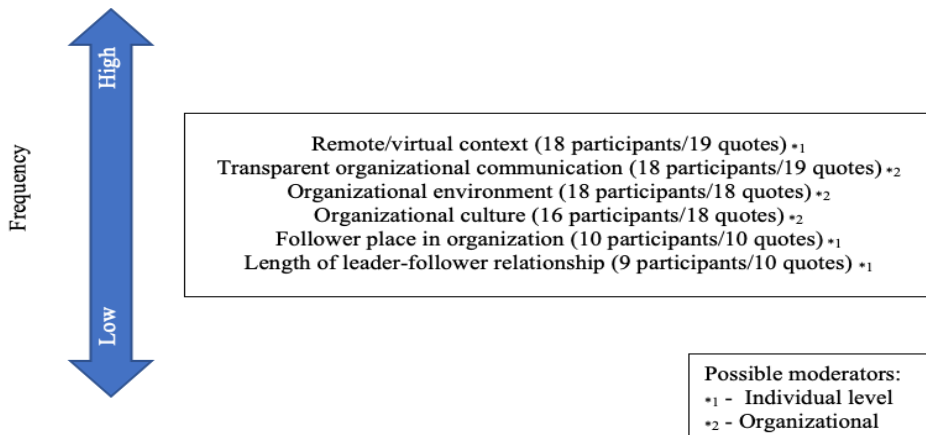
Participant L013 – Director, Surgical Specialties

### Potential Moderating Variables

The analyses revealed several specific contextual issues in which the relationships between transparent leader characteristics and behaviors are unique, as well as have a potential influence on the leader-follower relationship (Figure 9):

**Figure 9**

#### *Potential Moderating Variables*



#### *Context – Individual Level*

Three potential moderating influences were identified at the individual level, including (a) remote/virtual context (working outside of the traditional office environment); (b) follower

place in organization (level of position/title or work location); and (c) length of leader-follower relationship (amount of time follower has worked with leader). Since they were considered as potentially impacting only the leader and the follower, these contexts were deemed as influencing the leader-follower relationship at the individual level. They were described as having either a positive or a negative influence on the leader-follower relationship.

One of these contextual influences was the remote/virtual context, for which the participants described transparent leader behaviors as having a potential influence on the leader-follower relationship for followers working outside of the traditional office environment. The analysis results show that this variable operates as a moderator at the individual level, where transparent leader behaviors can have a positive impact on the leader-follower relationship. Yet, the leader has to be more deliberate in reaching out to followers working remotely to make a personal connection and keep them engaged, including face-to-face interactions, particularly making an upfront investment with new followers. It can be more challenging for a follower working remotely to feel connected or engaged, so it is important for a transparent leader to take the time to engage differently with them, including consistently connecting with them and by more than just email. Transparent leaders can schedule in-person events whenever possible so teams can interact, build those key relationships, and get to know each other better. If meeting in person is not possible, scheduling online meetings where the goal is simply to spend time together (e.g., play online games, share stories) to build relationships might be an option. When conducting online meetings using video software, it can be more difficult to pick up the emotions or subtle nuances in follower behavior to notice if they are engaged or have any questions or concerns, particularly if video cameras are not used consistently. By taking the time to get to know followers better and really connecting with them, transparent leaders improve their

chances to be able to effectively develop the leader-follower relationship and help ensure the follower's success. This moderator has been described in the literature as impacting the leader-follower relationship, either positively or negatively (Carsten et al., 2022; Norman et al., 2020), but not involving the transparent leader-follower relationship.

Carsten et al. (2020) conducted an empirical study to understand how follower role beliefs affect follower effort, performance, and withdrawal under physical leader distance and varying conditions of leader interaction frequency. 260 adults were surveyed working remotely, and results found that follower level of effort, performance, and withdrawal were contingent on leader interaction frequency. More specifically, followers who see their roles as more collaborative reported higher levels of effort with high leader interaction. The results were the opposite for followers with passive role orientations, who reported less effort when leader interaction was high.

Norman et al. (2020) used a theory-building research approach taken from a follower's viewpoint of their experiences to examine the trust relationship between leaders and followers in a virtual work setting. They found evidence that the leader-follower trust relationship may be influenced by the leader's personal characteristics, depth of leader-follower relationship, and length of time working with the leader. Further, characteristics of the leader were indicated as the most influential on the leader-follower trust relationship in a virtual environment and, after that, honesty and follower characteristics. A quality leader-follower relationship can be influenced by repeated interaction and, over time, quality interactions may reinforce the trust relationship.

Participants related their beliefs on the positive impact of transparent leaders on followers working remotely, including how they ensure they reach out to followers to help them feel connected (L010); emphasizing that you need to engage more upfront with new staff that are

working virtually in order to make a connection with them (L017); and describing the potential results when followers don't work for transparent leaders (L022). Exemplar quotes are provided:

I think it has a huge impact. I mean, they're working alone, it's easy for them to feel isolated, and it's easy for them to feel disconnected and that their work isn't really impacting the organization. So I mean, having to make it a point to touch base with them at least twice a day and try not to do it in a manner that is resonating as untrustable, like I'm micromanaging. It's just, any opportunity, I have a little bit of feedback, or kudos, or good job, or hey, thanks for sending me that, [for example] those reports on our quality measures. I just tried to maintain contact with them. Because it'd be really easy for them to not have those interactions I would normally do in person with the rest of the staff. And I'm kind of like, well, I guess for me, it's kind of deliberate on my part. I want to make sure that they're still connected, and that they realize that their work they're doing is vital, and that it is appreciated. I think if I wasn't as open, if I kind of left them to their own devices, I'm pretty sure that doubt of the effectiveness of their work, or the value of that work would creep in, and then it would begin to impact their commitment for it. And also, we make sure that they're invited to all of our events, all of our staff meetings, so we have every month, but like our little potlucks or whatnot, we always make sure like, hey, if you can make it, if you've got time, come on in, don't worry about the drive time or whatever. And that way, they still feel engaged and part of the team.

Participant L010 – Business Director, Community Health

I think you have to spend a lot more time engaging with that person, upfront. You have to be very purposeful, in embracing them, bringing them in, including them, making sure that you're meeting with that person enough, so that they get immersed. Otherwise, there's not a connection, and you need that connection. Yeah, I think you can do that virtually. But I think you can gain that trust and that transparency, that trust that comes from in meeting with somebody repeatedly and often. But I think it takes longer to achieve that [if meeting virtually].

Participant L017 – CFO, Home & Community Care Services

I think they are impacted. And we've had caregivers that started working remotely, and came back. Because they were at a distance, and they didn't have that transparent leadership. And where they're used to having that leadership present here at always, and hearing from us, hearing that we're involved, and we're having those discussions, and we're always around, always available. And then when they go remote, they don't get that out as often. So I would say that a leader that wants to be transparent with caregivers that are working from remotely, it's challenging to do, I would have to say, it's challenging, it's something that you would have to work on. And I don't know how much we realize that, but it [transparent leadership] certainly has impact. I would say it would have impact.

Participant L022 – Business Manager, Pharmacy Services



Follower place in organization was identified by participants as another contextual influence of transparent leader behaviors on the leader-follower relationship. The results show that this variable operates as a moderator at the individual level, with the amount of influence depending on where the follower works in the organization (e.g., position or place in the organization). Additionally, the positive influence of transparent leader behaviors appears to increase as the level of position that the follower holds in the organization increases, or as the follower gains additional experience in their career. For example, a follower that works as a leader in an outpatient clinic is likely to experience less influence of transparent leader behaviors than a leader working at the organizational headquarters. Follower place in organization has not been identified in the literature as potentially moderating the transparent leader-follower relationship.

Participants shared their thoughts about the level of influence of transparent leaders depending on their position or place in the organization by describing as they gained experience and seniority in their career, they experienced different levels of transparency (L012); describing how they experience different levels of transparency than followers that are reporting to them (L017); and recounting that as they transitioned from a frontline provider to a leadership role, how the influence of transparency changed for them (L019). Exemplar quotes are provided:

Absolutely. I think as you move up the chain, you see what doesn't make it through to everybody, and also what you have the capacity and what you even care to learn about. So when I was like a frontline worker, I cared about the policies that impacted me. But did I care about all the nitty gritty for making the [corporate level] decision back in that time? Probably not as a 20 something year old. But as someone who's been on organizational committees that are impacting system changes in the organization, then you can kind of see how the sausage is made. And, your position of power gives you access to that sausage making where, if you're in other levels, you might not be involved, [although] some organizations are good at involving frontline people in those decisions. But it also depends. So I think, where you stand and your power is often very impactful in terms of how much transparency you can see.

Participant L012 – Business Director, Community Health

Absolutely. Each level I think has a different degree of transparency. And it's probably a pretty good-sized leap to each level. I'm not necessarily in the day-to-day weeds of even the services that I support, but my leadership team that reports to me, they are in that day-to-day weeds, and they're very close to the operations, where I'm just kind of a step up above, a kind of 30,000-foot view of that. I feel that there is a very big delta between each one of those levels.

Participant L017 – CFO, Home & Community Care Services

Absolutely, absolutely influenced by my place in the organization. When I was a frontline therapist, there is only so much that matters to me, right? If it changed my day-to-day ability to see patients, it would have an influence on me, but otherwise, I treated patients. So the transparency didn't have as big of an influence on me until I moved up. And when I became more lead or middle management, that's when transparency had a whole lot more impact on my role and how I felt in the organization.

Participant L019 – Director, Rehabilitative Services

Another of these contextual influences was length of leader-follower relationship, which was inferred in the participant interviews as being a potential influence of the transparent leader-follower relationship. The analysis results show that this variable operates as a moderator at the individual level in that the longer a leader-follower relationship has to develop, the stronger the influence of transparent leader behaviors on follower outcomes. Length of leader-follower relationship has not been identified in the literature as potentially moderating the transparent leader-follower relationship, yet it has been tied to the leader-follower relationship in LMX literature (Dimotakis et al., 2023; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995).

Dimotakis et al. (2023) state that leader-follower relationships develop, mature, and then stabilize. In LMX, high-quality leader-follower relationships are based on the reciprocation of mutual trust, respect, and obligation (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). The exchange-based nature of this relationship implies that these links develop over time, with recurring cycles of reciprocal exchanges as leaders and followers enact their roles while engaging in shared goal pursuit, such as information sharing, collaborating on work, and other exchanges. With relationship-focused behaviors being more closely related to LMX than task-focused behaviors (Dulebohn et al.,

2012; Yukl et al., 2009) and the more relevant to social exchange a behavior is, the stronger the effects of its intensity should be on LMX (Barbuto & Hayden, 2011).

Participants recounted their experiences with transparent leaders and the development of their relationships over time, including mentoring them over a decade so that they could take her position when she retired (L006); how it took time for them to build a trusting transparent leader-follower relationship (L015); and describing the strength of the leader-follower relationship built over a long period of time, nearly 20 years (L021). Exemplar quotes are provided:

My recent leader who retired and I took her position ... We connected from the day I met her. I was doing some training, and I said something and she stood right up and was like, hey, I said something about [hometown hockey team] was in one of my stories. And she's like, hey, I just moved here from [home state], and we connected and that's about 12 years ago. And so from that moment on, we just had this amazing connection. But in the end, I became her manager. I was her manager for 10 years, she was that mentor who was transparent. She entrusted me with everything. But really, in all honesty, she and I had this daily dialogue, and had just this connection, and saw each other every day unless we were on vacation. But ultimately, she's 20 years my senior, but yet, the transparency she had with me, the ability to coach me to give me extremely positive feedback, but then also to give me constructive feedback to these are the things you could do better. And these are the things I want you to know. And someday, if you're interested, I want you to take my job. And these are the things I think you could work on. So let me help you. If that's what you want, let's help building that path forward. And so it was here's all the things you need to know about finance, here's all the things you need to know about the company politics, here's all the people you're going to want to connect with. And so that was the transparent leadership at all levels, from the business level to the professional level to the development me level that really helped me as a leader and someone I really started to model some of my behaviors after.

Participant L006 – Director, Revenue Cycle

Yeah, and it's the leader I have right now. It's my direct one up, supervisor. [First name of current leader.] She's the Executive Vice President. And I think that's, and again, that's that transparency has been built over time. I probably would not have said that for the first two, maybe even three years that we worked together. And so I think it's, transparency is something, there's got to be enough water under the bridge, there have to be enough change events that occur where you start to build that level of trust. And I know she's got the trust that I'm not going to put what she said in an email and send it out to people that can forward it on and I think we've, she's developed the kind of relationship with our team...I don't think

she's as transparent with the whole team. I think with some of the newer team members, she needs to earn their trust first. So I think she's more transparent with the leaders that she's developed trust with over time. So I think trust is something that has to be, it's a two-way street. It has to be earned.

Participant L015 – Senior Director, Primary Care

I have a perfect person in my mind, who was not a warm, fuzzy person, he wasn't like, bear hug, kind of person, and [had a] very, very dry sense of humor. But when you really got to know him and understand his depth of caring, like personally caring for the people that he led, and his willingness to share information so that they could be successful. That just shined bright for me, and I've had that a couple times in my career, and I actually feel blessed like, boy, wasn't I lucky to end up in the right place at the right time. You know, what, three specific individuals over my career, one of them was my boss for 19 years.

Participant L021 – Executive, Information Systems Solutions

### ***Context – Organizational Level***

Three potential moderating influences were considered at the organizational level, including (a) transparent organizational communication (transparent communication coming from the organization vs. leader); (b) organizational culture (beliefs, values, and attitudes); and (c) organizational environment (internal or external forces). Since they were considered as potentially impacting the entire organization, these contexts were deemed as influencing the leader-follower relationship at the organizational level. They were described as having either a positive or a negative influence on the leader-follower relationship.

A contextual influence of the leader-follower relationship described by the participants was transparent organizational communication. The analysis results show that it operates as a moderator at the organizational level, with transparent organizational communication potentially having a positive or negative influence on the leader-follower relationship. Participants expressed that transparent organizational communication is best delivered in a number of ways that allow for interaction between leaders and followers. The consistent use of organizational-level gatherings (in-person, online, or phone), regularly scheduled team meetings (large or

small), and workplace rounding or huddles were all identified as having a positive influence on the leader-follower relationship. Transparent organizational communication has been mentioned in the literature as potentially impacting the leader-follower relationship, mediating the effect of authentic leadership on follower trust and engagement (Jiang & Luo, 2018). With transformational leadership, it influences follower openness to change through organizational trust (Yue et al., 2019), but not involving the transparent leader-follower relationship.

Jiang and Luo (2018) tested a model examining how three influential organizational factors (e.g., authentic leadership, transparent organizational communication, and follower engagement) are linked to follower trust. The results suggest that authentic leadership impacts follower trust via transparent organizational communication, as well as exerts a strong positive effect on transparent organizational communication which significantly impacts follower engagement. The study highlighted the significance of transparent organizational communication in linking its antecedents and organizational outcomes.

Yue et al. (2019) examined the effect of transformational leadership and transparent organizational communication on cultivating follower organizational trust during an organizational change event. They found that transformational leadership and transparent organizational communication were positively associated with follower organizational trust, which in turn positively influenced follower openness to change. This provided additional evidence on the importance of transparent organizational communication in successful change implementation. More specifically, open, honest, and ethical communication can narrow the information gaps between followers and the organization, diminish change-related misinformation and rumors, and reduce follower anxiety and stress.

Participants expressed their views on the influence of transparent organizational communication on the leader-follower relationship, including how much of a positive difference it can make during a major organizational restructure (L002); what that could potentially look like, and the positive impact that it could bring to the organization (L015); comparing their experiences with communication coming from a transparent organization and that coming from an organization that is not transparent (L020). Exemplar quotes are provided:

Then that [restructure] was turmoil, right? Totally awful, horrible, turmoil. Everybody had to apply for their jobs again. But what was really good about this is that the leaders were actually transparent. So you could have ... two separate things [occurring]. So the leaders were transparent, here's what's happening, here's why we're doing it, here's the process we're going to do. And here's your next step, like so you know, what that meant for you, either as a leader or as a person impacted, it was super transparent. And at the same time, it was a ton of turmoil. Like, it was horrible, awful. But I felt like I had enough information. And everybody was in the exact same boat. And we all heard the exact same things, right? Like, that [message] was a bad, but [the process and communication was] good. So I think you can have good transparency and a horrible situation that still makes you feel okay, about whatever it is, and you feel okay, about, I'm communicating this as my next thing, because you have all this information and things were super transparent.

Participant L002 – Executive Director, Specialty Services

I think open communication from the top and whether that looks like holding a town hall or an open forum for a Q&A. I think it would be more senior leaders. And I'm not necessarily talking about the CEO, or the president. But I think it goes from all levels, more senior leaders, meeting with frontline staff to share the status of a company successes, failures, where we need support, what's working, what's not working. And just being open and transparent about what things we can change and what things we cannot change. And I think that creates a level of trust for frontline teams.

Participant L015 – Senior Director, Primary Care

I think the organization actually being transparent, in what they do and not wavering from that. Even in hard times, being able to share, this is hard, and we're gonna have to figure this out, and we don't have all the answers. But, we value you, and they really do value you as an individual. And, that's where I think those are the successful organizations. If you have an organization that's just talking, as you said, you can see through it, usually, it's like, there's an ulterior motive here, and this is not, you're just saying stuff to get me through the day. You can really sense it and you feel that.

Participant L020 – District Director, Primary Care

Organizational culture was mentioned by participants as a contextual influence of the leader-follower relationship, with the level of influence determined by how safe followers felt to fail and learn from their experiences, as well as how supportive they felt it was for everyone to share their thoughts without any fear of consequences. The results show that this variable operates as a moderator at the organizational level, with organizational culture typically having a positive influence on the leader-follower relationship, but could have a negative impact depending on the circumstances. The participants most often described a “safety culture” as being a positive influence on the leader-follower relationship. This type of culture was described as a safe place for followers where it is okay to fail (e.g., unfavorable interaction with a patient), to share results when things did not go as well as planned (e.g., implementing a new project), and to be able to learn from those experiences and improve future outcomes because of them. They described an open culture as another positive influence that would be supportive of transparent leader behaviors, sometimes termed a “speak up culture” where everyone feels safe to share their thoughts without fear of negative consequences. Organizational culture has been identified in the literature as potentially influencing the leader-follower relationship (Gardner et al., 2005: Gardner et al., 2021), but not the transparent leader-follower relationship.

Gardner et al. (2005) provided contrasting examples of cultures. Positive cultures characterized by a commitment to ethical conduct and human development are most conducive to the development of authentic leadership and followership. In contrast, a culture that reflects a preoccupation with short-term performance results at the expense of ethical considerations will not encourage the development of authenticity, in part because honesty, integrity, and high moral standards are not prototypical values.

Gardner et al. (2021) shared that organizational cultures tend to prescribe ways for leaders and followers to act. Senior people may be more influential, but most authenticity is not necessarily an outcome of leader or follower positioning, but rather a matter of general orientation, interpersonal relations, and cultural norms.

Participants related their perspectives on the influence of organizational culture on the leader-follower relationship, including the potential influences when the culture provides a safe environment and when the culture is not a safe environment (L005); by describing the benefits of having a “speak up culture” within an organization and how it promotes transparency (L006); and the significant impact a mission-based culture can have on the followers of an organization (L020). Exemplar quotes are provided:

I think the culture of an organization is really important. Because if from the top of the organization to the bottom, there is a culture of leading from a fear-based mentality, that's going to drive people to withhold information. Because that's withholding successes and failures. Like, well, I can't tell my boss that I screwed this up, because if I do, they're gonna fire me. So I'm going to hold on to this as long as I can, and see if things get better. And then figure out a way to communicate this in a sugar-coated way that isn't really the truth. I think having an organizational culture where it's okay to fail, and learn from those failures, is critical to having a transparent organization. Because you need to be able to feel safe to say, this didn't go as well as it should have. And, here's why. And here's what we're going to learn from it. But if it's an organization rooted in a fear-based leadership, you don't have that feeling of safety to be able to have those transparent conversations.

Participant L005 – Executive Director, Medical Specialties

So there's a big “speak up culture” movement within [their current organization]. And, when it's working correctly, knowing that there won't be negative consequences to speaking up, it promotes transparency. So an organization with a strong “speak up culture” promotes transparency everywhere, as far as I'm concerned. But the unfortunate thing is, all it takes is a couple of instances of negative ramifications for speaking up, that, it's fragile. No one will do it again, once they've had negative consequences of it. So for speak up to really make a transparent organization, it has to be not just words, [but] actions as well.

Participant L006 – Director, Revenue Cycle



I mean, I think their behaviors have a huge impact for sure. But I think that also the organization, really walking the talk, as well behind the scenes to allow them to be in that position to have that trust level that they know. They know the organization is there working with them and for them too, and to be able to exhibit that to the rest of the teams because they have that competence level, that's an organizational culture that has an impact. Knowing that, we had a forum in, and [Guest speaker's name] spoke at it, and she's like, hey, you know, we are going to care for patients and take it even if we can't afford to do it, we'll figure out a way to do it, because that's at our core. And that's what we're trying to do. So it was like, we knew that, and it resonates with the why of so many people. Some people, it's just a job, but generally, it's not when you're there, and you're like, this is exciting. And this was cool. And we know, we can do this, and we'll get over these hurdles. But that's organizational culture that I think you find it a little more with the non-profits. And I think that's why they have a mission behind them. They have a why, whether it was way back here, and hopefully it hasn't gotten distracted. But, that allows higher level leaders to be able to then be calm and confident and instill trust in the other leaders to move the ball forward.

Participant L020 – District Director, Primary Care

A final contextual influence mentioned by participants on the leader-follower relationship was organizational environment. The results show that this variable operates as a moderator at the organizational level, with the internal or external organizational environment having a positive or negative influence on the leader-follower relationship depending on the circumstances. The influence of the organizational environment, including the types and numbers of internal or external forces impacting followers, was described by participants as potentially having an influence on the leader-follower relationship. This moderator can be considered as either simple and less complex (e.g., new organizational logos), highly complex (e.g., changes to billing reimbursement), fast and volatile (e.g., pandemic), or somewhere in between (e.g., updated productivity software). The higher level of transparency followers experienced was reported as having a positive influence on those experiences. Organizational environment has been identified in the literature as potentially influencing the leader-follower relationship (Avolio et al., 2009; Gerstner & Day, 1997; Luthans & Avolio, 2003; Uhl-Bien, 1997), but not the transparent leader-follower relationship.

Theory and research suggest that organizational climate (environment) or culture may enhance or mitigate perceptions of authentic leadership behavior (Avolio et al., 2009; Luthans & Avolio, 2003). Uhl-Bien et al. (1997) suggested that several situational moderators of LMX-outcome relationships exist, such as task characteristics, time constraints, resources, physical setting, organizational climate, and culture. For example, when objective measures are used, such as sales performance or follower turnover behavior, leader-follower relationships are much weaker because such outcomes may have many other antecedents and some uncontrollable, environmental elements (Gerstner & Day, 1997).

Participants reported their experiences of how the organizational environment can have an impact on the leader-follower relationship, such as the lack of transparency of other leaders in the organization (L007); facing the impact of changes in the external environment and how it affects the organization (L015); and sharing their experiences where a transparent leader helped mitigate something negative happening internally to the organization, which made the circumstances still manageable for them (L019). Exemplar quotes are provided:

I'm sure there's other influences as well ... You know, [with a complex] organization there's not just one leader, right? In our complex healthcare [system], I don't just have one boss, I have many different bosses and different levels as well. So I think that sort of combination kind of influences that. And I feel like for me, it's sort of like a culmination of what you see. So it's not enough just to have my boss as a transparent, effective leader. When I see that person, when I see her not being able to [answer] a question. I see decisions that are made that I don't quite understand, that she doesn't have an answer to and I see other people that are not as effective from a transparency perspective, make those decisions, I think it influences how I view the organization and how I am as a leader.

Participant L007 –Director of Operations, Primary Care

Part of it was in different points in time of the industry and it was at a time that we were growing. Things are happening quickly. As opposed to kind of where we've been circling for the last decade around tightening budgets, asked for higher productivity. Yeah, I think I'd say those are some outside impacting or influencing factors, whether the job or the industry as a whole was going through rapid change and growth, exciting time. Almost like a startup versus, oh boy, we've got

twice the budget gap next year that we had last year, and we have to work. It really feels like it's been the same story on repeat for the last decade, of the next year is going to be tougher than the current [one], we're gonna have to do more with less. And I think that just frames that work for you.

Participant L015 – Senior Director, Primary Care

During times that I had an extremely transparent, effective leader, there were things happening in the organization beyond that leader's control that weren't necessarily so positive. So it [leader's behavior] mitigated some of that negative, but it still influenced my role. I've been through a lot of reorganizations in my time and they, every one, colored how I felt about my role at the time. But the leader made it where it was either manageable or not.

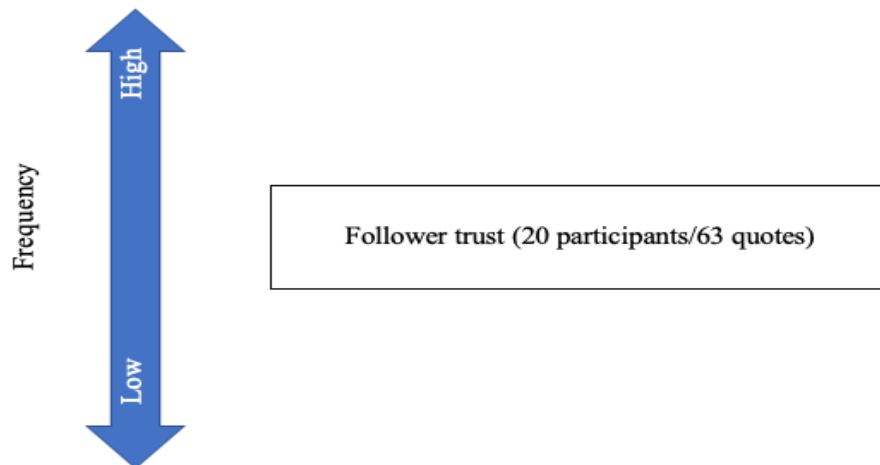
Participant L019 – Director, Rehabilitative Services

### Potential Mediating Variable

The results of the interviews identified follower trust as potentially mediating the influence of transparent leader behaviors on the leader-follower relationship (Figure 10).

**Figure 10**

#### *Potential Mediating Variable*



### Interpersonal Influence

Follower trust was identified as a significant variable under the category of interpersonal influence, linking the relationships between transparent leader behaviors and follower outcomes. It relates to the reciprocal interpersonal exchanges, verbally or non-verbally, between leader and

follower, influencing the leader-follower relationship. These continuous interactions over time can further develop and strengthen the relationship between the leader and follower as they learn to trust each other. Follower trust was described by virtually all participants as a primary effect of transparent leader behaviors and as an influence on the leader-follower relationship. The experience of follower trust appears to be associated with how transparent leader behaviors are positively connected to a range of important follower outcomes. It is described in the literature as a mediating influence on leadership behaviors or as an outcome of those leadership behaviors (Hernandez et al., 2014; Vogelgesang & Lester, 2009; Walumbwa, 2008; Yue et al., 2019), but not specifically as a mediating influence on the transparent leader-follower relationship.

In literature, trust is defined as “the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party” (Mayer et al., 1995, p. 712). Further, theoretically established antecedents of trust include ability, integrity, benevolence, positivity, competence, and transparency (Colquitt et al., 2007; Mayer et al., 1995; McAllister, 1995; Norman et al., 2010).

Hernandez et al. (2014) examined the pathways to building trust through leader behaviors. Consistent with past literature, the findings indicated that various leadership behaviors appear to directly promote follower trust when analyzed independently. However, when the leadership behaviors were analyzed jointly, relational leadership behaviors (e.g., displays concern for those they lead) were found to mediate the effects of personal and contextual leadership behaviors on follower trust.

Vogelgesang and Lester (2009) described potential outcomes of transparent leader behaviors, including follower trust in the leader. These transparent behaviors help create a

foundation for a trusting leader-follower relationship by sharing relevant information during exchanges with followers, being open to giving and receiving feedback, and being forthright about motives thereby, opening the door to the leader's rationale for decision-making.

Walumbwa (2008), developing a theory to test the corresponding measure of authentic leadership, described relational transparency as presenting one's authentic self to others, thereby promoting trust through leader disclosures that involve openly sharing information and expressing their own true thoughts and feelings.

Yue et al. (2019) examined the effect of transformational leadership and transparent organizational communication on cultivating follower organizational trust during a change event. The findings suggested that transformational leadership and transparent communication were positively associated with employee organizational trust. In turn, trust mediated the influence of transformational leadership and transparent communication on employee openness to change. These relationships are important in how they can separately and jointly influence leader-follower relationships and their corresponding outcomes.

Participants shared their thoughts about the importance of trust in the leader-follower relationship, such as emphasizing the ultimate importance of trust and that without it, a leader will not be considered transparent by followers and simply cannot be effective (L007); that it is really about the mutual trust between the leader and follower that makes a difference (L018); and describing a previous transparent leader, how he was a great role model for transparency and how he trusted his followers in a bold way (L020). Exemplar quotes are provided:

Because without trust, it doesn't matter. If you go through the motions or not, you're not going to be able to be an effective transparent leader. People are not going to believe you. And so I think that's first and foremost and without that, I can say that's really hard to overcome. So if you don't have trust with that leader, it doesn't matter if you've changed who you are as leader five years from now, you may still not have built that back [trust] with your audience ... and people are still not going to

think that you're [not] somebody that might be holding information [back] that people might be suspicious about.

Participant L007 – Director of Operations, Primary Care

I always put trust at the top of the list. And the interesting thing is that I've learned to better define that. I think maybe even 5, 10 years ago, I wouldn't have called it that, I would have just, even though trust is a word that we all know. Yeah, it's that I've got your back, you've got mine, we're gonna get through this, that locking arms together and figuring out how to move forward with something. Because, there are days that break your heart, across the board. But feeling like you have that support, and at times you can be vulnerable with a leader to let them know how sad, or disappointed, or heartbroken, or whatever you are throughout. I can trust my staff all I want, but if they don't trust me, and if we don't have that mutual respect, and if they don't feel like I have their best interests at heart, or the organizational leadership has their best interests at heart ...

Participant L018 – Clinic Manager, Primary Care

I would say I've had several [transparent leaders], but probably the CEO at [previous organization] was the best example of it, I mean, you just knew exactly where you stood and what was going on. And he involved the whole team, very early on, in helping, he would set the goal and the vision, and here's where we're going. Now, you guys have, we got to get there. And, I will pour resources and whatever you need to make it happen and then we can just move forward. So that early on transparency was just, almost at times, it's like, whoa, you're sharing all this, our competitors are going to hear this too, because you just shared it with a bunch of people before it ever happened. He didn't care, he just felt like, we know what the right thing is to do. This is what we're doing and I don't care if the hospital across the street knows it. So that was, that was an extreme level of transparency that really exhibited trust. And I think, in my current situation, with my boss I have now, she is extremely transparent, same way, but very, totally just, she trusts us, she lets the reign out. And just, you got this, and she's there to help guide and lead. You know, if there's things that that go south, but it's never in like a criticism or judgmental fashion. But if she is able to share and she knows something, we know it too. And that it's just great to be a part of that. Because then you can start envisioning, like, how can we be a part of this? And how can we play a role in that, getting to our goal and what we need to do? And then you get all kinds of creative and bright ideas that move you into that next phase.

Participant L020 – District Director, Primary Care

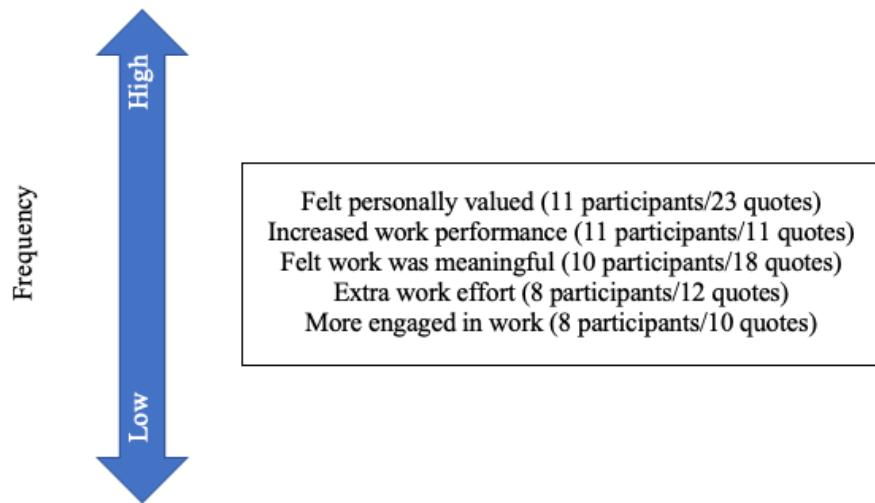
## **Follower Outcomes**

The results of the interviews revealed a series of follower outcomes because of the influences of transparent leader behaviors on the leader-follower relationship, including felt personally valued, felt work was meaningful, increased work performance, extra work effort, and

more engaged in work. The most common outcomes because of transparent leader behaviors are described in Figure 11.

**Figure 11**

***Follower Outcomes***



***Follower Personal Impact***

Two follower outcomes have been placed under the category of follower personal impact: felt personally valued and felt work was meaningful. These outcomes impacted followers on a personal level, answering “their why” regarding the work they do and where they do it.

The outcome most often mentioned by participants because of the influence of transparent leader behaviors was described as felt personally valued, referring to the positive impact they have had on them personally. The way followers are treated by leaders was described as very impactful, as they want and need to be appreciated and valued. Helping followers feel valued can be achieved by allowing them to be themselves, to communicate openly with them, to really hear them, and to show that they are trusted. Although followers felt

valued is addressed in the literature (Hamstra et al., 2014), feeling personally valued has not been linked in the literature to the transparent leader-follower relationship.

Followers who experience a sense of being valued as individuals has been identified in prior research (Hamstra et al., 2014), but appears to be missing the follower's personal impact of being valued that the participants described. Hamstra et al. (2014) stated that the leader-follower relationship is crucial in the social exchange process of leadership. The process only functions well when followers are actively involved, as a leader attains goals through the joint efforts of followers. This result implies that leaders who are able to help followers feel valued (accepted and important) are more likely to be effective leaders. This research provides an explanation for the feeling of being valued by a leader by taking into account both leader and follower characteristics, as well as leader behavior.

Interpersonal justice refers to the perceived fairness of the interpersonal treatment shown to others and can elicit strong emotional responses in recipients, which may be experienced immediately, and can directly reward actors as they foster social acceptance and support (Bies, 2001; Masterson et al., 2000). More specifically, interpersonal justice describes the degree to which people are treated properly with dignity, politeness, respect, and propriety (Colquitt, 2001) and is important in shaping employee behavior (Greenberg & Alge, 1998; Judge et al., 2006). This area of the literature may provide additional insight into how leader behaviors can result in outcomes that have a personal impact on followers. For instance, as transparent leaders treat followers fairly, and with dignity and respect, followers can respond by feeling valued. Similarly, when a transparent leader listens intently and respectfully to a follower when they share their concerns about work responsibilities, it can help them feel their work is meaningful.



Participants discussed their insights on the power of being personally valued, describing their perspective on the power of followers feeling valued and the significant impact that can have on them (L014); recounting some experiences in their career when they felt valued by their leader and when they did not, and how they impacted their performance and their career choices (L021); and expressing what they appreciate about transparency and how it makes them feel to be valued by their leader (L025). Exemplar quotes are provided:

It's all I mean, when people feel valued, they're gonna give you that 100% that you were looking for and more. All because they felt appreciated, valued, comfortable coming to work here. They have meaning, they have a purpose, like you said, and that was the whole secret, just allowing people to be themselves and feel comfortable, and valued, and seen and heard.

Participant L014 – Corporate Officer, Community Health

I'm a people pleaser, right. And I want to do well for the people that lead me, like I wanted to be a good student, want to be a good mom, want to be a good employee. So if I feel valued from the relationship that I have with my leader, I want to do good work for them. So I will say I perform better for individuals that have that transparent, authentic, kind of, I want to help you be successful, then I was in those situations when I didn't have that. And as a matter of fact, the two major moves that I've made in my career were specifically because of not working for people who had those, where I didn't feel like I was valued, that there wasn't a relationship that the person trusted me and it wasn't supportive.

Participant L021 – Executive, Information Systems Solutions

I think that's the beauty of the transparent conversations I have with my boss, he's interested in not only my work life, but in my family life, and he's earned my trust. And so that really helps me to know that I'm being valued as an employee, as a caregiver. It helps me know that, I know he's going to be consistent with me. He's not gonna pull any punches, and he's gonna try to help me learn and grow. So I think that's what I enjoy about his transparency with me.

Participant L025 – Director, Pharmacy Operations

Felt work was meaningful was expressed by the participants as a result of the influence of transparent leader behaviors. Followers want to feel good about their work and want and need it to matter. They need a leader to let them know that their work is valued and that it makes a difference to the organization. The meaningfulness of work is discussed extensively in the

literature (Elangovan et al., 2010; Gibson et al., 2023; Hackman & Oldham, 1980; Lips-Wiersma & Wright, 2012; May et al., 2004; Pratt & Ashforth, 2003; Sparks & Schenk, 2001; Yeoman, 2014), however, this outcome has yet to be linked to the transparent leader-follower relationship.

A number of management theories have recognized the importance of meaningful work and have been found to influence key work outcomes such as work engagement (May et al., 2004), job satisfaction (Sparks & Schenk, 2001), motivation (Hackman & Oldham, 1980) and stress reduction (Elangovan et al., 2010). Meaningful work is primarily important because it is a fundamental human need, and society ought to be arranged to allow as many people as possible to experience their work as meaningful through the development of the relevant capabilities (Yeoman, 2014). Meaningfulness of work is defined as “the value of a work goal or purpose, judged to the individual’s own ideals or standard” (May et al., 2004, p. 11). When something is meaningful to an individual, it helps answer the question, “Why am I here?” (Pratt & Ashforth, 2003). Thus, when someone experiences their work as meaningful, it is an individual subjective experience of the significance, or purpose of work (Lips-Wiersma & Wright, 2012).

Participants provided their reflections on the importance of feeling that their work was meaningful, including why leaders need to share with followers that the work they do matters, in words that the follower can understand (L001); relating their experience in working for a former transparent leader and how they were impressed with the leader’s ability to express his understanding of the positive impact that their team was making to the organization and the community (L008); sharing why they felt that their work was meaningful and attributed that feeling to working for a transparent leader (L021). Exemplar quotes are provided:

Because we're people and we come to work to not just do a job, but we bring who we are to that work. And we all want to be seen. I mean, we just do so whether that we're seen because of your brain, or seen because of who you are, you still spend a lot of time at work. So you want it to matter. And you want a boss that

gets that and understands how to communicate that your work and you are valued, you are appreciated for that and uses your language around that, as opposed to their language.

Participant L001 – Director, Community Health Access

You know, they can actually make you feel like your work is really important. So providing validation, perhaps, and from a truthful perspective that you can resonate with. So they may be able to echo things that you've said about your own work, and its importance. But they may have recognized on their own, and that's probably the more powerful one, it's they recognize the nature of the work that you're doing, the importance that it is to the organization or the department broader, not just in your own department, because often they're not there. Our CEO hardly ever stepped foot in here, but he knew the impact that we had in the community. And that was more rewarding, that he could recognize the impact of that work in the community. And so that made me feel like it was also important, and I felt rewarded, that he could recognize the importance of it.

Participant L008 – Director, Pharmacy Operations

Well, for me, you feel like you're making a difference. Like the work that I do impacts the communities that we serve, addresses things like health disparities, and getting information in front of clinicians so that they can make good decisions for their patients. Reduces waste, improves value. And so when you think about why is it that we're in non-profit, what are the things that draw us to non-profit healthcare in the first place? Which is to serve others, improve the health of our communities. Like all of the reasons why we're sitting where we're at. Those leaders allow you to do more of that and better, and it just makes you feel like you're not like this, some days, like, when you're not in that situation, you go home, and you go, oh gosh, like all I did today was like, fill out a bunch of forms, or that wasn't very productive. Or like, oh, I don't really feel like I created anything that brought value to anyone today. And so for me, it's really about that sense of creating value, self-fulfillment, that I'm making a difference, because it's not about money, because if it was about money, we would go somewhere else and do what we're doing for some for-profit entity, right?

Participant L021 – Executive, Information Systems Solutions

### ***Follower Professional Impact***

Two follower outcomes have been placed under the category of follower professional impact: increased work performance and extra work effort. These outcomes were considered ones that impacted followers on a professional level, how well they did their jobs, and how much effort they gave in doing them.

Increased work performance was another outcome described by participants as a result of the influence of transparent leadership behaviors on the leader-follower relationship. When relevant information is shared with followers, they have a clearer understanding of the goals and can focus their attention on their achievements. They are able to move past difficult situations much quicker, reducing wasted time by avoiding the confusion or distraction of not knowing what is really happening. Increased work performance has been linked in the literature as a result of the influence of transparent leadership behaviors, and the relational transparency dimension of authentic leadership has been linked to increased follower performance (Vogelgesang & Lester, 2009; Walumbwa et al., 2008), as well as being extensively tested with multiple leadership theories (Brown et al., 2015; Wang et al., 2011). Thus far, in instances when this outcome is tied to transparent leadership, it has not yet been empirically tested.

Vogelgesang and Lester (2009) suggested that leader transparent behaviors set the groundwork for multiple positive outcomes, including follower performance. They go on to state that when leaders allow for trust to arise and by laying a foundation in which followers become more engaged in their roles, leader transparency allows for positive impacts upon performance. Transparent leaders can help steer clear of any distractions that can harm productivity by proactively sharing information, and they consistently seek feedback from followers to create conditions that allow for creativity and improvement of established procedures.

When discussing the relational transparency dimension of authentic leadership, Walumbwa et al. (2008) stated that by promoting and building transparent relationships, we can expect a more rapid and accurate transfer of information that should facilitate more effective follower performance. In addition, over time, followers come to internalize many of their

leader's values and perspectives, which can facilitate the development of internal guiding points for making effective decisions, leading to improved individual follower performance.

Participants described how their leader-follower relationship positively impacted their work performance, by sharing their response when they experienced trust and honesty (L010); explaining the impact when team members feel trusted and as a valuable team member (L013); and describing how that relationship not only impacts their work performance, but that of their teams (L020). Exemplar quotes are provided:

I know it improved it, because I felt that there was a reciprocation of trust and honesty. And that I felt that I needed to honor that by ensuring I gave my best performance, that way it was that trust was validated in me, but also validated in them.

Participant L010 – Business Director, Community Health

Well, the way when they are not performing, certainly it cascades, because then you're doing more of what you might otherwise expect to do. If they're doing more because they feel good about themselves. And they feel trusted, they feel like they're part of the team, they feel like they're a valued team member. And [when] they are doing their best, their output is always more than what you expect. Therefore, if it's shared among [the team], if it's average, everybody else then has less to do. But the goal of the business then gets achieved, because now you have more people coming in at it, doing their best, than if having few that are doing more to get this going. That team environment is what you want to create. And you'll get it through this set of behaviors. Transparent leadership is one of them.

Participant L013 – Director, Surgical Specialties

It has a huge impact. I mean, when you have a transparent leader, that you have a clear understanding of what you're trying to accomplish, and what you're doing, it allows you to focus your attention on that, and when that trust factor is built, and they feel like you're a valuable component, you can feel more creative, more out of the box thinking, you know, let's try this, let's do this. And it's not going to get blasted or shot down. So it really, I think, it lets people rise to their highest level of achievement, and accomplishments and, [it] really serves the organization overall, much better. Because they've got high functioning teams, and individuals that are all adding to that result. And it doesn't have to be any one person winning or having that accolade, it's, hey, we all contributed, it's all moving in the direction we want it to go.

Participant L020 – District Director, Primary Care

Followers' extra work effort was an additional outcome shared by participants as a result of transparent leadership behaviors. They trust transparent leaders, want to please them, and want their leaders to be happy with their work performance. They feel valued and that their work matters. As a result, followers want to work harder for transparent leaders and will give that extra effort to ensure the organization is successful. Extra work effort has been linked in the literature to the leader-follower relationship (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Young et al., 2021) and has been tested with multiple leadership theories (DeGroot et al., 2000; Groves, 2020). That said, this outcome has yet to be linked to the transparent leader-follower relationship.

Participants relayed how the transparent leader-follower relationship impacts extra work effort, including their willingness to give extra effort to their work and how they might react when they do not receive that same level of trust (L015); sharing how they are willing to give extra effort to their work when their transparent leader and organization appreciates the work that they do (L016); and recounted how the respect they had for a leader and how she made them feel, resulted in making them want to work even harder (L018). Exemplar quotes are provided:

Working for a leader I trust, where I find my work has meaning and importance, I'm willing to bend over backwards, put in that discretionary effort. That's probably how I define that. It's that willingness and energy to put in the discretionary extra effort on a task, whether it's a task or project, infer on the conversely, when I work with leaders that I don't have that same degree of trust and respect for, I'd be more inclined to just do the minimum necessary.

Participant L015 – Senior Director, Primary Care

Well, your work performance, I think you want to just do the best you possibly can. And you know, and do more. I mean, I know that, I don't do just my job. I wear a whole bunch of hats, and I want to do more, because I feel like my organization appreciates what I bring to them. And I think that when you are feeling appreciated, you don't mind giving more of yourself. So by having a transparent leader, and having them listen and engage with me, I'm more than willing to give more of myself to that.

Participant L016 – Clinic Administrator, Natural Health Center

Ah, so this would be [previous leader]. I already had a pretty high regard and was pretty proud of the work I did and the organization I worked for. But when she was leading it, I felt like it even ramped it up, right? It's like, when we would launch a new trial, or have any service come on board or something like that, it was just, I mean, even it was small things like instituting a new, like there was a cooling cap that they we used in chemotherapy that was supposed to prevent hair loss while the insurance wouldn't pay for it. So of course, everybody's like, not a possibility. And a bunch of us fought and figured out a way to bring it in. And it's like, even when things like that, the amount of pride shoots through the roof, because you're proud of yourself and proud of the accomplishment. But you also know that this amazing leader is proud of you, somebody that you have a high level of respect for. And they're appreciative. Which just makes you want to work even harder.

Participant L018 – Clinic Manager, Primary Care

### *Follower Work Engagement*

More engaged in work was an outcome depicted by participants as a result of the influence of transparent leader behaviors. This outcome was considered as involving the level of involvement and commitment a follower had in their work. By receiving more information from transparent leaders, followers felt better about their work and had more emotional ties to it, resulting in them having increased commitment to the work. They felt more supported because they knew where they were going and trusted each other, making them feel more engaged. This outcome has been linked in the literature as a result of the influence of transparent leadership behaviors (Gardner et al., 2005; Vogelgesang & Lester, 2009; Yi, 2017) and has been tested with multiple leadership theories (Chughtai & Buckley, 2011; Jiang & Luo, 2018). Still, even when this outcome is tied to transparent leadership, it has not been empirically tested.

Vogelgesang and Lester (2009) suggested that if leaders are open about decision-making and the issues they are facing, and they should do so, they will receive greater follower engagement, as well as trust, satisfaction, and performance. Transparency allows followers to understand what their role means to the organization, it dispels myths and gossip by sharing relevant information and allows the follower to focus on their job and be more engaged.

Yi (2017) states that a leader's highly transparent behavior teaches followers to recognize their strengths and talents to make for a better fit between work demand and their abilities (Gardner et al., 2005), which may enhance follower engagement and their ability to focus on their work. Yi (2017) continues that highly transparent leaders treat followers frankly and are forthright about the motives and reasons behind decisions, reducing the need for followers to guess what the leader is thinking. In turn, followers focus more attention on their work and allow them to be more engaged in the creative process and roles within the organization.

Participants expressed their thoughts on how transparent leaders influenced their level of work engagement, describing their increase in emotional ties and commitment to their work (L007); describing how it made them feel more engaged with their work (L008); and sharing how the leader helped mitigate the negative impact of working with ineffective leaders to still get their work done (L019). Exemplar quotes are provided:

I think that it becomes more mission critical. I think that there's more emotional ties to my work and more commitment to the work that I do, versus like it's just a job, and I'm going to do my job well.

Participant L007 – Director of Operations, Primary Care

So if I'm working with other transparent leaders, if I know where they're going, and where we're going, and we trust each other, I actually feel more engaged.

Participant L008 – Director, Pharmacy Operations

I am much more engaged with a transparent leader. And I will work harder for them. In the periods of time that I worked with ineffective leaders, I had a strong peer team. And we got a lot done because we cared about each other, not because we cared about who were working for. But if I have a transparent leader above me, it's going to make me work that much harder to be successful and to make the organization successful.

Participant L019 – Director, Rehabilitative Services

## **Transparent Leadership**

A Transparent Leadership Model (TLM) was developed to capture all the findings reported in this study. A new definition of transparent leadership is also offered.



Transparent leadership has been described by Baum (2005) as “a leader who believes in telling the whole truth” (p. 42) and by Goldsmith and Wheeler (2007) as being able to “show their humanity and share information” (p. 20). Bennis et al. (2008) describe transparent leadership as leaders with “candor, integrity, honesty, ethics, clarity, full disclosure, legal compliance, and all that enables us to deal fairly with each other” (p. 19). Schwarz (2010) states that transparent leaders share what they are thinking and ensure that followers understand their thought process. Schwarz (2010) and Scott (2016) describe transparent leadership as the productive sharing of essential and valuable information with followers through open and honest conversations that helps build trusting relationships. Vogelgesang and Lester (2009) state that transparent leader behaviors include sharing of relevant information with followers, being open to giving and receiving feedback, and being honest about motives and reasons behind decisions.

Despite these descriptions of transparent leadership, Buell (2008) states that relevant literature lacks a formal definition of a new construct. The results of the interviews with the participants would suggest that transparent leaders possess the characteristics of EI: emotional attentiveness, approachability, communication skills, genuineness, honesty, and openness to self-expression. The participants described transparent leader behaviors in the following way: shares information with others, gives and seeks feedback, connects with followers, cares for others, speaks truthfully, behaves with authenticity, displays vulnerability, engages in conversation, and actively listens to others. The participants shared their perspectives on the contextual influences on the transparent leader-follower relationship, such as remote/virtual context, follower place in organization, length of leader-follower relationship, transparent organizational communication, organizational culture, and organizational environment. Considering the dynamics of the transparent leader-follower relationship, follower trust was described by participants as emerging

because of the quality of that reciprocal relationship, essentially mediating the connection between the transparent leader-follower relationship and the resulting follower outcomes. This reciprocal process may explain the positive influence of transparent leader behaviors, with an increased presence of follower trust, resulting in the following number of follower outcomes. The descriptions of those follower outcomes as shared by the participants included felt personally valued, felt work was meaningful, increased work performance, extra work effort, and more engaged in work. As such, I propose the following definition of transparent leadership:

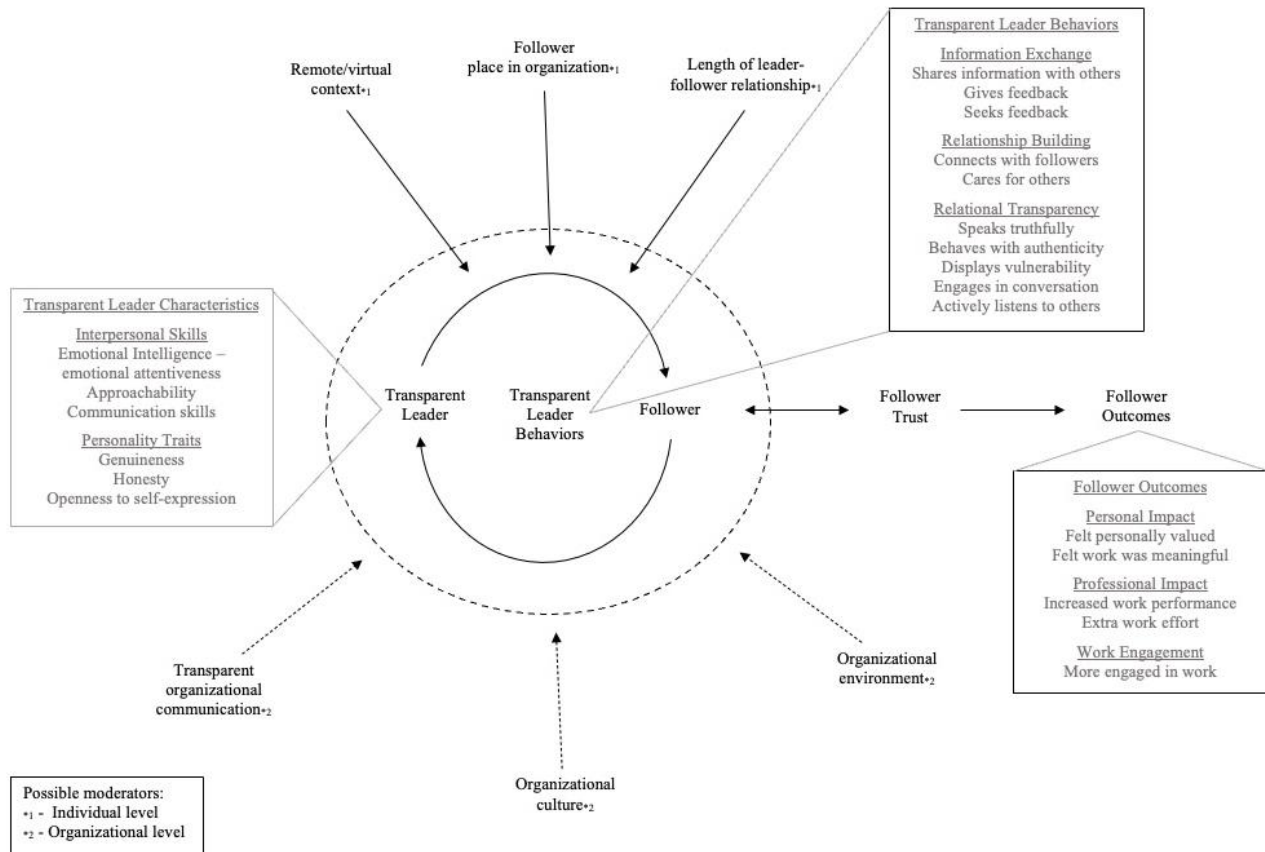
*A leader's intentional and reciprocal sharing of timely and relevant information with followers, and genuine relationship-building that cultivates follower trust and results in follower perceptions of strengthened personal value and meaningful work.*

### **Transparent Leadership Model (TLM)**

The TLM (Figure 12) emerged from the analysis of the interview data. It provides an overview of the dynamic, reciprocal relationship between a transparent leader and follower, with six leader characteristics and 10 leader behaviors. It includes six potential moderating influences on the leader-follower relationship, including three contextual influences at the individual level (solid arrows) and three at the organizational level (dashed arrows), with one mediating influence, ultimately leading to five follower outcomes. Transparent leadership was described by participants as being a dynamic, reciprocal leader-follower relationship that develops over time. Kouzes and Posner (2003) state that “Leadership is a reciprocal process between leaders and their constituents, any discussion of leadership must attend to the dynamics of this relationship” (p. 46). Scholars have argued the interdependent relationship between leaders and followers, as a leader's actions and behaviors not only influence follower conduct but influence the leader's conduct (Manning & Robertson, 2016; Riggio et al., 2008; Uhl-Bien et al., 2014).

**Figure 12**

***Transparent Leadership Model (TLM)***



The characteristics of a transparent leader were identified as key antecedents that activate or enable transparent leader behaviors. Transparent leaders possess the characteristics of EI: emotional attentiveness, approachability, communication skills, genuineness, honesty, and openness to self-expression, which enable their ability to demonstrate transparent leader behaviors. The transparent leader behaviors were described by participants as something they valued in a leader and as positively influencing the leader-follower relationship. These transparent leader behaviors include shares information with others, gives and seeks feedback, connects with followers, cares for others, speaks truthfully, behaves with authenticity, displays vulnerability, engages in conversation, and actively listens to others.

Prior research suggests that followers can attribute leadership to others, depending on how well they correspond to or match their implicit theory, and this cognitive process can be either conscious or unconscious (Lord, 1985; Lord & Maher, 2002; Schyns & Meindl, 2005). DeRue and Ashford (2010) proposed that this reliance on implicit theories of leadership not only creates a belief about whether a person is a leader but prompts the granting of the leader identity to individuals who match their implicit theory. In other words, when an individual looks like, seems like, and acts like a leader, people are more likely to grant that person a leader identity. For example, if a leader is open to self-expression and displays vulnerability by being willing to engage in open conversations with followers and seeking their feedback, followers are more likely to recognize them as a leader, someone that they can trust and engage in open conversation with.

I postulate that transparent leadership characteristics may fit the implicit theories of followers (DeRue & Ashford, 2010; Lord, 1985; Lord & Maher, 2002; Schyns & Meindl, 2005), namely their belief system, identifying those leaders as transparent and effective and activating the transparent leader behaviors that they value and allowing followers to be receptive to and influenced by transparent leader behaviors.

The participants described potential contextual features of the transparent leader-follower relationship, at both the individual and organizational level. They shared how and why each moderator can impact the leader-follower relationship, either positively or negatively, depending on the specific circumstances. Moderators at the individual level were typically described by participants as having a positive (e.g., relationships with leader improving over time) or negative influence (e.g., lack of transparency when working remotely), and at the organizational level as

potentially having either positive (e.g., high levels of transparent organizational communication) or negative influence (e.g., challenges of internal politics).

Follower trust emerged as a mediating influence on the leader-follower relationship. As the leader trusts the follower to develop the leader-follower relationship (e.g., shares sensitive information), the follower can respond by trusting the leader in return (e.g., shares insight into organizational challenges) despite any perceived risk of doing so. Over time, as trust is validated by the responses of the other, the leader-follower relationship can be further developed and potentially strengthened. There is something unique here, describing follower trust in a different way than what typically appears in the literature. Trust is often described as something that is granted by the follower to the leader or the organization (Jiang & Luo, 2018; Norman et al., 2010; Yue et al., 2019), but participants described a reciprocal trust that develops between leader and follower that was expressed as strengthening the leader-follower relationship over time.

Based on previous research, Hernandez et al. (2014) posited that followers decide how much to trust a leader based on the information about the leader, the leader's stance regarding the follower, and the situation in which the leader acts. They focused on three paths to follower trust creation based on Hernandez et al.'s (2011) different loci (i.e., sources) of leadership and used Sitkin and Lind's (2007) nomenclature to identify each category of leadership. Hernandez et al. (2014) continued by describing each of the three paths. Originating from the leader focus, personal leadership behaviors are leader-focused leadership behaviors that convey to followers that the leader has personal qualities that merit trust (e.g., genuineness, honesty, openness to self-expression). Originating from the leader-follower locus, relational leadership behaviors are relationship-focused behaviors that facilitate connections between leaders and followers (e.g., speaks truthfully, behaves with authenticity, displays vulnerability) and demonstrate to followers

that leaders will not take advantage if trust is conferred. Lastly, originating from the collective and context loci, contextual leadership behaviors are situation-focused leadership behaviors that focus on interpreting the organizational dynamics and environment for followers (e.g., transparent organization communication, organizational culture, and organizational environment). Past scholars have emphasized the crucial role that relationship-building leadership behaviors can play in assisting leaders to establish and maintain trust (Levin et al., 2006; Lewicki et al., 2006; Lind, 2001).

The participants described several positive outcomes as a result of the interrelationships between all the variables included in the research model, including the presence of transparent leader characteristics, influence of transparent leader behaviors on the leader-follower relationship, the potential moderators at the individual and organizational level, and the mediating influence of follower trust. A number of these variables have been linked in the literature to transparent leadership, but most of them have not. Yet, the research results have identified numerous compelling connections to help explain the leader-follower relationship and the potential power of transparent leadership.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

### Overview

Transparency has gained considerable interest in society as information is now more available than ever before. Social media has seemingly captured nearly everyone's attention, and companies are constantly engaging with consumers in non-stop marketing (Alton, 2017; Garcia-Sanchez et al., 2020; Kavakli, 2021). The measurement of transparency has continued to be quite challenging (Bernstein, 2017) and, although measures do exist, they were developed before studies addressed the theoretical dimensions and boundary conditions of transparency (Schnackenberg et al., 2020). Transparency is often considered as a solution to many challenges facing today's organizations (de Fine & Naurin, 2022; Essandoh et al., 2017; Pozen, 2020), and employees expect it from their leaders (Shum et al., 2019) although its definition and connection to leadership are still uncertain (Mamaril, 2021). The answers to the research questions included in this study describe several connections between transparency and leadership, as well as its timely importance for today's leaders and organizations to cultivate transparency for their followers.

The need for transparent leadership in today's organizations is highlighted by numerous challenges around communication and transparency in a work-from-home context (Gibson, 2020), digitization (Norman et al., 2020), and demographic shifts (Perkins et al., 2022), with followers demanding greater connections with their leaders, including mutual expectations, open communication, and two-way feedback (Schroth, 2019). The absence of transparent leadership in contemporary organizations may result in several negative outcomes, including a lack of follower trust (Alm, 2022), absence of follower feedback (Lutskiy, 2022), loss of follower motivation or focus, or tension between leaders and followers (Youshaei, 2021). Further, given

the emergence of Gen Z and the approaching exit of the Baby Boomers from the workforce, today's leaders and organizations are facing a rapidly shifting landscape that is demanding a different set of leadership competencies to meet follower needs and effectively manage the complexities and challenges of leading a multi-generational workforce (Groves, 2020). Further, these followers value diversity, work/life balance, an enjoyable workplace, highly frequent feedback, and strong psychological safety across their work teams. The current study's findings provide relevant and valuable insights into leader-follower relationships that are critical for today's context of the leader-follower relationship.

This research study began with a review of current leadership theories to better understand the literature related to transparency (Albu & Flyverbom, 2019; Ananny & Crawford, 2018; Bernstein, 2017; Coser, 1961; Schnackenberg & Tomlinson, 2016; Schnackenberg et al., 2020) and transparent leadership (Bennis et al., 2008; Mamaril, 2021; Vogelgesang & Lester, 2009; Yi et al., 2017). Although much has been written about transparency, its definition can vary greatly, even within the same domains of research (Schnackenberg & Tomlinson, 2016). When connecting transparency to leadership, there is no formal definition of transparent leadership (Buell, 2008), and it has yet to be developed into a formal leadership theory. Upon conducting a thorough review of other existing leadership theories (e.g., authentic leadership, transformational leadership, LMX), the purpose of this research was to contribute to both leadership theory and practice by exploring the multidimensional nature of transparent leadership. The goals of this study included identifying the behaviors of transparent leadership, discovering how transparent leadership influences followers, determining how the leader-follower relationship is influenced by where the follower works in the organization, and discerning how the leader-follower relationship is influenced by followers working outside the



traditional office environment. Overall, the depth of conceptual and empirical research on transparent leadership remains very limited.

The framework used for this research was designed to address four research questions to provide several important contributions to leadership theory and research (a) What are the primary behaviors that comprise transparent leadership?; (b) How does transparent leadership influence follower attitudes?; (c) How is the relationship between transparent leadership and follower attitudes impacted by follower role/status or place in organization?; and (d) How is the relationship between transparent leadership and follower attitudes impacted by virtual or distributed contexts?

A target population (i.e., mid-level leaders currently working in US non-profit healthcare organizations) was selected for this study. The sample of mid-level leaders of mission-based organizations, and their likely shared values (e.g., respect, care for others) and patient focus, was determined to relate well to the values expressed in transparent leadership and would provide valuable insight for the study. As a result of using my professional network to identify potential participants in the research study (as well as snowball sampling), the study participants were employed by six different non-profit healthcare organizations across the western US.

### **Primary Research Findings**

The principal finding of this study is the multidimensional TLM that captures a dynamic, reciprocal leader-follower relationship that is differentiated from existing leadership theories (e.g., authentic leadership, transformational leadership) that center more on the leader behavior (e.g., sharing reasons behind decisions) influencing follower behaviors (e.g., focus on work) and driving several outcomes (e.g., follower engagement). Transparent leadership, as described by the participants in this study, is distinct from existing theories as it relates a reciprocal leader-

follower relationship, with leader and follower continually interacting, sharing and responding, and developing a relationship over time. It is important to note that the data collected was not longitudinal, so conclusions cannot be reached about how leader-follower relationships develop over time. However, as stated in the TLM, participants discussed these relationships as evolving and reciprocal, with followers influencing leaders just as leaders influence followers.

The study inspired a new definition of transparent leadership that captures the nature of the transparent leader-follower relationship and reflects the multiple dimensions and levels of analysis of the TLM, as well as a theory of leadership and influence that aligns with the contemporary challenges faced by today's organizations and followers:

*A leader's intentional and reciprocal sharing of timely and relevant information with followers, and genuine relationship-building that cultivates follower trust and results in follower perceptions of strengthened personal value and meaningful work.*

The results of this study identified six transparent leader characteristics that enable transparent leader behaviors, represented by the leader themes of interpersonal skills and personality traits. These characteristics appear to be potential antecedents as they activate the transparent leader behaviors that influence the leader-follower relationship. These characteristics include a key aspect of EI, emotional attentiveness, as well as approachability, communication skills, genuineness, honesty, and openness to self-expression. These characteristics were not anticipated prior to this study, and only honesty (Bennis, 2008; Yukl, 2013) has previously been linked to transparent leader characteristics in prior literature, making this finding a new contribution to the literature on transparent leaders. This is important for developing a theory of transparent leadership as it identifies key characteristics of leaders that ideally are present to activate or enable any number of transparent leader behaviors and for the development of the transparent leader-follower relationship. It could also assist in identifying leaders that ideally possess the

characteristics needed to be transparent leaders, increasing their potential to become effective transparent leaders, and leading to opportunities for leadership development and selection for future leadership positions.

The first research question asked, “What are the primary behaviors that comprise transparent leadership?” The study results revealed 10 transparent leader behaviors as having a positive impact on the leader-follower relationship, comprised by the leader themes of information exchange, relationship building, and relational transparency. The list of leader behaviors includes: shares information with others, gives and seeks feedback, connects with followers, cares for others, speaks truthfully, behaves with authenticity, displays vulnerability, engages in conversation, and actively listens to others. These leader behaviors were determined to have a positive influence on the leader-follower relationship and are central to followers experiencing a heightened level of trust in their leader. Additionally, as followers trust the leader, leaders are more likely to respond in kind (e.g., speak truthfully, display vulnerability), resulting in mutual trust and strengthening the leader-follower relationship.

Five of these leader behaviors have previously been linked to transparent leader behaviors, including shares information with others (Vogelgesang & Lester, 2009; Yi et al., 2017), gives feedback (Huang et al., 2014; Vogelgesang & Lester, 2009; Yi, 2017), seeks feedback (Ji & Hong, 2022; Norman et al., 2010; Vogelgesang & Lester, 2009; Zhang et al., 2011), displays vulnerability (Vogelgesang & Lester, 2009) and actively listens to others (Baum, 2005; Bennis et al., 2008). The remaining five behaviors (i.e., connects with followers, cares for others, speaks truthfully, behaves with authenticity, and engages in conversation) have not previously been linked, making this finding a novel contribution to the literature on transparent

leadership. Further examination of these distinct transparent leader behaviors may help understand the follower experience in today's organizations.

The third research question asked, "How is the relationship between transparent leadership and follower attitudes impacted by follower role/status or place in organization?" The fourth research question asked, "How is the relationship between transparent leadership and follower attitudes impacted by virtual or distributed contexts?" Potential contextual factors were identified in the results that moderate the leader-follower relationship at the individual level (i.e., remote/virtual context, follower place in organization, length of leader-follower relationship) and the organizational level (i.e., transparent organizational communication, organizational culture, organizational environment). It is important to consider context, as variables acting as moderators may influence the relationship of other variables either positively or negatively.

The results suggest that remote/virtual context (working outside of the traditional office environment), follower place in organization (level of position/title or work location), and length of leader-follower relationship (amount of time follower has worked with leader) may moderate the leader-follower relationship at the individual level and were described as having either a positive or a negative influence on the leader-follower relationship. In the remote/virtual context, it was discovered that leaders need to be intentional about reaching out to followers working out of the office, ensuring they have meaningful interactions with followers regularly. For example, in a remote/virtual context, a high level or quality of interactions with a leader could be considered a positive influence, and a low level or quality of interactions with a leader could be considered a negative influence. Regarding follower place in organization, the positive influence of transparent leader behaviors was different depending on the role they had, or where they worked in the organization. For instance, a follower that works as a frontline leader in a hospital

may not be influenced by transparent leader behaviors as much as someone working at the regional headquarters where leaders may share transparent information more readily. With respect to length of leader-follower relationship, the length of time a follower worked with a leader influenced the level of leader transparency that they experienced. Thus, the longer a follower worked with a specific leader, the more likely these followers perceive their leader as demonstrating transparent leader behaviors such as speaks truthfully, behaves with authenticity, and displays vulnerability.

Transparent organizational communication (communication from organization vs. leader), organizational culture (beliefs, values, and attitudes), and organizational environment (internal or external forces) may moderate the leader-follower relationship at the organizational level. In regard to transparent organizational communication, its level of influence was determined by how the communication was delivered, as well as the timeliness and the consistency. For example, consistent and timely transparent organizational communication (e.g., upcoming leadership changes, budget challenges) could be considered a positive influence, and inconsistent or slow transparent organizational communication (e.g., sharing changes just before or after they occur) could be considered a negative influence. For organizational culture, the level of influence was indicated by how safe followers felt to fail and learn from their experiences, as well as how supportive it was for everyone to share their thoughts without fear of consequences (Edmondson, 1999; Edmondson & Bransby, 2023). In an organizational environment, the level of influence depended on the types and numbers of internal or external forces, either positive or negative, impacting the followers (e.g., organizational restructure, pandemic) and on the level of transparency they experienced, which appeared to help mitigate any negative impacts. None of these six potential moderators have previously been linked to

transparent leaders or existing leadership theory. As such, these findings represent a new contribution to leadership studies and potential directions for future research, such as examining the influence of more specific moderators (e.g., team psychological safety, organizational change events) on the transparent leader-follower relationship.

Follower trust was described as mediating the relationship between transparent leader behaviors and follower outcomes. The influence of follower trust helps to explain how transparent leader behaviors are positively connected to several follower outcomes, such as follower engagement (Rawlins, 2009) and follower openness to change (Yue et al., 2019). Follower trust has previously been linked to transparent leaders (Schwarz, 2010; Scott, 2016; Vogelgesang & Lester, 2009) and, in this study, it was found to potentially mediate the leader-follower relationship in a reciprocal manner that is considered distinct from other descriptions of this construct in literature, which is a new contribution to leadership studies. The literature review clearly identified trust as a key variable in the leader-follower relationship as a result of transparent leader behaviors (e.g., sharing information with followers, speaks truthfully, displays vulnerability) help demonstrate to followers that they are valued and trusted by their leader, and that trust encourages similar behavior in return (e.g., sharing insights to operational challenges, providing honest feedback, offering suggestions for process improvements).

The second research question asked, “How does transparent leadership influence follower attitudes?” The study results disclosed the emergence of five follower outcomes resulting from the influence of transparent leader behaviors on the leader-follower relationship, comprised of follower personal impact, professional impact, and work engagement. Two of the follower outcomes identified have previously been linked to transparent leadership, increased work performance (Vogelgesang & Lester, 2009; Walumbwa et al., 2008) and more engaged in work

(Gardner et al., 2005; Vogelgesang & Lester, 2009; Yi, 2017). However, three follower outcomes (felt personally valued, felt work was meaningful, extra work effort) have not previously been connected and are a novel contribution to the research literature on transparent leadership. In particular, the two outcomes that impact followers on a personal level (felt personally valued, felt work was meaningful) should be considered for closer examination as part of future research studies to better understand why transparent leader behaviors influence followers in such a way.

### **Implications for Advancing Theory**

The relational transparency dimension of authentic leadership, involving presenting one's authentic self to others, promoting trust through disclosures, openly sharing information, and expressing one's true thoughts and feelings (Jiang & Men, 2017; Kernis, 2003; Walumbwa et al., 2008) was anticipated as being associated with transparent leadership. The results supported this initial expectation, as relational transparency appears to be very similar to the transparent leader behaviors of sharing information with others and behaving with authenticity. The transparent leader behaviors of speaks truthfully and displays vulnerability is somewhat like the relational transparency descriptions of promoting trust through disclosures and expressing one's true thoughts and feelings, but that potential overlap is unclear. The remaining transparent leader behaviors of gives and seeks feedback, connects with followers, cares for others, engages in conversation, and actively listens to others, appear to be unique when compared to the authentic leadership dimension of relational transparency. Leadership scholars may further develop transparent leadership by closely examining the potential connections of these transparent leader behaviors and the authentic leadership dimension of relational transparency.

Transformational leadership's dimension of idealized influence, communicating collective purposes and values, demonstrating confidence and determination, and acting as charismatic role models (Garcia-Morales et al., 2012; Men & Bowen, 2017; Wang et al., 2011) was initially thought to be closely related to transparent leadership. Yet, results recognized the dimension of individualized consideration, defined as serving as a constant source of emotional support and personal care, empathy, and sensitivity for the development needs of employees, as closely related to TLM behaviors, which was reflected in the similar transparent leader behavior of cares for others. Transparent leadership may be further developed by leadership scholars with the continued exploration of transparent leader behaviors associated with relationship building (e.g., connects with followers, cares for others) to identify any further similarities with transformational leadership, in particular the dimension of individualized consideration.

The leader-follower relationship is addressed in LMX theory, which points to the quality of the relationship as a predictor of outcomes at the individual, group, and organizational levels of analysis (Gerstner & Day, 1997). Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) discussed a relationship-based approach to the leader-follower relationship, identifying three dimensions (i.e., mutual trust, respect, and obligation) that the offer to build a partnership LMX is based on. Further, Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) theorize that the offer to another person to build a partnership LMX is based on these three dimensions. After the initial assessment of LMX theory as part of the literature review, it was initially considered to be related to transparent leadership. The results confirmed that assessment, as follower trust was identified as a potential mediator of the reciprocal leader-follower relationship and a very prominent variable in the TLM, which appears to be very similar to the description of the LMX dimension of mutual trust. In addition, LMX was identified as potentially being related to the moderator of length of leader-follower relationship (with the



quality of the relationship potentially improving over time), a context that unexpectedly emerged from the data. Yet, the LMX dimensions of respect and obligation did not appear in the results. The further development of transparent leadership by leadership scholars may be considered with a closer investigation of the above connections with LMX, as well as any other potential correlation of LMX with the transparent leader-follower relationship, including potential follower influence on transparent leaders.

Upon completion of the literature review, informational justice was initially identified as being related to transparent leadership, as it relates to an organization sharing change-related information with followers in a candid, thorough, and timely manner and, by extension, the direct leader of a follower (Colquitt, 2001). However, although the research revealed some evidence of followers receiving change-related information from the leader or organization, there were not sufficient occurrences in the data to be considered significant. Still, leadership scholars interested in the further development of transparent leadership may want to consider an additional examination of its possible connection with informational justice. In addition, interpersonal justice, as it relates to the perception of fair treatment by others (Bies, 2001), may help explain the influence of transparent leader behaviors on follower outcomes. Leadership scholars might consider exploring those connections in future research to determine if there is any relationship between follower perception of fair treatment and feeling personally valued.

Leader values did not appear as explicit factors in the research data, but leader characteristics identified in the study may reflect underlying leader values. There has been a lack of consensus on the nature of values and, among other things, have been considered as needs, personality types, motivations, goals, or interests (Meglino & Ravlin, 1998). In terms of work behavior, Meglino (1996) describes values as a person's internalized belief about how they

should or ought to behave at work, with Meglino and Ravlin (1998) considering values as relatively permanent, or stable, although they may be capable of being changed under certain conditions (e.g., social influence). Further, leader-follower values congruence describes their shared values within an organization's culture (Jung & Avolio, 2000) and measures the follower's perception of how well their values match those of their leaders (Groves & LaRocca, 2011). There appears to be a connection between leader values and the leader characteristics posited in the TLM, which perhaps warrants closer examination of their similarities and differences, if any, in future leadership research.

In previous research studies, values have been examined as IVs, moderators, or DVs (Meglino & Revlin, 1998). As an IV (e.g., work or social values), studies have explored values and their impact on perceptions, decisions, and behavior. The moderating role of values (e.g., cultural or work values) has dealt with the value of concern for others and its influence on decisional and behavioral processes. Studying values as a DV investigated the influence of national culture or race (e.g., cultural or social values) on decision-making and behavior. The common approach to these studies has been to assess the influence of values on decision-making and behavior. Considering the focus of previous research and the possible connection between leader values and leader characteristics, future scholars should closely examine leader values as antecedents to transparent leader behaviors and their impact on follower outcomes.

This research contributes to leadership theory by furthering our understanding of transparent leadership and its influence on the leader-follower relationship and strongly advocates for a new theory of transparent leadership, represented by the TLM. It extends authentic leadership's dimension of relational transparency by introducing five leadership behaviors that were identified under the theme of leader relational transparency (i.e., speaks

truthfully, behaves with authenticity, displays vulnerability, engages in conversation, actively listens to others). The research offers additional support for transformational leadership's dimension of individualized consideration by adding a new behavior of cares for others. It extends LMX theory by adding six contextual influences that may influence the leader-follower relationship. Lastly, this research extends our understanding of follower trust in a unique way, identifying it as an interpersonal influence that mediates a reciprocal leader-follower relationship that leads to multiple follower outcomes (e.g., felt personally valued, felt work was meaningful). Previous literature often describes trust as a one-way granting of trust from the follower to the leader, or the organization (Jiang & Luo, 2018; Norman et al., 2010; Yue et al., 2019), a much different dynamic than what emerged from the study results. Future leadership scholars should consider further examining and or empirically testing this finding by focusing more closely on this unique understanding of follower trust.

### **Transparent Leadership**

This research is the first known empirical study that examined the multidimensional nature of transparent leadership. This contribution includes a new, multidimensional TLM that illustrates the dynamic, reciprocal transparent leader-follower relationship that embodies transparent leader behaviors. In particular, the reciprocal nature of the transparent leader-follower relationship is believed to be unique and describes the development of this critical relationship over time. This conclusion reflects LMX theory in regard to the quality of the leader-follower relationship predicting follower outcomes at the individual, group, and organizational levels of analysis (Gerstner & Day, 1997), which is consistent with the results of this study. Leadership scholars might consider a further exploration of the unique transparent leader behaviors identified in this study (e.g., connects with followers, cares for others, speaks

truthfully, behaves with authenticity, and engages in conversation) that are mediated by follower trust and help lead to multiple follower outcomes.

This research contributes a new definition of transparent leadership that reflects the components of the TLM. The definition describes the positive influence it has on the leader-follower relationship, while highlighting the key influence of follower trust and the personal impact it has on the follower, including the unique follower outcomes of felt personally valued and felt work was meaningful.

The leader characteristics identified in the research appear to be potential antecedents to transparent leader behaviors, possibly activating any number of the transparent leader behaviors that influence the leader-follower relationship. In addition, honesty is related to the HEXACO personality trait of honesty-humility, described with common defining adjectives of sincere, honest, faithful/loyal, modest/unassuming, and fair-minded, with a theoretical interpretation of reciprocal altruism (Ashton & Lee, 2007). This similarity may help provide additional insight into the HEXACO model of personality structure and assist leader trait scholars in advancing theory on transparent leader characteristics.

Leadership scholars should prioritize quantitative studies for further developing the TLM, as well as address a clear need for the development of a transparent leadership measure by conducting multiple validation studies to help advance leadership theory. Future scholars should develop a psychometric measure that includes behavioral items assessing each of the transparent leader behavioral dimensions. The predictive validity of this new measure should be assessed via the follower outcomes illustrated in the TLM, including personal impact, professional impact, and work engagement. Future validation studies should capture data from leaders and followers in multiple industries, such as for-profit healthcare and non-profit outside of healthcare, as well

as other non-profit healthcare organizations to determine if those contexts produce similar results. In addition, considering the reciprocal nature of the transparent leader-follower relationship, an examination of how the transparent leader is influenced by these relationships could be a strong consideration for future research studies. Further, how does the quality of the leader-follower relationship make the leader feel with regard to personal impact, enduring relationships, intrinsic rewards, or a sense of legacy? Investigation of the leader-follower relationship from the perspective of the leader and its impact on the leader will support the advancement of transparent leadership theory.

### **Authentic Leadership**

This research contributes to authentic leadership theory, specifically the dimension of relational transparency (Gardner et al., 2005; Kernis, 2003; Walumbwa, 2008). It is described in literature as displaying high levels of openness, self-disclosure, and trust in close relationships (Gardner et al., 2005), involves valuing and achieving openness and truthfulness in close relationships (Kernis, 2003), and presenting one's authentic self to others (Walumbwa, 2008). The results extend our understanding of the dimension of relational transparency with the additional behaviors identified in the results by the theme of relational transparency, speaks truthfully, displays vulnerability, engages in conversation, and actively listens to others. These findings may increase our perception of the potential value of relational transparency in the development of the leader-follower relationship. Scholars may consider testing the influence of these behaviors on the leader-follower relationship to advance authentic leadership theory.

### **Transformational Leadership**

This research contributes to Transformational Leadership theory, particularly the dimension of individualized consideration (Garcia-Morales et al., 2012; Men & Bowen, 2017;

Wang et al., 2011). This dimension is related as serving as a constant source of emotional support and personal care, empathy, and sensitivity for the development needs of followers. The study results extend our understanding of the dimension of individualized consideration with the identification of the additional behavior of cares for others. This finding may help leaders consider additional behavioral factors when crafting strategies to positively drive change in organizations. Transformational leadership scholars may contemplate a further examination of the transparent leadership behavior of cares for others, as well as other transparent leader behaviors identified in this study (e.g., connects with followers), to further the understanding of how to positively drive change with the development of the leader-follower relationship.

## **LMX**

This research contributed to LMX theory with the addition of follower trust as a mediator on the leader-follower relationship as one of three interrelated dimensions of mutual trust, respect, and obligation (Gerstner & Day, 1997; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). It introduces six contextual influences (potential moderators) of the leader-follower relationship that extends our understanding of the additional contextual influences that may moderate that relationship. LMX scholars could potentially look more closely at how these moderators impact the leader-follower relationship and the LMX exchange relationship, focusing on those at the individual level, such as remote/virtual context or follower place in organization.

## **Follower Trust**

Trust is defined by Mayer et al (1995) as the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party, based on their expectation that the other party will perform an expressed action that is important to them. In addition, antecedents to trust are described as ability, integrity, benevolence, positivity, competence, and transparency (Colquitt et al., 2007; Mayer et

al., 1995; McAllister, 1995; Norman et al., 2010). Follower trust is frequently portrayed as a mediating influence on leader behaviors or as an outcome of those behaviors (Hernandez et al., 2014; Vogelgesang & Lester, 2009; Walumbwa, 2008; Yue et al., 2019). The results expressed follower trust in a unique way, as a mediating influence on the leader-follower relationship, linking leader behaviors and follower outcomes. This perspective describes the development of trust as part of the leader-follower relationship over time, involving continuous interactions between leader and follower, not as part of a linear path from leader behaviors to follower outcomes. This phenomenon underlines the critical importance of follower trust in driving the follower outcomes appearing in the results, particularly followers feeling personally valued and perceiving that their work was meaningful. Determining how these variables are linked would be a strong consideration for future research, closely examining how follower trust mediates transparent leader behaviors and leading to the outcomes personally impacting followers.

In summary, there are many compelling variables identified in this research, the relationships they have with each other, and how they all contribute to help explain the dynamics of transparent leadership. Leadership scholars should consider further exploration of these relationships in the TLM through an expanded number of interviews across non-profit healthcare organizations in the US to increase the richness of the data. Another alternative could be to expand the interviews to similar populations, such as non-profit service organizations or for-profit healthcare organizations, to determine if the results extend to similar types of organizations. Testing these relationships using surveys would be a strong consideration for future research, including examining any potentially negative outcomes resulting from leaders demonstrating transparency (e.g., disclosing sensitive or proprietary information), including

organizational cultures or environments that may not be supportive of transparent behaviors (e.g., technology or financial sectors).

### **Implications for Business Practice**

These study results provide insight to organizational senior leaders to help them to better understand the value transparent leadership can bring to their organizations. The ideal leader characteristics and behaviors needed to be transparent leaders are identified, as well as the key importance of the leader-follower relationship. The critical role of follower trust to leader-follower relationships is emphasized, as well as the follower outcomes that could be expected by the influence of follower trust. Lastly, the study results point out how other internal or external contextual factors could positively or negatively affect the leader-follower relationship, either supporting or undermining any transparent leadership efforts.

In the past, transparent leadership has been identified as leader transparency, or simply transparency, in popular business magazines such as *Entrepreneur* or *Forbes* (Alton, 2017; Llopis, 2012) while using various transparency behaviors to describe what it is (e.g., honesty, information sharing, trust). Since it is unlikely that business leaders regularly read academic journals, these popular magazines or books, often published by the same authors, may be the only exposure that business leaders have to transparent leadership. As a starting point, this research and any future research conducted on transparent leadership should be more widely shared in popular business magazines, books, and internet sites to continue the educational process of today's decision makers, capture their interest, and spark conversations in executive meetings, the hallways, and offices of their organizations.

Once an interest in pursuing transparent leadership has been established, an organizational project plan could be developed to achieve the goals of senior organizational



leaders. That project plan could include the following (a) develop and implement a leader training and educational program on the TLM, and the positive influence transparent leadership can have on the leader-follower relationship; (b) advance a leader assessment tool to identify the characteristics and behaviors each leader currently possesses; (c) use the results of the leader assessment tool, at least in part, for identification of leaders to enroll in leadership and development programs to advance the competencies needed for transparent leaders (including first-time leaders), as well as selection for future positions or executive succession planning; (d) develop tools to assist leaders that have been trained on TLM and in the use of transparent leader behaviors, to be used on a regular basis to reinforce what they have learned; (e) initiate leader training programs in additional competencies needed to further support transparent leader behaviors, including follower engagement, work-from-home policies, 360-degree assessment/feedback tools, etc.

As an example for consideration as a starting point, Vogelgesang and Lester (2009) outlined a process for becoming a transparent leader with a current group of followers. In short, it included three main steps/processes (a) assess current follower perceptions of leader (e.g., 360-degree feedback); (b) start becoming transparent, giving and receiving feedback, and developing a plan to accomplish that; and (c) maintain the transparency that is achieved, consistently sharing relevant information, proactively seeking feedback and keeping the lines of communication open with followers. These actions will show followers that a leader is serious about becoming a more transparent leader, that their feedback and participation are valued, and that they can succeed only with their help. This plan could be used as a template and revised as needed to meet the needs of each leader and organization. By using this template and the results of this research as guidance, this approach could serve as a springboard to help take the next steps toward

developing transparent leaders. Further, these study results can readily be used to build on the template recommended by Vogelgesang and Lester (2009). For example, the results of this study could help determine the criteria to be used for assessing leaders, how to effectively give and seek feedback, and the identification of considerations for effectively sharing relevant and timely information with followers.

### **Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research**

Since the population selected for this study was drawn from non-profit healthcare organizations across the western US, the results may not necessarily be generalizable to all non-profit organizations, for-profit healthcare organizations, other industries, or other specific regions of the country. Further, other specific contextual moderators may be relevant to consider for the understanding of transparent leadership, such as the confidentiality of protected health information (i.e., information that cannot readily be shared), national cultural dimensions, or previous organizational changes (e.g., reorganization). However, the results may be generalizable to other non-profit organizations, given that such organizations are also considered to be mission-based (Brinckerhoff, 2009) and may share similar values and or cultures. Future scholars seeking to advance transparent leadership theory could consider involving different populations in determining if the results extend to those similar populations.

This study only focused on one stakeholder group, mid-level leaders currently working in non-profit healthcare organizations. The perspectives of other leaders, followers, or even board-level members may differ (e.g., focus of position, levels of experience). However, mid-level leaders were chosen to align with the focus of this study's research questions, and future studies should include other stakeholder groups such as frontline and or executive level leaders or

potentially interview leaders and followers that have a direct reporting relationship with the goal of getting both perspectives for comparison.

The number of participants selected for this study was partially determined by the time constraints. Future studies should increase the number of participants to be involved to potentially add more diversity and richness to the data, perhaps interviewing both leaders and followers, collecting a more segmented sample across different levels of the organizations (e.g., outpatient clinics, inpatient care, headquarters) or looking more closely at demographics (e.g., gender, level of experience).

The participants in this research were selected through my professional network, and other participants were identified using a snowball approach in which interviewees identified additional leaders for participation in the study. As a result, the leaders involved in this research were not selected at random. Yet, the use of a snowball sampling approach has been supported as a common and accepted interview sampling methodology in past research studies (Etikan et al., 2016; Parker et al., 2019). In addition, the time frame for conducting this study, as well as the one-hour length of the interview, further influenced which leaders were able to participate in the interviews. A consideration for future research could be to instead select participants at random within the selected population, or potentially add more control to selections to ensure diversity of the sample, including cultures, professions, ages, genders, etc. For instance, in the second example, interested participants could complete a demographic intake form that included the selection criteria and then the participants could be selected at random, but still using the selection criteria, to ensure the diversity goals of the population are still met.

Taking into consideration that the interviews were social interactions, an interviewer can potentially influence the participants and resulting data in many ways, including the use of

language to garner a positive or negative response, or by encouraging the participant to move the conversation in another direction to support a narrative (Potter & Hepburn, 2005). Respecting that possibility, care was taken to avoid the use of any language in the interview protocol, or with the use of probing questions that could introduce bias in the research results. In addition, a reliability check was conducted with the use of a peer debriefing to ensure that the codes/initial findings were reflective of the data and not driven by any biases (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

This research relied on the participants to recall their past experiences with leaders who fit their definition of leaders who led transparently. Since the amount of time having passed since working with those leaders may have been significant, the accuracy of the participants' recollections potentially may have been diminished. To address this concern, future scholars might consider limiting the use of leader examples to a shorter period, such as the last five years. Yet, it may limit the richness of the data by removing examples that exceed the time limit.

Lastly, although the research delivered compelling and, at times, surprising results, all transparent leader characteristics, behaviors, potential moderators and mediators, and follower outcomes need to be cross-validated and TLM factors/dimensions confirmed with a quantitative study adopting validated measures. Scholars could prioritize conducting a quantitative study to examine the connection between the new transparent leader behaviors included under the themes of relationship building (i.e., connects with followers, cares for others) and relational transparency (i.e., speaks truthfully, displays vulnerability, engages in conversation, actively listens to others), follower trust and the new follower outcomes included under the theme of personal impact (i.e., felt personally valued, felt work was meaningful). Of note, the relationship between the mediator of trust and the two follower outcomes related to personal impact was particularly compelling and likely warrants a separate, focused study of their own. For instance, I

recommend using a mixed method, longitudinal study involving both leaders and followers to demonstrate follower trust mediating transparent leader behaviors and resulting in follower outcomes, focusing on followers feeling personally valued and that their work was meaningful. This approach could help lead to a further refinement of the TLM and likely extend the understanding of follower trust in the literature (Hernandez et al., 2014; Mayer et al., 1995).

## **Conclusion**

This research provided insight into transparent leadership that was not identified in the literature review. It highlighted several leader characteristics and behaviors, potential moderators and mediators, as well as follower outcomes, and the relationships that they appear to have with each other. These results identify compelling relationships in which to explore and pursue a further understanding of and are worthy of future academic research. The hope is that these research results will serve as an inspiration for scholars and as a foundation for future research studies exploring the potential power of transparent leadership.

## REFERENCES

- Albu, O.B. & Flyverbom, M. (2019). Organizational transparency: Conceptualizations, conditions, and consequences. *Business & Society*, 58(2), 268–297.
- Alessandro, M., Lagomarsino, B.C., Scartascini, C., Streb, J., & Torrealday, J. (2021). Transparency and trust in government. Evidence from a survey experiment. *World Development*, 138, 105223
- Alm, J. (2022). Trust, the Pandemic, and Public Policies. *National Tax Journal*, 75(2), 355-370.
- Alton, L. (2017). How Transparency Became a Top Priority for Businesses, and Why You Should Care. *Obtenido de <https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/295739>*.
- Ananny, M. & Crawford, K. (2018). Seeing without knowing: Limitations of the Transparency ideal and its application to algorithmic accountability. *New Media & Society*, 20(3), 973–989.
- Ashton, M.C., & Lee, K. (2005). Honesty-humility, the Big Five, and the five-factor model. *Journal of Personality*, 73(5), 1321-1354.
- Ashton, M.C., & Lee, K. (2007). Empirical, theoretical, and practical advantages of the HEXACO model of personality structure. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 11(2), 150-166.
- Avolio, B.J., Walumbwa, F.O., & Weber, T.J. (2009). Leadership: Current theories, research, and future directions. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 60, 421-449.
- Balkin, J. M. (1999). How mass media simulate political transparency. *Cultural Values*, 3, 393-413.
- Baltzley, D., & Lawrence, J. (2016). Candor and transparency in the service of purpose. *People and Strategy*, 39(4), 21-25.
- Barbuto, J. E., & Hayden, R.W. (2011). Testing relationships between servant leadership dimensions and leader member exchange. *Journal of Leadership Education*, 10, 22–37.
- Barling, J., Slater, F., & Kelloway, E. K. (2000). Transformational leadership and emotional intelligence: An exploratory study. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 21(3), 157-161.
- Bass, B.M. (1985). Leadership: Good, better, best. *Organizational Dynamics*, 13, 26-40.
- Bass, B.M. (1990). From transactional to transformational leadership: Learning to share the vision. *Organizational Dynamics*, 18, 19-31.

- Baum, H. (2005). Transparent leadership. *Leader to Leader*, 2005(37), 41–47.  
<https://doi.org/10.1002/ltl.139>.
- Bennis, W., Goleman, D., & O'Toole, J. (2008). *Transparency: How leaders create a culture of candor*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Berdejo-Espinola, V., Suárez-Castro, A.F., Amano, T., Fielding, K.S., Oh, R.R.Y., & Fuller, R. A. (2021). Urban green space use during a time of stress: A case study during the COVID-19 pandemic in Brisbane, Australia. *People and Nature*, 3(3), 597-609.
- Bernstein, E.S. (2012). The transparency paradox: A role for privacy in organizational learning and operational control. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 57(2), 181–216.
- Bernstein, E.S. (2014). The transparency trap. *Harvard Business Review*, 92(10), 58-66.
- Bernstein, E.S. (2017). Making transparency transparent: The evolution of observation in management theory. *Academy of Management Annals*, 11(1), 217–266.
- Bernstein, E., Blunden, H., Brodsky, A., Sohn, W., & Waber, B. (2020). The implications of working without an office. *Harvard Business Review*, 15.
- Bies, R. (2001). Interactional (in)justice: The sacred and the profane. In J. Greenberg & R. Cropanzano (Eds.), *Advances in Organizational Justice* (pp. 89–118). Stanford University Press.
- Billups, F.D. (2020). *Qualitative Data Collection Tools: Design, Development & Applications*. Sage.
- Braun, S., Peus, C., Weisweiler, S., & Frey, D. (2013). Transformational leadership, job satisfaction, and team performance: A multilevel mediation model of trust. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 24(1), 270–283.
- Brinckerhoff, P. C. (2009). *Mission-based management: Leading your not-for-profit in the 21st century* (Vol. 231). John Wiley & Sons.
- Brown, F.W., & Moshavi, D. (2005). Transformational leadership and emotional intelligence: A potential pathway for an increased understanding of interpersonal influence. *Journal of Organizational Behavior: The International Journal of Industrial, Occupational and Organizational Psychology and Behavior*, 26(7), 867-871
- Brown, S., Gray, D., McHardy, J., & Taylor, K. (2015). Employee trust and workplace performance. *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, 116, 361-378.
- Brynjolfsson, E., Horton, J.J., Ozimek, A., Rock, D., Sharma, G., & TuYe, H.Y. (2020). *COVID-19 and remote work: An early look at US data* (No. w27344). National Bureau of Economic Research.

- Buell, J.M. (2008). What it takes to be an authentic and transparent leader: living the organization's mission, vision and values. *Healthcare Executive*, 23(6), 20-24.
- Burns, J.M. (1978). *Leadership*. Harper and Row.
- Butler, J. (2015). *Notes toward a performative theory of assembly*. Harvard University Press.
- Carsten, M., Goswami, A., Shepard, A., & Donnelly, L.I. (2022). Followership at a distance: follower adjustment to distal leadership during covid-19. *Applied Psychology*, 71(3), 959–982. <https://doi.org/10.1111/apps.12337>
- Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory*. Sage.
- Chughtai, A.A., & Buckley, F. (2011). Work engagement: Antecedents, the mediating role of learning goal orientation and job performance. *Career Development International*, 16(7), 684-705.
- Clark, D. (2012, April 11). Transparency Is The New Leadership Imperative. *Harvard Business Review*. <https://hbr.org/2012/04/transparency-is-the-new-leader>
- Colquitt, J.A. (2001). On the dimensionality of organizational justice: A construct validation of a measure. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 86(3), 386-400. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.86.3.386>
- Colquitt, J.A., Scott, B.A., & LePine, J.A. (2007). Trust, trustworthiness, and trust propensity: a meta-analytic test of their unique relationships with risk taking and job performance. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 92(4), 909-927.
- Corbin, J.M., & Strauss, J.M. (2007). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (3rd ed.). Sage.
- Corbin, J.M., & Strauss, J.M. (2015). *Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (4th ed.). Sage.
- Coser, R.L. (1961). Insulation from observability and types of social conformity. *American Sociological Review*, 26, 28-39.
- Cotterrell, R. (2000). Transparency, mass media, ideology and community. *Cultural Values*, 3, 414-426.
- Creswell, J.W., & Creswell, J.D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage publications.



- Dansereau, R., Graen, G., & Haga, B. (1975). A vertical dyad linkage approach to leadership within formal organizations. A longitudinal investigation of the role making process. *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance*, 131, 46-78.
- Day, D.V., Riggio, R.E., Tan, S.J., & Conger, J.A. (2021). Advancing the science of 21st-century leadership development: theory, research, and practice. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 32(5), 101557.
- De Cremer, D. (2016). When transparency backfires, and how to prevent it. *Harvard Business Review*.
- de Fine Licht, J., & Naurin, D. (2022). Transparency. In *Handbook on theories of governance* (pp. 226-233). Edward Elgar Publishing.
- DeGroot, T., Kiker, D.S., & Cross, T.C. (2000). A meta-analysis to review organizational outcomes related to charismatic leadership. *Canadian Journal of Administrative Sciences*, 17, 356-371.
- DeRue, D.S. & Ashford, S.J. (2010). Who will lead and who will follow? A social process of leadership identify construction in organizations. *The Academy of Management Review*, 35(4), 627–647.
- Dimotakis, N., Lambert, L.S., Fu, S.Q., Boulamatsi, A., Smith, T.A., Runnalls, B., Corner, A.J., Tepper, B.J., & Maurer, T. (2023). Gains and losses: week-to-week changes in leader-follower relationships. *Academy of Management Journal*, 66(1), 248-275.
- Dubbink, W., Graafland, J. & Van Liedekerke, L. (2008). CSR, transparency and the role of intermediate organisations. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 82(2), 391–406.
- Dubey, A.D., & Tripathi, S. (2020). Analysing the sentiments towards work-from-home experience during COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of Innovation Management*, 8(1), 13-19.
- Dulebohn, J.H., Bommer, W.H., Liden, R.C., Brouer, R.L., & Ferris, G.R. (2012). A meta-analysis of antecedents and consequences of leader–member exchange: Integrating the past with an eye toward the future. *Journal of Management*, 38, 1715–1759.
- Dulewicz, V., & Higgs, M. (2000). Emotional intelligence—A review and evaluation study. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 15(4), 341-372.
- Edmondson, A. (1999). Psychological safety and learning behavior in work teams. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 44(2), 350-383.

- Edmondson, A.C., & Bransby, D.P. (2023). Psychological safety comes of age: Observed themes in an established literature. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, 10, 55-78.
- Edmondson, A. C., & McManus, S. E. (2007). Methodological fit in management field research. *Academy of Management Review*, 32(4), 1246-1264.
- Elangovan, A.R., Pinder, C.C., & McLean, M. (2010). Callings and organizational behavior. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 76, 428-440.
- Essandoh, M.K., Salani, R., Mendel, E., Brod, H.C., Koesters, S.C., & Satiani, B. (2017). Walking a tightrope of transparency. *Physician Leadership Journal*, 4(5), 49–51.
- Estlund, C. (2011). Just the facts: The case for workplace transparency. *Stanford Law Review*, 63(2), 351–407.
- Etikan, I., Alkassim, R., & Abubakar, S. (2016). Comparison of snowball sampling and Sequential sampling technique. *Biometrics and Biostatistics International Journal*, 3(1), 55-56.
- Fernandez-Feijoo, B., Romero, S. & Ruiz, S. (2014). Effect of stakeholders' pressure on transparency of sustainability reports within the GRI framework. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 122(1), 53–63.
- Fortin, M. (2008). Perspectives on organizational justice: concept clarification, social context integration, time and links with morality. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 10(2), 93-126.
- Galanti, T., Guidetti, G., Mazzei, E., Zappalà, S., & Toscano, F. (2021). Work from home during the COVID-19 outbreak: The impact on employees' remote work productivity, engagement, and stress. *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, 63(7), e426.
- Garcia-Morales, V.J., Jimenez-Barrionuevo, M.M., & Gutierrez-Gutierrez, L. (2012). Transformational leadership influence on organizational performance through organizational learning and innovation. *Journal of Business Research*, 65(7), 1040–1050. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2011.03.005>.
- García-Sánchez, I.M., Rodríguez-Ariza, L., Aibar-Guzmán, B., & Aibar-Guzmán, C. (2020). Do institutional investors drive corporate transparency regarding business contribution to the sustainable development goals? *Business Strategy and the Environment*, 29(5), 2019-2036.
- Gardner, H. (1993). *Multiple intelligences: The theory in practice*. Basic books.

- Gardner, H. & Hatch, T. (1989). Multiple intelligences go to school. *Educational Researcher*, 18(8), 4-9.
- Gardner, W.L., Avolio, B.J., Luthans, F., May, D.R., & Walumbwa, F.O. (2005). “Can you see the real me?” A self-based model of authentic leader and follower development. *Leadership Quarterly*, 16, 343-372.
- Gardner, W.L., Karam, E.P., Alvesson, M., & Einola, K. (2021). Authentic leadership theory: The case for and against. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 32(6), 101495.
- Gelles, D. (2019, October 29). Boeing737max: What’s happened after the 2 deadly crashes. *The New York Times*.  
<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/business/boeing-737-crashes.html>
- Gerstner, C.R. & Day, D.V. (1997). Meta-Analytic review of leader-member exchange theory: Correlates and construct issues. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 6, 827-844.
- Gibson, C. (2020). From “social distancing” to “care in connecting”: An emerging organizational research agenda for turbulent times. *Academy of Management Discoveries*, 6(2), 165-169.
- Gibson, C., Thomason, B., Margolis, J., Groves, K., Gibson, S., & Franczak, J. (2023). Dignity inherent and earned: The experience of dignity at work. *Academy of Management Annals*, 17(1), 218-267.
- Gill, R. (2002). Change management--or change leadership? *Journal of Change Management*, 3(4), 307-318.
- Gioia, D.A., Corley, K.G., & Hamilton, A.L. (2013). Seeking qualitative rigor in inductive research: Notes on the Gioia methodology. *Organizational Research Methods*, 16(1), 15-31.
- Goldsmith, M., & Wheeler, P. (2007). Transparent Leaders: They build teams. *Leadership Excellence*, 24(11), 20.
- Goleman, D. (1996). Emotional intelligence. Why it can matter more than IQ. *Learning*, 24(6), 49-50.
- Goleman, D. (1997). Beyond IQ: developing the leadership competencies of emotional intelligence. Paper presented at the 2nd International Competency Conference.
- Gomez-Carrasco, P., & Michelon, G. (2017). The power of stakeholders’ voice: The effects of social media activism on stock markets. *Business Strategy and the Environment*, 26, 855–872.

- Gottfredson, R.K., & Aguinis, H. (2017). Leadership behaviors and follower performance: Deductive and inductive examination of theoretical rationales and underlying mechanisms. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 38, 558-591.
- Graen, G., & Cashman, J. (1975). A role-making model of leadership in formal organizations: A development approach. In J G Hunt & L L Lawson (Eds), *Leadership Frontiers*, p 143-165. Kent State University Press.
- Graen, G., Novak, M., & Sommerkamp, P. (1982). The effects of leader-member exchange and job design on productivity and satisfaction. Testing a dual attachment mode. *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance*, 30, 109-131.
- Graen, G., & Uhl-Bien, M. (1995). Relationship-based approach to leadership: Development of leader-member exchange (LMX) theory of leadership over 25 years: Applying a multi-level multi-domain perspective. *Leadership Quarterly*, 6, 219-247.
- Granados, N., & Gupta, A. (2013). Transparency strategy: Competing with information in a digital world. *MIS Quarterly*, 37(2), 637-641.
- Granados, N., Gupta, A. & Kauffman, R.J. (2010). Information transparency in business-to-consumer markets: Concepts, framework, and research agenda. *Information Systems Research*, 21(2), 207–226.
- Greenberg, J., & Alge, B.J. (1998). *Aggressive reactions to workplace injustice*. In R.W. Griffin, A. O’Leary-Kelly, & J. Collins (Eds.), *Monographs in organizational behavior and industrial relations: Dysfunctional behavior in organizations*, Vol. 23: 83-117. JAI.
- Grimmelikhuijsen, S., Herkes, F., Leistikow, I., Verkroost, J., de Vries, F., & Zijlstra, W.G. (2021). Can decision transparency increase citizen trust in regulatory agencies? Evidence from a representative survey experiment. *Regulation & Governance*, 15(1), 17-31.
- Groves, K. (2020). Testing a moderated mediation model of transformational leadership, values, and organization change. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*, 27(1), 35-48.
- Groves, K.S., & LaRocca, M.A. (2012). Responsible leadership outcomes via stakeholder CSR values: Testing a values-centered model of transformational leadership. *Responsible Leadership*, 37-55.
- Gui, C., Luo, A., Zhang, P., & Deng, A. (2020). A meta-analysis of transformational leadership in hospitality research. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 32(6), 2137-2154.
- Hackman, J.R., & Oldham, G.R. (1980) *Work redesign*. Addison-Wesley.

- Hackman, M.Z., & Johnson, C.E. (2013). *Leadership: A communication perspective*. Waveland press.
- Hamstra, M.R., Sassenberg, K., Van Yperen, N.W., & Wisse, B. (2014). Followers feel valued—When leaders' regulatory focus makes leaders exhibit behavior that fits followers' regulatory focus. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 51*, 34-40.
- Harter, S. (2002). Authenticity. In C.R. Snyder & S.J. Lopez (Eds.), *Handbook of Positive Psychology*, 382-394. Oxford University Press.
- Healy, P., & Serafeim, G. (2019). How to Scandal-Proof Your Company A rigorous compliance system is not enough. *Harvard Business Review, 97*(4), 42.
- Hernandez, M., Eberly, M.B., Avolio, B.J., & Johnson, M.D. (2011). The loci and mechanisms of leadership: Exploring a more comprehensive view of leadership theory. *The Leadership Quarterly, 22*, 1165–1185.
- Hernandez, M., Long, C.P., & Sitkin, S.B. (2014). Cultivating follower trust: are all leader behaviors equally influential? *Organization Studies, 35*(12), 1867-1892.
- Hong, C., & Ji, Y.G. (2022). When transparent leadership communication motivates Employee advocacy: Testing the mediator roles of employee attributions in CEO activism. *Public Relations Review, 48*(3), 102202.
- Houser, D., Levy, D.M., Padgitt, K., Peart, S.J., & Xiao, E. (2014). Raising the price of talk: An experimental analysis of transparent leadership. *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization, 105*, 208-218.
- Huang, X., Hsieh, J.J., & He, W. (2014). Expertise dissimilarity and creativity: The contingent roles of tacit and explicit knowledge sharing. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 99*, 816-830.
- Ilies, R., Morgeson, F.P., & Nahrgang, J.D. (2005). Authentic leadership and eudaemonic well-being: Understanding leader-follower outcomes. *Leadership Quarterly, 16*, 373-394.
- Jain, G., Singh, H., Chaturvedi, K.R., & Rakesh, S. (2020). Blockchain in logistics industry: in fizza customer trust or not. *Journal of Enterprise Information Management, 33*(3), 541-558.
- Ji, Y.G., & Hong, C. (2022). Engaging Employees in CEO Activism: The Role of Transparent Leadership Communication in Making a Social Impact. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly, 100*(1), 78-99.

- Jiang, H., & Luo, Y. (2018). Crafting employee trust: from authenticity, transparency to engagement. *Journal of Communication Management*, 22(2), 138-160.  
<https://10.1108/JCOM-07-2016-0055>
- Jiang, H., & Men, R.L. (2017). Creating an Engaged Workforce: The Impact of Authentic Leadership, Transparent Organizational Communication, and Work-Life Enrichment. *Communication Research*, 44(2), 225-243.  
<https://10.1177/0093650215613137>
- Jin, Y. (2010). Emotional Leadership as a Key Dimension of Public Relations Leadership: A National Survey of Public Relations Leaders. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 22(2), 159-181. <https://10.1080/10627261003601622>
- Judge, T.A., Scott, B.A., & Ilies, R. (2006). Hostility, job attitudes, and workplace deviance: Test of a multilevel model. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 91, 126-138.
- Jung, D., & Avolio, B. (2000). Opening the black box: An experimental investigation of the mediating effects of trust and value congruence on transformational and transactional leadership. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 21(8), 949-964.
- Kahn, B.K., Strong, D.M., & Wang, R.Y. (2002). Information quality benchmarks: Product and service performance. *Communications of the ACM*, 45(4), 184-192.
- Kaplan, G.S. (2018). Building a culture of transparency in health care. *Harvard Business Review*, 1-5.
- Kaptein, M. (2008). Developing and testing a measure for the ethical culture of organizations: The corporate ethical virtues model. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 29(7), 923-947.
- Kavakli, B. (2021). Transparency Is No Longer An Option; It's A Must. *Forbes Magazine*.  
*Forbes Business Council*.
- Kernis, M.H. (2003). Toward a conceptualization of optimal self-esteem. *Psychological Inquiry*, 14, 1-26.
- Kim, H.S. (2009). Examining the role of informational justice in the wake of downsizing from an organizational relationship management perspective. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 88, 297-312.
- Kim, H., & Kim, T. (2017). Emotional intelligence and transformational leadership: A review of empirical studies. *Human Resource Development Review*, 16(4), 377-393.
- Kim, S., & Lee, J. (2012). E-participation, transparency, and trust in local government. *Public Administration Review*, 72(6), 819-828.

- Kouzes, J.M., & Posner, B. (2003). *The leadership challenge* (3rd ed.) Jossey-Bass.
- Lavoie, A. (2015). 4 Reasons You Need to Embrace Transparency in the Workplace. *Entrepreneur*. <https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/245461>
- Lee, Y.W., Strong, D.M., Kahn, B.K., & Wang, R.Y.(2002). AIMQ: A methodology for information quality assessment. *Information & Management*, 40(2), 133–146.
- Leonardi, P.M., & Treem, J.W. (2020). Behavioral visibility: A new paradigm for organization studies in the age of digitization, digitalization, and datafication. *Organization Studies*, 41(12), 1601-1625.
- Levin, D. Z., Whitener, E. M., & Cross, R. (2006). Perceived trustworthiness of knowledge sources: The moderating impact of relationship length. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 91, 1163–1171.
- Lewicki, R.J., Tomlinson, E.C., & Gillespie, N. (2006). Models of interpersonal trust development: Theoretical approaches, empirical evidence, and future directions. *Journal of Management*, 32, 991–1022.
- Liden, R., & Graen, G. (1980). Generalizability of the vertical dyad linkage model of leadership. *Academy of Management Journal*, 23, 451-465.
- Lind, E.A. (2001). Fairness heuristic theory: Justice judgments as pivotal cognitions in organizational relations. *Advances in Organizational Justice*, 56(8), 56-88.
- Lindebaum, D., & Cartwright, S. (2010). A critical examination of the relationship between emotional intelligence and transformational leadership. *Journal of Management Studies*, 47(7), 1317-1342.
- Lips-Wiersma, M., & Wright, S. (2012). Measuring the meaning of meaningful work: Development and validation of the Comprehensive Meaningful Work Scale (CMWS). *Group & Organization Management*, 37(5), 655-685.
- Liu, Z., Venkatesh, S., Murphy, S.E., & Riggio, R.E. (2021). Leader development across the lifespan: A dynamic experiences-grounded approach. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 32(5), 101382.
- Llopis, G. (5). Powerful things happen when a leader is transparent. *Forbes*.
- Long, X., & Nasiry, J. (2020). Wage transparency and social comparison in sales force compensation. *Management Science*, 66(11), 5290-5315.
- Lord, R.G. (1985). An information processing approach to social perceptions, leadership and behavioral measurement in organizations. *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 7, 87-128.

- Lord, R.G., & Maher, K.J. (2002). *Leadership and information processing: Linking perceptions and performance*. Routledge.
- Luthans, F., & Avolio, B.J. (2003). *Authentic leadership development*. In K. S. Cameron, J. E. Dutton, & R. E. Quinn (Eds.), *Positive organizational scholarship: Foundations of a new discipline* (pp. 241–261). Barrett-Koehler.
- Lutskiy, A. (2022, August 22). Transparency Leadership: A Clear View For Breaking New Grounds. *Forbes*. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbestechcouncil/2022/08/22/transparency-leadership-a-clear-view-for-breaking-new-grounds>
- Mamaril, E. (2021). Effective Followership Impacting Transparent Leadership. In *Transparent and Authentic Leadership*, pp. 161-183. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.
- Manning, T., & Robertson, B. (2016). A three factor model of followership: part 1—introduction to followership, leadership and the three factor model of leadership. *Industrial and Commercial Training*, 48(6), 277-283.
- Masterson, S.S., Lewis, K., Goldman, B.M., & Taylor, M.S. (2000). Integrating justice and social exchange: The differing effects of fair procedures and treatment on work relationships. *Academy of Management Journal*, 43, 738–748.
- Matthews, R.A., Mills, M.J., Trout, R.C., & English, L. (2014). Family-supportive supervisor behaviors, work engagement, and subjective well-being: A contextually dependent mediated process. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 19, 168-181.
- May, D.R., Gilson, R.L., & Harter, L.M. (2004). The psychological conditions of meaningfulness, safety and availability and the engagement of the human spirit at work. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 77, 11-37.
- Mayer, R.C., Davis, J.H., & Schoorman, F.D. (1995). An Integrative Model of Organizational Trust. *The Academy of Management Review*, 20(3), 709–734. <https://doi.org/10.2307/258792>
- McAllister, D. J. (1995). Affect-and cognition-based trust as foundations for interpersonal cooperation in organizations. *Academy of Management Journal*, 38(1), 24-59.
- Meglino, B.M. (1996). *Work values*. In L.H. Peters, S.A. Youngblood & C.R. Creer, *The Blackwell encyclopedic dictionary of human resource management*. Blackwell Publishers,
- Meglino, B.M., & Ravlin, E.C. (1998). Individual values in organizations: Concepts, controversies, and research. *Journal of Management*, 24(3), 351-389.
- Mehmood, I., Macky, K., & Le Fevre, M. (2023). High-involvement work practices, employee trust and engagement: the mediating role of perceived organisational politics. *Personnel Review*, 52(4), 1321-1344.



- Mehta, D., & Mehta, N.K. (2013). Employee engagement: A literature review. *Economia. Seria Management*, 16(2), 208-215.
- Men, L.R., & Bowen, S. (2017). *Excellence in internal communication management*. Business Expert Press.
- Miller, H. (1996). The multiple dimensions of information quality. *Information Systems Management*, 13(2), 79–82.
- Mitchell, A. (2021). Collaboration technology affordances from virtual collaboration in the time of COVID-19 and post-pandemic strategies. *Information Technology & People*, 36(5), 1982-2008.
- Morgan, K. (2021, November 17). How much “radical transparency” in a workplace is too much? *BBC Worklife*. <https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20211116-how-much-radical-transparency-in-a-workplace-is-too-much>
- Morrison, L. (2021). Virtual Improvement: Advising and Onboarding During Pandemic. *Honors in Practice*, 17, 203-207.
- Neu, D., & Saxton, G.D. (2023). Twitter-Based Social Accountability Callouts. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 1-19.
- Ng, T.W. (2017). Transformational leadership and performance outcomes: Analyses of multiple mediation pathways. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 28, 385-417.
- Nicolaou, A.I. & McKnight, D.H. (2006). Perceived information quality in data exchanges: Effects on risk, trust, and intention to use. *Information Systems Research*, 17(4), 332–351.
- Norman, S.M., Avey, J., Larson, M., & Hughes, L. (2020). The development of trust in virtual leader–follower relationships. *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management: An International Journal*, 15(3), 279–295.  
<https://doi.org/10.1108/QROM-12-2018-1701>
- Norman, S., Avolio, B., & Luthans, F. (2010). The impact of positivity and transparency on trust in leaders and their perceived effectiveness. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 21(3), 350-364.
- Northouse, P.G. (2021). *Leadership: Theory and practice*. Sage publications.
- O’Toole, J., & Bennis, W. (2009). A culture of candor. *Harvard Business Review*, 87(6), 54-61.
- Pagano, M., & Röell, A. (1996). Transparency and liquidity: a comparison of auction and dealer markets with informed trading. *The Journal of Finance*, 51(2), 579-611.

- Parker, C., Scott, S., & Geddes, A. (2019). *Snowball sampling*. SAGE research methods foundations.
- Parris, D.L., Dapko, J.L., Arnold, R.W., & Arnold, D. (2016). Exploring transparency: A new framework for responsible business management. *Management Decision*, 54(1), 222–247. <http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.regent.edu:2048/10.1108/MD-07-2015-0279>
- Perkins, K.M., Toskos Dils, A., & Flusberg, S.J. (2022). The perceived threat of demographic shifts depends on how you think the economy works. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 25(1), 227-246.
- Potter, J., & Hepburn, A. (2005). Qualitative interviews in psychology: Problems and possibilities. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 2, 1- 27. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088705qp045oa>
- Pozen, D.E. (2020). Seeing transparency more clearly. *Public Administration Review*, 80(2), 326-331.
- Pratt, M.G., & Ashforth, B.E. (2003) *Fostering meaningfulness in working and at work*. Chapter 20. In K. S. Cameron, J. E. Dutton, & R. E. Quinn (Eds.), *Positive organizational scholarship: Foundations of a new discipline* (pp. 309-327). Berrett-Koehler.
- Prieto-Rodriguez, J., & Vecco, M. (2021). Reading between the lines in the art market: Lack of transparency and price heterogeneity as an indicator of multiple equilibria. *Economic Modelling*, 102, 105587.
- Ramachandran, S., & Flint, J. (2018). At Netflix, radical transparency and blunt firings unsettle the ranks. *The Wall Street Journal*, 25.
- Rawlins, B.L. (2008). Measuring the relationship between organizational transparency and employee trust. *Public Relations Journal*, 2(2), 1–21.
- Rawlins, B.L. (2009). Give the emperor a mirror: toward developing a stakeholder measurement of organizational transparency. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 21(1), 71–99.
- Reed, K.M., & Allen, J.A. (2021). *Suddenly virtual: Making remote meetings work*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Riggio, R.E., Chaleff, I., & Lipman-Blumen, J. (Eds.). (2008). *The art of followership: How great followers create great leaders and organizations*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Robinson, D., Perryman, S., & Hayday, S. (2004). The drivers of employee engagement. *Institute for Employment Studies*.

- Rogers, D.P. (1987). The development of a measure of perceived communication openness. *The Journal of Business Communication*, 24(4), 53–61.
- Salovey, P., & Mayer, J. D. (1990). Emotional intelligence. *Imagination, Cognition and Personality*, 9(3), 185-211.
- Saxton, G.D., Ren, C., & Guo, C. (2021). Responding to diffused stakeholders on social media: Connective power and firm reactions to CSR-related Twitter messages. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 172, 229–252.
- Schnackenberg, A.K. & Tomlinson, E.C. (2016). Organizational Transparency: A New Perspective on Managing Trust in Organization-Stakeholder Relationships. *Journal of Management*, 42(7), 1784-1810. <https://10.1177/0149206314525202>
- Schnackenberg, A.K., Tomlinson, E., & Coen, C. (2020). The dimensional structure of transparency: A construct validation of transparency as disclosure, clarity, and accuracy in organizations. *Human Relations*, 0018726720933317. <https://10.1177/0018726720933317>
- Schroth, H. (2019). Are you ready for Gen Z in the workplace? *California Management Review*, 61(3), 5-18.
- Schumacher, D., Schreurs, B., De Cuyper, N., & Grosemans, I. (2021). The ups and downs of felt job insecurity and job performance: The moderating role of informational justice. *Work & Stress*, 35(2), 171-192.
- Schwarz, R. (2010). Transparent leadership. *Government Executive*, 42(4), 56-57.
- Schyns, B., & Meindl, J.R. (Eds.). (2005). *Implicit leadership theories: Essays and explorations*. IAP.
- Scott, M. (2016). Transparent leadership. *Smart Business Cleveland*, 28(4), 74.
- Shafieizadeh, K., & Tao, C.W.W. (2020). How does a menu's information about local food affect restaurant selection? The roles of corporate social responsibility, transparency, and trust. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 43, 232-240.
- Shamir, N., & Yehezekel, Y. (2023). Sales Information Transparency and Trust in Repeated Vertical Relationships. *Manufacturing & Service Operations Management*, ahead-of-print.
- She, C., & Michelon, G. (2019). Managing stakeholder perceptions: Organized hypocrisy in CSR disclosures on Facebook. *Critical Perspectives on Accounting*, 61, 54–76.
- Shum, C., Gatling, A., Book, L., & Bai, B. (2019). The moderating roles of follower conscientiousness and agreeableness on the relationship between peer transparency and follower transparency. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 154(2), 483-495.

- Siangchokyo, N., Klinger, R.L., & Campion, E.D. (2020). Follower transformation as the linchpin of transformational leadership theory: A systematic review and future research agenda. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 31(1), 101341.
- Sitkin, S.B., & Lind, E.A. (2007). *The six domains of leadership: A new model of developing and assessing leadership qualities*. Delta Leadership, Inc.
- Sparks, J.R., & Schenk, J.A. (2001). Explaining the effects of transformational leadership: An investigation on the effects of higher-order motives in multilevel marketing organizations. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 22, 849-869.
- Sull, D., Sull, C., & Bersin, J. (2020). Five ways leaders can support remote work. *MIT Sloan Management Review*.
- Trope, Y., & Liberman, N. (2010). Construal-level theory of psychological distance. *Psychological Review*, 117(2), 440-463.
- Tsipursky, G. (2023). The Surprising Reason Behind Why Many Leaders Are Forcing Employees Back To The Office. *Entrepreneur*. <https://www.entrepreneur.com/leadership/the-surprising-reason-why-many-leaders-are-forcing/449330>
- Uhl-Bien, M., Riggio, R.E., Lowe, K.B., & Carsten, M.K. (2014). Followership theory: A review and research agenda. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 25(1), 83-104.
- Vogelgesang, G.R., & Lester, P.B. (2009). Transparency: How Leaders Can Get Results by Laying it on the Line. *Organizational Dynamics*, 38(4), 252-260. <https://10.1016/j.orgdyn.2009.07.003>
- Walumbwa, F.O., Avolio, B.J., Gardner, W.L., Wernsing, T.S., & Peterson, S.J. (2008). Authentic leadership: Development and validation of a theory-based measure. *Journal of Management*, 34(1), 89-126.
- Wang, G., Oh, I.S., Courtright, S.H., & Colbert, A.E. (2011). Transformational leadership and performance across criteria and levels: A meta-analytic review of 25 years of research. *Group & Organization Management*, 36(2), 223-270. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1059601111401017>
- Williams, L., Stein, R., & Galguera, L. (2014). The distinct affective consequences of psychological distance and construal level. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 40(6), 1123-1138.
- Wong, C.S., & Law, K.S. (2002). The effects of leader and follower emotional intelligence on performance and attitude: an exploratory study. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 13(3), 243-274. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1048-9843\(02\)00099-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1048-9843(02)00099-1)

- Yean, T.F., & Yusof, A.A. (2016). Organizational justice: A conceptual discussion. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 219, 798-803.
- Yeoman, R. (2014). Conceptualising meaningful work as a fundamental human need. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 125, 235-251.
- Yi, H., Hao, P., Yang, B., & Liu, W. (2017). How leaders' transparent behavior influences employee creativity: The mediating roles of psychological safety and ability to focus attention. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*, 24(3), 335-344.
- Yim, M.C. (2019). CEOs' political tweets and perceived authenticity: Can expectancy violation be a pleasant surprise? *Public Relations Review*, 45(3), Article 101785. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2019.05.006>
- Young, H.R., Glerum, D.R., Joseph, D.L., & McCord, M.A. (2021). A meta-analysis of transactional leadership and follower performance: Double-edged effects of LMX and empowerment. *Journal of Management*, 47(5), 1255-1280.
- Youshaei, J. (2021, November 19). 3 Ways To Be A More Transparent Leader. Forbes. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jonyoushaei/2021/11/19/3-ways-to-be-a-more-transparent-leader>
- Yukl, G.A. (2013). *Leadership in organizations* (8th ed.). Pearson
- Yukl, G., O'Donnell, M., & Taber, T. (2009). Influence of leader behaviors on the leader-member exchange relationship. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 24, 289-299
- Yue, C.A., Men, L.R., & Ferguson, M. (2019). Bridging transformational leadership, transparent communication, and employee openness to change: The mediating role of trust. *Public Relations Review*, 45(3), 101779. <https://10.1016/j.pubrev.2019.04.012>
- Zhang, A.Y., Tsui, A.S., & Wang, D.X. (2011). Leadership behaviors and group creativity in Chinese organizations: The role of group processes. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 22, 851-862.
- Zhu, M., Liu, L., Su, R., & Contractor, N. (2023). Revisiting the effects of social networks on enterprise collaboration technology use: A fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis approach. *Decision Support Systems*, 114017.

## APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL LETTER

Pepperdine University  
24266 Pacific Coast Highway  
Malibu, CA 90263  
TEL: 310-506-4000

### NOTICE OF APPROVAL FOR HUMAN RESEARCH

Date: September 12, 2022

Protocol Investigator Name: Edward Piecek

Protocol #: 22-07-1889

Project Title: Understanding and Valuing Transparent Leadership

School: Graziadio School of Business and Management

Dear Edward Piecek:

Thank you for submitting your application for exempt review to Pepperdine University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). We appreciate the work you have done on your proposal. The IRB has reviewed your submitted IRB application and all ancillary materials. Upon review, the IRB has determined that the above entitled project meets the requirements for exemption under the federal regulations 45 CFR 46.101 that govern the protections of human subjects.

Your research must be conducted according to the proposal that was submitted to the IRB. If changes to the approved protocol occur, a revised protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB before implementation. For any proposed changes in your research protocol, please submit an amendment to the IRB. Since your study falls under exemption, there is no requirement for continuing IRB review of your project. Please be aware that changes to your protocol may prevent the research from qualifying for exemption from 45 CFR 46.101 and require submission of a new IRB application or other materials to the IRB.

A goal of the IRB is to prevent negative occurrences during any research study. However, despite the best intent, unforeseen circumstances or events may arise during the research. If an unexpected situation or adverse event happens during your investigation, please notify the IRB as soon as possible. We will ask for a complete written explanation of the event and your written response. Other actions also may be required depending on the nature of the event. Details regarding the timeframe in which adverse events must be reported to the IRB and documenting the adverse event can be found in the *Pepperdine University Protection of Human Participants in Research: Policies and Procedures Manual* at [community.pepperdine.edu/irb](http://community.pepperdine.edu/irb).

Please refer to the protocol number denoted above in all communication or correspondence related to your application and this approval. Should you have additional questions or require clarification of the contents of this letter, please contact the IRB Office. On behalf of the IRB, I wish you success in this scholarly pursuit.

Sincerely,

Judy Ho, Ph.D., IRB Chair

cc: Mrs. Katy Carr, Assistant Provost for Research

## APPENDIX B: RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

### Written Recruitment Letter



Dear [Name],

My name is Ed Piecek, and I am a doctoral student in the Graziadio Business School at Pepperdine University. I am conducting a research study exploring the topic of transparent leadership, with the goal to better define it and identify ways to measure behaviors that lead to it. You are invited to participate in the study. If you agree to participate you will take part in a one-time interview with me as the principal researcher. In the interview, you will be asked a series of questions about your experiences as a leader.

The interview is anticipated to take no more than 60 minutes to complete. The interview will take place on Zoom Meetings and will be audio-recorded and transcribed. Your identity as a participant will remain confidential during and after the study. Your participation in this study is voluntary and you can stop participating at any time during the interview.

All identifying information acquired from email, Zoom Meetings, audio-recordings, and transcription will be removed from the reported dataset. Any personal information, such as emails and a master list of participants will be stored in electronic password-protected files on the researcher's computer.

If you have questions or would like to participate, please contact me at [ed.piecek@pepperdine.edu](mailto:ed.piecek@pepperdine.edu) or 253-709-1574.

Thank you for your consideration.

Ed Piecek  
Pepperdine University  
Graziadio School of Business  
Executive Doctor of Business Administration

## Interview Consent Form



IRB#:

Formal Study Title: Understanding and Valuing Transparent Leadership

Authorized Study Personnel: Edward J. Piecek, MBA Cell Phone: (253) 709-1574

Dear [Name],

My name is Ed Piecek, and I am a doctoral student in the Graziadio Business School at Pepperdine University. I am conducting a research study exploring the topic of transparent leadership, with the goal to better define it and identify ways to measure behaviors that lead to it.

### **Invitation**

You are being invited to take part in this research study. The information in this form is meant to help you decide whether or not to participate. If you have any questions, please ask.

### **Why are you being asked to be in this research study?**

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are a leader working for a non-profit healthcare organization in the United States.

### **What is the reason for doing this research study?**

To better understand how transparent leadership influences the perception and behavior of organizational followers, the research study aims to draw from prior mature streams of research on transparency, authentic leadership, and transformational leadership. The proposed study will explore the multiple dimensions of transparent leadership to help establish the construct validity of this type of leadership. In addition, the proposed study will examine the relationship between transparent leadership and follower attitudes.

### **What will be done during this research study?**

The research study will focus on the analysis of interviews of mid-level leaders of non-profit healthcare organizations across the United States. This population was selected primarily due to



the researcher's over two decades of career experience in the non-profit healthcare field. Considering this context, this employee population, working in mission-based organizations, may likely place more value on non-economic factors such as transparent leadership when compared to those working in for-profit healthcare companies. For instance, mission-based organizations are likely to attract and retain employees that believe they are contributing to a cause bigger than themselves, and it's important for them to feel valued for their contributions to that mission. In addition, mid-level leaders were selected for this study due to the belief that they are more likely to have sufficient experience to understand the leader-follower relationship than other leaders, and still be close enough to first and second level employees to be aware of the current issues impacting those relationships.

The research study will also include a sample of mid-level leaders that reflect the context of non-profit healthcare delivery organizations, including outpatient and inpatient employees, clinical and non-clinical employees, and corporate headquarters employees. This approach is intended to explore the expected differences in follower perceptions of leader transparency at different levels of the organization. Further, the proposed study will explore what is expected to be a new leader-follower dynamic for non-clinical employees working outside of a traditional office environment and the impact of those remote working arrangements. Snowball sampling will be used as a recruiting technique to identify additional participants that meet these criteria as needed.

Participation in this study will include an interview that will require approximately 60 minutes. The interview will take place online using Zoom meetings and is expected to include approximately 20 questions. The video and audio of the interview will be recorded with your permission.

### **What are the possible risks of being in this research study?**

The possible risks of being in this research study are minimal. There is a small chance that you will recall uncomfortable conversations in which board members or shareholders disagreed; however, it is not anticipated that this will cause duress of any kind. This includes boredom, fatigue, anxiety, guilt, or feeling uncomfortable with questions that ask for a recollection of an experience as leader.

### **What are the possible benefits for you?**

There is no direct benefit to you other than the interview transcription and notes that can be shared with you upon request. If you're interested, an executive summary of the research results can be provided after it's completed.

### **What are the possible benefits to other people?**

The proposed research intends to contribute to both leadership theory and practice by providing a better understanding of the multidimensional nature of transparent leadership, and its impact on follower engagement and follower ratings of leadership effectiveness. Further, this study will examine how the presence of transparent leadership can enhance leader-follower

relationships, influence follower attitudes, their perception of leaders and the organization, and how its presence can potentially improve those relationships and follower performance.

**What will being in this research study cost you?**

There is no cost to you to be in this research study.

**Will you be compensated for being in this research study?**

There will be no compensation for your participation in this study.

**What should you do if you have a problem during this research study?**

Your welfare is the major concern of every member of the research team. If you have a problem as a direct result of being in this study, you may immediately contact one of the people provided on this consent form.

**How will information about you be protected?**

Reasonable steps will be taken to protect your privacy and the confidentiality of your data in the study. The information discussed will be included as part of a doctoral dissertation, but will not be tied to any specific individual participating in the interviews. All interview responses and transcripts will also be handled with complete confidentiality and will not be shared with anyone. Transcripts will be stored with name identifier in a coded format on the password protected hard drive of the researcher's laptop to protect your confidentiality. Likewise, video and audio recordings will be stored with name identifier in a coded format in the online meeting provider's password protected cloud. The key to the coded format will be stored separately on the researcher's password protected flash drive. All transcripts may be used in an aggregate, summarized format in final research publication, with any direct quotes having to be explicitly approved by you.

**What are your rights as a research subject?**

You may ask any questions concerning this research and have those questions answered before agreeing to participate in or during the study.

For study related questions, please contact the investigator(s): [ed.piecek@pepperdine.edu](mailto:ed.piecek@pepperdine.edu)

For questions concerning your rights or complaints about the research contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB):

- Phone: 1 (402) 472-6965
- Email: [gpsirb@pepperdine.edu](mailto:gpsirb@pepperdine.edu)

**What will happen if you decide not to be in this research study or decide to stop participating once you start?**

You can decide not to be in this research study, or you can stop being in this research study

(“withdraw”) at any time before, during, or after the research begins for any reason. Deciding not to be in this research study or deciding to withdraw will not affect your relationship with the investigator or with Pepperdine University.

### **Documentation of Informed Consent**

You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to be in this research study. By clicking on the I Agree button below, your consent to participate is implied. You should print a copy of this page for your records.

I agree

I do not agree

### **Participant Feedback Survey**

To meet Pepperdine University’s ongoing accreditation efforts and to meet the Accreditation of Human Research Protection Program (AAHRPP) standards, an online feedback survey is included below:

<https://forms.gle/nnRgRwLgajYzBq5t7>

## Interview Protocols

Direct quotes are identified by *italics*

**Participant:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

### Introduction

*Good morning/afternoon. My name is Ed Piecek and I'm a doctoral student at Pepperdine University. It's nice to meet you. [If not having met prior to today.] Thank you again for agreeing to participate in this interview.*

*My research project is exploring the topic of transparent leadership, with the goal to better define it and identify ways to measure behaviors that lead to it. This research is being conducted as part of my doctoral research for Pepperdine's Executive Doctoral Business Administration program. The intent is to use the results of this research to add to the body of knowledge regarding effective leadership in today's organizational contexts.*

*You were invited to participate in the interview process based on your background and experience and since you work at a non-profit healthcare organization in the United States, the selected population for this research.*

*The findings will be published in a doctoral dissertation and disseminated into a format for potential acceptance in both academic and business practitioner publications. The research may also form the basis for the publication of a peer-reviewed journal article, book chapter, book or other outlet.*

### Treatment of data

*The information we discuss today will be included as part of my doctoral dissertation, but will not be tied to any specific individual participating in the interviews. Everything said in the interview will also be handled with complete confidentiality and will not be shared with your*

*employer. All information will be stored with name identifier in a coded format to protect your confidentiality.*

*Responses may be used in a consolidated, summarized format in final research publication, with any direct quotes having to be explicitly approved by you. Interview transcription and notes can be shared with you upon request and for quote approval. If you're interested, I would be happy to provide an executive summary of the research results after it's completed.*

### **Consent form and approvals.**

*I will be taking notes while we talk to ensure I capture key thoughts, so please don't be concerned about that. As a reminder, I also would like to record the interview. Is that still okay with you? Thank you, I will now start the recording. [Start the recording.] The recording has started.*

*I know we agreed to the recording of the interview ahead of time, and you signed a consent form, but I still wanted to confirm again that you consent to the interview before we start. [Wait for a confirmation of consent before continuing.] Thank you. This interview is voluntary and we can stop at any time, without any negative consequence. I can also turn off the recording at any time if you would like.*

### **Other questions or concerns?**

*This interview will take approximately 60 minutes. Do you have any questions or concerns before we start the interview? [Answer any additional questions or address any concerns.]*

### **Introductory Questions**

**Q1:** *What is your current role?*

*Probe: How long have you been in your current role?*

**Q2:** *Where in the organization does your current role reside?*

Probe: *Is your role at a corporate/regional headquarters, outpatient clinic, inpatient facility, etc.?*

**Q3:** *Have you ever worked in a for-profit healthcare organization in your career?*

Probe: *If so, what for-profit organizations have you worked for?*

**Q4:** *Please tell me about your previous experiences in working with leaders within your organization throughout your career, both effective and ineffective.*

Probe: *Please describe for me the impact of those leaders on your view of leadership and the organization.*

## **Main Interview Questions**

### **Examining Transparency**

**Q5:** *How would you define transparency as it relates to human interaction in organizations?*

**Q6:** *Could you identify specific actions, behaviors or processes that constitute transparency from your perspective?*

**Q7:** *What elements of transparency are the most important to you?*

### **Defining Transparent Leadership**

**Q8:** *Have you ever worked with what you would consider to be a transparent leader in your career?*

Probe: *If so, please tell me about some of the qualities that stood out the most to you?*

Probe: *If not, please tell me about the qualities of the most effective leaders you've worked with that had the most positive impact on you and or your organization.*

**Q9:** *How would you define transparent leadership?*

Probe: *How would you describe leaders who value transparency in their interactions with team members?*

### **Exploring the dimensions of transparent leadership**

**Q10:** *Could you identify specific characteristics, qualities, or behaviors that constitute or comprise a transparent leader?*

Probe: *Which of those characteristics, qualities, or behaviors of a transparent leader do you think are or would be the most effective?*

Probe: *Why do you think they are or would be the most effective?*

### **Identifying the influence of transparent leadership behaviors**

**Q11:** *When working with a transparent leader, how do their behaviors impact or influence your work performance?*

Probe: *Please tell me why you think those behaviors affected you in that way?*

**Q12:** *When working with a non-transparent leader, how do their behaviors impact or influence your work performance?*

Probe: *Please tell me why you think those behaviors affected you in that way?*

**Q13:** *Considering the most transparent leader you have worked with in your career, how did their leadership approach or behaviors influence the way you felt about your work?*

Probe: *Please tell me why you think they affected you in that way?*

### **Exploring organizational context of transparent leadership**

**Q14:** *Considering the most transparent leader you have worked with in your career, do you think the way you felt about your work was influenced, at least in part, by any factors other than the leader's behaviors or actions?*

**Q15:** *Can you share any specific examples of organizational contexts that best support transparent leadership behaviors?*

Probe: [If applicable, see Q5] *Have you observed any differences between non-profit and for-profit healthcare settings?*

**Q16:** *Do you have any employees working virtually or remotely that report directly to you?*

Probe: *Do they work virtually or remotely full-time or part-time?*

**Q17:** *If so, how do you think that an employee working in that context is influenced by transparent leadership behaviors?*

### **Concluding Questions**

**Q18:** *Is there anything else you would like to tell me or share regarding the topics we discussed today?*

*Finally, do you know of other leaders that may be interested in sharing their thoughts on these topics and may be willing to participate in an interview? [Snowball sampling approach.]*

*If needed, would it be okay if I contacted you with any follow-up questions?*

### **Concluding Comments**

*Thank you very much for your time and insights on transparency and transparent leadership. If you're interested, I can follow-up with you in a few months to share the emerging findings of this research with you. Would you like me to follow-up with you? Thank you again for your time today.*