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## Leadership Trust: A Phenomenological Study of How Major Superiors of Catholic Women Religious Institutes Build Trust With Professed Members

Mary Amanda Nwagbo  
Brandman University, [mnwagbo@mail.brandman.edu](mailto:mnwagbo@mail.brandman.edu)

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Leadership Trust: A Phenomenological Study of How Major Superiors of Catholic  
Women Religious Institutes Build Trust With Professed Members

A Dissertation by  
Mary Amanda Nwagbo

Brandman University  
Irvine, California  
School of Education

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

January 2019

Committee in charge:

Patricia Clark White, Ed.D., Committee Chair

Len Hightower, Ph.D.

Lisbeth Johnson, Ed.D.

BRANDMAN UNIVERSITY

Chapman University System

Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

The dissertation of Mary Amanda Nwagbo is approved.

 \_\_\_\_\_, Dissertation Chair

Patricia White, Ed.D.

 \_\_\_\_\_, Committee Member

Len Hightower, Ph.D.

 \_\_\_\_\_, Committee Member

Lisbeth Johnson, Ed.D.

 \_\_\_\_\_, Associate Dean

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Women Religious Institutes Build Trust With Professed Members

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## ABSTRACT

### Leadership Trust: A Phenomenological Study of How Major Superiors of Catholic Women Religious Institutes Build Trust With Professed Members

by Mary Amanda Nwagbo

**Purpose:** The purpose of this phenomenological research study was to explore how major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes build trust with professed members, using the 5 domains of competence, consistency, candor, concern, and connection.

**Methodology:** The study used a qualitative phenomenological research design to explore the lived experiences and behaviors of leaders with reputations of trusting relationships with their members. The study sample included 10 major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes in Southern California who exhibit trusting relationships with their members. Data were collected using interviews, observations, and artifacts and analyzed with the assistance of NVivo software, revealing themes and assigning codes to the emerging themes and patterns.

**Findings:** A comprehensive analysis of the data yielded 26 themes with 921 frequencies aligned with the 5 C's of trust model—competence, consistency, candor, concern, and connection. Further analysis yielded 12 key findings on how the major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes build trust with the professed members.

**Conclusions:** Based on the findings of this study and supported by the literature, it was concluded that the major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes can foster an atmosphere of trust by practicing the following behaviors: (a) demonstrate genuine care, love, and respect to the members of their religious institutes; (b) devise various means to establish and maintain deep-level relationships with the professed members of their

religious institutes; (c) regularly communicate honestly and transparently with the members of their religious institutes; (d) build leadership competency by providing personal and professional development opportunities for themselves and others; and (e) have a regular and consistent system of reporting and soliciting input and demonstrate reliability and dependability by following through on promises.

**Recommendations:** Further research on the trust-building strategies of the major superiors with other stakeholders and Catholic women religious in leadership in other organizations within the Catholic Church and outside of the Catholic Church should be conducted. Also, a comparative study focusing on both the major superiors and the professed members needs to be conducted to provide a holistic picture of the trust-building strategies used by the population.



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## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Interests in the concept of trust have grown among scholars within the past several decades (Creed & Miles, 1996; Dirks & Ferrin, 2002). Trust has been recognized to play a central role in effective leadership (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002; Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012; Gillespie & Mann, 2004). Hence, researchers and practitioners from various fields and disciplines strive to understand how to gain and maintain trust (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002; Lewicki & Bunker, 1996). Indeed, trust, rather than money, is considered the new currency of business and life (Horsager, 2012). Yet, trust has continued to decline at the global, national, state, organizational, and individual levels.

One needs only to turn on any news channel, log on to the Internet, or pick up a newspaper to learn about the latest trust violation, scandal, abuse, or unethical act across the globe. The 2017 Edelman Trust Barometer survey indicates a global trust decline in business, media, government, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). More than half of the people surveyed did not trust the four entities to do what is right. The United States is not spared in this decline as major American institutions are plagued with lack of trust from the public. A 2016 Gallup poll showed that among Americans, trust in the nation's major institutions has remained low since 2007, with record lows for politicians, the news media, and organized religion (J. Norman, 2016). The news is replete with leaders of government agencies, public, private, and nonprofit organizations engaging in self-serving and corrupt practices (Rosenman, 2014).

Significantly, trust in organized religion and the church is at an all-time low. Previously ranked at the top of the list, churches have been displaced by the military as the institution in which people have the most confidence (Kennedy, 2016; Westcott,



2015). Findings of corruption, fraud, and embezzlement that went unreported for years continue to have ripple effects on people's trust in religious and nonprofit organizations (Nagaoka, 2017; Pavlo, 2013). The Catholic Church in particular has been hit with numerous sex abuse scandals in the recent past. Cases of Catholic clergy and personnel accused of sexual misconduct, and the hierarchy's silence or improper handling of the issues, have tested the trust of both Catholics and non-Catholics in the institution (J. F. Burns, Donadio, & Kulish, 2010; Reese, 2017). With such abuses and scandals, the Catholic Church has not only lost considerable trust of the public, its moral authority has become severely undermined (Morton, 2016). The cascading of the negative impacts of the abuses has been felt in major sectors of the church's life and work, including Catholic education, Catholic social work, pastoral activities, and institutes of consecrated life.

Within the Catholic Church, major superiors (chief executive officers) of Catholic women religious institutes grapple with suspicions, misconceptions, and stereotypes engendered by the eroding trust in Catholic institutions (Jordan, 2016). Recent research by the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation showed that the majority of the American public have images of Catholic sisters formed from inaccurate sources such as the movies (for example, *Sister Act*), and hearsay about strict disciplinary measures of sisters in Catholic schools (Massey & Donnellan, 2016). Such misconceptions are aided by the limited public presence and publicity of the work of the religious sisters in the present time. While more than 80% of Americans think that the work of religious sisters is important, only 14% indicate seeing, hearing, or reading about them in the recent past (Massey & Donnellan, 2016). Furthermore, the sharp decline in the number of Catholic women religious (sisters) in the United States appears to support these misconceptions. A 2014

study by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) showed that from 181,421 sisters in 1965, the number of sisters in the United States plummeted to below 50,000 in 2014 (Berrelleza, Gautier, & Gray, 2014). Faced with such dire situations, major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes seek to redirect the impressions that have negatively impacted trust in their institutions.

As confidence in institutions continues to remain low among Americans, major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes in the United States face the task of rebuilding and maintaining trust, first, among members, then, within the general public. Such efforts in rebuilding trust would not only improve relationships among members of the religious institutes and increase leader effectiveness but also help to attract and retain even more members in the religious institutes. For this reason, more information is needed about the strategies that are most effective in helping to rebuild trust in these religious organizations.

### **Background**

Trust as a construct has gained prominence as a concern across the globe in various fields, which has roused the interest of scholars and researchers from various fields, such as management, psychology, sociology, and religion (Brower, Shoorman, & Tan, 2000; Colquitt, Scott, & LePine, 2007). This attention could partly be based on the demands for trust in organizations, the organizational outcomes connected with trust or lack thereof, and the issues of unethical behaviors in today's organizations (Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012). Consequently, multiple definitions and conceptualizations of trust exist within various fields, resulting in lack of agreement among scholars on the definition of

trust and best practices for building it with stakeholders (Burke, Sims, Lazzara, & Salas, 2007; Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012).

### **Defining Trust**

Reviews of literature show different operational definitions of trust.

Notwithstanding the different definitions, scholars acquiesce to two important aspects of trust, namely readiness to be vulnerable and positive expectation (Burke et al., 2007; Colquitt et al., 2007; Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012). The definition proposed by Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman (1995), possibly the most cited trust definition in the literature, appeals to many scholars (Burke et al., 2007). According to Mayer et al. (1995), trust is defined as “the willingness 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 the other party” (p. 712). Similarly, for Mishra (1996) trust has to do with “one party’s willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the belief that the latter party is (a) competent, (b) open, (c) concerned, and (d) reliable” (p. 265). Relevant to this study is the definition proposed by Weisman (2010) of The Values Institute, according to whom trust is

an individual’s willingness, given their culture and communication behaviors in relationships and transactions, to be appropriately vulnerable based on the belief that another individual, group or organization is competent, open and honest, concerned, reliable and identified with their common values and goals. (p. 1)

The three definitions from Mayer et al. (1995), Mishra (1996), and Weisman (2010) highlight the interpersonal aspect of trust between a person and another person or group

of persons (Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012). The definitions also point to the vulnerability and positive expectation dimensions of trust.

### **Linking Leadership Theories and Trust**

Today's organizations are characterized by complexity, constant change, result-orientated, technological revolution, and increased diversity (Legood, 2013; White, Harvey, & Fox, 2016). Such organizations necessitate interdependency, making trust increasingly important. Trust has been linked to a number of leadership theories, with emphasis on how leaders build trust with followers (Legood, 2013). For the current study, three leadership theories were explored.

**Transformational leadership.** A transformational leadership model is centered on the ability to influence and inspire followers to internalize the leader's espoused values by leading them to new a level of performance and commitment (McCarthy, 1997; Northouse, 2016). The transformational leader utilizes the four components of idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration to inspire and empower followers (Bass, 1990; 1995). Operating from strong moral values, transformational leaders inspire trust and adhere to ethical behaviors and practices (Bass, 1990; W. Zhu, Avolio, Riggio, & Sosik, 2011). These leaders engender trust in followers through modeling behaviors such as those identified in the Transformational Leadership Skills inventory (TLSi)—visionary leadership, communication, problem solving and decision making, character and integrity, collaboration and sustained innovation, managing change, diversity, team development, and political intelligence (Larick & White, 2012). These behaviors are organized around the cognitive and affective domains of trust (McAllister, 1995; Y. Zhu & Akhtar, 2014).

**Servant leadership.** Van Dierendonck (2011) argued that current sensibilities and the quest for a leadership model that is people oriented and with moral outlook provide the rationale for the principles and ideas advanced by the servant leadership theory. While Greenleaf (2008) did not offer an explicit definition of servant leadership, he argued that a servant leader is a servant first, which commences “with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve *first*. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead” (p. 15). This model is distinguished from the leader who is a leader first and who may be compelled by power or need for material possession (Greenleaf, 2008). Therefore, the servant leader places followers’ needs and interests above personal needs and interests (Van Dierendonck, 2011). Studies have shown that servant leadership is positively correlated with leader trust as well as organizational trust (Joseph & Winston, 2005; Sendjaya & Pekerti, 2010). More importantly, characteristics such as integrity, communication, and competence attributed to servant leaders are also connected with interpersonal and organizational trust (Joseph & Winston, 2005).

**Spiritual leadership.** Irrespective of regulations and sanctions, unethical practices have endured in organizations, compelling scholars to search for a more holistic approach to leadership (Duthely, 2017; Fry, 2003). Unlike some other leadership theories that focus on productivity and profitability, spiritual leadership centers on the psychological and emotional well-being of the employee (Cregård, 2017). Fry (2003) defined spiritual leadership as “the values, attitudes, and behaviors that are necessary to intrinsically motivate one’s self and others so that they have a sense of spiritual survival through calling and membership” (pp. 694-695). Spiritual leadership, founded on the objective of creating compelling vision and alignment of values across stakeholders,

increases commitment and productivity (Fry, 2003). Two distinguishing factors in spiritual leadership include (a) providing individuals with a deeper sense of meaning, a sense of transcendence, and (b) a sense of belonging to a community. Studies show an array of positive outcomes in organizations that practice spiritual leadership (Cregård, 2017; Fry, 2003; Kaya, 2015). Kaya (2015) argued that practicing spiritual leadership emphasizes values such as trust and honesty. Furthermore, it has been established that spiritual leadership, transformational leadership, and servant leadership share an ethical outlook necessary for building and maintaining trust (S. M. R. Covey, 2006; Crossman, 2010).

### **Theoretical Foundation**

Having established that trust is a key factor in transformational, servant, and spiritual leadership theories, this section examines major trust theories that are foundational to this study. A review of the literature revealed major proponents as well as major areas of convergence on trust construct. Studies such as the integrative model of trust (Mayer et al., 1995), the ABCD trust model (Blanchard, Olmstead, & Lawrence, 2013), and the four cores of credibility (S. M. R. Covey, 2006) identify trustworthy behaviors that leaders use to engender trust.

**Integrative model of trust.** Mayer et al.'s (1995) integrative model of trust is by far the most cited and dominant model in the trust literature (Burke et al., 2007; Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012; Legood, 2013). The model clarified what trust is and also distinguished trust from other constructs such as trustworthiness. Trust is based on two factors: a party's willingness to trust (propensity to trust) and the perceived trustworthiness of the other party. The propensity to trust concerns stable personal dispositions for which some

individuals are more likely to trust than others (Mayer et al., 1995). Based on contextual factors, psychological factors, and personal experiences, individuals differ in their willingness to trust. Though necessary for understanding trust, such internal disposition detracts from the more manageable behavioral factors that affect trust. Indeed, research by scholars recorded mixed results as to its relevance (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002; Legood, 2013). On the other hand, trustworthiness is evidenced in the characteristics of the trustee, which include ability, benevolence, and integrity. These three characteristics are referred to as the antecedents of trust. *Ability* includes skills, competencies, and characteristics that ensure a leader's influence in a specific domain. *Benevolence* is the belief that the trustee would show care and concern to the trustor without expectation of reward. *Integrity* is the perception that the trustee follows a set of ethical and moral principles that align with those of the trustor (Mayer et al., 1995).

**ABCD trust model.** For Blanchard et al. (2013), trust could represent different things to different people. Blanchard et al. (2013) conceived trust as being made up of four components: ability, believability, connectedness, and dependability. While *ability* signifies competence and skills, *believability* deals with integrity and honesty, fairness, and respect for others, *connectedness* relates to care shown to others, and *dependability* focuses on reliability, being consistent, and following through on commitments. Interestingly, Blanchard et al. (2013) conceived connectedness as involving care and communication, components considered separately by other authors (Mayer et al., 1995; Mishra, 1996; Shockley-Zalabak, Morreale, & Hackman, 2010). According to the authors, the four behaviors of ability, believability, connectedness, and dependability

provide a common framework for a discussion on trust, and all four components work together to build and maintain trusting relationships.

**Four cores of credibility.** S. M. R. Covey (2006) argued that trust involves two things: character and competence. While character relates to integrity, motive, and intent, competence centers on capabilities, skills, and results. For S. M. R. Covey, trust boils down to credibility—being believable to oneself and others. S. M. R. Covey identified four cores of credibility, including integrity, intent, capabilities, and results. *Integrity* is the ability to remain true to one's values and principles, the alignment between words and actions, and being honest. *Intent*, on the other hand, has to do with motives, agendas, and behaviors that stem from them. *Capabilities* relate to abilities such as talents, attitudes, skills, knowledge, and style. *Results* refer to track records, performance, and success achieved. While integrity and intent relate to character, capabilities and results form part of competence. The four cores of credibility are interrelated and work together to build trust.

### **Theoretical Framework for This Study**

Having provided an overview of select trust models across the literature, the present study identified The Values Institute (TVI) trust model as the theoretical framework for the study. Weisman (2010, 2016) identified values as the bedrock on which character and culture are formed. Building trust requires living and working in the values economy. To understand the trust-building process, Weisman (2016) developed the pyramid of trust, or the five C's of trust model, including competence, consistency, concern, candor, and connection.



**Competence.** By far, the most researched component of trust, competence, involves the knowledge and skills required to accomplish specific jobs (Colquitt et al., 2007; Legood, 2013; Mayer et al., 1995). Competence or ability refers to the extent to which the leader is effective by providing expected products and services (Weisman, 2016). For some authors, competence or ability forms part of the cognitive dimension of trust (McAllister, 1995; Weisman, 2016). A leader is competent to the extent he/she possesses skills in setting a compelling direction, creating enabling structure, and setting functional norms (Burke et al., 2007).

**Consistency.** Consistency focuses on the leader's reliability and dependability. It involves matching words with actions and walking the talk as well as fidelity to sets of principles and values deemed important by the trustor (Mayer et al., 1995; Weisman, 2016). Trust is built gradually over time, requiring effort, diligence, and character (Horsager, 2012). Yet trust can be destroyed in an instant. Hence, consistency requires stability and reliability and the ability to deliver on promise. Consistency borders on predictability with people knowing what to expect at each moment. Behaviors that convey a leader's consistency include accountability, perceptions of justice, and value congruence (Burke et al., 2007).

**Concern.** Concern indicates genuine care and respect shown to all stakeholders (Weisman, 2016). Concern is expressed through interactions that are not directly related to business, but which create bonds within the organization. Mayer et al. (1995) referred to this component as benevolence, and for Horsager (2012), compassion is showing concern for the other and the good of the whole. Concern is connected with the aspect of vulnerability in trust, where the trustor has confidence that he or she will not be exploited

(Mayer et al., 1995). Leadership behaviors that show concern include creating and maintaining a supportive environment, coaching and mentoring, and utilizing transformational and consultative leadership styles (Burke et al., 2007).

**Candor.** Candor is the leader's openness and honesty when communicating with subordinates. It involves both the truthfulness of information being transmitted and the authenticity and appropriateness of how it is communicated (Weisman, 2010). Effective communication has been found to impact trust development among leaders and followers, and among teammates. Further, open communication was found to be a critical factor in interpersonal trust (Boies, Fiset, & Gill, 2015). Blanchard et al. (2013) considered communication and sharing of information as helping to build the connectedness necessary for trust.

**Connection.** Connection is the culmination of all the other trust components. Connection necessitates a deep level of relationship between leaders and followers (Weisman, 2016). Connection indicates the bond with which leaders and followers share common values, goals, norms, and shared beliefs related to the culture of the organization (Shockley-Zalabak et al., 2010; Weisman, 2010). Connection develops through conversations and sharing of information, which reveal areas of commonalities (Horsager, 2012). It improves commitment, emotional engagement, loyalty, and performance (Horsager, 2012; Phelps-Jones, 2014; Weisman, 2016). While each component is necessary, all need to be present for trust to exist.

### **The Role of the Major Superior**

Major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes are consecrated women who, along with other members, belong to what is called "institutes of consecrated life"

(The Canon Law Society Trust, 1983, Canon 573). The institutes of consecrated life are made up of women and men who declared fidelity to a life of abandonment to God through the public profession of three vows, namely chastity, poverty, and obedience, referred to as “evangelical counsels” (Canon 573; John Paul II, 1996). Major superiors occupy leadership roles ranked as high as those of the chief executive officer in secular organizations.

### **Roles and Responsibilities of Major Superiors**

The specific laws establishing the roles of major superiors are found in the written laws of the Catholic Church called the Code of Canon Law (Canon). Canon 620 states, “Major superiors are those who govern an entire institute or a province or part equal to the latter or an autonomous house and their vicars” (see also Gallen, 1983, p. 57).

Commonly referred to as mother superiors, major superiors, in this sense, are superiors general and provincial superiors of Catholic religious institutes (Canon 620). According to the 2008 document of the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (CICLSAL) and a 2009 document of the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious (CMSWR), major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes are primarily spiritual leaders. Their authority, as widely conceived and expressed by the laws and precepts of the Catholic Church, comes from God.

Consequently, they are called to a service of obedience to the law of God, to the church, to the Roman Pontiff (Pope), and to each institute’s specific laws (CICLSAL, 2008). In effect, major superiors are called to promote the spiritual life of the members through active listening and openness to self, to others, and to the signs of the time, evident in new forms of apostolate (service), personal autonomy, and shared experiences of

members. Consistent with the servant leadership model, major superiors of Catholic women's religious institutes are called to promote the spiritual, personal, and professional lives of their members (CICLSAL, 2008).

In specific and procedural terms, major superiors have the task of leading their institute and making the final decisions on any issue. Their major task lies with leading the professed members of their respective religious institutes to spiritual, physical, psychological, and professional well-being (CICLSAL, 2008). Particularly, they have the responsibility to apply the laws of consecrated life, which are specified in the Code of Canon Law. Such laws include (a) admission of new members, (b) excusing members from particular obligations proper to the rule of consecrated life, (c) giving permission to carry out certain functions in accord with the vow of obedience, (d) dispensation from obligations required by the law, (e) determining the obligation to the rule and Constitutions, which is the institute's own law or way of life, and (f) dismissal of members (Canon 587; 694).

The leadership role of major superiors, interpreted in the light of servant leadership, is performed in the spirit of service. Following in the footsteps of Christ, who, according to their belief, "came not to be served, but to serve" (Mk. 10:45, New Revised Standard Version), major superiors place the interests of the members above their interests and strive to build community and connection with members. While trust is assumed to be the bedrock of interaction within the relationship between major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes and their members, it is important to further explore strategies these leaders utilize to build trust.

## **Statement of the Research Problem**

Unethical practices have persisted in many organizations despite efforts by regulatory bodies in government, religious, and social institutions to stem them through regulations and sanctions (Duthely, 2017). The financial collapse and corporate scandals of the early part of the 21st century necessitated regulations such as the Patriot Act and the Sarbanes-Oxley Act. These regulations were put in place to address ethical lapses in management as well as to protect stakeholders from corrupt leaders in business and other institutions (S. M. R. Covey, 2006; Horsager, 2012; Ötken & Cenkeci, 2012). Yet, ethical breaches and scandals have persisted, resulting in widespread distrust of leaders and organizations (Edelman, 2017).

Studies have shown that, while leaders have significant influence in determining the ethical and moral direction of their organizations, they are also more susceptible to corruption and ethical lapses than other stakeholders (Duthely, 2017; Ötken & Cenkeci, 2012). This vulnerability makes it imperative for leaders to embrace and maintain strong ethical and moral values on which depend their leadership practices and the sociomoral climate of their organizations. No organization is immune from the virus of corruption. Recent events have revealed that merely espousing high moral and ethical norms does not guarantee ethical behavior. For example, Facebook's latest controversy regarding data security has been deemed a breach of trust (O'Donnell, 2018). Also, a number of religious leaders have engaged in criminal conduct and troubling ethical breaches (Pavlo, 2013).

One of the organizations whose leadership has been seriously impacted by unethical behavior is the Catholic Church (Jordan, 2016). Even though attention has

centered on bishops and priests in dioceses and parishes, women religious organizations within the Catholic Church face similar challenges as their male counterparts, which call for greater attention in stemming unethical behavior. As part of the umbrella organization with nonprofit status, Catholic women religious institutes face the same issue of building trust in a volatile environment. Major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes grapple with suspicions, misconceptions, and stereotypes engendered by the eroding trust in Catholic institutions (Jordan, 2016). Major superiors affect both the human and spiritual dimensions of leadership, attending to lifelong members of their respective religious institutes. In the light of this lasting relationship, major superiors attend to the whole person—body, mind, heart, and spirit (Cregård, 2017). Hence, among other qualities, trust is a distinctive quality and critical component on which their leadership behavior and assessment are based given the enormity of their role.

Scholars have argued for the value and importance of trust in organizations and explored leadership behaviors and strategies that engender trust. Major trust proponents posit components such as ability, benevolence, and integrity (Mayer et al., 1995); competence, openness, concern, and reliability (Mishra, 1996); and integrity, intent, capability, and results (S. M. R. Covey, 2006), as essential to building trust. More recently, Weisman (2010, 2016) of TVI conceptualized a trust model that encompasses both the cognitive and affective aspects of trust (McAllister, 1995). The five C's of trust model including competence, consistency, candor, concern, and connection appear to offer a holistic approach to trust-building behaviors and strategies. While competence and consistency are cognitive or rational factors, candor and concern include emotional

factors, and connection is posited as the culmination of trust in self-actualization (Weisman, 2016).

Ample research exists on leadership and trust, and the literature in this field shows studies in various settings. Leadership trust has been studied extensively in settings such as educational (Adams & Forsyth, 2009; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000), military (Fulmer & Ostroff, 2017), public sector (Legood, Thomas, & Sacramento, 2016; Pate, Morgan-Thomas, & Phillip Beaumont, 2012), health care (Baker, Mathis, Stites-Doe, & Javadian, 2016), and research and development (Gillespie & Mann, 2004). However, despite the availability of numerous studies on leadership trust in different settings, only a few studies have explored trust-building behaviors in religious settings (Phelps-Jones, 2016). Additionally, no studies were found in the search of the literature examining trust within the setting of Catholic women religious institutes.

Furthermore, while a majority of studies on trust have utilized quantitative methods, few studies have explored other research methods in understanding trust-building behaviors and strategies (Hyman-Shurland, 2016; Kodish, 2017). Therefore, TVI's five C's of trust model, competence, consistency, candor, concern, and connection, centered on ethical values and principles, offer a new and integrated model to explore trust-building behaviors and strategies among leaders in organizations.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore how major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes build trust with professed members, using the five domains of competence, consistency, candor, concern, and connection.

## **Research Questions**

### **Central Research Question**

How do major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes build trust with professed members using the five domains of competence, consistency, candor, concern, and connection?

### **Subquestions**

- How do major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes build trust with professed members using competence?
- How do major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes build trust with professed members using consistency?
- How do major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes build trust with professed members using candor?
- How do major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes build trust with professed members using concern?
- How do major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes build trust with professed members using connection?

### **Significance of the Problem**

There is an increased demand for leadership trust in organizations, in both profit and nonprofit, as well as in secular and religious organizations. This need for trust is attributable to both its importance and to the adverse effects of lack of trust in personal and organizational lives (S. M. R. Covey, 2006; Duthely, 2017; Edelman, 2017; Horsager, 2012). The negative impact and cost of lack of trust could be enormous. To address the issue of lack of trust caused by ethical lapses in organizations, regulations and



sanctions, such as the Sarbanes-Oxley Act, were put in place. However, compliance with such regulations was estimated to have cost an average organization more than \$2 million within its first year of implementation, and the figure is much higher for larger corporations (Horsager, 2012). Furthermore, not only does trust impact cost, it also impacts the speed of performance (S. M. R. Covey, 2006). The higher the trust, the faster the speed, and the lower the cost. Conversely, the lower the trust, the slower the speed, and the higher the cost (S. M. R. Covey, 2006). Trust is crucial in both personal and professional lives of individuals and organizations (S. M. R. Covey, 2006).

Following the recent sexual abuse scandals of the clergy, Catholic women religious institutes struggle to remain trustworthy and significant in the face of suspicions, misconceptions, and stereotypes engendered by the eroding trust in Catholic institutions (Jordan, 2016). Notably, the sharp decline in the number of religious women around the world, particularly in the United States, is considerable cause for concern among all stakeholders (Berrelleza et al., 2014). While the decline in number is a combination of several factors, lack of trust in the institute is undoubtedly one of them (Massey & Donnellan, 2016). Attracting and retaining members becomes critical for major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes, a situation that could be ameliorated through building trusting relationships with stakeholders.

Trust has been linked to organizational outcomes, such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, reduced turnover, goal commitment, and open communication (Burke et al., 2007; Dirks & Ferrin, 2002). Whereas there are many trust models, Weisman's (2010, 2016) five C's of trust model—including competence, consistency, candor, concern, and connection—appears to offer a holistic approach to

trust-building behaviors and strategies. Strategies with which major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes use to build trust are yet to be explored. Hence, this study will fill the gap in the literature relating to how major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes, using the five C's of trust model build trust with professed members.

The results of this study may assist all major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes in gaining greater clarity on how to build and maintain trust with all stakeholders. Also, national conferences such as the CMSWR and the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) may find the results of this study useful in their objective to provide major superiors with essential tools to be transformational leaders. Similarly, international organizations, such as the International Union of Superiors General (UISG), a worldwide, church-approved organization of superiors general of Catholic women religious institutes, may profit from the findings of this study as they support leaders of religious institutes around the world. At the grassroots level, each religious institute may find the outcome of the study useful in designing their initial and ongoing formation programs aimed at training future leaders. Moreover, close collaborators and supporters of Catholic women religious, such as Catholic bishops' conferences, Catholic priests, Catholic seminaries, and numerous NGOs may benefit from the study as they learn more efficient ways to collaborate with Catholic women religious, as well as help them in their respective ministries and services.

### **Definitions**

Defining key terms allows for precision in scientific studies. Given that in a particular study meaning may vary based on scholar's interest, it is important to define terms as they are used in the study (Creswell, 2012; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

Hence, to avoid ambiguity or misinterpretation of terms, scholars provide theoretical and operational definitions of the study's key terms or variables.

### **Operational Definitions**

Operationalization signifies definition of terms based on how they are used in the study (Roberts, 2010). Operational definitions delineate how the variables would be measured, categorized, or manipulated in a specific study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Roberts, 2010). This section offers operational definitions of key terms in the current study.

**Candor.** Candor involves communicating information in a precise manner and being truthful even if one does not want to provide such information (Gordon & Giley, 2012; Tschannen-Moran, 2014; O'Toole & Bennis, 2009; Weisman, 2016).

**Catholic women religious institutes.** These are religious orders of women in the Catholic Church whose members live out their consecration and mission under the authority of the major superior.

**Competence.** Competence is the ability to perform a task or fulfill a role as expected (S. M. R. Covey, 2009; Farnsworth, 2015; Handford & Leithwood, 2013; Tschannen-Moran, 2014).

**Concern.** Concern is the value placed on the well-being of all members of an organization, promoting their welfare at work and empathizing with their needs. Concern entails fostering a collaborative and safe environment where leaders and members are able to show their vulnerability, support, motivation, and care for each other (Anderson & Ackerman Anderson, 2010; S. M. R. Covey, 2006; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Livnat, 2004; Weisman, 2016).

**Connection.** Connection is a shared link or bond where there is a sense of emotional engagement and inter-relatedness (Sloan & Oliver, 2013; Stovall & Baker, 2010; White et al. 2016).

**Consistency.** Consistency is the confidence that a person's pattern of behavior is reliable, dependable and steadfast (Tschannen-Moran, 2014; Weisman, 2016).

**Major superiors.** Within the Catholic Church, major superiors occupy the highest leadership roles in their religious organizations, ranking as high as those of the chief executive officer in secular organizations.

**Professed members.** Professed members are religious sisters who have completed their initial formation in a particular religious organization and have made the public profession of the three vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience.

**Nuns.** Professed members of cloistered religious institutes.

**Sisters.** Professed members of Catholic women religious institutes dedicated to apostolic works.

**Trust.**

An individual's willingness, given their culture and communication behaviors in relationships and transactions, to be appropriately vulnerable based on the belief that another individual, group or organization is competent, open and honest, concerned, reliable and identified with their common values and goals. (Weisman, 2010, p. 1)

### **Delimitations**

The study was delimited to 10 major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes in Southern California who met the following criteria:

- Reputation of trusting relationship with members,
- a minimum of 2 years of experience (current or retired within the last year) leading a successful organization,
- recommendation by their peers, and
- membership in associations within their field like CMSWR or LCWR.

### **Organization of the Study**

This study is organized into five chapters, a reference list, and appendices. Chapter I, the introduction, addresses the global, national, and organizational concerns around the trust construct, background on theories and the study variables, statement of the problem, the research purpose, operational definitions, and the delimitations of the study. Chapter II presents the review of the literature on what is known about trust construct, the theoretical foundation, the theoretical framework, trust concepts, outcomes and levels of trust, the five C's of trust model, leadership trust and leadership theories linked to trust, and the role of major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes in building trust. Chapter III delineates the research design and the methodology of the study, including the study population and sampling processes for data collection and analysis. Chapter IV reports the study findings and analyses. Chapter V presents a summary of findings, conclusions, implications for action, and recommendations for future research.

## CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter presents a review of the literature related to the background and theoretical foundation for leadership trust leading to Weisman's (2010) five C's trust model of competence, consistency, candor, concern, and connection. This review of the literature is organized into four parts. Part I presents an overview of trust in organizations and explores the interconnection between leadership theories and the trust concept, with an analysis of leadership practices deemed pertinent to trust-building behaviors of leaders. Part II reviews the specific theoretical foundations for trust construct relevant to the present study. Part III presents the theoretical framework of Weisman's five C's of trust model, exploring in detail the five variables of competence, consistency, candor, concern, and connection. Part IV examines the role of major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes in building trust with professed members. This chapter provides the conceptual framework for understanding the role of major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes and behaviors they use to build trust with professed members.

### **Leadership Trust in Organizations**

The concept of trust in organizational studies has garnered attention among scholars from different fields. Whether based on the demands for trust in organizations due to the issues of unethical behaviors, or the organizational outcomes connected with trust or lack thereof, the trust construct has remained one of the most investigated constructs in the organizational literature (Burke et al., 2007; Colquitt et al., 2007; Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012). And yet, in spite of all the research devoted to this concept, the lack of trust in all types of organizations, large and small, is still pervasive. Through

the years, the study of trust has undergone several changes, with each stage influenced by its social context (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). From empirical focus to individual traits, to interpersonal relationships, and sociological, economic, and organizational science, scholars conceptualized trust in response to factors operational in the society.

Just as effective leadership is critical to organizational success, leadership trust is necessary for effective leadership and invariably to organizational success (Brower et al., 2000; Colquitt et al., 2007; Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012). Recognizing the importance of trust in organizational contexts, scholars and practitioners have devoted attention to understanding trust-building strategies as well as strategies to restore trust when it is lost (Burke et al., 2007; Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012). Scholars from fields such as management, psychology, sociology, and religion have attempted to define trust. Consequently, multiple definitions and conceptualizations of trust exist within various fields, resulting in lack of agreement among scholars on the definition of trust and best practices for building it with stakeholders (Burke et al., 2007; Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012). Nevertheless, this study presents some trust definitions deemed congruent with the purpose of the study, which is to explore trust-building strategies among major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes.

### **Defining Trust**

While various operational definitions of trust exist in the literature, scholars concur on two important aspects of trust, namely readiness to be vulnerable and positive expectation (Burke et al., 2007; Colquitt et al., 2007; Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012). Table 1 contains a summary of the agreement among the major contributors to the field on the trust attributes and areas of convergence:

Table 1

*Agreement Among Major Contributors to the Trust Attributes and Areas of Convergence*

Contributors	Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman (1995)	Mishra (1996)	Weisman (2010)
Trust attributes	Vulnerability Ability Benevolence Integrity Positive expectation	Vulnerability Competence Concern Reliability Openness	Vulnerability Competence Concern Reliability Openness and honesty Identification
Areas of convergence		Vulnerability Ability/competence Benevolence/concern Integrity/reliability	

The definition proposed by Mayer et al. (1995), possibly the most well-known and influential in the literature, appeals to many scholars due to its ability to distinguish between trust and its antecedents (Burke et al., 2007; Colquitt et al., 2007). According to Mayer et al. (1995), trust is defined as “the willingness 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 the other party” (p. 712). Similarly, for Mishra (1996), trust has to do with “one party’s willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the belief that the latter party is (a) competent, (b) open, (c) concerned, and (d) reliable” (p. 265). These definitions highlight behaviors that build trust. Relevant to this study is the definition proposed by Weisman (2010) of The Values Institute (TVI), according to whom trust is

an individual’s willingness, given their culture and communication behaviors in relationships and transactions, to be appropriately vulnerable based on the belief that another individual, group or organization is competent, open and honest, concerned, reliable and identified with their common values and goals. (p. 1)



The three definitions highlight the interpersonal and organizational aspects of trust and the vulnerability and positive expectation dimensions of trust; they indicate the conditions under which trust exists (Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012).

### **Conceptualization of Trust**

Efforts for a systematic and integrated model of the trust construct have been the focus of many scholars, as evidenced in the many reviews on trust literature (Bigley & Pearce, 1998; Burke et al., 2007; Dirks & Ferrin, 2002; Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012; Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt, & Camerer, 1998; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). Also, scholars have pointed to the lack of consensus among scholars regarding trust conceptualizations and definitions (Burke et al., 2007; Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012).

Contrary to the concerns of many authors, Bigley and Pearce (1998) argued the benefit of the different trust definitions and conceptualizations. According to the authors, the multiple conceptualizations have facilitated the understanding of the construct as well as provided greater insight into the trust construct. They contended that rather than focus on eliminating the differences, scholars need to maximize the opportunity of the multiple concepts idea (Bigley & Pearce, 1998).

Accordingly, Mayer et al. (1995) conceptualized trust as a function of the trustor's propensity to trust and the trustee's trustworthiness. While propensity to trust relates to personality traits, trustworthiness or antecedents to trust include ability, benevolence, and integrity. Numerous scholars (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002; Mishra, 1996; Whitener, Brodt, Korsgaard, & Werner, 1998) drew from Mayer et al.'s (1995) conceptualization, making ability, benevolence, and ability the three most common antecedents to trust across various conceptualizations (Burke et al., 2007). While terminologies may differ among

scholars, they agree on ability, benevolence, and integrity as concisely embracing trustee behaviors that enhance trust.

Furthermore, trust is conceptualized under two theoretical perspectives, namely relationship-based and character-based perspectives (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002; Y. Zhu & Akhtar, 2014). While the relationship-based perspective operates under the assumption of the social exchange theory emphasizing the interaction between leader and follower, the character-based perspective is based on the follower's perception of the leader's behavior. These two perspectives correspond to McAllister's (1995) interpersonal reality of trust conceptualized under two dimensions of affect-based and cognition-based trust. Whereas the relationship-based perspective corresponds to affect-based, character-based perspective corresponds to cognitive trust (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002; McAllister, 1995; Y. Zhu & Akhtar, 2014). According to McAllister (1995), the cognition-based trust centers on the reliability, integrity, honesty, and fairness of the trustee; the affect-based dimension relates to the established relationship based on care and concern for the well-being of the referent. While some scholars contend that cognition-based trust is more superficial than affect-based trust, others agree that some form of cognition-based trust is necessary for the development of affect-based trust (Mayer et al., 1995). From Mayer et al.'s (1995) stance, the ability of the trustee is necessary at the beginning of a trusting relationship.

Another important conceptualization of trust is the risk inherent in trusting behaviors. Risk is a necessary condition for trust (Rousseau et al., 1998); with risk, there is a possibility that the trustor will suffer loss. Such possibility arises from the mutual relationship between the two parties, which creates the condition for trust. Nevertheless,

Mayer et al. (1995) argued that trust is different from risk taking, even though trust leads to risk taking. Hence, while an individual may be willing to take a risk (trust), risk taking happens when the individual engages in trusting behaviors (trust outcome).

### **Levels and Forms of Trust**

The multiple definitions and conceptualizations of trust are due in part to the different levels and forms of trust on which scholars focus their theorization efforts. As indicated, definitions and conceptualizations are almost as varied as the scholars who have explored the construct (Burke et al., 2007; Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012). In their integrative model of trust, Burke et al. (2007) distinguished trust at the team, leadership, organizational, and interorganizational levels. The different levels of trust, therefore, require different trust-building strategies. As a result, trust could develop differently between team members as opposed to between team members and the leader. To further clarify the complexity of the trust construct, Fulmer and Gelfand (2012) organized studies on trust into two broad headings: trust at different levels and trust in different referents. Therefore, trust could be examined as a unit of analysis across three organizational levels—individual, team, and organizational—and focused on three referents: interpersonal, team, and organization.

Furthermore, trust is analyzed as operating in various forms: as a trait, as an emergent state, and as a process (Burke et al., 2007). As a trait, trust is the stable characteristics of the individual for which individuals are innately disposed to trust at different levels. The trait concept explains the idea of propensity to trust advanced by some authors (Mayer et al., 1995; Rousseau et al., 1998). Trust as an emergent state emphasizes the attitudinal aspect of trust, its development over time, and its dependence

upon the context in which it is cultivated. Trust as an emergent state draws from the relational aspect of trust, or the social exchange theory, arguing that input translates to outcomes (Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012). Most scholars adhere to the theoretical perspective of trust as an emergent state (Mayer et al., 1995; McAllister, 1995). Conceptualizing trust as a process entails viewing trust as a channel through which other behaviors, attitudes, and relationships take place. Depending upon the perceived trust in existence, an individual may be willing, or less willing, to engage in a specific action, attitude, or interaction. Studies focused on trust development highlight trust as a process.

Conceptualizing trust in its various forms and levels highlights the complexity of the construct and explains the discrepancies among scholars concerning trust definitions. Consequently, the many definitions and conceptualizations of trust are better understood in light of the levels of analysis, specific referents, and forms of trust. Despite the merit of the multilevel and multireferent framework, Fulmer and Gelfand (2012) observed that numerous definitions of trust focus on the individual level (Legood et al., 2016; Rousseau et al., 1998). While the importance of analysis at the multilevel and multireferent cannot be negated, this study centers on exploring trust at the individual level of analysis.

### **Linking Leadership Theories and Trust**

Discussions on trust in organizations go hand in hand with discussions on leadership. Trust is conceptualized as existing in three levels—interpersonal, team, and organizational levels (Burke et al., 2007; Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012). As a result, trust affects every level of the organization, making it a crucial factor in the leadership process. Admittedly, leadership is one of the most examined topics in the social sciences, yet it has remained a complex process with multifaceted dimensions. The different ways

scholars conceptualize leadership attests to its complexity. Trust has been linked to many leadership theories (Sendjaya & Pekerti, 2010). While some studies emphasize how leaders build trust with followers (Fulmer & Ostroff, 2017; Legood, 2013), others focus on employees' trust in their leaders (Fulmer & Ostroff, 2017). For the current study, three leadership theories were explored: transformational leadership, servant leadership, and spiritual leadership (see Table 2).

Table 2

*Leadership Theories and Leadership Behaviors Linked to Trust*

Leadership theory	Transformational leadership	Servant leadership	Spiritual leadership
Components	Inspiration Creativity Charisma Interaction Empowerment Ethics/moral values Passion	Empathy Concern Empowerment Building relationships Sacrifice Building community	Vision Faith/hope Altruistic love Meaning Connectedness
Behaviors that lead to trust	Idealized influence, Intellectual stimulation, Inspirational motivation and Individualized consideration	Employee empowerment, early involvement of employees, consistency, developing coaching skills and fostering risk taking, appropriate management style, integrity, communication, and competence	Focus on the psychological and emotional well-being of the employees, common vision, deep care and concern for stakeholders, and honesty

*Note.* Adapted from Bass (1990); Cregård (2017); Crossman (2010); Fry (2003); Gillespie & Mann (2004); Greenleaf (2008); Joseph & Winston (2005); W. Zhu, Avolio, Riggio, & Sosik (2011).

**Transformational leadership.** The transformational leadership model centers on the ability to influence and inspire followers to internalize the leader's espoused values by leading them to new a level of performance and commitment (McCarthy, 1997; Northouse, 2016). According to Bass (1990), transformational leadership happens when

“leaders broaden and elevate the interest of their employees, . . . and when they stir their employees to look beyond their own self-interest for the good of the group” (p. 21). Operating from strong moral values, transformational leaders raise the morality and commitment of followers for organizational success (Bass, 1990; W. Zhu et al., 2011). These leaders engender trust in followers through modeling behaviors such as those identified in the Transformational Leadership Skills inventory (TLSi)—visionary leadership, communication, problem solving and decision making, character and integrity, collaboration and sustained innovation, managing change, diversity, team development, and political intelligence (Larick & White, 2012). These behaviors are organized around the cognitive and affective domains of trust (McAllister, 1995; Y. Zhu & Akhtar, 2014). Specifically, using the four components of idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, transformational leaders build trust through inspiring and empowering followers (Bass, 1990, 1995).

***Idealized influence.*** Transformational leaders who possess idealized influence or charisma are strong role models with high standards of morality and ethical conduct. These leaders influence followers to emulate them and follow their vision (Bass, 1995). Trust and respect develop as leaders provide vision and a sense of direction for their followers. At the same time, followers learn to trust their leaders and commit to advancing the mission and goals of the organization (Bass, 1990, 1995; W. Zhu, Newman, Miao, & Hooke, 2013).

***Inspirational motivation.*** Using meaningful symbols, the leader communicates high expectations to followers by providing clear goals and vision. The transformational

leader is enthusiastic about organizational goals and communicates the same enthusiasm to employees, rousing their motivation and commitment (Bass, 1990; Gillespie & Mann, 2004). Hence, through mapping out strategies and setting high yet achievable goals, the leader inspires confidence and enthusiasm leading to successfully achieving the organizational goals (Bass, 1990; W. Zhu et al., 2013).

***Intellectual stimulation.*** In intellectual stimulation, the transformational leader creates a safe environment in which followers are encouraged to ask questions, use their creativity and innovation to resolve problems, and value learning. Rather than penalize mistakes, transformational leaders use mistakes as opportunities for learning and growth (W. Zhu et al., 2013).

***Individualized consideration.*** Leaders who provide individualized consideration deeply listen to the individual needs of their followers and coach them to reach their highest potential. In addition, the leaders facilitate the growth of their subordinates as they navigate through personal challenges (Northouse, 2016; W. Zhu et al., 2013). In particular, the leaders devote personal attention to followers who may be neglected (Bass, 1995).

One of the ways to measure the effectiveness of transformational leadership is through the trust that followers develop for their leaders (Gillespie & Mann, 2004; Y. Zhu & Akhtar, 2014; W. Zhu et al., 2013). Drawing from the relationship-based perspective, trust has been used to measure the quality of the interaction or social exchange between leaders and followers. Extricating themselves from previous research focused on the unidimensional concept of trust, Y. Zhu and Akhtar (2014) and W. Zhu et al. (2013) employed a multidimensional measure of affect-based and cognitive-based

trust to measure how transformational leadership behaviors impact work outcomes. The findings of the studies indicate that affect-based trust correlates to transformational leadership and various organizational outcomes, such as commitment, organizational citizenship behaviors, and job performance. Similarly, other studies show a strong correlation between trust and transformational leadership behaviors (Butler, Cantrell, & Flick, 1999; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Bommer, 1996). Consequently, the transformational leadership behaviors of idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and individualized consideration help build trust among followers.

**Servant leadership.** Robert Greenleaf (2008) coined the term *servant leadership*, a leadership model in which the leader advances followers' interests, placing them above personal needs and interests. The servant leader focuses on valuing, developing, and empowering employees and building community through seeking the good of the followers, the organization, and the organizational stakeholders (Greenleaf, 2008; Joseph & Winston, 2005). While Greenleaf (2008) did not offer an explicit definition of servant leadership, he contended that a servant leader is first of all a servant, arising from the desire to serve, rather than lead others. Indeed, for Sendjaya and Pekerti (2010), servant leadership stems from a deeply held belief—rather than a leadership style—in serving those in need, notwithstanding personal costs.

Further, whereas other leadership theories focus on achieving organizational goals, the servant leader focuses on serving followers' needs, helping them to achieve personal development, and attaining autonomy (Sendjaya & Pekerti, 2010). To this effect, some scholars have argued that the servant leadership model operates contrary to



effective business (J. A. Andersen, 2009; Giampetro-Meyer, Brown, Browne, & Kubasek, 1998). For the scholars, rather than working toward achieving stakeholder goals (for example in maximizing business profit), servant leaders pay particular attention to employees' needs; they serve the employees and not the organization. However, to facilitate the personal and professional growth of others, successful organizations are people centered, and servant leaders rise above personal interest as they serve others (Ebener & O'Connell, 2010). Ruschman (2002) highlighted companies that are successful because they "focus on keeping a long-term, quality workforce through sustainable practices focused on the employees, the customer, the product, and the bottom line" (p. 123). These servant-led companies are found in the *Fortune* magazine's "100 Best Companies to Work for in America." Hence, by focusing on the needs of the employees, servant leaders develop strong relationships built on trust (Woo, 2018). Consequently, servant leadership has been linked to trust. Through empathy, authentic concern for the well-being of followers, and service, the servant leader develops deep relationships with followers, eliciting their trust. Servant leadership is strongly connected with trust; it is considered an antecedent and product of organizational and leader trust (Joseph & Winston, 2005). Studies have shown servant leadership to possess a positive correlation with leader trust, interpersonal trust, and organizational trust (Beck, 2014; Chatbury, Beaty, & Kriek, 2011; Joseph & Winston, 2005; Sendjaya & Pekerti, 2010; Woo, 2018). For example, trust in the servant leader enhances employees' creativity (Jaiswal & Dhar, 2017), positively correlates with emotional intelligence (Marieta du, Zani, & Petrus, 2015), inspires high levels of commitment (Miao, Newman, Schwarz, & Xu, 2014), and promotes interpersonal communication (Rezaei, Salehi, Shafiei, & Sabet,

2012). According to research, a majority of these servant-led companies are profitable and successful (Ruschman, 2002). By concentrating on their employees, customers, and the environment—or the *top line*—these companies increased their bottom line (Freeman, Isaksen & Dorval, 2002). Moreover, servant leadership behaviors lead to the development of trust between the leaders and the employees. Mutual trust creates ripple effects of positive work environments, commitment, and job satisfaction. This, in turn, increases retention, productivity, and profitability. According to Ruschman (2002), the quality of the workplace leads to employees' job satisfaction, the company, their colleagues, and the external environment, which impacts job performance and the bottom line. Interestingly, consistent with transformational leadership, some scholars distinguished between the unidimensional and multidimensional approaches to the trust construct, with results indicating affect-based trust, rather than cognitive-based trust, as strongly correlated to servant leadership and organizational outcomes (Miao et al., 2014; Sendjaya & Pekerti, 2010).

Scholars identified multiple behaviors with which servant leaders elicit trust from their followers. Though discrepancies exist among scholars on the behaviors leaders use to build trust, findings from scholars of servant leadership validate the various behaviors servant leaders use to instill trust in their followers. Specifically, Joseph and Winston (2005) established a list of trust-building behaviors of servant leaders, which includes employee empowerment, early involvement of employees, consistency, cultivating coaching skills and promoting risk taking, apposite management style, and integrity and competence. More importantly, characteristics such as integrity, communication, and competence attributed to servant leaders are also connected with interpersonal and

organizational trust (Joseph & Winston, 2005). In summary, servant leadership behaviors impact interpersonal and organizational trust. Followers develop a high level of trust in both the leader and in one another, resulting in positive organizational outcomes (Jaiswal & Dhar, 2017; Sendjaya & Pekerti, 2010; Woo, 2018).

**Spiritual leadership.** The demands of ethical behaviors in both the public and private sectors necessitated the search for a more holistic approach to leadership (Duthely, 2017; Fry, 2003). Spiritual leadership is proposed as a leadership model that contributes to a more holistic and ethical organizational environment (Crossman, 2010; Duthely, 2017). While positive outcomes, such as improved morale, reduced stress, low turnover, and improved profitability, have been associated with spiritual leadership, scholars are slow to associate spirituality with business, due in part to the confusion between spirituality and religion (Cregård, 2017; Crossman, 2010; Fry, 2003; Kaya, 2015). Hence, Fry (2003) distinguished spirituality from religion. For Fry, spirituality is intended as the search for meaning and interconnectedness with others and the community; religion, on the other hand, concerns an organized group with specific practices, dogmas, and doctrines. Hence, while spirituality is vital for religion, the reverse is not the case.

Unlike some other leadership theories that focus on productivity and profitability, spiritual leadership centers on the psychological and emotional well-being of the employee (Cregård, 2017). Spiritual leadership is conceptualized as encompassing vision, altruistic love, and faith/hope, and underscores personal ethics and the interconnection between individuals in organizations (Duthely, 2017; Fry, 2003; Fry & Cohen, 2009). Fry (2003) defined spiritual leadership as “the values, attitudes, and

behaviors that are necessary to intrinsically motivate one's self and others so that they have a sense of spiritual survival through calling and membership" (pp. 694-695).

Consequently, spiritual leadership creates a common vision through access to both the needs of the leader and the followers, resulting in deep care and concern for self and others. The objective of spiritual leadership is to enhance an employee's well-being, deepen commitment to the organization, increase profitability, and maintain corporate social responsibility (Fry & Cohen, 2009). Consistent with some elements of servant leadership and transformational leadership, spiritual leadership emphasizes values, such as altruistic love manifested through genuine care and concern for others, resulting in trusting relationships. For Kaya (2015), practicing spiritual leadership emphasizes values such as trust and honesty.

Cognizant that today's employees desire meaningful jobs, spiritual leadership offers an opportunity to make a difference in others' lives based on service to others and the community. Furthermore, it has been established that spiritual leadership, transformational leadership, and servant leadership share an ethical outlook necessary for building and maintaining trust (S. M. R. Covey, 2006; Crossman, 2010). Nevertheless, Cregård (2017) warned of the risk inherent in spiritual leadership practices. Findings in a study of nuns and their abbess (leader) in a Catholic monastery show the possible negative effects of spiritual leadership. According to the study, given the demands of spiritual leadership practices, the abbess manages an excessive workload in attending to the holistic needs of the nuns (Cregård, 2017). Also, this responsibility comes with personal sacrifices such as difficulty in delegating tasks due to the monastery rule (Cregård, 2017). Spiritual leadership focuses on taking care of the body, the mind, the

heart, and the spirit of the stakeholders—their psychological and emotional well-being. Such responsibilities necessitate deep connection between leader and stakeholders. Consequently, scholars point to the risks of exploitation, threats to individual expression, and invasion of privacy by the spiritual leader in the effort to offer a holistic attention to the individual (Cregård, 2017).

### **Theoretical Foundation**

The previous section explored trust in general with the various conceptualizations and definitions and discussed some leadership theories that are connected with trust. This section examines the major trust theories that are foundational to this study. Reviewing the literature on trust revealed major proponents and theoretical foundations. Three trust models were selected and form the theoretical base with which the current study aligns. The integrative model of organizational trust (Mayer et al., 1995), the ABCD trust model (Blanchard et al., 2013), and the four cores of credibility (S. M. R. Covey, 2006) provide strong theoretical foundations to identifying trustworthy behaviors leaders use to engender trust (see Table 3).

Table 3

*Summary of Key Components of Study's Theoretical Foundations*

Theory	Integrative model of organizational trust	ABCD trust model	The four cores of credibility
Components	Ability Benevolence Integrity	Ability Believability Connectedness Dependability	Integrity Intent Capabilities Results

*Note.* Adapted from Blanchard, Olmstead, & Lawrence (2013); S. M. R. Covey (2006); Mayer et al. (1995)

## **Integrative Model of Organizational Trust**

By far, the most influential and most cited trust model in the literature, Mayer et al.'s (1995) integrative model of organizational trust centers on the interpersonal trust between a trustor and a trustee (Burke et al., 2007; Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012; Legood, 2013). The model's acclaim is attributable to being a pioneer in clarifying what trust is and distinguishing trust from related constructs (Burke et al., 2007; Legood, 2013). Also, the continued relevance of the model points to its robust theoretical conceptualizations (Legood, 2013). According to Mayer et al. (1995), trust is distinguished from its antecedents and is defined as comprising the willingness to be vulnerable and having positive expectations of others. These two components form the basis of consensus among scholars on the trust construct. Further, the model analyzed trust antecedents (ability, benevolence, and integrity) distinct from trust and trust outcomes (Burke et al., 2007; Dirks & Ferrin, 2002; Legood, 2013).

In the integrative model of organizational trust, Mayer et al. (1995) advanced what Dirks and Ferrin (2002) referred to as character-based trust. The trustor extends trust based on personal views about the trustee's trustworthy behaviors. Thus, the trustor decides whether to extend trust or not based on perceptions, beliefs, and observations of determined characteristics (Burke et al., 2007; Lee & See, 2004; Whitener et al., 1998). Reviewing their trust model, Schoorman, Mayer, and Davis (2007) reiterated the cognition-based approach of their model, consistent with the character-based trust model. Generally, Mayer et al. (1995) advanced a developmental model of organizational trust between two parties based on two factors—a party's willingness to trust (propensity to

trust) and the perceived trustworthiness of the other party. While the former is the characteristic of the trustor, the latter is the characteristic of the trustee.

**Propensity to trust.** Early theorists of trust proposed a dispositional aspect of trust composed of the individual's general willingness to trust (Rotter, 1976). This disposition or propensity to trust is conceptualized as a personality trait, for which some individuals are more likely to trust than others (Mayer et al., 1995). Mayer et al. (1995) envisioned propensity to trust to be a stable form of trait, distinguishing individuals one from another. This trait explains the individual differences in trusting others, especially at the beginning of relationships before obtaining information about the other's trustworthiness (Mayer et al., 1995). The differences inherent in the propensity to trust are a result of contextual factors, psychological factors, and personal experiences. What is more, this propensity to trust is considered stable across different situations. Though necessary for understanding trust, such an internal disposition detracts from the more manageable behavioral factors that affect trust. In fact, the findings in studies by scholars show mixed results and limited correlation to leadership trust (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002; Legood, 2013). Therefore, the current study seeks to explore trust-building behaviors of leaders, giving greater attention to understanding the leader's characteristics that build trust as proposed in the next section.

**Trustworthiness.** Trustworthiness is the link to understanding the reason some individuals are trusted more than others. As already noted, trustors decide to trust based on their perceived trustworthiness of the trustee manifested through motives, intentions, and actions (Burke et al., 2007; Lee & See, 2004). Given that trust involves vulnerability and a probability of suffering loss, determining a trustee's trustworthiness becomes

critical. Ring and Van de Ven (1992) argued the merit of trustworthiness based on the risks inherent in transactions. Similarly, early research by Hovland, Janice, and Kelley (1953) shows credibility as dependent upon trustworthiness and expertise. Consequently, the behaviors and characters of the trustee determine trustworthiness and are the antecedents to trust. Drawn from the review of previous studies, Mayer et al. (1995) identified ability, benevolence, and integrity as antecedents to trust. The framework is consistent with Gabarro's (1978) assertion, which considers trustworthiness a construct that is multifaceted involving the character and competence of the trustee. These three characteristics, though not trust, lead to trust when manifested by trustees.

*Ability.* Ability is undoubtedly the most commonly examined component of trustworthiness (Blanchard et al., 2013; Colquitt et al., 2007; Legood, 2013). It comprises skills, competencies, and characteristics, leading to objective influence in a specific area (Mayer et al., 1995). A glance at the list of antecedents to trust provided by Mayer and colleagues shows scholars who have examined trustworthiness using the same or similar constructs. Synonyms of ability include expertise, competence, expertness, and perceived expertise. To ensure the conceptualization of trust as domain specific, Mayer and colleagues added the ability trustworthiness, though it conflicted with commonly held views on the importance of affection in building trust (Schoorman et al., 2007). Ability accounts for the different levels of trust shown to the same referent under different situations. For example, while a medical doctor may be trusted to treat diseases, the same trust is not extended when the doctor is required to teach a class of high school students, an area in which the doctor lacks competence, training, and preparation.



***Benevolence.*** Benevolence highlights the trustor's belief regarding the extent to which the trustee would act with the trustor's interest at heart, without expectation of reward (Mayer et al., 1995). The benevolence trustworthiness presupposes the trustee's attachment to the trustor. The trustee is inclined to perform good deeds to the trustor based on the already established relationship. Scholars have shown interest in the benevolence dimension, using the same or similar constructs, such as openness, caring, altruism, or support, in their analyses of trust (Colquitt et al., 2007; Mayer et al., 1995). Furthermore, some scholars consider intentions or motives as relevant to trust wherein trust entails ascribing good intentions to the words and actions of the other (Cook & Wall, 1980; S. M. R. Covey, 2006; Mishra, 1996). In the benevolence dimension, with a reliance on personal orientation and relationship specificity, the trustee acts in manners congruent with the needs and desires of the trustor.

A more systematic analysis of benevolence by Livnat (2004) presents benevolence as comprising emotional, performative, and cognitive elements. Emotional elements relate to feelings of care and concern for the other, which is internal; the performative element is the specific action one undertakes to ease the suffering and pain of others and to promote their well-being; and the cognitive element includes the sincere and rational aspects of the good deeds performed (Livnat, 2004). Livnat's view places benevolence in the affective, behavioral, and cognitive domains of trust. Hence, not only is the trustee believed to have an attachment to the trustor and performs specific actions for the trustor's good, but the trustee also acts in acceptable and rational manners. The scholars with their similar constructs lend credence to the relevance of benevolence to trust and to Mayer et al.'s (1995) model.

***Integrity.*** A cognitive element from the character-based perspective, integrity, is the perception that the trustee follows a set of ethical and moral principles that align with those of the trustor (Mayer et al., 1995). The importance of congruence is critical in the integrity domain. A trustee who adheres to a set of principles may be considered as lacking integrity if the trustor finds the principles unacceptable or incongruent to personal principles. Consequently, the perception of integrity is subjective. A combination of other factors fosters the perception of a trustee's integrity—consistency of past actions, positive reputation, a strong sense of justice, and congruence in words and deeds (Mayer et al., 1995). Synonyms such as value congruence, fairness, justice, consistency, and promise fulfillment have been used to denote integrity (Colquitt et al., 2007; Mayer et al., 1995). Using the same or similar constructs, other scholars (e.g., Butler, 1991; S. M. R. Covey, 2006) included integrity in their trust approach, validating its inclusion in the present model.

### **ABCD Trust Model**

Blanchard et al. (2013) elaborated on an interpersonal aspect of trust. For the authors, trust is multidimensional and could represent different things to different people. Conceptualized as a delicate thing that could easily be lost, trust is viewed as dependent on consistent behaviors. Hence, a single behavior considered inconsistent with trustworthy behaviors is enough to lose another's trust. Consistent with other theories that view trust as multidimensional, the need for a common frame of reference resulted in the authors' ABCD trust model. For the authors, trust is a function of specific behaviors that, when present, allow for the development of trust. The approach aligns with previous trust theories that emphasized trust-building behaviors or antecedents to trust.

Further, the trustworthiness dimension of trust elaborated by Mayer et al. (1995) aligns with the idea that specific behaviors—ability, benevolence, and integrity—lead to trust development. Hence, motivated by the desire to find a simple trust model that could be used at all levels of the organization, Blanchard et al. (2013) devised a simple acronym to explain trust-building behaviors. The ABCD trust model represents the four domains under which trust-building behaviors fall: ability, believability, connectedness, and dependability.

**Ability.** Congruent with the integrative model of organizational trust (Mayer et al., 1995), ability is the first element of trustworthiness. Also in alignment with previous models, ability signifies competence and skills in specific domains. Blanchard and colleagues (2013) found that trust is enhanced when the individual demonstrates the capacity to carry out certain functions deemed important to the trustor. Hence, ability entails competence in behaviors such as problem resolution, requisite experience, necessary skills, using the skills to assist others, being the best in what one does, and getting quality results. As noted by White et al. (2016), the quickest way to lose trust is to show incompetence. Interestingly, Blanchard et al.'s (2013) ability behaviors consist of Campbell's (1990) ability and character dimensions of trustworthiness. For Campbell (1990), while ability demonstrates the “can-do” component of trustworthiness, character captures the “will-do” component. Combining both aspects in the ABCD trust model, ability shows competence as well as the readiness to use the skills for quality results.

**Believability.** As the authors stated in their theory, trust could be lost very easily. An inconsistency in behavior deemed trustworthy by another negatively impacts trust. Therefore believability is the trustworthy dimension that deals with integrity and honesty,

fairness, and respect for others. In the previous studies, believability, as used here, is synonymous with integrity. Integrity is the belief that the other would act in a morally acceptable manner (Colquitt et al., 2007; Mayer et al., 1995). Integrity also comprises justice, fairness, consistency, and promise fulfillment. For S. M. R. Covey (2006) believability is the same thing as credibility.

In the ABCD trust model, the integrity aspect of believability includes keeping confidence, admitting and apologizing for mistakes, and following through on promises. Believability encompasses the person's reputation (White et al., 2016). Honesty relates to saying things as they are without exaggerating or minimizing the truth. Fairness entails sincerity in words and deeds, being nonjudgmental, and showing respect for others. As the authors pointed out, believability has to do with the character of the trustee. The believability dimension correlates with the perspective of other scholars as part of trustworthiness behaviors.

**Connectedness.** Another dimension in the ABCD trust model is connectedness, which involves behaving in ways that connect one to the other. Connectedness is caring about others. It comprises empathy, sharing of information, listening to the other, showing interest in the other, and valuing the opinion of others. Although comprising other aspects, one can identify the similarity between connectedness and the benevolence dimension in the other trust theories. Indeed, connectedness is the affective and relationship-based dimension of trustworthiness according to the ABCD trust model. While the first two dimensions (ability and believability) are character based, connectedness is more relationship oriented. McAllister (1995) conceptualized interpersonal trust as a two-dimensional reality comprising cognition-based and affect-

based perspectives. Also, transformational leadership and servant leadership models show that individualized consideration and focusing on the needs and interests of followers fosters the relationship necessary for building trust (Bass, 1990; Greenleaf, 2008; Joseph & Winston, 2005; Zhu et al., 2013).

**Dependability.** The person who can be counted upon is dependable.

Dependability means being able to count on someone, doing what one says he or she would do, and being accountable. It centers on being reliable, consistent, and following through on commitments (Harvey & Drolet, 2006; White et al., 2016). Cognizant of its importance, Blanchard et al. (2013) included consistency in two out of the four trust domains: believability and dependability. Trustworthiness is not a sporadic, occasional behavior of the leader; instead, trust is built through a continuous and ubiquitous demonstration of trustworthy behaviors. Supporting the claim, Harvey and Drolet (2006) contended that people trust those who are consistent in their word and deed and from one action to the other. Nothing destroys trust as quickly as the perception of dishonesty, as indicated in the integrity or believability domain.

Interestingly, Blanchard et al.'s (2013) ABCD trust model appears to progress in a linear mode, moving from one trustworthiness domain to the other. As analyzed in the model, ability was demonstrated before believability and believability before connection and dependability. Such a view was not elicited in other scholars' studies; rather the antecedents to trust were considered a unified process. Likewise, the model described connectedness as involving care and communication, components considered separately by other authors (Mayer et al., 1995; Mishra, 1996; Shockley-Zalabak et al., 2010). Nevertheless, the ABCD model identified four essential trust-building behaviors of

leaders. According to the authors, these four domains provide a common framework for a discussion on trust, and all four components work together to build and maintain trusting relationships.

### **Four Cores of Credibility**

Setting the tone of his model, S. M. R. Covey (2006) asserted that trust is the one thing that changes everything. Differing from other views, S. M. R. Covey argued that trust is confidence. Trust denotes confidence in the ability and integrity of the trustee. When the reverse is the case, there is suspicion—suspicion of motives, integrity, capabilities, or track record. Conversely, Mayer et al. (1995) believed that trust is separate from confidence and pointed to the lack of distinction between trust and similar constructs, such as confidence, predictability, and cooperation, in the trust literature. Luhmann (1988) offered the distinction between trust and confidence, in that whereas in a situation of trust, risk is recognized and assumed; in a situation of confidence, risk is recognized but not assumed.

S. M. R. Covey (2006) argued that trust involves two things: character and competence. While character concerns integrity, motive, and intent with people, competence is the capabilities, the skills, the results, and the track record. Both aspects are vital. Consistent with the domain-specific nature of trust advanced by Mayer et al. (1995), S. M. R. Covey (2006) considered the two components of trust as domain specific. Hence, while individuals may be trusted based on character (leaving one's children under someone's care), they may not be trusted based on competence (handling a business proposal). The two components, though both essential, differ in that whereas character is constant, competence is situational. It is impossible to have competence in

every discipline and skills suitable for every profession. Similar to other scholars, S. M. R. Covey conceptualized trust as multidimensional with trust existing at five levels or waves: self, relationship, organizational, market, and societal. The five levels of trust correspond to five key principles, namely credibility, consistency, alignment, reputation, and contribution. The interest of this study lies in the first three levels of trust—self, relationship, and organizational—with a focus on self-trust. According to S. M. R. Covey, self-trust deals with self-confidence regarding ability, integrity, and the capability of inspiring trust in others. The key principle of credibility sets the underlying tone of the self-trust and from it emanated the trust model - the four cores of credibility. For S. M. R. Covey, self-trust boils down to credibility—being believable to oneself and others. S. M. R. Covey identified four cores of credibility, including integrity, intent, capabilities, and results.

**Integrity.** Integrity falls within the character domain of trust, and it is the ability to remain true to one's values and principles, to be congruent and honest. For S. M. R. Covey (2006), integrity demands courage in living out one's core values and beliefs. One who acts with integrity walks the talk. S. M. R. Covey's view aligns with early theories of integrity: trustworthiness, which highlighted consistency of past actions, positive reputation, a strong sense of justice, and congruence in words and deeds as factors that foster integrity (Mayer et al., 1995). Other scholars used synonyms such as value congruence, positive reputation, consistency, and justice to denote integrity (Butler, 1991; Colquitt et al., 2007; Mayer et al., 1995). Nevertheless, while there are similarities with other theories, S. M. R. Covey's (2006) idea of integrity differs from Mayer et al.'s (1995) in their origin. While in Mayer et al.'s (1995) model, the trustor attributes

integrity to the perceived behaviors of the trustee, in S. M. R. Covey's (2006) model, the trustee determines personal integrity through intentional acts.

**Intent.** For S. M. R. Covey (2006), intent has to do with motives, agendas, and the resulting behaviors. Trustworthiness lies in having unambiguous motives based on mutual benefits in which there is a genuine care for oneself and others. This core capability relates to the benevolence trustworthiness in other studies. For example, Mayer et al. (1995) envisioned benevolence as the belief that the trustor acts in the interest of the trustee; Cook and Wall (1980) defined trust as the readiness to attribute good intentions to others' words and actions. Hence, the perception of behaviors geared towards the interest of others engenders trust.

**Capabilities.** Capability is ability, and as shown by numerous references by scholars, it is the most commonly examined component of trustworthiness (Blanchard et al., 2013; Colquitt et al., 2007; Legood, 2013). Belonging to the competence aspect of trust, capabilities relate to abilities such as talents, attitudes, skills, knowledge, and style. Capabilities inspire confidence, the "can-do" aspect of trustworthiness, and build credibility.

**Results.** While this component may be inferred from the other trust models especially in the ability trustworthiness, S. M. R. Covey's (2006) model uniquely includes results as part of trust-building behaviors. Results refer to track records, performance, and success achieved. S. M. R. Covey argued that unless goals are accomplished, and things are done right, credibility takes a dip, irrespective of the integrity, intent, and capabilities of the leader. It is critical to produce results, to show some sort of evidence. Today's organizations, with the stress of meeting the bottom line,



demand results. As one manager put it following S. M. R. Covey's presentation, "Results are vital to establishing trust and we have to hit our numbers every month" (p. 30).

Working together, the four cores of credibility build the foundation for establishing and sustaining trust.

In this section, the researcher elaborated on the three trust models that form the theoretical foundation for the current study. Though unique, the three models have areas of convergence, lending credence to each. While the integrative model of organizational trust is more comprehensive and from an academic background, the other two models—the ABCD trust model and the four cores of credibility—are more practical and based on experiences from the field. Drawn from this theoretical foundation, the next section focuses on the theoretical framework for the current study.

### **Theoretical Framework for This Study: The Value Institute's Five C's of Trust Model**

Weisman (2010, 2016) cofounded The Values Institute (TVI) in 2009, a nonprofit research and consulting firm focused on studying and sharing with organizations and individuals the powerful role of values in building trusting relationships (TVI, n.d.). TVI operates with the underlying assumption that discovering, defining, and working toward common values results in a changed organizational culture, motivated employees, inspired customers, resiliency in the face of crisis, and an improved bottom line (Weisman, 2016). Drawing from the literature and extensive interviews with organizational leaders, Weisman (2010, 2016) deduced that values form the nucleus of the character and culture of any organization or individual. Values have steadily declined in many organizations within the past 5 decades. The high level of corruption, abuse, and

scandals of the transactional economy of the late 20th century resulted in increased loss of trust by Americans in businesses and institutions (Weisman, 2016). As a matter of fact, the 2018 Edelman Trust Barometer survey shows that the United States recorded a steep decline in trust across all institutions, with a 37-point aggregate drop and a 23-point decline from the previous year (Ross & Kehoe, 2018).

The quest to discover strategies to overcome the trust violations and dysfunctional corporate scandals provides insight into broken relationships and connections between organizational leaders and stakeholders, which in turn is the premise for the current lack of trust. Hence, for Weisman (2016), building trust requires reconnecting with stakeholders and living and working in the values economy. To understand the trust-building process, Weisman developed the pyramid of trust, or the five C's of trust model, namely competence, consistency, concern, candor, and connection. While competence and consistency fall under rational factors, and candor and concern under emotional factors, connection is the self-actualization factor in the trust-building process (Weisman, 2016). With increased interest in the trust construct, numerous trust-building strategies have been developed. The current study opts for the model proposed by TVI, which is considered the most comprehensive and broadest trust model, incorporating elements of other models from the literature (see Figure 1).

### **Competence**

Competence is the most researched component of trust and involves the knowledge and skills required to accomplish specific jobs (Colquitt et al., 2007; Legood, 2013; Mayer et al., 1995). Competence or ability is the degree of the leader's effectiveness in providing expected products and services (Weisman, 2016). In the trust

literature, competence or ability forms part of the cognitive dimension of trust (McAllister, 1995; Weisman, 2016). A leader is competent to the extent he/she possesses skills in setting a compelling direction, creating enabling structure, and setting functional norms (Burke et al., 2007).

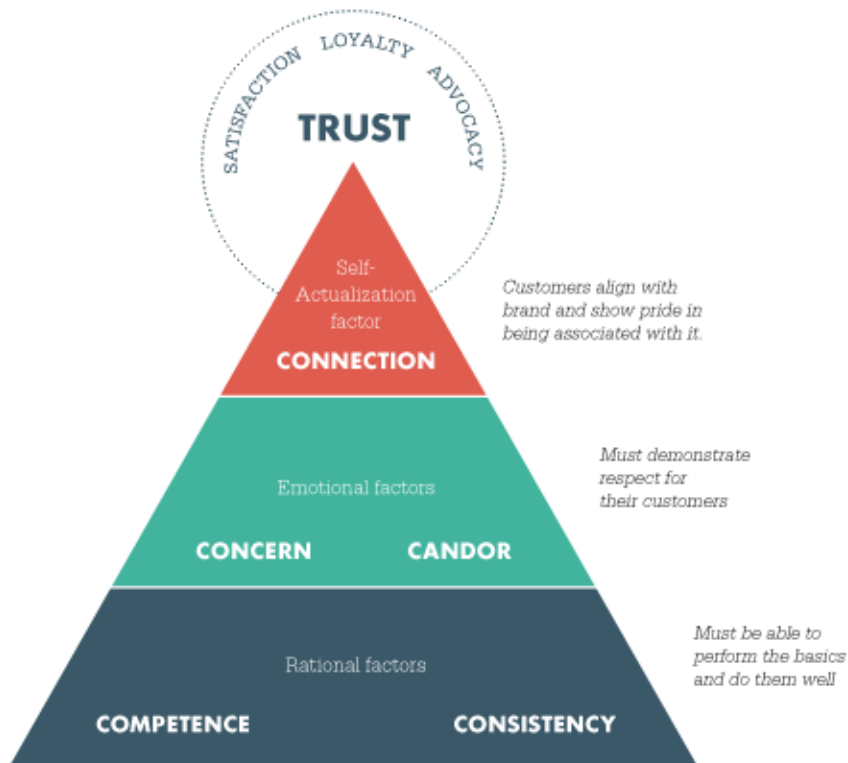


Figure 1. The Values Institute pyramid of trust. From The Hierarchy of Values, n.d., para. 1, TVI (<http://www.thevaluesinstitute.org/values-2#hierarchy-of-values>).

**Providing compelling vision.** One of the recurrent characteristics of effective leaders is the ability to establish a compelling vision. For Richards and Engle (1986) leadership involves communicating visions, exemplifying values, and providing the enabling environment for accomplishing them. Influence in leadership emanates from the leader’s ability to set a compelling vision, have clear goals and values, and communicate them to others. Transformational leaders inspire followers to internalize

their espoused values by leading them to a new level of performance and commitment (McCarthy, 1997; Northouse, 2016). In addition, transformational leaders possess and model strong moral values and goals. Their followers identify with these characteristics and emulate them. Transformational leaders excite their followers and inculcate within them, a belief and practice that extra efforts lead to the accomplishment of great things (McCarthy, 1997). This explains why foresight, visionary leadership, and providing direction are among the characteristics of transformational leaders and servant leaders (Van Dierendonck, 2011).

Enacting a compelling vision entails not only having clear goals and vision but also providing clear direction for accomplishing them (Burke et al., 2007). Hence, the leader provides correct tasks and goals, ensures that the followers can accomplish them, and communicates what is in it for the followers, making the vision appealing to them (Burke et al., 2007). Though limited research exists on the correlation between setting a compelling vision and trust, a study by Butler and colleagues (1999) found a compelling vision and other leadership attributes to be positively correlated to leadership trust (see also Burke et al., 2007).

**Promoting enabling structure.** Drawing from Hackman's (2002) team leadership model, fostering an enabling structure comprises work design and resource allocation, creating fundamental team norms, and proper team structure. Today's organizations, characterized by a high rate of task complexity and increasingly flexible and flattened organizations, demand the establishment of enabling structures necessary for task completion (Northouse, 2016). The path-goal theory of leadership emphasizes matching the leader's style, followers' characteristics, and organizational setting to

enable effective leadership and positive organizational outcomes (Northouse, 2016). Creating the structure that allows for successful completion of tasks communicates the leader's competence, and in turn generates confidence in the leader, resulting in trust. Weisman's (2016) assertion that an employee's readiness is a primary indicator of competence is consistent with the leader's ability to create an enabling structure. When employees work in a flexible environment, are empowered to self-correct, and have access to necessary information, they perceive the leader not only as competent, but also as caring, through the operating functional norms (Burke et al., 2007).

In addition, putting together a proper team composition relates to the leader's ability. Team composition entails matching members with technical competence as well as interpersonal competence (Hackman, 2002). Creating an enabling structure comprises how people work (task) and how they work together (relationship). Hence, the leader's effectiveness or competence lies in the ability to match individuals with required knowledge, skills, and abilities through a substantial knowledge of the task and the situational factors involved (Burke et al., 2007).

**Setting functional norms.** Instituting functional norms includes developing standards of excellence through requiring results and making clear the expectations (Burke et al., 2007). The capacity to achieve results is dependent upon the competence of the leader as manifested through the ability to institute functional norms of operation and interaction. According to S. M. R. Covey (2006), results include the track records, performance, and success achieved. Goals are essential because they indicate the tasks of the members, provide direction on how to achieve them, and form criteria for evaluation at the end (Lencioni, 2002). Establishing functional norms entails the ability to

determine the best structures for achieving organizational goals. The leader initiates functional norms through task designs, team composition, and norms of conduct, which in turn produce necessary results, promote trust, and show the competence of the leader (Northouse, 2016).

### **Consistency**

Consistency focuses on the leader's reliability and dependability. Also conceptualized as integrity, it involves matching words with actions and walking the talk, as well as fidelity to sets of principles and values deemed important by the trustor (Mayer et al., 1995; Weisman, 2016). Trust is built gradually over time, requiring effort, diligence, and character (Horsager, 2012). Yet, trust can be destroyed in an instant. Hence, consistency requires stability and reliability, and the ability to deliver on a promise. Consistency means being predictable so that people will know what to expect at each moment. Behaviors that convey a leader's consistency include accountability, perceptions of justice, and value congruence (Burke et al., 2007).

**Accountability.** Accountability is the obligation to hold oneself and others responsible for actions performed. Within the organization, leaders show accountability through behaving in specific ways deemed appropriate (Burke et al., 2007). Accountability comprises integrity, intent, and competence (White et al., 2016). In fact, accountability is synonymous with one's reputation, the ability to deliver on promise. Leaders are accountable to the extent that they take the initiative to acquire requisite skills for their jobs, ensure that their intent is congruent to organizational values, involve others, and share success (White et al., 2016). Accountability could be internal, involving an honest assessment of one's capabilities and competence, and the willingness

to accept responsibilities and blame for mistakes, while recognizing others' successes (Burke et al., 2007; White et al., 2016). Also, accountability could be external through formal and informal structures such as norms, culture, and performance assessments ensuring monitoring and compliance procedures (Burke et al., 2007).

S. M. R. Covey (2006) referred to the internal and external dimensions of accountability as holding oneself accountable and holding others accountable. To build trust, a leader needs to engage in both behaviors. However, one cannot be held accountable without first clarifying expectations. Hence, establishing in advance explicit agreements and consequences for noncompliance provides guidance and fosters a leader's credibility. To ensure accountability, Lencioni (2012) suggested communicating goals and standards and conducting regular and straightforward process reviews. By eschewing all ambiguity and publicly clarifying what needs to be done, who needs to do what, and how everyone must behave, individuals know what to expect and the behaviors for which they are being held accountable. Accepting personal responsibility and accountability was ranked the second highest trust-building factor in a 2002 Golin/Harris poll (as cited by S. M. R. Covey, 2006). On the contrary, lack of accountability or inconsistency in enforcing accountable behaviors erodes trust quickly. It creates a sense of disappointment, inequity, and insecurity (S. M. R. Covey, 2006).

**Perceptions of justice.** The literature indicates that people want to be treated fairly and consistently, and that such consistent behaviors lead to trust (Burke et al., 2007). Justice involves maintaining what is equitable, being impartial, especially in matters of conflicting claims or in allocating merits or sanctions (Cascio, 2013). In leadership studies, justice is subdivided into procedural justice, distributive justice, and

interactive justice (Burke et al., 2007; Dirks & Ferrin, 2002). Procedural justice involves fairness of policies and decision-making procedures, according to which consistency, freedom from bias, and accuracy of information determine fair procedures (Burke et al., 2007; Cascio, 2013; Posthuma, 2003). Distributive justice involves decisions with fair outcomes, especially in consistently giving rewards and promotions. Interactive justice deals with respect and dignity accorded others in interaction (Burke et al., 2007; Cascio, 2013; Dirks & Ferrin, 2002).

All three areas of justice are vital for building trust. Leaders are perceived as trustworthy when outcomes are distributed fairly, for example, allocating bonuses, raises, or promotions; they are also considered trustworthy when procedures for allocating outcomes are fair (job assessments, performance appraisals), and when they treat others with respect and dignity while enforcing policies and procedures (Burke et al., 2007). Contrarily, inconsistency across persons and over time in any of the three aspects of justice questions the integrity and benevolence of the leader and impacts negatively on trust.

**Value congruence.** Values serve as guiding principles of one's actions, attitudes, and choices (Arieli, Grant, & Sagiv, 2014; Whitener et al., 1998). Values are influenced by friends, culture, and one's ideas; they define one's personality and distinguish individuals, one from the other (Weisman, 2016). Values drive decisions, provide purpose and guidance, distinguish individuals or groups, engage and connect individuals and groups (Weisman, 2016). Shared values define what the organization stands for and how it conducts its business. According to Senge (2006), building shared vision or values is similar to developing organizational culture, which emanates from personal



vision and is developed gradually. Research findings indicate the important role of shared values in establishing high levels of trust. Scholars contend that identifying with each other's values fosters trust building (Lewicki, McAllister, & Bies, 1998), leads to unconditional trust (Jones & George, 1998), and allows for reciprocity in building trusting relationships, which in turn serves to maintain the shared values (Barber, 1983).

Also used as a synonym of integrity, value congruence consists of the perception that the trustee conforms to sets of ethical and moral principles that align with those of the trustor (Mayer et al., 1995). Consequently, a leader may be considered as lacking integrity if the trustor finds the espoused principles or values unacceptable or incongruent to personal values or principles. Congruence is the critical factor in value. Findings point to shared values as the reason for establishing and maintaining relationships with particular products or brands (Weisman, 2016). Literature corroborates the importance of value congruence by showing that leaders' integrity, and the resultant trust, is dependent on the degree to which there exists congruence between leaders' values and those of the followers (Burke et al., 2007). Specifically, Jung and Avolio (2000) found a positive correlation between value congruence and trust in leadership.

### **Concern**

Concern indicates genuine care and respect shown to all stakeholders (Weisman, 2016). Concern is expressed through interactions that are not directly related to business, but which create bonds within the organization. Also referred to as benevolence (Livnat, 2004; Mayer et al., 1995), concern comprises three parts: showing consideration for and being sensitive to employee's needs and interests, protecting employees' interests, and not exploiting others for personal benefits (Whitener et al., 1998). Concern is connected

with the aspect of vulnerability in trust whereby the trustor has confidence that he or she will not be exploited (Mayer et al., 1995). Leadership behaviors that demonstrate concern include creating and maintaining a supportive environment and coaching and mentoring (Burke et al., 2007).

**Creating and maintaining a supportive environment.** A supportive environment involves designing reward systems, information systems, and training/educational systems that enable achievement of personal and organizational goals (Burke et al., 2007). An environment is supportive when an alignment exists between organizational setting, employee characteristics, and leadership style (Northouse, 2016). Change, both in new membership or new job responsibilities, entails learning new skills, forming new coalitions, and navigating the organizational culture and norms. Hence to reduce stress inherent in change, instituting effective orientation and onboarding programs helps to create a supportive environment. While orientation programs serve to introduce new employees to their jobs, supervisor, coworkers, and organization, onboarding refers to all the processes ranging from recruiting employees and conducting orientation, to ensuring that new employees settle effectively into their jobs (Werner & DeSimone, 2012). Therefore, effective orientation or an onboarding program helps to lessen the impact of the shock new employees feel about the unfamiliar environment and new job requirements, reduces the unrealistic expectations one may have about the job or the organization, and communicates a feeling of acceptance from the new group (Cascio, 2013). By building such a supportive environment for employees, leaders are perceived as caring and showing concern (Burke et al., 2007).

**Coaching and mentoring.** Bass's (1995) assertion that transformational leaders turn followers into disciples and empower followers to become leaders is underscored through coaching and mentoring as well as leading by example. Coaching involves a personal and dynamic relationship to meet the needs of the coachee (Kimsey-House, Kimsey-House, Sandahl, & Whitworth, 2011). The coach (leader) cares for the coachee through providing guidance, holding the coachee accountable, and supporting the coachee to clarify choices and make appropriate changes (Kimsey-House et al., 2011). More than just sharing knowledge, mentoring includes listening, encouraging others, sharing relevant experiences, and asking the right questions (Horsager, 2012). In a coaching relationship, the leader assumes the responsibility of nurturing and leveraging the talents and skills of employees (Burke et al., 2007). Northouse (2016) stressed that by paying attention to the individual needs of followers, coaching and mentoring them toward excellence, and facilitating their growth through personal challenges, leaders have positive impacts on their institutions.

Not only are coaching and mentoring necessary to situate employees in their job responsibilities, they also serve to enhance competence for future job responsibilities. Effective leaders build capacity and empower others to reach their highest potential through a cycle of continuous growth and development. Consequently, a leader works for the progress and development of the followers. To illustrate, assuring the availability of top-quality and prepared talents and skills in succession planning is the responsibility of the leader and the mark of effective leadership (Cascio, 2013). Similarly, other forms of organizational internal recruitment programs (job posting, employee referrals, and temporary worker pools) increase employee motivation and productivity based on

perceived career improvement opportunities within the organization (Cascio, 2013).

Hence, when employees are mentored to advance in their career and jobs, they perceive the leader as benevolent, showing care and concern for their personal and professional goals.

### **Candor**

Candor is the leader's openness and honesty when communicating with subordinates. It involves both the truthfulness of information being transmitted and the authenticity and appropriateness of how it is communicated (Weisman, 2010). Effective communication has been found to impact trust development among leaders and followers, and among teammates. Furthermore, open communication was found to be a critical factor in interpersonal trust (Boies et al., 2015). Blanchard et al. (2013) considered communication and sharing of information as helping to build the connectedness necessary for trust. In fact, a leader's consistency and integrity are deeply connected with candor. S. M. R. Covey's (2006) intent could be likened to candor relating to a leader's genuine care of others with no hidden agenda. Leaders are open and honest to the extent their words match their actions (Avolio, 2016). Leaders show candor through transparency and open and honest communication (Vogelgesang, Leroy, & Avolio, 2013; Vogelgesang & Lester, 2009).

**Transparency.** Leader transparency, especially in times of change and uncertainty, has been linked to building trusting relationships. Baltzley and Lawrence (2016) defined transparency as conducting oneself in a way that allows others to see one's actions and understand the reason for them. Transparency involves access to necessary information without having to pass through obstacles (Kristjansson & Tashjian,

2016; White et al., 2016). Leaders show transparency through sharing relevant information, being open and honest in giving and receiving information (Vogelgesang & Lester, 2009), and being straightforward about personal motives and intentions about decisions (White et al., 2016).

In the face of unethical practices and scandals, the increased demand for leadership trust has necessitated regulations and sanctions, such as Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002, to promote transparency in business (Horsager, 2012; S. M. Norman, Avolio, & Luthans, 2010; Ötken, & Cenkci, 2012). In fact, Transparency International, with a focus on eliminating global corruption, publishes a transparency index of organizations showing which organizations are viable and which are questionable (S. M. Norman et al., 2010). However, while such regulations and sanctions exist, transparency goes beyond the letter of the law to embrace the spirit of the law. Transparent leaders not only disclose decision-making processes, but they also share personal motives, values, and intentions facilitating decision making on the part of followers (S. M. Norman et al., 2010), and reducing unnecessary assumptions and expectations (White et al., 2016). Such personal disclosures also permit trust development when congruence exists between leaders' values, motives, and intentions and those of their followers.

S. M. Norman et al.'s (2010) field experiment in a downsizing context showed that a leader's high positive psychological capacity and high transparency were positively correlated to how highly the leader was trusted and perceived leader effectiveness. Several positive outcomes are associated with leader transparency, among which are trust in the leader, better alignment of roles enabling increased performance, and high engagement (Kristjansson & Tashjian, 2016; S. M. Norman et al., 2010; White et al.,

2016). However, Avolio (2016) cautioned about the need to put into consideration the context under which transparency occurs. Hence, while specific industries (e.g., healthcare) demand greater leader transparency due to the high cost of failures, others may not require such depth of transparency. Also, while transparency is associated with positive outcomes, and lack of transparency with adverse outcomes, it is critical to strike a healthy balance between the amount of information to disclose and withhold based on the context (Baltzley & Lawrence, 2016). According to Baltzley and Lawrence (2016), too much disclosure of information may signal a leader's ineffectiveness and rouse unnecessary fear in followers, and withholding of relevant information fosters lack of trust in the leader due to an information gap.

**Open and honest communication.** Candor relates to the openness and straightforwardness, as well as the honesty and sincerity, of communication (Baltzley & Lawrence, 2016). Research indicates a correlation between communication and trust (Boies et al., 2015; Whitener et al., 1998), and communication as an antecedent of trust (Butler, 1991). Openness refers to the availability of relevant information and it requires vulnerability on the part of the individual (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999). Honesty, on the other hand, is integrity, authenticity, and character of the individual, where actions correspond to words and truth is upheld (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999). Openness in communication comprises how leaders and members send and receive information related to job responsibilities, personal concerns, and innovative topics (Rogers, 1987). Furthermore, open and honest communication is understood in terms of a leader's clear expectations and plans (Horsager, 2012). Whereas unclear expectations and plans generate fear, confusion, frustration, and dispersion of energy, clear expectations and

plans foster trust (Horsager, 2012). Understood in terms of the quality (timeliness, accuracy, and usefulness) and quantity (sufficiency) of information, open communication bridges the vulnerability gap inherent in communication (Thomas, Zolin, & Hartman, 2009). The higher the frequency of a message, the greater the clarity and the more the leader inspires trust (Horsager, 2012).

Additionally, communication and trust have been explored in terms of the quality and quantity of information shared. Thomas et al. (2009) found that trust development associated with open communication was dependent on the referent. While the quality of information increases trust among coworkers and supervisors, the quantity of information increases trust in top leaders. Consequently, among coworkers and supervisors, the accuracy, timeliness, and relevance of information enhance reliability and dependency necessary for building trust. By contrast, inaccurate, irrelevant, and untimely information increases vulnerability among employees, impacting trust development (Thomas et al., 2009). In all, White et al. (2016) reiterated the preeminence of matching words with actions on which the leader's trust is dependent. Corroborating with the integrity aspect of communication, a study by Vogelgesang et al. (2013) showed that transparent or open communication is an antecedent to a leader's behavioral integrity.

### **Connection**

Connection is the culmination of all the other trust components. Connection necessitates a deep level of relationship between leaders and followers (Weisman, 2016). Connection indicates the bond with which leaders and followers share common values, goals, norms, and shared beliefs related to the culture of the organization (Shockley-Zalabak et al., 2010; Weisman, 2010). Conceptualized in various ways, connection

involves the relationship with self, others, environment, and a higher being (Stovall & Baker, 2010). Connection develops through conversations and sharing of information, which reveals areas of commonalities (Horsager, 2012). It involves commitment and emotional engagement, shared values, and loyalty (Horsager, 2012; Phelps-Jones, 2016; Weisman, 2016).

**Commitment and emotional engagement.** Commitment and emotional engagement highlight the relationship aspect of trust. Commitment comprises ownership and taking responsibility for one's actions (Horsager, 2012). Also, commitment involves resilience when faced with challenges; committed leaders go out of their way to promote what they believe in and are not afraid to make sacrifices (Horsager, 2012; Williams, 2002). Such commitment could be seen in the stories of leaders who undergo adversities and challenges to bring to fruition their goals (Williams, 2002). Transformational leaders have been shown to be better equipped in articulating clear and compelling visions, providing direction, fostering a sense of common purpose and meaning, and elevating the self-esteem and commitment of followers (Yukl, 2006).

Emotional engagement, on the other hand, relates to the intensity and the tenacity with which employees emotionally invest in their work (Reina, Rogers, Peterson, Byron, & Hom, 2018). Conceptualized as personal engagement, Kahn (1990) argued that individuals who are personally engaged at work behave in manners that foster connections to self, others, and work. For Kahn, such personal engagements could be expressed at the physical, cognitive, and emotional levels. Antecedents to emotional engagement include meaningfulness, safe environment to be creative without fear of



negative consequences, and availability of resources necessary for job performance (Kahn, 1990; Reina et al., 2018).

**Shared values.** Values relate to deeply held beliefs that drive decisions, provide purpose and guidance, distinguish individuals or groups, and engage and connect individuals and groups (Weisman, 2016). Shared values form part of the mission and vision of the organization, which define how the organization carries out its business. At the organizational level, individuals develop a personal connection with management and coworkers based on perceived value congruence (Shockley-Zalabak et al., 2010). For Shockley-Zalabak and colleagues (2010), such perceived common values foster identification with and trust in the leader and the organization.

**Loyalty.** Loyalty to a brand signifies customers' attitudes and repeated patronage (Weisman, 2016). Loyalty is developed through personal identification with a particular brand or organization. Identification is achieved through prior experiences founded on the alignment of values, beliefs, needs, and purpose (Shockley-Zalabak et al., 2010). Loyalty turns a consumer into an advocate who promotes the cause of the organization or the brand (Weisman, 2016). At the highest point of the trust pyramid, connection comprises customer satisfaction, loyalty, and advocacy (Weisman, 2016). Leaders inspire loyalty when they have the ability to develop an authentic relationship with employees and customers through continually living out their values through understanding of and aligning their brand to what these stakeholders need and value (Horsager, 2012; Weisman, 2016).

While each of the five components is necessary, they all need to be present for trust to exist. Founded upon the model of Maslow's hierarchy of needs for which the

satisfaction of fundamental needs is a precondition for higher needs of self-actualization, Weisman's (2016) pyramid of trust proceeds in the same manner. For trust to exist, the individual must begin from the foundational levels of rational factors with behaviors that exhibit competence and consistency in every relationship. Further, being trustworthy demands emotional factors of concern and candor that bind individuals one to the other. Finally, trust culminates in the highest level of self-actualization in connection (Weisman, 2016). Having examined the proposed variables in trust-building strategies, the next section explores the role of major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes and their responsibilities in building trust with professed members.

### **The Role of the Major Superior in Organizational Leadership**

Major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes are consecrated women occupying leadership positions ranked as high as those of the chief executive officer in secular organizations. As top leaders in their respective religious institutes, they not only have responsibilities to the professional lives of the members, but due to the nature of the religious institutes, they have responsibilities in the advancement of the personal and spiritual lives of the members.

Given that trust is operational in the context of relationships, major superiors as leaders engage in such relationships. This relationship necessitates forming both a trusting relationship and a cohesive (trusting) leadership experience. When applied within the context of religion, which extols a trusting relationship between the human person and a purely spiritual being, leadership and trust appear to be inseparably tied together. Hence, the relationship between the major superiors of Catholic women

religious institutes and their members makes sense and can only be gainfully explored within the context of building and living a trusting relationship.

### **Who Are Major Superiors of Catholic Women Religious Institutes?**

Major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes are consecrated women who, along with other members, belong to what is called “institutes of consecrated life” (Canon 573). The institutes of consecrated life are made up of women and men who made a commitment of fidelity to a life of abandonment to God through the public profession of three vows, namely chastity, poverty, and obedience, referred to as “evangelical counsels” (Canon 573; John Paul II, 1996). The consecrated life is a permanent state of life lived with others and expressed through sharing things in common, for the purpose of personal sanctification and service of the people of God (Canon 573). Under the authority of the major superiors and faithful to each institute’s mission, members of each religious institute live out the evangelical counsels as blueprints for their sanctification and salvation and carry out their specific mission and apostolate (Canon 573).

### **Major Superior as Leaders in Catholic Religious Institutes**

The specific laws establishing the roles of major superiors are found in the written laws of the Catholic Church called the Code of Canon Law (Canon). The Canon states, “Major superiors are those who govern an entire institute or a province or part equal to the latter or an autonomous house and their vicars” (Canon 620; Gallen, 1983, p. 57). To address the diverse management needs of religious institutes, Canon law directs that institutes may be divided into central and provincial administrations (Canon 581, 621; Gallen, 1983). Therefore, major superiors, in light of this definition and directive will

include superiors general, to whom belong the care of the entire institute, and provincial superiors, who oversee the operations of regional bodies. Two requirements make possible but do not necessitate the creation of provinces for a religious institute: (a) the possibility of being divided into three provinces, and (b) a minimum number of one hundred members (Gallen, 1983). The rule of thumb is that a religious institute must have a minimum of 300 members before division into provinces.

Superiors general are elected for a 6-year term by the members of the religious institute in a special conference referred to as the “general chapter.” Provincial superiors, however, are either elected in a provincial assembly or appointed by the superior general with the consent of her council for a 3-year term (Canon 625). At the end of their first term of service, major superiors are eligible for reelection to another term (Canon 624).

### **Roles and Responsibilities of Major Superiors**

In specific and procedural terms, major superiors have the task of leading their institute and making the final decisions on any issue related to the institute. They have the responsibility to apply the laws of consecrated life, which are specified in the Code of Canon Law. Such laws include (a) admission of new members; (b) excusing members from particular obligations proper to the rule of consecrated life; (c) giving permission to carry out certain functions in accord with the vow of obedience; (d) dispensation from obligations required by the law; (e) determining the obligation to the rule and constitutions, which is the institute’s own law or way of life; and (f) dismissal of members (Canon 587, 694).

According to the 2008 document of the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (CICLSAL) and a 2009 document of

the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious (CMSWR), major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes are primarily spiritual leaders. Their authority, as widely conceived and expressed by the laws and precepts of the Catholic Church, comes from God. Consequently, they are called to a service of obedience to the law of God, to the Church, to the Roman Pontiff (Pope), and to each institute's specific laws (CICLSAL, 2008). Nevertheless, Catholic religious institutes, like churches are not exempted from the needs and demands of effective leadership, of which building trust is critical (Eguizabal & Lawson, 2009).

**Major superiors and the professed members of their religious institutes.** In each religious institute, the major superiors are directly responsible for the members of their religious institutes (Canon, 596). The members of the religious institute include those in formation (training) and the professed religious. Commonly referred to as sisters or nuns (though canonical differences exist between the two), the professed members of the Catholic women religious institutes are religious women who have undergone initial training and made their religious profession by public profession of the three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience (Canon 654). The Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institute (SCRSI, 1983) provides nine elements that denote an authentic living of the religious life, among which are public profession of vows, common life lived in a stable and visible form, corporate apostolate faithful to charism, a certain separation from the world, personal, communal, and liturgical prayer, and religious authority based on faith (SCRSI, 1983).

Totally consecrating their lives to God in a particular religious institute, the professed members of Catholic women religious institute strive to love and serve God

with an undivided heart (Canon 607; CMSWR, 2009). They engage in the saving mission of Christ in accordance to each institute's charism. To do this, they freely give up their will in the vow of obedience to the religious superiors who are seen as holding the place of God when they give legitimate commands (Canon 601; CMSWR, 2009). Consequently, a unique bond exists between the professed members of the religious institute and their major superiors. While the professed member is bound to obey the religious superior by the virtue of the vow of obedience, the religious superior is in turn bound by obedience to God and religious obedience when exercising authority as superior (CMSWR, 2009). Though spiritual in nature, authority within the institutes of Catholic women religious follow a specific hierarchical model, with the major superiors at the top and the members as subordinates (see Appendix A). The religious life is a stable form of living; hence, the professed members, generally, are lifelong members of the religious institute (CMSWR, 2009).

**Major superiors as transformational leaders.** Can major superiors of women religious institutes become transformational leaders? To answer this question, it would be germane to note some of the characteristics of transformational leaders: (a) engaging followers to an elevated level of morality and motivation (J. M. Burns, 1978); (b) creating awareness and commitment to the mission and vision of the organization and influencing followers to go beyond personal interest (Bass, 1990); (c) maintaining high ethical and moral standards (W. Zhu et al., 2011); and (d) developing clear shared goals and missions, providing clear direction, and creating trusting environments (Bennis & Nanus, 2007). As agents of transformation, the character and functions deputed to major superiors make them or call them to be transformational leaders. The task of leading

members of their religious institutes to personal transformation of union with God and holiness of life (CICLSAL, 2008) is a radical call that can be achieved within the purview of transformational leadership. Among the directives given to the religious leaders (persons in authority), the Church highlights the following transformational leadership practices for major superiors:

- Exercise authority as first of all a spiritual service in which leaders promote the spiritual lives of members through openness to God, others, and the environment.
- Create ample time for personal and spiritual development.
- Promote the dignity of each member through individual attention to the growth and well-being of members, appropriate appreciation and positive consideration, and showing sincere affection.
- Inspire courage and hope in difficult and challenging times.
- Keep alive the charism (the purpose of existence) of the religious institute.
- Be mentors and coaches to members throughout their journey of ongoing formation (CICLSAL, 2008).

Corroborating faithfulness to the Church directives, McCarthy (2015), in her keynote address to members of the Leadership Conference of Major Superiors (LCWR), noted that the major superiors have a kind of leadership that is less like a specific model or style and more like a way of being in the world, which she referred to as spiritual transformational leadership. For McCarthy, transformational leadership practices by major superiors “is a set of dispositions, a way-of-being-in-the world, that when fostered in the leader, contributes to creating an environment in which deep authentic transformation of the individual and of the whole is possible” (p. 3). In addition,

McCarthy stated that this leadership style is a result of commitment and consistency developed over time. Corroborating this idea, Sanders (2015) emphasized the growing public interest in understanding how major superiors practice leadership, which is distinct from the way leadership is often practiced in other organizations. This interest led to the publication of the collection of transformational leadership practices by the members of the LCWR.

**Major superiors as servant leaders.** Following in the footsteps of Christ, who, according to Christian belief, “came not to be served, but to serve” (Mk. 10:45, New Revised Standard Version), major superiors place the interests of the members above their personal interests and strive to build community and connection with members. They attend to the personal needs of the members, showing appropriate care and concern, as well as ensuring that the mission and vision of the institute are promoted (CICLSAL, 2008). As servant leaders, major superiors are at the service of the individual and the community. Consistent with servant leadership characteristics, major superiors exercise their leadership among members of their religious communities (CICLSAL, 2008; Greenleaf, 2008). Such servant leadership characteristics include listening, creating a safe environment for dialogue, sharing and co-responsibility, and involving each member in decision making, commitment to the growth of the people, and building community (CICLSAL, 2008; Greenleaf, 2008). In so doing, their goal is to create an environment of trust through being consistent, showing concern, and engaging in open and sincere dialogue. This leadership role of major superiors, interpreted in the light of servant leadership, is performed in the spirit of service (CICLSAL, 2008).



**Major superiors as spiritual leaders.** There is a gap in the literature on spiritual leadership theory in religious organizations (Washington, 2016). However, the uniqueness of the responsibility of major superiors as leaders stems from the spiritual aspect of their leadership practices. While they have an obligation to exercise leadership as conceptualized in secular organizations, they have the added responsibility of being spiritual guides to those under their authority. To that effect, their leadership is first and foremost a spiritual authority (CICLSAL, 2008). While some differences exist between the spiritual leadership theory as conceptualized by Fry (2003) and other scholars of organizational leadership (Cregård, 2017, Crossman, 2010; Duthely, 2017; Fry & Cohen, 2009), there are elements of the theory that could be extended to the context of Catholic women religious institutes. For example, spiritual leadership theory emphasizes promoting an environment built on altruistic love, faith, meaning, membership, and interconnectedness (Crossman, 2010; Fry, 2003), behaviors inherent in the spiritual authority of the major superiors (CICLSAL, 2008).

Previous studies (Gillespie & Mann, 2004; Y. Zhu & Akhtar, 2014) have found a correlation between transformational leadership and trust; and between servant leadership and trust (Joseph & Winston, 2005). Similarly, given its characteristics as value based, spiritual leadership research was found to be consistent with some elements of servant leadership and transformational leadership (Washington, 2016). With an emphasis on values such as altruistic love, manifested through genuine care and concern for others, spiritual leaders develop trusting relationships (CICLSAL, 2008; Kaya, 2015). Nevertheless, while trust is assumed to be the bedrock of interaction in the relationship

between major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes and their members, it is important to further explore strategies these leaders utilize to build trust.

### **Gaps in Leadership Trust Research**

Ample research exists on leadership and trust, and the literature in this field shows studies in various settings. Leadership trust has been studied extensively in settings such as education (Adams & Forsyth, 2009; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000), military (Fulmer & Ostroff, 2017), public sector (Legood et al., 2016; Pate et al., 2012), health care (Baker et al., 2016), and research and development (Gillespie & Mann, 2004). However, despite the availability of numerous studies on leadership trust in different settings, only a few studies have explored trust-building behaviors in religious settings (Phelps-Jones, 2016). A search of the literature unearthed sparse research specifically in the context of Catholic women religious organizations. Such studies include the longitudinal studies concerning the decline in the number of female religious sisters in the United States by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA), and on the identity of Catholic sisters (Lemma, 2013).

Furthermore, while the majority of studies on trust have utilized quantitative methods, few studies have explored other research methods in understanding trust-building behaviors and strategies (Hyman-Shurland, 2016; Kodish, 2017). Therefore, TVI's five C's of trust model—competence, consistency, candor, concern, and connection—centered on ethical values and principles offer a new and integrated model to explore trust-building behaviors and strategies among leaders in organizations.

## Summary

Demand for leadership trust in organizations is on the increase and scholars and practitioners continue to explore best practices and behaviors of leaders who build trust. While leadership practices postulated in theories such as transformational leadership and servant leadership theories have shown correlations with trust leading to numerous positive outcomes, scholars are yet to arrive at a consensus on the leadership behaviors that build trust. Whereas scholars such as Bigley and Pearce (1998) view such multiple conceptualizations as adding to the greater understanding of trust and trust-building behaviors, the need to streamline the trust literature has been the focus of many scholars (Burke et al., 2007; Dirks & Ferrin, 2002; Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012).

Despite efforts by scholars and practitioners, trust has continued its downward spiral. In the quest to discover strategies to overcome trust declines and dysfunctional corporate scandals, Weisman (2016) discovered the powerful role of values in building trusting relationships. Furthermore, through insights into the defective relationship and connection between organizational leaders and stakeholders, which in turn is the premise for the present lack of trust, Weisman argued that building trust requires reconnecting with stakeholders and living and working in the values economy. To understand the trust-building process, Weisman developed the pyramid of trust, or the five C's of trust model, namely competence, consistency, concern, candor, and connection. While competence and consistency fall under rational factors, candor and concern; under emotional factors, connection is the self-actualization factor.

With the increasing interest in the trust construct, numerous trust-building strategies exist. The current study settled on the model proposed by TVI as the most comprehensive and broad model available, incorporating the elements of other models.

## CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Research methods are forms of collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data that researchers select for their studies (Creswell, 2014). Three broad research approaches, based on specific philosophical assumptions, include qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods approaches. Each approach has various research designs, types of inquiry, which guide the specific direction and procedures of the study. Effectively selecting an approach is dependent upon alignment around research approaches, research designs, and research methods (Creswell, 2014).

This chapter focuses on the research design and the procedures used to collect data in the current study. The chapter describes in detail the purpose of the study, research questions, population, study sample, instrumentation, data collection, and methods of data analysis. Following careful evaluation of various methods, the phenomenological qualitative research inquiry was deemed the most appropriate approach to explore how a particular group of participants—the major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes—build trust with professed members. The rationale for this decision is presented under the Research Design.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore how major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes build trust with professed members, using the five domains of competence, consistency, candor, concern, and connection

### **Research Questions**

The study has one overarching central question and five subquestions. The central question focuses on determining trust-building strategies using the theoretical

framework of the five C's of trust model. The five subquestions align with each of the five elements of the five C's of trust model.

### **Central Research Question**

How do major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes build trust with professed members using the five domains of competence, consistency, candor, concern, and connection?

### **Subquestions**

1. How do major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes build trust with professed members using competence?
2. How do major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes build trust with professed members using consistency?
3. How do major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes build trust with professed members using candor?
4. How do major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes build trust with professed members using concern?
5. How do major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes build trust with professed members using connection?

### **Research Design**

Research designs provide the blueprint for gathering information from general assumptions through specific data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2014). The approaches to research include qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. While similarities exist among the three approaches (they all involve systematic processes of collecting and analyzing data for a specific purpose), they have distinct features.

Quantitative research is prescriptive, and using standardized instruments, allows for generalization of results. On the other hand, qualitative research is an approach used to investigate and comprehend the meaning individuals attribute to a social or human issue (Creswell, 2014). Mixed-methods approach is a combination of both qualitative and quantitative approaches.

Specifically, the qualitative research approach is based on interpretative /constructivist worldview, which maintains the existence of multiple socially constructed realities (Creswell, 2014; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). As a result, the objective of qualitative research is to explore and interpret realities based on the subjective meanings attributed to them by individuals. Immersing oneself in the study, the researcher collects data in the participants' natural setting, using methods such as interviews and observations. It is inductive and flexible in nature, with the researcher as the instrument of the research. Indeed, qualitative research uses words and employs research designs such as phenomenology, ethnography, grounded theories, and case studies. Furthermore, qualitative research methods vary from those of quantitative methods, in that they utilize open-ended questions in interviews, observations, and review of documents and audiovisual data, as opposed to the quantitative research method, which is an instrument-based research (Bazeley, 2002; Creswell, 2014; Sale, Lohfeld, & Brazil, 2002).

Selecting an appropriate research method for each study is crucial. Typically, the researcher uses qualitative research when hard data are not enough to tell the whole story and when voices from the field need to be heard. Also, the qualitative approach is appropriate when little is known about the topic, and the participants belong to a closed or reserved culture (Creswell, 2014; Patten, 2009). Moreover, there are several forms of

research inquiry within the qualitative research approach. For this study, aimed at exploring how major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes build trust with professed members, using the five domains of competence, consistency, candor, concern, and connection, several forms of qualitative research inquiry such as ethnography, phenomenology, and case study, were considered.

The phenomenological approach was chosen as the best research inquiry for this study. Phenomenology seeks to understand “the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experience” of a particular issue for a person or group of persons (Patton, 2015, p. 98). The purpose of this research inquiry was to capture the essence of a specific experience from the viewpoint of the participants. Phenomenological qualitative research inquiry was considered the most appropriate to explore how a particular group of participants—major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes—build trust with professed members. The Values Institute’s (TVI) five C’s of trust model has not yet been used to study trust within the setting of Catholic women religious institutes. In addition, not much is known about trust-building strategies of this group of individuals. Hence, obtaining and exploring the perspective, experience, judgment, and the meaning the major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes attribute to the phenomenon of trust necessitate using the phenomenological inquiry.

### **Population**

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), population is the whole group corresponding to specific criteria to which the result of research could be generalized. The population of the present study was the 1,470 major superiors of Catholic Women religious institutes in the United States (Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious



[CMSWR]; Leadership Conference of Women Religious [LCWR]). These major superiors belong to various institutes of consecrated life, and share the same responsibility as the highest leadership authority in their organization; a position ranked as high as the chief executive officer in secular organizations.

### **Target Population**

The target population comprises the entire group of individuals or events that comply with specific criteria to which the results of a research can be generalized (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The target population was the major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes in Southern California. California comprises about 5% of the entire population of the major superiors in the United States. This percentage is approximately distributed evenly between Northern and Southern California. Southern California was selected to enable face-to-face interviews and observations. An essential characteristic of qualitative research is the participant's natural setting (Creswell, 2014; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Targeting the major superiors in Southern California permitted the researcher to reach the study site with ease.

### **Sample**

Sample refers to a group of individuals drawn from the population from whom data are collected (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). In contrast to quantitative research, qualitative sampling seeks to increase the usefulness of information collected from small samples, rather than generalization to a larger population (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). In qualitative research, the focus is on utilizing information-rich cases to obtain in-depth understanding of the inquiry under exploration (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Patton, 2015). Hence, qualitative research uses purposeful sampling involving selection

of cases that provide in-depth information of the phenomenon under consideration (Patton, 2015).

In sampling methods that do not involve random selection of participants, or nonprobability sampling, the researcher makes use of accessible subjects or those possessing specific characteristics required by the study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Conversely, in random sampling, each subject in the population has an equal probability of being selected as any other member of the group (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The nonprobability sampling method aligns with qualitative phenomenological research inquiry and permits purposeful sampling. Hence, participants were strategically selected to provide data that aligned with the research purpose, research questions, and data collection methods. This study used purposeful sampling, focusing on major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes in Southern California who met the study criteria.

Another critical step in sample selection is the sampling strategy. Several purposeful sampling strategies exist, and the researcher based her choice of method on the research objective. Patton (2015) identified 40 purposeful-sampling strategies organized into eight categories. This study used homogenous sampling and key informants sampling strategies. Homogeneous sampling strategy involves the selection of cases with similar characteristics; key informants sampling strategy selects people with knowledge or influence on the phenomenon under consideration (Patton, 2015). Major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes belong to a homogeneous group of Catholic sisters, and as leaders of their religious communities, they are in a position to provide information on the trust-building strategies they use with the professed members

of their religious institutes. Convenience sampling, involving selection of participants based on availability or convenience, is another form of nonprobability sampling (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Based on practicality, efficiency, and accessibility, convenience sampling is typical in both quantitative and qualitative studies. For practicality, the current study was delimited only to major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes in Southern California.

Sample size in qualitative research requires carefully evaluating specific guidelines, such as the purpose of the study, the focus of the study, data collection strategy, and availability of informants, time, and resources (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Patton, 2015). Typically, qualitative research design uses few participants for studies, focusing on obtaining rich data from the perspective of the participants (Creswell, 2012, Patton, 2015). As a result, 10 participants were considered an appropriate sample size for the present study. The guiding principle is to choose participants who are knowledgeable and have enough information about the phenomenon being explored (Patton, 2015). Participants were identified through membership at the LCWR and CMSWR, and from the office of the vicar for religious women in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.

The study sample was the 10 major superiors of Catholic Women religious institutes in Southern California who met the following criteria:

- Reputation of trusting relationship with members,
- a minimum of 2 years of experience (current or retired within the last year) leading a successful organization,

- recommendation by their peers, and
- membership in associations within their field like CMSWR or LCWR.

### **Instrumentation**

Data collection methods in qualitative research include qualitative interviews, qualitative observations, and examination of artifacts (Creswell, 2014). Contrary to the norm in quantitative research where standardized instruments may be available, the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection in qualitative research (Creswell, 2014). Generally, qualitative researchers develop their own instruments for specific studies. Based on the qualitative phenomenological research design of the study, semistructured and open-ended interview questions were created to explore how major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes build trust with professed members, using the five domains of competence, consistency, candor, concern, and connection.

### **Process for Creating Interview Questions**

Qualitative research uses in-depth interviews to elicit information from study participants. In creating interview questions, the researcher may choose one of the three forms of qualitative interviews: informal conversation, interview guide approach, or standardized open-ended interviews (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Patton, 2015). Each interview approach has its distinct feature. In the informal conversations, there are no fixed topics or wording. The interview guide approach has preselected topics, but the researcher determined the sequence and wording of the questions during the interview. In the standardized open-ended interviews, the researcher predetermined the exact wording and sequence of the interview questions (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010;

Patton, 2015). Furthermore, interview questions may be structured, semistructured, or unstructured.

This study used the standardized open-ended interview approach to formulate semistructured interview questions. Semistructured questions, though specific, allow for individual open-ended responses, as opposed to structured questions that only allow for predetermined responses from the participants (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Researchers often choose standardized open-ended approach because it allows for consistency and involves asking the same questions to participants in the same order and using the same words (Patton, 2015). The advantages of the standardized open-ended interview include minimizing variation among interviewers, using the exact instrument, effective time management, and ease of analysis of results (Patton, 2015). A significant disadvantage of the standardized open-ended interview is the limited flexibility possible in the interview. The approach restrains researchers from delving into topics outside the interview protocol, which limits adjustment to individual differences and situations (Patton, 2015). However, it is not uncommon for researchers to combine interview approaches for greater flexibility in probing for in-depth information when occasioned by circumstances.

The instrument for the current study was developed in collaboration with the trust thematic dissertation team under the guidance of faculty members. In collaboration with the trust thematic team, the researcher developed 10 semistructured open-ended questions centered around the five variables of TVI five C's trust model: competence, consistency, candor, concern, and connection (Appendix B). Each variable has two interview questions, with at least one probing question to elicit further responses as needed. The

trust thematic team was divided into subteams based on the study sample focus, which included executives of organizations, principals, and superintendents. Each subteam was assigned one variable, except the principal subteam, which was assigned two variables, based on the team size. Following the initial questions produced by each team, the entire trust thematic team, with the faculty members, collaborated to analyze and evaluate the questions, providing guidelines for further revision. Each team further revised the interview questions with a focus on alignment with the definition of each variable and linking the questions to the literature on Weisman's (2010, 2016) trust-building strategies. The four faculty members served as the expert panel and evaluated the interview questions for content and alignment to the research questions and the purpose of the study. At the end of the process, the team chose 10 semistructured and open-ended interview questions with one probe for each question, to be used as needed.

### **Field Testing of Interview Questions**

Before the actual interview, all the members of the trust thematic team carried out a pilot interview with a participant who met the study requirement but was not included in the study (Appendix C). An expert in conducting qualitative research interviews served as an interview observer in the field testing. Both participants, the pilot interviewee and the expert observer, provided feedback on the interview questions and process.

### **Interview Protocol**

Interview protocol is a guideline designed by the researcher containing the interview process, the interview questions, and spaces for taking notes (Creswell, 2012). Following the guideline of qualitative research and the Brandman University's policy, the

protocol for the interview process was determined before each interview (Appendix D). The study participants each received three documents for their review: the definitions of major study variables (Appendix E), the Brandman University Institutional Review Board (IRB) Research Participant's Bill of Rights (Appendix F), and the Informed Consent and Audio Recording Release (Appendix G). The peer researchers each conducted 10 interviews with each researcher's selected study sample, resulting in 150 interviews using the 10 interview questions and additional probes as needed by each researcher.

To ensure reliability, each researcher used a common interview protocol for the 150 interviews (Appendix D). The protocol included the researcher introduction, the study purpose, a reminder to complete the informed consent and consent for audio recording release, and the 10 interview questions and potential probing questions. The interview was audiotaped to ensure a comprehensive record and transcription of participants' responses as well as permit reliability checks. In addition, notes were taken to record insights and nonverbal communications for data analysis. Subsequently, the researcher transcribed the audio records and typed the notes, putting them together in a single draft. All notes and transcriptions were analyzed and coded for qualitative themes.

### **Researcher as Key Instrument**

Though instruments such as interview questions may be developed for qualitative studies, the researcher collects data through observations, interviews, and examination of artifacts. A major characteristic of qualitative research is the integral role the researcher plays in the collection and interpretation of data. Immersing oneself in the study, the researcher collects data in the participants' natural setting, using methods such as

interviews and observation. As such, the researcher's personality and skills are critical (Patton, 2015). Bias often comes into play resulting from the subjectivity that the researcher brings into the qualitative research process. The subjectivity in question could be in the form of beliefs, assumptions, presumptions, values, experiences, interests, and competencies. While every scientific research strives to minimize bias, Morrow (2005) argued that it is impossible to be entirely without bias in research. Consequently, the validity and trustworthiness of the study are dependent upon the researcher. To reduce bias, care was taken to maintain professional ethical standards and identify personal and professional factors that could impact the study.

In this study, the researcher is not a major superior but is a professed member of the Catholic women religious institute. While the researcher's major superior was not included in the study, the experiences of the researcher as a member of a Catholic women religious institute could introduce study bias. However, to reduce potential bias, crucial steps were taken, including developing questions that were constructively criticized and evaluated by peer researchers under the direction of faculty members and constant checking with peer researchers.

### **Validity**

In qualitative research, validity is the extent to which the explanations of the phenomena are congruent to external world realities, and the degree to which "interpretations have mutual meanings between the participants and the researcher" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 330). Qualitative researchers prefer to use the term credibility to refer to internal validity, transferability for external validity, and dependability for reliability, which taken together refer to the trustworthiness of the study



(Patton, 2015). Validity was enhanced in this qualitative phenomenological study through the use of significant strategies. These include multiple researchers, participant language and verbatim accounts, mechanically recorded data, multimethod strategies, and participant review of their transcribed interviews, which are described below (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

### **Multiple Researchers**

A team of 15 peer researchers collaborated to develop the instrumentation for the study. Following multiple iterations under the guidance of faculty members, the 15-member team generated definitions of the study variables, crafted the interview questions, conducted field testing of the interview questions, revised appropriately based on feedback received, and implemented the study instrumentation. Throughout the process, the team ensured the interview questions were based on the literature and aligned with the research questions and purpose of the study. Four Brandman University professors provided expert validation to the process of creating variable definitions, interview questions and protocols, and sample criteria.

### **Multimethod Strategies**

The accuracy and credibility of qualitative studies are of foremost importance given the subjective interpretation and analysis of data. To enhance credibility, qualitative research often involves the use of multiple data collection strategies, including interviews, observation, and review of artifacts. This strategy allows for triangulation or cross-validation of data from varied individuals, types of data, or methods of data collection (Creswell, 2012; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). This study used the in-depth interview as the primary data collection method, augmented with observation of

participants and review of artifacts such as communications between the major superior and the professed members, agendas, vision statements, newsletters, and calendars.

### **Participant Review**

Participant review is the practice where by following the transcription of interview records, the researcher requests the interviewee to review the accuracy of the information (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The review could be done in person or writing. The researcher transcribed the recorded data, and ensuring confidentiality, forwarded the document via e-mail to participants for review. Each participant was asked to review the transcript and modify any information for accuracy. The time limit was established for within a week of sending the e-mail. All transcripts were then analyzed and coded for themes.

### **Reliability**

Reliability in qualitative research “indicates that the researcher’s approach is consistent across different researchers and different projects” (Creswell, 2014, p. 201). Nevertheless, there has been an ongoing debate among researchers as to the value of reliability in qualitative studies. Quantitative researchers, using the same positivists’ framework to evaluate validity and reliability, are critical of the trustworthiness of qualitative research (Shenton, 2004). Similarly, some qualitative researchers argue the relevance of reliability in qualitative studies, which is either based on the purpose of the qualitative study (for example, to generate new understanding), or on the need to undergird internal validity. Still, others contend that qualitative researchers need to concern themselves with validity and reliability to justify study credibility and usefulness, and to establish trustworthiness (Golafshani, 2003; Noble & Smith, 2015; Patton, 2015).

Hence, qualitative scholars prefer to use the term *dependability* to refer to consistency across procedures and among scholars (Golafshani, 2003; Patton, 2015). Consequently, some of the steps to ensure reliability in qualitative studies include reflexivity, triangulation, and intercoder reliability.

### **Reflexibility**

Reflexibility is the process of rigorous self-examination regarding the personal and theoretical beliefs and assumptions the researcher brings to the research (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Reflexibility brings to forefront potential personal biases to the research and explains the lens through which the researcher interprets and analyzes data. Rather than constituting a limitation, reflexivity creates researcher awareness of the existence of such biases by making them explicit to him/herself and others through reflexive questions. Strategies to enhance reflexivity include keeping a reflexive journal, maintaining a field log, and engaging a peer debriefer who serves as a mirror and devil's advocate, offering alternative interpretations to those of the researcher (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Morrow, 2005; Nobel & Smith, 2015; Shenton, 2004). The researcher maintained a reflexive journal, where records of thoughts, ideas, the rationale for decisions and reactions were kept.

### **Internal Reliability**

Consistent with the validity of the study, internal reliability strives for consistency of methods and procedures across multiple researchers. The trust thematic team members collaborated to formulate the various aspects of the study. The team generated definitions of the study variables, crafted the interview questions, conducted field testing of the interview questions, revised appropriately based on feedback received, and used a

common interview protocol. One of the methods of data triangulation is the use of multiple researchers; hence, data triangulation among the peer researchers provided comprehensive result findings and shows the consistency of research methodology necessary for internal reliability.

### **Intercoder Reliability**

Intercoder reliability refers to the measurement of agreement between two or more coders on how they independently assign codes to the data (Kurasaki, 2000; Lombard, Synder-Duch, & Bracken, 2004). As an essential step in coding qualitative research data, intercoder reliability, seeks to reduce the limitation of the researcher as the instrument of the research. Also, it reduces researcher bias through ensuring that codes are not merely a result of personal mental model, idea, or opinion but are shared across coders (Burla et al., 2008; Lombard et al., 2004). To enhance research reliability, a peer researcher analyzed 10% of the coding from this study, with the standards of agreement set to 80% (Patton, 2015). Intercoder reliability is also a critical step toward valid and credible research. Although intercoder reliability makes for efficiency and improves comprehensibility, it does not guarantee validity. Nevertheless, its lack thereof signals to lack of validity of the research (Burla et al., 2008; Lombard et al., 2004). For this study, the trust thematic team members used the same study purpose, research questions, variables, operational definitions, and instrumentation, allowing for intercoder reliability and reliability of the study.

### **Data Collection**

The objective of data collection in a qualitative phenomenological study is to obtain information on a given phenomenon from the viewpoint of the participants.

Unlike quantitative research, which uses standardized instruments to support or refute a theory and establish correlation among variables, the qualitative research explores the meaning individuals ascribe to a social or human issue (Creswell, 2014). Hence, the researcher, in a qualitative study, as much as possible, seeks to obtain information directly from the participants. Data collection methods include interviews, observations, and review of artifacts (Creswell, 2014).

The principal data collection method in this study was in-depth qualitative interviews with the 10 major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes in Southern California. Observations were conducted where possible and artifacts collected for data triangulation. Data collection commenced following approval (see Appendix H) from Brandman University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) and completion of National Institutes of Health (NIH) certification for protection of human research participants (Appendix I). Participants were identified through membership at the LCWR and CMSWR, and from the office of the vicar for religious women in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles and invited through e-mail to participate in the study (Appendix J). To maintain confidentiality and privacy, interviews were recorded using password-protected micro voice recorder, and field notes taken during interviews and observations were stored in a locked drawer in the researcher's home.

### **Interview Process**

In preparation for the interview, the study participants each received three documents for their review: the definitions of the major study variables (Appendix E), the Brandman University Institutional Review Board (IRB) Research Participant's Bill of Rights (Appendix F), and the Informed Consent and Audio Recording Release (Appendix

G). Participants were requested to study the documents and check for understanding of the research purpose, individual rights, and study procedure.

The interview process began with the researcher's introduction and summary of the research purpose, and an invitation to complete the informed consent and consent for audio recording. Interviews commenced after participants had signed the documents. The researcher interviewed each participant for approximately 60 minutes, using the 10 semistructured and open-ended interview questions. Additional probing questions, also formulated collaboratively with peer researchers, were used to elicit further information, clarify responses, or elaborate on details where necessary. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), probes distinguish qualitative in-depth interviews rather than the formats of the questions.

All the interviews were conducted face-to-face, enabling establishing of rapport and capturing nonverbal communications. Using two password-protected micro voice recorders, one as a backup, the interviews were recorded to ensure a comprehensive and accurate record of participants' responses. Also, the researcher took notes, recording insights and nonverbal communications for data analysis. After each interview, the researcher transcribed the audio records and typed the notes, putting them together in a single draft. After all of the participants had been interviewed, audio recordings transcribed, and notes typed, the documents were reviewed and coded for qualitative themes. NVivo, a web-based software program, was used to code the data. The researcher uploaded the separate Word documents of the transcribed data into NVivo, wrote down the themes that had been previously identified, and reviewed the whole transcription document, copying and pasting phrases and sentences to appropriate themes.

## **Observations**

A distinguishing characteristic of a qualitative study is direct data collection effected in the participant's natural setting. Qualitative researchers operate under the assumption that phenomena are best understood in consideration to the context under which they occur (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Hence, understanding the meaning participants attribute to personal and lived experiences involves an analysis of the social, political, cultural, economic, and ideological factors, as well as other relevant factors in the participant's life and environment. Direct observations provide the researcher with firsthand information through hearing participants and seeing behaviors as they occur naturally. Such observations give a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study and fill the gaps in other data collection methods: interviews and review of artifacts. While observation is the preferred data collection method in ethnographic study, other qualitative research inquiries, such as phenomenology, use observations for comprehensiveness and data triangulation (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Patton, 2015).

In observations, the researcher could assume one of three roles: a participant observer, nonparticipant observer, or a partial observer. Participant observer, or a complete insider, plays a definite role in the research, engaging in the same activities as those under study. Conversely, the nonparticipant observer or complete outsider only collects information without engaging with participants in any form. The partial observer is a combination of both the complete insider and complete outsider, engaging with participants to some extent (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). In the current study, the researcher was, in some cases, a participant observer and in others, a partial observer,

engaging with the participants in some extent. Being a Catholic religious woman, the researcher gained access to participate in some activities, such as prayers and meals. The focus of the observation was to identify those trust-building behaviors exhibited during observation. In-depth review of the literature and understanding of the theoretical framework of the study provided a guide for the observation process. The five variables of the TVI trust model comprised the grid through which the participants were observed. Hence, attention focused on the participants' behaviors, which showed competence, consistency, candor, concern, and connection when interacting with professed members. The researcher took notes of the trust-building behaviors during observations and, immediately after each observation, wrote down a reflection on the process.

### **Artifacts**

Artifacts are written documents that permit access to the participant's language and words (Creswell, 2014). This data collection method had the advantage of allowing the researcher to work at a convenient time, providing well-developed ideas of the participant, and being economical with time and cost (Creswell, 2014). The researcher collected artifacts from participants and from the religious institute's website. Artifacts included samples of two-way communication between major superiors and the entire religious institute or individual members of the religious institute, presentations, agendas, minutes of meetings, vision statements, newsletters, and inspirational messages on various issues. Using the information obtained after reviewing the artifacts, data were coded and analyzed, and triangulation of data was conducted. The three data collection methods—interviews, observations, and review of artifacts—facilitated data



triangulation, establishing the validity and reliability of the study (Creswell, 2014; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Noble & Smith, 2015; Patton, 2015).

### **Data Analysis**

According to Patton (2015), “The challenge of qualitative analysis lies in making sense of massive amounts of data” (p. 521). One of the characteristics of qualitative inquiry is that it follows the process of inductive data analysis. In an inductive analysis, data are organized into categories and the relationships among them established, thus enabling sense-making of the data (Creswell, 2014; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Contrary to quantitative study, which seeks to generalize findings to the larger population, the qualitative study explores the meaning individuals ascribe to a social or human issue through a detailed description of a particular study (Creswell, 2014). Accordingly, preparation for analysis begins with an inventory of the data collected, systematic data coding, identifying and categorizing themes or patterns, and interpreting the data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Patton, 2015).

The transcripts of the in-depth interview using 10 semistructured and open-ended questions with 10 major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes, the notes that were taken during interviews and observations, and data from the review of artifacts produced massive amounts of data. Analyzing such massive amount of data may seem daunting at first, but the use of guidelines makes the data manageable for analysis. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) list five guidelines for commencing qualitative data analysis:

1. The research question and foreshadowed problems or sub questions;
2. The research instrument, in this case, the standardized open-ended interview questions;
3. Themes, concepts, and categories used by other researchers;
4. Prior knowledge of the researcher or personal experience;
5. The data themselves. (p. 369)

Analysis of qualitative data is an ongoing process taking place during data collection and after data collection (Creswell, 2014; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Ideas of possible themes started forming in the researcher's mind during the interview process, observations, and review of artifacts. At the end of data collection, data were organized through appropriately transcribing all audio-recorded interviews and notes taken during interviews, observations, and review of artifacts. The researcher created separate Word documents for interviews, observations, and review of artifacts, organized in a folder dedicated to data collection. Subsequently, the transcribed data were coded using NVivo software. Based on the researcher's familiarity with the data, initial themes were identified and codes assigned to emerging themes and patterns. In this study, the researcher coded for common themes based on the five C's of trust model: competence, consistency, candor, concern, and connection. After reviewing codes and eliminating redundant codes, an analysis and interpretation of the findings was conducted based on the frequency count of each code. The researcher established a priori, a minimum frequency count of 10 for a theme to be included in the study. Themes with less than 10 frequency counts were excluded from the study.

## **Limitations**

No research is without limitations. While the objective of every researcher is to minimize, and if possible, eliminate study limitations, there are always some limitations. Though the study limitations may not signal weakness or lack of validity, they may influence the ability to make generalizations (Patton, 2015). Besides, the qualitative phenomenological study does not seek to generalize results to a population; instead, it seeks to understand the meaning participants attribute to a particular phenomenon (Patton, 2015). The limitations of this study comprise the researcher as the instrument of study, sample size, participants' location, and time.

### **Researcher as Study Instrument**

Qualitative research is interpretative; hence the expertise, competence, and interpersonal skills of the researcher impact the outcome of the research (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). To reduce the impact of this limitation, the researcher conducted a pilot interview monitored by an expert with a doctorate and experience in conducting qualitative research. The exercise provided the researcher with the opportunity to practice the interview process, receive feedback, and improve on interview skills. Also, the researcher maintained a reflexive journal throughout the data collection process as well as checked in with peer researchers for accuracy. Self-reflective journals kept the researcher aware of possible biases and the environment of the study—the participants, the study site, and the self (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Patton, 2015).

### **Sample Size**

Sample size in qualitative research is dependent upon factors such as the purpose of the study, the primary data collection strategy, and the availability of participants

(McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). While there are only guidelines for sample size in a qualitative study, with size ranging from 1 to 40, obtaining in-depth and rich information determines the appropriateness of the sample size (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The sample size for this qualitative phenomenological study was limited to 10 major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes. Though a more substantial number may have been preferable, the researcher believed that redundancy of data might occur after 10 in-depth interviews (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Moreover, other peer researchers, using the same methodology and instrumentation, interviewed a total of 150 study participants, increasing the overall sample size.

### **Study Participant Location**

There are about 1,470 Catholic women religious institutes in the United States. California accounts for about 5% of the religious institutes, with the institutes distributed somewhat evenly between the Northern and Southern California. For practicality, the researcher narrowed the research to Southern California, to permit face-to-face interviews and observations, as well as limit travel expenses. Limiting the research only to Southern California narrowed the possibility of including other qualified participants in the study.

### **Time**

Phenomenological study uses in-depth interview to collect data. Such in-depth interview requires extended interview and interaction with the study participants to obtain rich information (Creswell, 2014; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The schedule of the major superiors could not permit extended time for interviews. Nonetheless, for the current study, each interview was scheduled for 60 minutes. The duration of 60 minutes limited deep reflection and in-depth information from participants on the 10 interview

questions. However, to mitigate this limitation, the researcher sent the transcribed copy of the interviews to the participants, providing them opportunity for further reflection. In addition, the researcher used triangulation of data obtained from observations and review of artifacts to mitigate the impact of this limitation.

### **Summary**

This study used the methodology in line with the qualitative phenomenological study to collect data. Focusing on the perspectives of major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes, the study used interviews, observations, and review of artifacts to obtain rich information on how this particular sample population builds trust with their professed members. The methodology was aligned with the purpose statement, research questions, research design, sampling method, and the instrumentation. The chapter noted the validity and reliability of the study as well as study limitations. Chapter IV reports the study findings and analyses. Chapter V presents a summary of findings, conclusions, implications for action, and recommendations for future research.

## CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH, DATA COLLECTION, AND FINDINGS

This qualitative phenomenological study utilized The Values Institute's (TVI) five C's of trust model, namely, competence, consistency, candor, concern, and connection to determine trust-building strategies that major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes use with the professed members of their religious institutes (Weisman, 2010, 2016). The chapter recapitulates the purpose of the study, research questions, population and study samples, and data collection methods used for the current research. The chapter also presents in detail the data analysis organized in emergent themes from the research and a summary of the study's key findings.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore how major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes build trust with professed members, using the five domains of competence, consistency, candor, concern, and connection.

### **Research Questions**

The study has one overarching central question and five subquestions. The central question focuses on determining trust-building strategies using the theoretical framework of the five C's of trust model. The five subquestions align with each of the five elements of the five C's of trust model.

### **Central Research Question**

How do major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes build trust with professed members using the five domains of competence, consistency, candor, concern, and connection?

## **Subquestions**

1. How do major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes build trust with professed members using competence?
2. How do major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes build trust with professed members using consistency?
3. How do major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes build trust with professed members using candor?
4. How do major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes build trust with professed members using concern?
5. How do major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes build trust with professed members using connection?

## **Research Methods and Data Collection Procedures**

The current study employed qualitative phenomenological research inquiry to explore how a particular group of participants—the major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes—build trust with the professed members. Using in-depth qualitative interviews, observations in a natural setting, and review of artifacts, the researcher explored the trust-building strategies of the study participants. The researcher conducted 10 in-depth interviews of major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes in Southern California who have reputations of trusting relationships with their members.

The bulk of the data stems from the 10 qualitative and in-depth interviews conducted with the study participants. All 10 interviews were conducted face-to-face and lasted between 70 and 105 minutes, with an average of 75 minutes in length. Nine out of the 10 interviews were conducted in the participant's home (convent) and one in an office

outside of the participant's home. Two portable digital audio-recording devices were used to capture the discussions during the interviews, in addition to the reflective notes taken by the researcher. All of the participants responded to the same 10 semistructured, open-ended interview questions (Appendix B) developed in collaboration with the trust thematic team under the guidance of four faculty members.

The questions centered on the five variables of TVI five C's trust model: competence, consistency, candor, concern, and connection. Each variable has two interview questions, with at least one probing question, to elicit further responses as needed. To ensure reliability, the researcher followed the interview protocol (Appendix D) throughout the interviews. After the interviews, the responses were transcribed and e-mailed back to the participants for review. A time limit of 1 week from the date of sending out the interview transcript was indicated for a response from the participants.

A total of nine observations were conducted, and each of them took place on the day of the interview. Participants were observed in various activities performed together with the professed members of their religious communities. Activities included the Holy Mass, community prayers, meals, ad hoc meetings, and interactions around the premises and in the ministries. Observations lasted between 2 hours and an entire day. The researcher took note of the interactions and observations, transcribing the notes immediately after each observation. The ensuing field notes from the observations added to the richness as well as validated the data obtained from the interviews. They also contributed to a better understanding of the trust-building strategies used by the major superiors in this study.



Artifacts were obtained from the participants on the day of the interview, before the interview, or after the interviews. Artifacts ranged from meeting notes, agendas, regular and special messages, inspirational messages, personal communications, vision and mission statements, chapter statements, and publications. A total of 99 artifacts were collected and 84 were used in the coding and data analysis. The 15 artifacts not used, though an indication of communication from the participants, contained neither direct nor indirect information about any of the five trust-building components used in the study.

### **Population**

The population of the present study was the 1,470 major superiors of Catholic Women religious institutes in the United States (Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious [CMSWR] and the Leadership Conference of Women Religious [LCWR]). These major superiors belonged to various institutes of consecrated life and shared the same responsibility as the highest leadership authority in their organization, a position ranked as high as the chief executive officer in secular organizations. This population was further narrowed down to the target population comprising 40 major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes in Southern California (*The Official Catholic Directory*, 2010).

### **Sample**

This study used a purposeful sampling method, focusing on key informants and convenience sampling strategies. From the target population, 10 major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes in Southern California were selected for the study. All 10 major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes in Southern California met the following criteria:

- Reputation of trusting relationship with members,
- a minimum of 2 years of experience (current or retired within the last year) leading a successful organization,
- recommendation by their peers, and
- membership in associations within their field like CMSWR or LCWR.

Prospective participants were recommended by the leader of the Region XIV of the LCWR, for those belonging to the conference who resided in Southern California, and by the vicar for women religious of the Catholic Archdiocese of Los Angeles for the entire major superiors residing within the archdiocese. Further screening eliminated those who did not meet the study criterion of a minimum of 2 years of experience. Ten of the major superiors who met all of the study criteria, and were invited and accepted to participate in the study, formed the study sample for the current study.

Sample size in qualitative research is dependent on factors such as the purpose of the study, the focus of the study, data collection strategy, and availability of informants, time, and resources (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Patton, 2015). Typically, qualitative research design uses few participants for studies, focusing on obtaining rich data from the perspective of the participants (Creswell, 2012; Patton, 2015). As a result, 10 participants were considered an appropriate sample size for the present study. The guiding principle is to choose participants who are knowledgeable and have enough information about the phenomenon being explored (Patton, 2015). Altogether, the researcher conducted 11 interviews. One interviewee was unable to complete the triangulation process with observation and artifacts and therefore was eliminated from the final sample, leaving the 10 participants originally targeted for the study.

This study forms part of a larger thematic study comprising 15 researchers and a total of 150 participants. Nonetheless, analysis of the data in this chapter is circumscribed only to the data collected by the current researcher. Although the current study with its sample size is deemed adequate in obtaining rich and detailed information relevant to the purpose of the study, the other 14 peer researchers each also interviewed 10 leaders with reputations of having trusting relationships with stakeholders, extending the generalizability of the study.

### **Demographic Data**

To guarantee confidentiality, data were reported without reference to any individual or institution. Hence, the participants were each assigned a number and identifying demographic data such as the participant’s age, and the numbers of professed members in the religious institute were presented in a range format. Participants’ demographic data are described in Table 4, and qualifying criteria for inclusion in the study are summarized in Table 5.

Table 4

*Demographics for Study Participants*

Participant #	Years in leadership	Years in religious life	Number of professed members	Age range
1	8	51	10-49	61-70
2	9	27	50-99	41-50
3	12	34	10-49	51-60
4	6	28	100-149	51-60
5	4	23	50-99	51-60
6	12	60	50-99	71-80
7	2	62	10-49	71-80
8	10	51	10-49	71-80
9	4	46	300-349	61-70
10	8	49	10-49	61-70

Table 5

*Study Criteria*

Participant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Reputation of trusting relationship with members	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
A minimum of 2 years of experience (current or retired within the last year) leading a successful organization	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Recommendation by their peers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Membership in associations within their field like CMSWR or LCWR	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

**Presentation and Analysis of the Data**

This section provides a detailed presentation and analysis of the obtained data relevant to this study. An analysis was conducted on the information obtained from the lived experiences, perceptions, and thoughts of the 10 major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes in Southern California using in-depth interviews, observations, and a review of artifacts. The study findings are presented in alignment with TVI’s five C’s of trust model—competence, consistency, candor, concern, and connection—on which the central research question and five subquestions of the study are based.

**Data Analysis**

According to Patton (2015), “The challenge of qualitative analysis lies in making sense of massive amounts of data” (p. 521). One of the characteristics of qualitative inquiry is that it follows the process of inductive data analysis. In an inductive analysis, data are organized into categories and the relationships among them established, thus enabling one to make sense of the data (Creswell, 2014; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

The researcher uploaded into NVivo software the 10 interview transcripts, the field notes from the observations, and the artifacts obtained. Data were coded using the NVivo software. The interview transcripts were the major source of identifying the emerging themes; the observations and artifacts added to the frequency of the themes and enabled a better understanding of the trust-building strategies used by the participants. Based on the researcher's familiarity with the data, initial themes were identified and codes assigned to emerging themes and patterns. In this study, the researcher coded for common themes based on the five C's of trust model: competence, consistency, candor, concern, and connection. After reviewing codes and eliminating redundant codes, an analysis and interpretation of the findings were conducted based on the frequency count of each code.

### **Validity**

In qualitative research, validity (preferably referred to as credibility) is the extent to which the explanations of the phenomena are congruent to external world realities, and the degree to which "interpretations have mutual meanings between the participants and the researcher" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 330). Validity was enhanced in this qualitative phenomenological study through the use of several strategies. These included multiple researchers, participant language and verbatim accounts, mechanically recorded data, multimethod strategies, and participants' review of their transcribed interviews (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Data triangulation from the multimethod strategies increased the validity of the study's findings.

## **Reliability and Intercoder Reliability**

To ensure consistency “across different researchers and different projects” (Creswell, 2014, p. 201), the researcher used the interview protocol developed for the study. Each participant in this study was asked the same questions, and the researcher read most of the questions to maintain consistency across each interview and among researchers. To enhance research reliability, a peer researcher analyzed 10% of the coding from this study, in this case, one of the 10 interviews, with the standards of agreement set to 80% (Patton, 2015). Twenty-five of the 26 themes within that transcript were coded consistently. The coded themes represent 96% agreement with the researcher, thereby establishing intercoder reliability.

## **Research Question and Subquestions Results**

This study sought to answer one central research question, which was, “How do major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes build trust with professed members using the five domains of competence, consistency, candor, concern, and connection?” The central question was further broken down to subquestions using each of the five domains of the five C’s of the trust model. For each of the five elements, two questions were developed for a total of 10 interview questions, with at least one additional probing question to be used as needed (Appendix B). The following were the subquestions:

1. How do major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes build trust with professed members using competence?
2. How do major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes build trust with professed members using consistency?

3. How do major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes build trust with professed members using candor?
4. How do major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes build trust with professed members using concern?
5. How do major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes build trust with professed members using connection?

A comprehensive analysis of the data collected from the 10 interviews, nine observations, and 84 artifacts yielded a total of 26 themes and 921 frequencies. The themes and frequencies were unequally distributed among the five study variables of the five C's of trust: competence, consistency, candor, concern, and connection. Figure 2 shows the distribution of the themes among the five variables and Figure 3 illustrates the frequency count for each variable.

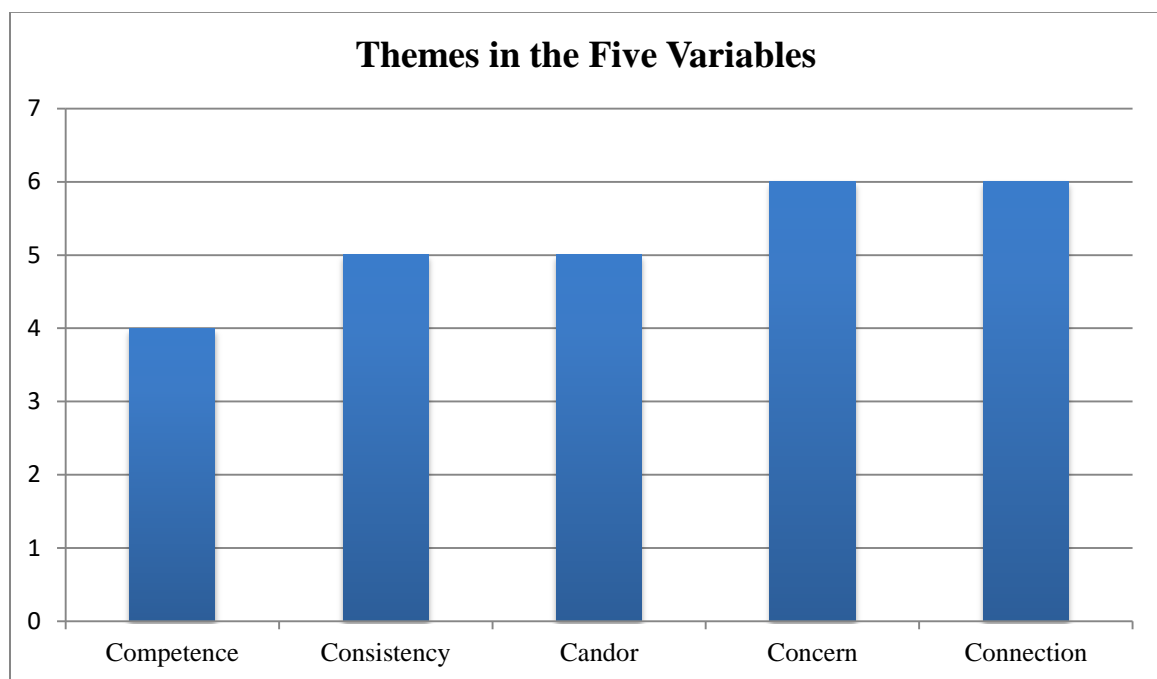


Figure 2. Number of themes in each variable.

While concern and connection variables had six themes each, consistency and candor each had five themes, and competence had a total of four themes. The researcher established, a priori, a minimum frequency count of 10 for a theme to be included in the study. Hence, themes with less than 10 frequency counts were excluded from the study.

The frequency counts for the themes organized according to the five variables are summarized by percentages in Figure 3:

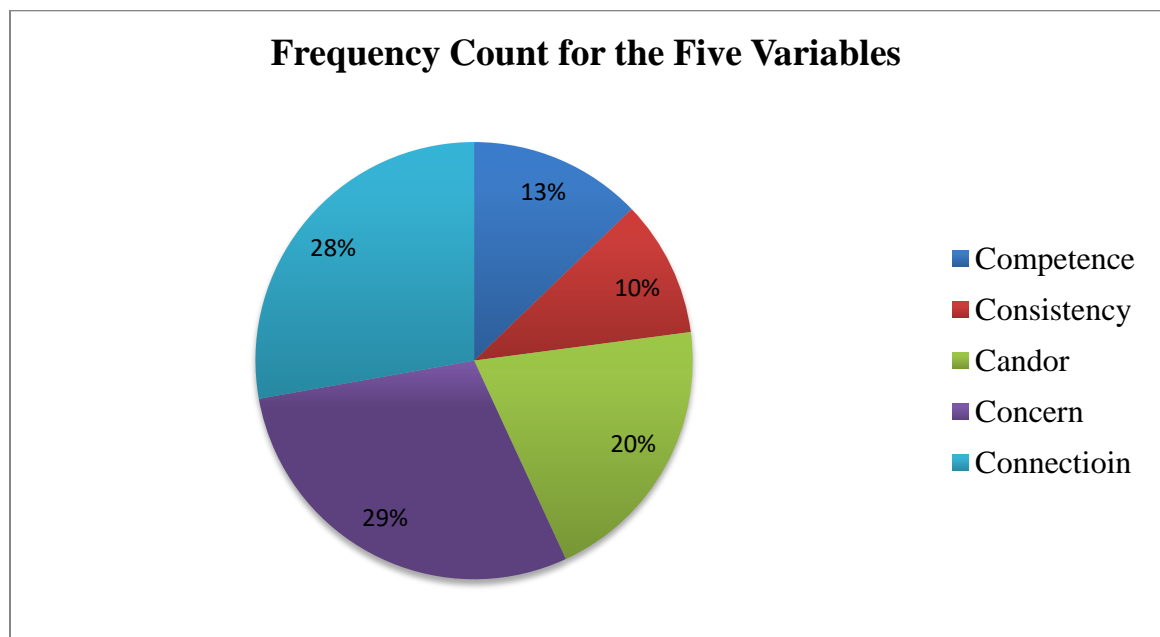


Figure 3. Frequency count for coded themes in each variable.

Concern emerged with the highest number of frequencies with 268 counts (29%). Connection followed with 256 frequency counts (28%); candor had 186 frequency counts (20%); competence had 13% with 118 frequency counts; and consistency had 10% with 93 frequency counts. As could be noted, concern and connection emerged with more than half of the entire frequency counts of the coded themes. The next section provides a detailed analysis of the data, arranged according to the variable, with the highest number of frequencies to the one with the lowest number of frequencies.



## Concern

Concern was defined in the current study as the value placed on the well-being of all members of an organization, promoting their welfare at work and empathizing with their needs. Concern entails fostering a collaborative and safe environment where leaders and members can show their vulnerability, support, motivation, and care for each other (Anderson & Ackerman Anderson, 2010; S. M. R. Covey, 2006; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Livnat, 2004; Weisman, 2016). Six themes emerged from the data coding process of the interviews, observation field notes, and artifacts. These themes were referenced 268 times by the study participants and have a total of 29% of the coded data. Table 6 summarizes the themes for the element of concern as related to trust-building strategies used by the major superiors.

Table 6

### *Concern Themes*

Themes	Participants	Interview sources	Observation sources	Artifact sources	Total sources	Frequency
Expressing care and love	10	10	7	4	21	72
Being sensitive to the needs of others	10	10	8	6	24	66
Inviting participation and including others	10	10	4	4	18	53
Visiting and spending time to get to know members	9	9	0	2	11	37
Treating others with respect and consideration	10	9	4	0	13	24
Acknowledging mistakes and showing vulnerability	5	5	1	2	8	13

**Expressing care and love.** This theme was referenced directly by all the participants during the interviews and had 72 frequency counts. According to Weisman

(2016), concern deals with the genuine care and love shown to others and is expressed through interactions, not directly related to business or tasks, but serving to create the bond needed in the organization. For the major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes (henceforth, the major superiors), expressing care and love is inherent in their leadership responsibilities. Given that major superiors are responsible for both the professional and personal lives of their professed members, they are called to embrace a holistic outlook in their leadership roles and responsibilities. Showing care and love was expressed as doing little acts of kindness for the members and expressing care and love verbally. A participant expressed how she showed care and love to a professed member (sister) who moved to a new location:

We have a sister who's now at [name of location], and she just moved there this year in August and in September I've been gone, and I just was wondering how it was going for her. So I just wrote her a little note and said, "Thinking about you and how's it going?"

Another participant responded that she expresses love and care by checking up on her sisters. In a particular instance, a sister had been away for a while from the religious community to take care of her mom; the major superior said, "I call her on special occasions, such as her birthday, Christmas, anniversary. I also call the closest community to invite her and encourage her to attend retreats with them, and we send money for these things." Another participant narrated, "Usually when a sister comes home after a period of time, we put out a welcome sign and fresh flowers at her place in the refectory and fresh flowers and welcome sign in her place in her cell (room)." Hence,

expressing care and love forms part of the big and small acts performed by the superiors for the well-being of the professed members. A participant indicated,

We do not have sufficient financial resources, but whatever we have is for the well-being of the sisters. It could be spiritual need, material need, psychological need. We try to bring the best that we can to the sisters so that they feel secure, happy; that is permissible in their religious life.

Showing care and love is so much a part of the life of the major superiors that one stated, "Showing concern is easy. I know some things you have to work out, but showing concern is very easy because our women are so good." During observation, this particular participant had with her a gift bag with a present for one of the sisters whose birthday was sometime within the week. She presented the gift to the sister, and there was a clear expression of mutual care and love. In another instance, a review of the minutes of meetings showed that at the beginning of each meeting, members were invited to "speak to their life and well-being." This invitation to sharing involves personal notices of members and what is happening in their lives and any concerns they may have at the time. One participant simply stated, "I actually love all the sisters, even if there's some of them that, now, they'll do things that I don't like, I still love them tremendously."

At the same time, expressing care and love could entail tough love, where difficult decisions are made for the well-being of the individual. One participant noted, "Sometimes, as a leader, I'm called on to do difficult things. For instance, telling someone they have to give up their car keys, and they can't drive anymore, things of that sort. And I hate having to do that, you know? I just find it so hard,

because I know that it's really giving up a part of their independence and that they won't be as free as they were before, to go wherever they want to, or whatever.

It's one of the things that I don't like doing, but I would do it out of love, anyway.

**Being sensitive to the needs of others.** This theme was referenced 66 times and was evidenced in the three data collection methods: interviews, observations, and artifacts. All 10 participants narrated how they modeled being sensitive to others' needs during the interviews. Leaders build trust with stakeholders when they care for their needs and interests, protecting their interests, and not exploiting others for personal benefits (Whitener et al., 1998). Mayer et al. (1995) argued that in benevolent trustworthiness, the trustee acts in manners congruent with the needs and desires of the trustor. Hence, not only is the leader performing benevolent acts, but the actions are congruent with the needs and desires of the stakeholders. Participants frequently mentioned the attention taken to ensure that their actions were congruent with the needs and preferences of the members. For example, one of the major superiors explained:

For me, what's most important for sisters regarding ministry is *what is life-giving?* For too long, in many religious congregations, it was *there was a hole; you need to fill it, whether or not you're competent*— maybe not. So those days hopefully are over. So we say to the sister, “What's life-giving?” She said, “Well, I need to earn a salary.” I said, “What's life-giving? We'll figure it out.” I said, “Okay I'm not reckless with our resources but if something is life-giving for you but it's not compensated, it's the mission of Jesus. God will take care of us.” So right now, I think we have seven sisters in uncompensated ministries.

Needs of the sisters were framed as physical, psychological, emotional, or spiritual. Another major superior mentioned that she makes an effort to provide what the sisters need, especially the elderly ones:

Well, here at the motherhouse, I think I pay a lot of attention to the elderly sisters. And I know that being more elderly, they sometimes feel lonely and all that, it's normal. So, when I go to meetings or when I make a trip down to [name of place], I always buy them something, something to eat, that they like—The Vietnamese food 'cause they have a lot of Vietnamese food there. And I will bring it home, and I hear sisters say, "Oh, she's so thinking of us, so thoughtful."

Another major superior narrated how she was sensitive to the emotional and psychological needs of a member of the community who had been away for so long from the community taking care of her sick parent:

When her mom passed away, I told her to take the time to rest and grieve, and to reflect on how she feels about returning to the province, after 13 years of absence. So, I decided to ask her to go for a mini-sabbatical for four months to enable her get the help she needs, with the grieving process. And she was very grateful because she said that I was always there with her, that she never felt disconnected from the community, because I always took the initiative. And now she is in the province, in transition of course; but I think she is happy.

**Inviting participation and including others.** The theme of inviting participation and including others was referenced 53 times by all 10 participants and appeared in 18 sources. Employees have a sense of care and well-being when they participate and are included in projects and discussions. Specifically, Joseph and Winston (2005) identified

the early involvement of employees as one of the servant leader behaviors that engender trust. One of the artifacts revealed the participant's plan to involve the sisters in the letter sent to the members in the region: "In order to ensure maximum involvement in shaping our future, we plan to share all responses to questions and reflections with all the members of the region."

Not only does involving others build trust, but it also fosters engagement and commitment, creating a collaborative work environment. For example, a participant shared:

And then to include the sisters. Process always takes more time than just doing it yourself or having something come down from on high. It always takes more time, but that's where the buy-in comes. And that's why it took us a year to really figure out what we wanted to do with this facility assessment.

Most of the participants shared that they invite participation and involve the members through different committees. Others solicit for participation by reaching out to individual sisters or group of sisters. For example, one participant shared that to get the sisters involved, she delegates responsibilities. She commented,

Because the sisters, most of the time, have better ideas than I. To delegate. I think I am a person who delegates a lot. For example, we have provincial chapter and we had to make a project, and I form committee with one of the leadership team serving in the committee as a link, to serve on the project, to evaluate and report everything that is done in the general chapter or provincial chapter. So, to provide information and involve the sisters.

Another major superior simply asserted, “Involving everybody was the key to building trust.” Therefore, the important thing here for the major superiors was helping sisters feel included, that “things are not happening to them,” as noted by one participant.

**Visiting and spending time to get to know members on a personal level.** This theme was referenced 37 times by nine participants and appeared in 11 sources.

Spending time with employees is a part of interaction, not directly related to business but which creates bonds within the organization. The major superiors do this by just visiting sisters to know how they are doing, to show care and love, and to get to know them. One participant said, “So by really sitting down with people, that was a value of visitations, like you would meet with each sister individually, so you got to know what their expertise was, otherwise you wouldn’t know.” Another participant shared that she just visits with sisters and sits down to listen to them, “particularly with the elderly sisters, just going to visit them, sitting down, taking time to listen to them to hear what they’re doing, what their life is like now.” Another major superior shared that she makes time to visit communities to spend time with sisters and also invite members who wish to meet with her privately:

When I go to visit the houses, I say, “Sisters if any of you would like to talk to me privately, just let me know; we can meet each other separate from the community.” Or they come here, they call me or send me emails or messages: “Sister, I want to talk to you about this, do you have time?” “Oh yes, I have time! If you want me to go or you’re coming.” And because we are very local, most of the time, I go.

Another remarkable finding was that sometimes members ask for the leader to visit them and spend time with them so they can share more personal things with them. Such requests are generally based on previous experiences of the leader taking time to visit with the sister. For example, one participant shared,

She has asked me to spend a little time with her. She wanted to tell me some more personal things. But I've also gone out of my way to spend more time with her than anyone else in this building because I believe she needs some support to keep that going. She's getting a lot of support from the whole group. That took a while to build.

**Treating others with respect and consideration.** This theme was referenced 24 times in 13 different sources by all of the major superiors. Going even further than inviting participation and including others is doing so with respect and consideration for the stakeholder. The major superiors recognized the importance of treating others with respect and showing consideration in building trust. Respect and consideration were framed both as showing professional respect and personal or interrelational respect and consideration. One participant expressed,

By trusting them, respecting them. If I delegate something, I respect the person, knowing that she can take care of it. For example, if I delegate a team member to take care of a community, and the sisters in the community call me to say one thing or the other, I tell them, "Thank you for telling me," because they can tell me whatever. However, I ask them whether they informed the sister in charge of the community. And if they said yes, that they informed her, but she didn't do anything, I will promise them to talk with the sister, and the sister will get back to



them. I do not like to micromanage. I delegate something and I trust that it will be done. I like to make the person understand that I trust her and that is why I gave her the responsibility, and I will respect that.

Another participant highlighted the aspect of personal respect and consideration shown to the members of the community:

A sister called me the other day, and she needs new hearing aids. She is just this holiest sweetest woman and, I could almost cry, she just was so nervous and felt so guilty because those hearing aids cost so much. And I said, “Sister, you are a treasure to us. You are worth every cent that those hearing aids are gonna cost. Plus, God needs you to hear so that when you go visit the shut-in people, you can hear them. Please don’t even think about that.”

**Acknowledging mistakes and showing vulnerability.** Acknowledging mistakes and showing vulnerability was referenced 13 times in eight sources and by five participants. The major superiors consider this behavior important in building trust because it shows their authenticity. While organizations aim at efficiency and effectiveness, it may be difficult, if not discouraging, to measure up to leaders who never make mistakes. Thus, leaders’ acknowledgment of personal mistakes and showing vulnerability make them relatable and authentic. Accordingly, one of the major superiors stated that it was okay to show vulnerability “because they [the sisters] already know you’re not perfect. So if you have to admit something or you have to say something, it’s ok.”

Regarding acknowledging mistakes and showing vulnerability, one participant specified, “but you cannot not say it’s a failure, you got to say it. You have to say it

didn't work out. You cannot hide it." Another participant reiterated the importance of acknowledging mistakes:

I know that I myself make mistakes, I fail and so you know, it's okay. And I think one important thing is, when we fail, we just have to acknowledge it, and not hide it or eh . . . not deny it, not excuse ourselves. Just accept it, as something that we can learn from.

Focusing on showing vulnerability and its significance in building trust, a participant recounted how she admitted to not knowing the answer to a particular issue when she visited a group of sisters:

And I stood up there and I said, "I need to be honest: I don't know. . . . So give me your ideas and then when I go back I can talk to my finance office about it, and we can figure this out." I kind of feel everybody relaxing.

The same participant shared how she put another sister at ease by admitting a mistake:

And I had to say that to the sister this morning that I didn't sign her travel board request because I didn't know I was supposed to. And immediately she was kind of anxious. I put her at ease when I said, "I'll call the travel board and tell them it was my mistake and it'll be fine." So the honesty and the vulnerability seem to be what puts people at ease, and then a little humor too in the appropriate situation.

This theme also emerged during observations when two of the participants had to apologize for their lack of proficiency in the English language. One participant had a member of the leadership team on standby in case of any need for translation or clarification. In one of the artifacts, the leadership team sent a letter apologizing to the

sisters for a mistake in one of the pieces of information that went out, “We apologize and hope that you understand that mistakes can happen.”

### **Connection**

The peer researchers defined connection as a shared link or bond where there is a sense of emotional engagement and interrelatedness (Sloan & Oliver, 2013; Stovall & Baker, 2010; White et al., 2016). Connection is the culmination of all the other trust components; it necessitates a deep level of relationship between leaders and followers (Weisman, 2016). Six themes emerged from the data coding process of the interviews, observation field notes, and artifacts. Closely trolling the concern variable, these themes were referenced 256 times by the major superiors and accounted for 28% of the coded data. Table 7 displays the themes for the element of connection as related to trust-building strategies used by the major superiors.

Table 7

#### *Connection Themes*

Themes	Participants	Interview sources	Observation sources	Artifact sources	Total sources	Frequency
Establishing and maintaining relationships	10	10	2	6	19	67
Sharing the values of the religious institute	10	10	4	5	20	59
Listening with an open mind and heart	9	9	2	3	14	40
Involving others in shared decision making	10	10	2	6	18	36
Making others feel important and valued	8	8	2	2	12	29
Being open and honest	7	7	3	2	12	25

**Establishing and maintaining relationships.** All of the participants referenced the theme of establishing and maintaining relationships 67 times in 19 sources. At 67 frequency counts, this theme received the second highest number of frequency counts in the entire data analysis. It is not surprising that this theme of relationship received the highest frequency count in the connection domain given that connection is conceptualized as relationships—that deep level of relationship existing between leaders and followers (Weisman, 2016). In one of the artifacts, a participant exhorted the members of her religious community on the necessity of building trust through character on which lies the foundation of relationships. She wrote, “Authentic collaboration is built through relationships. Relationships are built on trust. Trust is built on character. Not other people’s character . . . MY character.”

Similarly, artifacts from three other participants revealed the vision statement—either the religious institute’s or the leadership team’s vision statement—to be focused on relationships. A participant stated, “Our model being the Trinity, we strive to be catalysts of loving relationships that lead to transformation in this congregation of the great love of God.” Yet another stated, “Our strength is in each other as we affirm gifts, share leadership and cherish connections. We deepen our relationships and shared sense of community life.”

Establishing and maintaining relationships was considered so important in building connection that it was equated to connection. Relationship or connection extends, likewise, to other stakeholders. One participant observed,

Relationships are really important and if the sisters or the constituents or whoever it is, know that you are for them and with them and one of them, that’s a

tremendous asset for leadership. And I think, you know, if you look on my wall, my image of Jesus is the foot washer, that the ministry of leadership, I believe, is to bend low and to wash feet for my sister. So obviously you have to be connected. I just think that that's connection—I would say probably relationships would be the word I would use. And then, there are also relationships with our co-workers, our employees.

In order to build relationships, the major superiors engage in various behaviors and activities, ranging from visiting the sisters and inquiring about them, to spending time together away from the regular demands and responsibilities of life. All the participants referenced having a get-together for the members, just for the sake of building relationship and communion. For example, one participant noted,

Since uh . . . probably the year 2000, there have been more and more of a verbalization that there was a desire to go deeper in relationships. And so one of the things we do is we have a monthly Bethany day. This is an opportunity for us to just be together as sisters outside of the apostolate. We might go to the mountains; we might go to the ocean; we might spend the day at home. But we do something together as sisters to build community; that we can be connected in relationships and build rapport with one another.

Another participant recounted how she intentionally finds ways to establish and maintain relationships with the sisters:

So, what I did was in 2014, when I was elected, I began by visiting the convents, to gain personal interaction with all of them. You know, getting to know them more on a personal level, although before I knew them, the ones I lived with, in

different communities. But this was a little different; this was a different role that I would be playing.

The same participant also revealed the following:

I also organized days to just come and have fun . . . watching movies, playing games, table games or outdoor games. And so I do special celebrations in our communities, like Saint Francis day, different celebrations or opportunities just to be together and to get to know each other, and meet among ourselves. Because, it's always the work, the apostolate, studying, and we need some time, that's the time we need to build these positive relationships and to bring out the values and talents and the gifts of each sister.

One religious institute took it further by making building relationships the focus of their shared value and ministry goal: "I would say the primary shared value that we're working on is relationship. It's what the sisters asked for in the selection process when they gave their input into what they want in leadership. They want relationship."

Two observations showed evidence of establishing and maintaining relationships. In one instance, a major superior invited a member of the community to join us for coffee after the interview. In another instance, a major superior brought a birthday gift for a sister. One major superior spent the time to watch TV with some sisters after supper and shared during the interview that she does such things to stay connected with the sisters and to build relationship: "It's just how we relate. Watching television last night with sister [name] was that. So I think that's what I'd say about connection."

**Sharing the values of the religious institute.** This theme was referenced 59 times in 20 sources, by all of the participants. Shared values form part of the mission and

vision of the organization, which define how the organization carries out its business. At the organizational level, individuals develop a personal connection with management and coworkers based on perceived value congruence (Shockley-Zalabak et al., 2010). Among the major superiors, shared values are so much a part of the life and mission of the sisters that it is difficult to think of not having them. One participant stated, “Our values are just so much a part of us. And I think you could go to any of our houses and say, ‘Tell me a little about what family spirit means to you?’ They would be able to tell you.” All the participants frequently referenced shared values emanating from the religious institutes’ charism and spirit, and also from the congregational vision and mission statements. For example, one participant shared how the sisters came up with their shared values:

We do have some shared values that are part of our own charism. So, in pursuing those, it’s one of the ways that we always develop the values and work towards that type of a value. . . . Our general chapters, of course, promote certain values. And among them is the empowerment of women, as [laughs], before we began this, we talked about how so often we have girls in high schools, and just [laughs], you know, across the world.

Another participant related how she promotes shared values based on the charism of the religious institute:

In the community, the value that I share with the sisters from the charism of our congregation is to go out to encounter others; not to wait, expecting that they come to you. You have to go to others and see what is going on.

Showing the inextricable import of sharing values, one major superior declared,

Without shared values, there is no foundation upon which to build communion. If you don't have shared values, you're constantly going to be in conflict over the principles which guide your whole life. So shared values, I see, and I think I would say we see, shared values as an extremely important part of the foundation of building trust.

Artifacts provided evidence of shared values through the mission and vision statements of the religious institutes, usually placed at strategic places in the house, in the institute's website, and the communications to the members in the form of reminders or a follow-up on initiatives. Furthermore, the researcher observed a community celebrating two of its members to honor their feast day, in line with its shared value of celebration.

**Listening with an open mind and heart.** The theme of listening with an open mind and heart was referenced 40 times in 14 sources, by nine out of the 10 participants. According to Blanchard et al. (2013), connectedness, among other things, comprises sharing of information, listening to the other person, and showing interest in the other. The major superiors frequently referenced listening without judgment, listening to understand, and listening to be able to provide better support. One participant expressed, "The principal value of connection for me is to accompany the sisters in the way that I listen to them in their needs, to sit for many hours with each sister during the year, because I am visiting communities." Another participant believes that listening enhances a sister's trust in her: "It's like I give her trust, just by listening, asking questions in order to understand better."

Listening with an open mind and heart was also framed as listening to understand the root cause of issues:



And yet as I listened to her, it helped me to kind of get underneath what the resistance was. And a lot of times I find that when you do that, the resistance isn't what . . . is external. It's something deeper that is blocking people from moving with some kind of a decision or whatever.

Another participant shared how she was able to get buy-in from a member on a delicate issue as a result of having listened to her and understanding what mattered to her:

And I was expecting her to say, "Well, no, because of this and this, or whatever else." And she just looked at me, and she said, "Yes." So, I nearly fell off my chair, with that [laughs]. But it was that kind of having listened to her story already, many times, and where she was coming from. And listening to what was going on in her life, what were the things that were important to her, and then really working on trying to find an appropriate answer for it.

Particularly outstanding is the idea of listening to understand. While this theme could have been a child node to the overarching theme of listening with an open mind and heart, it was subsumed in the main theme with a frequency count of nine, for not meeting the minimum number of frequency count (10). One participant narrated how she builds connection:

Listening to them and truly listening with an open mind, and an open heart. Being, I call it holy curiosity—that listening with interest, not listening to judge, but listening to know what exactly is going on with the person, and being interested in what they have to say. I've learned how to ask a lot of questions with people and not quizzing, not hammering on them, but asking questions that elicit some kind of a deeper understanding of what's happening with them.

**Involving others in shared decision making.** All 10 participants responded to the theme of involving others in shared decision making, and it was referenced 36 times in 18 sources. Connection involves commitment and emotional engagement. According to Horsager (2012), commitment comprises ownership and taking responsibility for one's actions. One of the ways the major superiors ensure that the members assume ownership is by involving them in shared decision-making processes. As research indicates, employees are committed and engaged when they are involved (Bass, 1990; Kahn, 1990; Reina et al., 2018; W. Zhu et al., 2011). One religious community value involving others in shared decision making to the extent that it is their unique way of life. They call it "collegiality and consensus" and it forms the foundation of the religious institute's "Guidelines." Their Guidelines for government (leadership) state, "We are co-responsible and come to decisions through a consensus process. We define consensus as a process of decision making in which the group, through open discussion, works towards resolutions basically acceptable to all concerned." Another participant shared that she involves her leadership team and the sisters in decisions. Even though it may take longer, she stated that shared decisions are better because they engender commitment:

Process always takes more time than just doing it yourself or having something come down from on high. It always takes more time, but that's where the buy-in comes. And that's why it took us a year to really figure out what we wanted to do with this facility assessment. Because otherwise people are resentful and most people, I think with few exceptions, don't really care what the outcome is as long as they've been listened to.

Another major superior shared how the leadership team involves the members of their community in the critical process of their community, composing the wisdom statement, which is similar to the vision statement. She narrated,

At each Provincial Chapter (every 4 years) we together compose a wisdom statement, and then we compose another one at the next Chapter. But for four years, those words become a guidepost to what we're trying to do in this period of time before the next chapter. . . . That's at the heart of what they're still committed to.

Moreover, yet another major superior disclosed the following:

We also have policies and procedures, and we have everything there. And we made the policies and procedures together and everybody knows how everything works. . . . And the process of crafting the policies through having a 3-year reflection on the three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience and our experience of God and communion in the community. All the reflections were put together by consensus through discernment. And then, we agreed together in the assembly or the meetings.

The same major superior reiterated, "They know that we like to inform and involve everybody in the decisions and we follow up with them."

**Making others feel important and valued.** This theme was referenced 29 times in 12 sources, by eight participants. Part of building connection is interacting with others in ways that show that they are important and valued. Transformational leaders, servant leaders, and spiritual leaders behave in ways that communicate value and meaning to the

stakeholders. In the same manner, the major superiors agree to such behaviors as fostering trust. For example, one participant shared,

I think what people appreciate is when you give them your attention, like they're the only thing that's important and what they are saying is so important. But it's not just when they step into this office they become important, but it's just how we relate.

Similarly, another participant shared how she communicates that the sisters are important and valued by acknowledging the individuality of each person, rather than treating them as a group. She recounted,

I make it a point when I come into that room after Mass with any of them instead of just blanket saying hello to everybody as a general hello, I would go to each sister and actually say her name and say hello. It's the personal touch. They are individuals; they're not just a group in a room. So I just made that my way of being every time. . . . For me that's significant. It's acknowledging the person.

For the major superiors, making others feel important and valued comprises giving them time, showing them respect, and acknowledging them. A participant shared how she makes time to acknowledge the elderly sisters, letting them know that they are important and valued. She explained,

For the past 5 or 6 years, I have been visiting our retired sisters every Tuesday. One thing I often did was to point out the positive things I could see that they were doing. In their old age, they start thinking of themselves as less, because they can't do as much as they used to do, that kind of thing.

**Being open and honest.** This theme was referenced 25 times in 12 sources and by seven participants. While this theme may be considered apt for another variable—that of candor—this theme is consistent with the literature. According to Horsager (2012), connection develops through conversations and sharing of information, which reveals areas of commonalities. Consequently, the major superiors ensure that they are open and honest in interacting with the members of their religious institute.

Interestingly, the openness and honesty are framed not only as sharing information and conversations, but also in one's intent and motives. A participant observed, "What we have decided from the very beginning was that we wanted to be open and transparent with our sisters. And even when it is difficult to do so, or there is doubt, to remain open and honest." One participant narrated how she remained open and honest when she communicated an important piece of information to a member of her religious institute and the member doubted the veracity of her statement:

I said to her, I said, "I'm sorry that you don't believe me, but it's true." And I think that that's one of the things, it's the honesty. And I saw that somewhere—yes, the candor, yes [laughs]. And you know, being open, being honest. And she did get back to her own room, and we never talked about it again, to say, you know, "How come you didn't believe me?"

Another participant narrated how she was able to convey difficult and delicate decision to a sister because she owed it to her to be open and honest:

I just had one recently, kind of a difficult one. Well, the one that I mentioned to you before in terms of suggesting to the sister that maybe she needed to get some

serious professional treatment for something and she received it well, and she's written a few times and thanked me for that.

## **Candor**

Candor was defined in this study as communicating information in a precise manner and being truthful, even if one does not want to provide such information (Gordon & Giley, 2012; Tschannen-Moran, 2014; O'Toole & Bennis, 2009; Weisman, 2016). Candor is the leader's openness and honesty when communicating with subordinates. It involves both the truthfulness of information being transmitted and the authenticity and appropriateness of how it is communicated (Weisman, 2010). Five themes emerged from the data coding process of the interviews, observation field notes, and artifacts. These themes were referenced 186 times by the study participants and had a total of 20% of the coded data. Table 8 exhibits the five themes for the element of candor as related to trust-building strategies used by the major superiors.

Table 8

### *Candor Themes*

Themes	Participants	Interview sources	Observation sources	Artifact sources	Total sources	Frequency
Being honest and transparent in communication	10	9	4	7	20	48
-Maintaining confidentiality	5	5	0	0	5	11
Sharing information regularly and constantly	9	8	7	4	19	34
Encouraging open and two-way communication	10	10	0	1	18	33
Being physically present and accessible	8	8	0	1	9	30
Showing vulnerability	9	7	2	1	10	30
-Admitting mistakes	6	5	1	0	6	12

**Being honest and transparent in communication.** This overarching theme has one subtheme attached to it. Combined with its subtheme or child node, namely, maintaining confidentiality, this overarching theme and the subtheme were referenced 59 times. Specifically, all of the participants referenced the theme, being honest and transparent in communication, 48 times in 20 sources. Communication was considered fundamental to the life of a religious institute, which is inherently communal. A major superior wrote to her sisters: “To foster relationship, communication is at the heart of the matter. When a community no longer communicates, it ceases to exist, or at least weakens.” Another participant declared, “I think anything that interferes with our transparency, leads to inauthenticity and doubt on the part of the sisters.”

Transparent communication was considered necessary to build trust. One participant remarked, “I think that transparency helps people to trust that, well, maybe the leadership team isn’t perfect but they are rooted in God, and God will guide them.”

Another participant associated transparency with being reliable and dependable:

And again by being transparent. When you’re transparent, people feel they can rely on you, that you will tell them the truth. They know that you’re there for the whole, you’re not just there for a certain part of the group or for yourself. So, communication is at the core of all of this. In my mind, transparent communication, telling the facts, meeting with people, describing the situation, asking for feedback, all of those things create a sense of . . . that you are reliable and dependable.

The content of this theme comprised being honest and transparent in communication even when one lacks the full picture or is unsure of the next steps. The

ability to be clear at each point is what builds trust. A participant shared how the leadership team does that: “Since we want the sisters in the whole province to trust us, then we need to be clear with them about what we are doing, how we’re doing it.”

***Maintaining confidentiality.*** This subtheme was referenced 11 times in six sources. A part of being open and honest is to know when to respect confidences. One participant maintained, “But we are open as we can. And because I think we are open as we can be, then they realize whenever there’s something that we say, ‘I’m sorry, I can’t share that with you right now,’ they realize that that’s okay.” Another participant observed the need to respect confidences: “I need to respect confidences and ensure that I do not infringe someone’s sensitivity or privacy.” Keeping confidences was considered as crucial as being transparent in building trust and the responsibility of the leader to know when to engage in one or the other. A participant maintained,

It has to do with, sometimes keeping confidences, what you know about another person, that is as important in keeping trust alive as transparency and saying everything. And for leadership, I think that it’s sometimes a burden to know which is which.”

For another participant, keeping confidences is required to maintain the good reputation of the members: “There’s a consideration about what the provincial leadership does, how much to tell everybody about what we’re doing and then certain things that we will keep confidential because, otherwise, it might destroy the good reputation of a sister.”

***Sharing information regularly and constantly.*** The theme of sharing information regularly and constantly was referenced 34 times in 19 sources by nine



participants. Candor consists of the quality (timeliness, accuracy, and usefulness) and quantity (sufficiency) of information (Thomas et al., 2009). In fact, the higher the frequency of a message, the greater the clarity and the more the leader inspires trust (Horsager, 2012). To that effect, one participant declared, “I think we err on the side of communication. I think too much communication is better than not enough.” Another participant reiterated the need to communicate with the sisters regularly and constantly:

I think it’s no matter what, about every two weeks or so to have them hear something, so that they’re just not out there wondering. . . . But I think to be consistent with that, so the only time they don’t hear from you is when there’s a problem or when there’s something wrong or somebody dying. It kind of sets it up.

The content of the theme revealed various systematic means through which the major superiors communicate with the members of their religious institutes. These entail both formal and informal mediums; however, the goal is to keep the sisters informed of and involved in whatever is going on. One participant related how she accomplishes that:

I try to make them know what is happening through phone calls, e-mails, visiting the communities, meetings, provincial meetings, and preparing a detailed written document when we need to communicate something very important. Letters, e-mails, and our internal webpage.

Another participant disclosed, “We have the monthly newsletter, the one I showed you? That’s a way of me communicating with them in a written form. Also, I have e-mails, for communicating with them what has happened between one newsletter and the other.”

Yet, another participant expressed,

I don't know how many years we've done it, but the leadership council, the provincial council for years, many years now, every time the provincial council has a council meeting, minutes are taken, of course. And then they are called council notes when they get in their final form, and their final form is sent to everybody. So they know, the whole province knows what we talked about, any decisions we've made, what's ongoing.

This theme was also coded in seven out of the nine observations. Attention was paid to keeping the sisters informed through the use of bulletin boards where information is displayed. Sometimes, there is more than one bulletin board in the house, and they are usually placed at strategic places in the house. One community was advanced in technology, and instead of the bulletin board, they have LCD monitors at several places in the house displaying weekly information.

**Encouraging open and two-way communication.** All the participants referenced this theme 33 times in 18 sources. Not only do the major superiors ensure open, honest, and regular communication, they invite and encourage feedback from the members. Openness in communication comprises how leaders and members send and receive information (Rogers, 1987). Inviting and receiving feedback is a critical factor in candor and helps to build trust. Six of the documents reviewed showed the major superiors inviting feedback explicitly from the sisters. One participant wrote, "If you have any suggestions, please feel free to send us your contributions as we look forward to hearing from you in order to better serve our community." The coded contents revealed specific ways the major superiors encourage open and two-way communication. One participant shared what the leadership team does:

We also invite, any time that some of the sisters have a concern, or an issue, or an idea, or whatever, to come and be part of our team meeting, too. So to come and sit down and talk it through and offer ideas or whatever else.

Another participant related how the leadership team encourages two-way communication:

And if you, as an individual sister, want to raise an issue that you think the provincial council ought to be talking about, at the end of every council notes, there is a notice that “the next provincial council meeting will be these dates. If you have an agenda item you’d like to suggest, please send it to the provincial by, like a day that is a week before, so it can be put on the agenda.”

In two instances, this theme was observed where the leadership invited the members to share information with the rest of the members. In one instance, the leader gave an announcement at the end of the meal and invited other sisters who had things they would like to share with the rest of the members. Three sisters stood up and shared different things concerning the community that the rest of the community needed to be aware of. In the other instance, the major superior gathered together the members (12 in number), and they met with the researcher. The major superior invited them to share their own experiences of trust in their community.

**Being physically present and accessible.** This theme was referenced 30 times in nine sources by eight participants. Of utmost importance to communication and sharing of information is being present and accessible. While different information technology devices are used to disseminate information today, scholars uphold the preeminence of face-to-face communication. The coded responses indicate that the major superiors

intentionally make themselves available and present to their members. For example, a participant declared, “If you’re not accessible to people, it’s really hard to build trust. So, I work extra hard to be present to them when I’m here.” Also, one participant simply stated, “I’m always here, and they know.” Another participant shared,

I keep my door open all the time. I try to walk around during the day and say hi to people. After dinner, I might sit with somebody, or they’re just at the table, and I just plopped down next to them and say, “Hey what’s going on?”

Yet, another participant commented on how she takes time to make herself available and accessible to people, even informally:

But I think we’ve tried, when we’re here any of us, to eat in the dining room and to spread out, go to different tables and take time to visit. Sometimes it takes half an hour to get from the dining room to my office in the morning, and I have to say to myself, “This is part of it. This is important.”

Also, part of accessibility is keeping an open-door policy and making available to the sisters one’s calendar, so they are aware of where the leader is and what is happening.

**Showing vulnerability.** This theme has a subtheme of admitting mistakes, and together they were referenced 30 times in 10 sources. The parent theme of showing vulnerability was referenced by nine out of 10 participants. Openness in communication requires vulnerability on the part of the individual (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999). The coded references evidenced the importance of showing vulnerability in communicating openly and honestly. One participant expressed, “Just being honest and vulnerable in communicating where I was at a certain time or whatever; I think that helps. Again, helps build that trust in the relationship, both in a group or with an individual.”

Another participant reiterated the importance of showing vulnerability toward the authenticity of the leader:

Not to be afraid to show our vulnerability. I think maybe for years people thought leaders had to be perfect and know all the answers. And I think the humble Jesus who washed feet, showed his vulnerability and showed his humanity and a part of that humanity was less than what it should have been. I think to be a genuine member of the community, you're not going to be different as a leader; I don't think, than you were as a member.

One participant shared how she admits to limitations: "I also told them, 'You know, I have my struggles with it too.'" From the coded responses, showing vulnerability comprised acknowledging limitations and showing emotions. One participant revealed that she cried in front of the members when they had to deal with a very difficult issue. Another participant shared that she is open to her weaknesses. One acknowledged that she talks too much. During the interviews, one participant showed vulnerability by tearing up on sharing a particularly challenging situation she dealt with in the past.

*Admitting mistakes.* Essential to showing vulnerability is admitting one's mistakes. This subtheme was referenced 12 times in six sources. Showing vulnerability could also involve admitting failures and mistakes. For example, a participant related her struggles with a particular limitation:

I tend to be very choleric, and so I sometimes will tend to finish people's sentences. And I've said, "I'm so sorry, I'm working on it, and I just cut you off,

so what were you gonna say?” So, to be able to be vulnerable enough to show my wound. ‘Cause it’s a wound!

Another participant stated,

I think vulnerability, my own vulnerability, like if I’ve made a mistake or whatever, to be able to say, “I know that I was sharp, let’s say, and speaking to you and I really apologize. I was just not in a good place, or I was making a judgment that I shouldn’t be.”

### **Competence**

For this study, competence was defined as the ability to perform a task or fulfill a role as expected (S. M. R. Covey, 2009; Farnsworth, 2015; Handford & Leithwood, 2013; Tschannen-Moran, 2014). Competence involves the knowledge and skills required to accomplish specific jobs (Colquitt et al., 2007; Legood, 2013; Mayer et al., 1995). Five themes emerged from the data coding process of the interviews, observation field notes, and artifacts. These themes were referenced 118 times by the study participants and have a total of 13% of the coded data. Table 9 illustrates the themes for the element of competence as related to trust-building strategies used by the major superiors.

**Using years of experience in handling problems and decisions.** This theme has a subtheme of having leadership skills and abilities. Together they were referenced 46 times in 15 sources. Predominantly, all of the participants referenced the theme of using experience in handling problems and decisions. The coded responses related to having been in leadership for some years, being prepared for leadership through previous experiences in other fields, and having training in terms of education. For example, a

participant shared previous experiences as a factor in being elected to the leadership position:

Table 9

*Competence Themes*

Themes	Participants	Interview sources	Observation sources	Artifact sources	Total sources	Frequency
Using years of experience in handling problems and decisions	10	9	6	0	15	46
-Having leadership skills and abilities	8	8	6	0	14	28
Providing opportunities for collaboration and sharing	10	10	1	8	19	44
-Providing professional and personal growth opportunities	10	6	0	2	8	10
Demonstrating the ability to set and maintain boundaries	5	4	0	2	6	15
Establishing and maintaining clear vision/communication	7	5	2	6	10	13

They trusted me because they've seen me in action for a long time: I've been on committees, I've gotten up and made announcements, I've been giving presentations. It's that kind of when you're invited to do that kind of thing, and you do a pretty good job of it, and it's pretty well accepted by almost everybody. Then they know they can trust you if they're going to give you a new role as a provincial council member.

Another participant summed up competence as experience and argued:

“Competence, I look at as experience. It could be education. But if I've had experience with something, then I feel more competent in it, and other people would feel I was more competent.” Similarly, another participant recounted her preparations in other fields as contributing to her competence in leadership:

I think I've had a lot of experiences. Because after I entered, I trained to be a teacher, and I taught for 8 years. And then I went to Brazil for 15 years, and I ran a parish there that had no priest, and did a number of other things as well. . . . So, I feel like I had a lot, through my life experiences, I had a lot of background in being a leader.

A participant, likewise, commented, "I realized it is my background in psychology and social work, that competency and in my love for formation that created a trust amongst each other that we could do this."

Having years of experience was also attributed to the ability to take innovative and creative ways to handle difficult problems and make the right decisions. One participant narrated,

So before 2014, the formators submitted quarterly reports in writing, and they met quarterly with the directress of formation. It was extremely formal, distant, and nonrelational. And I just, I knew I couldn't do it that way. I had to ask if I could do something different. So what I did is I brought together all of the formators monthly, and we began to meet monthly to learn about each other's area of formation, to work on topics of formation for the whole community, and to get the support we needed from one another. In the midst of that, it also built trust because the leader was also involved with helping create an environment where we could actually work together and support each other in our roles.

Experience fosters trust and confidence in the leader and the leader with experience acts as a resource person to other leaders. One participant narrated,



Let's say that on the Foundation, there's a director who is seeking advice. OK. So the only reason they would come to me is because they see that I've had experience working with sisters, let's say from different parts of the world. So I have that kind of competency that they can come and ask me about. Or because I've had experience as an administrator and they have some issue with staffing, and so they come to me and say, "So how would you handle this situation with this person. What would you do if you were in my place?" And then I can give my experience.

Another participant focused on the trust and confidence that come with experience:

So when things would come up, and I would share maybe a way to do something or give some advice, people would feel secure knowing that I'd done it before and I'd had lots of experience in it. And I think that builds trust because they could trust me that, "Yeah she probably knows that because she's seen it a million times or done it."

***Having leadership skills and abilities.*** This subtheme was referenced 28 times by eight participants. Competence has to do with skills and abilities to carry out one's responsibilities. The coded responses aligned with many of the behaviors identified in the Transformational Leadership Skills inventory, such as visionary leadership, creativity, communication, and team development (Larick & White, 2012). Mainly, the skill of public speaking or ability to address others accounted for many of the coded responses. For example, a participant shared,

I'm a pretty good public speaker. I am competent in public speaking. And so when I had to address some issue with the congregation, I think my own self-

confidence was able to give them a sense of self-confidence that we can do this together. And just being able to speak in a confident manner, I think, creates a sense of confidence in other people.

Other participants named different leadership skills and abilities—good discussion leader, confidence, smart, creative, organization skills, being articulate in writing, and identifying talents and individual skills. Interestingly, two participants mentioned spirituality and relationship with God as part of their competence. One participant declared,

I know how to pray, and I've experienced God's faithfulness in my life. And I've experienced that when I am in crisis, God will send the Angel I need to carry me through. And so, that's the competence I feel I bring to leadership.

Equally, another participant considered that, given that the major superior is called to be a spiritual leader, then part of her competence is her spirituality:

Also, when you're in leadership, you're kind of expected to be the spiritual leader of your group, and so being able to, I suppose, reflect a competency of spirituality and yet the vulnerability of spirituality, is also good in helping the group feel competent and confident about their spiritual development, and that the struggles that they have are normal. So I think competency is both being able to show confidence but also vulnerability.

**Providing opportunities for collaboration and sharing.** The theme of providing opportunities for collaboration and sharing has a subtheme of providing professional and personal growth opportunities. Both the parent theme and subtheme were referenced 44 times by all the participants. The parent theme of providing opportunities for

collaboration and sharing appeared in 19 sources. Competent leaders ensure that their stakeholders have all they need to accomplish tasks effectively and efficiently. The coded responses in this theme referenced availability of various opportunities for collaboration and sharing among the members of the religious institute. Opportunities for collaboration and sharing were framed as providing information to the members and giving the members occasion to contribute and share expertise, knowledge, and concerns. These opportunities were both at the general group, small groups, and individual levels.

Eight of the coded artifacts revealed an invitation from the major superiors to collaboration and sharing. For example, one participant wrote,

I would like to visit your local community to explain the possibilities and the reasoning for the proposed province restructuring before the [name] assembly on July 17. Together we will speak about this and you will have the opportunity to both ask questions and give input. This proposed restructuring is not a done deal. It will be presented as a recommendation from the local superiors and the provincial council who have worked extensively on this.

Another participant wrote to the members,

To prepare for our 2018 Community week with an emphasis on renewal, our group would like to ask each local community to engage in a preparatory activity, which would foster communication, caring, and understanding among all members in each convent.

Other coded responses indicate a regular means through which the religious institute provides opportunities for collaboration and sharing:

We have the *Circles of Conversation*, inviting sisters to that. We did one on *New Wine in New Wine Skins* last year. We used it for visitation. And we had Circles of Conversation about how the sisters felt about the new structure. We had Circles of Conversation when we first talked about becoming one province, whether we should do that or not. So that conversation really started in 2011. So it's been kind of a consistent pattern. I think again it's involving them, and the sisters believing that their opinions matter, and that the decision isn't made ahead of time and that they're not just being tokenly asked. And if it's not a Circle of Conversation or it's not a group gathering, to send out a survey, "Can you answer the following questions? What do you think about this and return it if you will."

Likewise, another participant shared how she brought a group of leaders together for collaboration and sharing in order to move forward the religious institute:

One was the group when we had 65 leaders come together, everybody had a different competency, and we welcomed the sisters' input. In making decisions, we worked in small groups. We derived a document that could help us move forward. . . . We try to do that often in the community to bring the expertise of others together. That's frequently our . . . because we are so diverse in our apostolate, we really do see the need for us to come together, so we see the full picture of [foundress's] charism.

Other responses include inviting sisters to work in committees, use of regular mediums, such as "Stable Tables," "Clusters," "House Circle," "Communication for Communion," where sisters meet, either on a weekly or monthly basis to collaborate and share ideas.

*Providing professional and personal growth opportunities.* This subtheme was referenced 10 times in eight sources. The literature shows that competent leaders ensure their employees' readiness at all times (Weisman, 2016). This subtheme was understood as both providing professional and personal growth opportunities for both the leader and the members. One participant mentioned that she leverages her competence by attending professional development training and workshops: "I avail myself of different development and improvement training, for my ministry. I read. I collaborate with other leaders. I try to pray and discern the best way to go in each situation." Another participant highlighted that she brings in professionals to help her in the leadership team: "In the very beginning, we brought in a facilitator to help us with everything. And I think we've got in every council meeting; we bring somebody in."

Other participants emphasized professional and personal growth opportunities for the members of the religious institute. For example, a participant noted,

We also have our own sisters, let's say we are going to discuss financial contribution and situation, a sister, that is provincial treasurer, will give us workshop and training to the ones that manage finances in the house. We call the sister to give us a workshop or call someone from outside. For example, we were discussing the topic of Corporation, and we invited someone, an expert in Profit Corporation, and she came and gave us the answers that we needed. Or some lawyers, when we had difficulties in the apostolate with what to do with the workers, and they came and told us what to do, or we go to different places, different workshops to help sisters with different problems.

Interestingly, most workshops and training focused on communication skills for developing deeper relationships with one another. The interviews and artifacts revealed various communication workshops the participants and members have engaged in— Conversational Approach to Relational Effectiveness (CARE), Communication for Communion, and Interpersonal Communication Skills Training.

**Demonstrating the ability to set and maintain boundaries.** Setting and maintaining boundaries was a theme referenced 15 times in six sources and by five participants. The capacity to achieve results is enhanced by the competence of the leader to institute functional norms of operation and interaction so that everyone understands expectations. Given that the major superiors generally live with sisters in the same house as well as work together, it is important to have norms that make it possible to be together constantly. A participant narrated how the members of her community were bringing business concerns during nonbusiness hours, such as in the evening and at meal times. She had to set that boundary of conducting business concerns at the right place and time. The responses of the participants indicate the need to create guidelines of operation and interaction and maintain boundaries. For example, one participant recognized the importance of knowing when to draw the line: “I need to put my foot on the floor and say, ‘Yes, this is what we need to do.’ And I was firm, and I believe in firmness and gentleness when needed.” Also, another participant avowed,

For the most part, they give me my space and allow me to have those boundaries, you know? There’s one who is in an automatic wheelchair that she can’t get down here to talk to me. And so, sometimes, she’ll call me during the daytime, to come up and see her. Or once in a while, she’ll say, “Can I see you for a minute

after dinner?” You know, and so, I’ll sit down. But it’s like the boundaries have been established, and I’m pretty good at keeping them.

A participant expressed that part of the effectiveness of the leadership team was the initial guidelines they created together:

And then once we get into our meeting, what we did is, we put together some ground rules that will help us in our meetings. So, (1) we never leave our meeting with unresolved conflict. We always bring it to the next step, either we’ve put closure on it, or we know what our next step is. (2) We give each other permission to say what we need to say to the group. (3) If we perceive that something is hurtful or perceiving something that needs to be clarified, we give each other permission to clarify our perceptions. (4) We give sufficient time for the topic we need to discuss so that we’re not rushed, and we have a discerning heart as we go about our work together. And then (5), we enjoy each other’s company [laughs].

Another participant narrated how the leadership team was able to draw the line with a member who was creating a toxic environment for the rest of the community. Common life is a fundamental aspect of the religious life, in addition to the vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience. In this particular experience, the professed member found it difficult to live out the common life, a serious infraction in the religious life setting, and was toxic to the health of the other members. The participant concluded by saying, “So our big claim to fame or infamy is that we took a sister, a challenge sister out of the house and put [her] somewhere.” The coded responses from the artifacts

evidenced this theme through the required expectations both in the general lives of the members and in specific situations.

**Establishing and maintaining clear vision/communication.** This theme was referenced 13 times in 10 sources by seven participants. Competency in leadership demands the ability to communicate visions, exemplify values, and provide the enabling environment for accomplishing them. Similarly, influence in leadership derives from the leader's ability to clearly communicate organizational vision, goals, and values to others (Richards & Engle, 1986). A lot of the coded responses for this theme emanated from the reviewed artifacts. In all the documents provided by one participant, she clearly and consistently communicated to the sisters what the vision of their religious institute is, how they are working toward it, and what the sisters are required to do toward achieving the goals of the religious institute. For example, in one document, she wrote, "The general chapter had a clear vision for congregational solidarity. We are challenged to grow in understanding that we are a global congregation." She then went on to suggest some guidelines to achieve this vision of congregational solidarity. In another document, another participant went to the extent of providing resources to enable the members to follow along in an upcoming meeting: "I will bring materials and will talk them through with you. I think it may take at least an hour or longer depending on our interaction." To enable clear reporting and evaluation, a third participant created a guideline for reporting information during meetings. She clarified, "I gave them my expectations of what they're reporting on every month. So, it's very clear what they are reporting on."



## Consistency

In this study, consistency was defined as the confidence that a person’s pattern of behavior is reliable, dependable, and steadfast (Tschannen-Moran, 2014; Weisman, 2016). Consistency is the leader’s integrity, and it involves matching words with actions and walking the talk (Mayer et al., 1995; Weisman, 2016). It also implies predictability so that people will know what to expect at each moment. Consequently, time is vital given that trust is built gradually over time, requiring effort, diligence, and character (Horsager, 2012). Five themes emerged from the data coding process of the interviews, observation field notes, and artifacts. These themes were referenced 93 times by the study participants and had a total of 10% of the coded data. Table 10 illustrates the themes for the element of consistency as related to trust-building strategies used by the major superiors.

Table 10

### *Consistency Themes*

Themes	Participants	Interview sources	Observation sources	Artifact sources	Total sources	Frequency
Having a regular system of reporting and soliciting input	8	7	1	5	15	34
Being reliable and standing by convictions	8	7	0	1	8	20
Matching words with actions	8	6	2	2	10	18
Accepting personal responsibilities and being accountable	4	3	0	2	5	11
Demonstrating dependability and following through on promise	5	3	0	2	5	10

**Having a regular system of reporting and soliciting input.** This theme was referenced 34 times in 15 sources by eight participants. Consistency demands predictability. The coded responses for this theme revolved around the systems put in place by the major superiors to regularly accomplish specific objectives. Most of the responses relate to a regular system of communicating with the members. For example, one participant responded, “Well, I think it goes with the consistency. I think it’s no matter what, about every two weeks or so to have them hear something.” Another participant emphasized, “We communicate three or four times a week with concerns. That’s very predictable because as I said, that’s frequent.” Yet another participant stated, “We have the monthly newsletter, the one that I showed you? That’s a way of me communicating with them in a written form.” Another coded response focused on having a regular system of soliciting input. The participant disclosed beginning a new initiative:

It’s just starting in 2018 this month, where the local [common name of communities in the religious institute] are going to have this activity monthly. Where they’re going to get together and have what we call “Communication for Communion.” Ideas and issues that need clarity in the community. So there is a forum in which to be heard, and it will be consistent. That’s just one little aspect of what is going on in trust.

A similar response came from a participant: “We have a weekly bulletin where the sisters have an opportunity to share whatever they’d like with the whole community.”

**Being reliable and standing by convictions.** The theme of being reliable and standing by convictions was referenced 20 times in eight sources by eight participants. Behaving in ways that are reliable and that people can count on permeated the coded

responses for this theme. One participant maintained, “I will never say anything that I won’t do. . . . And it takes only once or twice for it to happen and they know that I’m true to my word.” Another participant shared how she is very intentional in ensuring consistency once she takes up any project:

I just keep saying it’s important to be consistent. It’s important to be consistent and to be the same way all the time. I’m prone to moods just as much as anybody else, but sisters need to see a person who’s pretty consistently the same way. And I tell other sisters, “You know what? Because you’re having a bad day, it’s nobody else’s fault.”

Consistency also entails standing by one’s convictions even when that is difficult.

A participant shared a situation in which she had to move on without a consensus decision in order to remain consistent:

So then we made the courageous decision that this is what the sisters were recommending. This is what the professionals recommended. Not everybody agreed with this. OK. You just have to be a little bit of a Teflon and let it come off and go ahead and move forward because if you wait for everybody, if you wait for everybody to be happy, it’s not going to happen. Because you’re going to end up being hugely inconsistent because you want to make this person happy or this group happy, then you want to make this group happy, but they’re opposites. I’ve seen that, and it makes for such ineffective leadership.

Another participant narrated,

They knew that I am not going to back down because of resistance. That we had to move through the resistance to come to what needed to be done for the

betterment of the ministry. So I think the thing of consistency was that the message that I and my team had to give was this, “We must move forward with this.” . . . And even though not everybody is going to be on board throughout the whole thing, it does build trust because they know they can depend on you, that you’re not going to waver because of difficulties that you are going to meet.

**Matching words with actions.** Eight participants referenced this theme 18 times in 10 sources. Consistency involves matching words with actions, walking the talk, and showing integrity. Two coded documents evidenced the participants paying attention to both personal and communal integrity. In one of the documents, the major superior invited the members to reflect on their life of integrity: “What are the cracks in my integrity? What are the weaknesses in my character? Are there any relationships I am taking ‘shortcuts’ in?” A participant shared, “We’ve got to be consistent. You know if we said, we’re going to do this, you got to do it.” Yet, another participant remarked, “If I say I’m going to do something, I do need to do it and carry it out, I have to model that.” A participant emphasized, “I think you don’t get trust; you have to model it.” Another commented on the need to take the lead in whatever she requires the members to do: “I am part of the province as a sister and not only as a superior. I abide by the same rules and regulations and by the same agreement that we arrive at together.”

The same participant further clarified,

I try to live by my words. For example, if I visit a community and tell them that we need to keep the value of prayer, or have fun moments to rest, I must do it in my own community. I cannot say something to others and not do it. Sometimes,

I am struggling with a particular thing, as I tell the sisters to do that, I am also reminding myself to do the same thing.

**Accepting personal responsibility and being accountable.** The theme of personal responsibility and accountability was referenced 11 times in five sources by four participants. Accountability is an integral part of consistency, both personal accountability and holding others accountable. The coded responses reflected both aspects of accountability. For example, a participant commented on how the leadership team practices accountability:

I think it's got to do with being accountable. A lot of the information that we get from the general level needs to be shared with the sisters because, again, it's our community not just a few people's community. So I think that's an important part, that's part of the accountability. I think the accountability of even in our provincial council meetings to say, "This is what we've talked about and if you have anything you want us to talk about, send it in." And to do that not just, "Oh gee, once a year we do that." That consistency needs to be there almost so that they don't even see it anymore because they're so used to it. But I think accountability is a big part of consistency.

In one example, a participant narrated how she was reluctant to let a group of sisters take up a project because of the demands it would make on them: "I said, 'That's a whole lot of bookkeeping. Are you sure you want to do that?' And they said 'yes.' I said, 'Okay as long as you are consistent.' And they have been consistent; they do it."

In terms of holding others accountable, a participant recounted how, in one instance, the members of the leadership team wanted to discontinue an ongoing practice.

The participant clarified to the theme members the need for accountability:

The council members were saying, “Well, maybe we don’t need to do this anymore because now we’re doing Skype reports instead of written ones.” I said, “I think the sisters still need to feel that they’re accountable. They’re out there. They’re the boots on the ground, but they need to be accountable for what they do.” That’s that whole principle of subsidiarity. So, you know, so again it just being consistent all the way through.

This same participant insisted, “You are only going to be effective if you are consistent.”

**Demonstrating dependability and following through on promise.** This theme was referenced 10 times in five sources by five participants. Dependability and reliability were mostly mentioned together by the participants. One participant narrated her strategy of showing dependability and following through on promise:

If you say you’re going to do something or you’re going to send something—I write e-mails to myself cause if I think it’s something that you have to follow through—and that way the sisters just feel like you are dependable. You want them to be dependable, but you have to also hold yourself to the same standard.

For another participant,

Dependability is when your sister asks something, to get back to her, even if I don’t know the answer, I’ll e-mail right back and say, “I got your question. I will do some research, and I’ll get back to you.” Or, “No, I’m not the right person, but you would contact [name] for this.” To be dependable, be reliable, we will be

somebody that if they have a concern they know they can contact one of us and we'll do something about it, if we can.

Yet, another participant conceives dependability in terms of honoring wishes: "I just have to honor the wishes of the sisters. If there is some sister, who, on her funeral wishes says, 'anybody, except this person,' then I have to honor that, and they know I will."

### **Key Findings**

Twenty-six themes emerged from the coded analysis of the data collection process of the interviews, observations, and artifacts. A comprehensive analysis of the 26 themes yielded 12 key findings to indicate the strategies the major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes use to build trust with the professed members. The themes that met the following criteria were included in the key findings:

- The theme was referenced by at least 80% of the study participants (eight participants),
- the theme was referenced in a minimum of 15 sources, and
- the theme has a frequency count of 30 and above.

The qualifying criteria for including themes in the key findings are summarized in Table 11.

#### **Key Findings: Competence**

1. Using years of experience in handling problems and decisions
2. Providing opportunities for collaboration and sharing

#### **Key Finding: Consistency**

3. Having a regular system of reporting and soliciting input

Table 11

*Summary of Criteria for Key Findings*

Variable	Theme	% of participants	Sources	Frequency count
Competence	• Using years of experience in handling problems and decisions	100%	15	46
	• Providing opportunities for collaboration and sharing	100%	19	44
Consistency	• Having a regular system of reporting and soliciting input	80%	15	34
Candor	• Being honest and transparent in communication	100%	20	59
	• Sharing information regularly and constantly	90%	19	34
	• Encouraging open and two-way communication	100%	18	33
Concern	• Expressing care and love	100%	21	72
	• Being sensitive to the needs of others	100%	24	66
	• Inviting participation and including others	100%	18	53
Connection	• Establishing and maintaining relationships	100%	19	67
	• Sharing the values of the religious institute	100%	20	59
	• Involving others in shared decision making	100%	18	36

**Key Findings: Candor**

4. Being honest and transparent in communication
5. Sharing information regularly and constantly
6. Encouraging open and two-way communication

**Key Findings: Concern**

7. Expressing care and love
8. Being sensitive to the needs of others
9. Inviting participation and including others



### **Key Findings: Connection**

10. Establishing and maintaining relationships
11. Sharing the values of the religious institute
12. Involving others in shared decision-making

### **Summary**

This chapter reported the findings and analyses of the research aimed at exploring how major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes build trust with professed members, using the five domains of competence, consistency, candor, concern, and connection as proposed by Weisman (2010, 2016). This qualitative phenomenological research used three data collection methods—interviews, observations, and artifacts—to explore the essence of the lived experiences, strategies, perspectives, and thoughts of the major superiors in building trust with the professed members of their religious institutes. A comprehensive analysis of the data collected from the 10 interviews, nine observations, and 84 artifacts yielded a total of 26 themes and 921 frequencies. Further analysis of the themes generated 12 key study findings describing how the major superiors build trust with the professed members of their religious institutes. Chapter V presents a summary of findings, conclusions, implications for action, and recommendations for future research.

## CHAPTER V: FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter V of this paper discusses the findings of this study—the major findings and the unexpected findings. It also includes the conclusions reached, implications for action, and recommendations for future research. The chapter closes with general remarks and reflections on the impact this study has had on the researcher.

### **Review of Methodology**

This qualitative phenomenological study explored the trust-building strategies that major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes use with their professed members. Specifically, the purpose of the study was to explore how major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes build trust with professed members, using the five domains of competence, consistency, candor, concern, and connection. To proceed, the study was guided by a central research question and five subquestions.

### **Central Research Question**

How do major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes build trust with professed members using the five domains of competence, consistency, candor, concern, and connection?

### **Subquestions**

1. How do major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes build trust with professed members using competence?
2. How do major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes build trust with professed members using consistency?
3. How do major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes build trust with professed members using candor?

4. How do major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes build trust with professed members using concern?
5. How do major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes build trust with professed members using connection?

The study employed a qualitative phenomenological research inquiry to explore the meaning and essence of the lived experiences, strategies, perspectives, and thoughts of the major superiors in building trust with the professed members of their religious institutes. Using in-depth qualitative interviews, observations, and review of artifacts, the researcher explored the trust-building strategies of the major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes in Southern California who have reputation of trusting relationships with their members. The researcher conducted 10 in-depth interviews and nine observations of the major superiors in their natural settings. The interviews were conducted face-to-face and recorded with the consent of the participants. Following data transcription, NVivo software was used to code and analyze the data for emerging themes aligned with the research questions. Intercoder reliability was used to ensure reliability and validity of the study, resulting in 96% reliability.

### **Population and Sample**

The population of the present study was the 1,470 major superiors of Catholic Women religious institutes in the United States. This population was further narrowed down to the target population comprising 40 major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes in Southern California (*The Official Catholic Directory*, 2010). The 10 participants selected for the study were major superiors who (a) had reputation of trusting relationships with members; (b) had a minimum of 2 years of experience (current or

retired within the last year) leading a successful organization; (c) were recommended by their peers; and (d) were members in associations within their field.

### **Major Findings**

This study revealed 12 major findings after a comprehensive analysis of data from the interviews, observations, and review of artifacts. The criteria for inclusion as a major finding were as follows: (a) the theme must be referenced by a minimum of eight participants, (b) the theme was referenced in 15 sources or more, and (c) the theme had a frequency count of 30 and above. The domains of candor, concern, and connection each had three major findings; the competence domain had two major findings; and consistency had one major finding. The following are the major findings:

#### **Competence**

1. Using years of experience in handling problems and decisions
2. Providing opportunities for collaboration and sharing

#### **Consistency**

3. Having a regular system of reporting and soliciting input

#### **Candor**

4. Being honest and transparent in communication
5. Sharing information regularly and constantly
6. Encouraging open and two-way communication

#### **Concern**

7. Expressing care and love
8. Being sensitive to the needs of others
9. Inviting participation and including others

## **Connection**

10. Establishing and maintaining relationships
11. Sharing the values of the religious institute
12. Involving others in shared decision-making

Interestingly, the major findings in this research revealed greater emphases on the emotional factors (candor and concern) and the self-actualization in connection. The five C's theoretical framework of this study was founded upon the basic principles of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, for which the satisfaction of fundamental needs is a precondition for higher needs of self-actualization. The study findings show that the rational needs (competence and consistency) were met based on the high frequency of the higher needs (candor, concern, and connection). For trust to exist, the individual must begin from the foundational levels of rational factors with behaviors that exhibit competence and consistency in every relationship. Further, being trustworthy demands emotional factors of concern and candor that bind individuals one to the other. Finally, trust culminates in the highest level of self-actualization in connection (Weisman, 2016).

Though the five C's of trust model were founded on Maslow's hierarchy of needs, Weisman (2016) argued that trust does not necessarily follow a sequential process, beginning with rational factors and culminating in self-actualization; rather, all the components of the five C's need to be present for high trust to exist. The major findings of this study highlighted the domains of connection, concern, and candor, and also had themes from competence and consistency. While some components received greater emphasis than others, the findings suggest that all the components are necessary for trust to exist. As one of the participant argued,

I think you don't get trust; you have to model it. You give people reasons to trust you by your competency, by your candor, by your consistency, by all of these things that you've mentioned. It's a gift, trust is a gift given to the leader, but it's mutual.

Consequently, the study findings indicate high-trust behaviors on the part of all 10 major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes with their professed members.

### **Unexpected Findings**

This study revealed one unexpected finding. The component of competence received less attention from the major superiors as an essential element in building trust. At the beginning of the interview process, the participants were asked their opinions and thoughts about the five elements of the theoretical framework of the study (the five C's of trust). Three of the participants explicitly expressed their reservation with or surprise about competence being included as an important trust element. One participant declared,

Well, I wouldn't have thought to put a couple of them in, but I think that since you have put them in, I would agree with them. Trust, certainly; connection, definitely; concern, yes; candor, certainly. But competence [laughs], I think I wouldn't have thought of that as something to be addressed.

A second participant remarked,

I'm not quite sure how it all fits in, but maybe the questions will reveal kind of what they mean. Like the one about competence, I'm not quite sure how that fits in with trust. But anyway like I said, it might be answered in the questions.

Some of the participants who did not openly express reservations with the component of competence appeared uncomfortable talking about their abilities. One participant had to stop in the middle of answering a question on competence and remarked, “I feel that I am talking about all the positive things I am doing and nothing about the negatives. Could you interview my sisters and find out what they think [Laughing]?” Others responded to the question about competence by saying, “they say,” or “the sisters say,” thereby attributing the responses to others. While this could be a result of long years of practicing prudence and humility, it is also significant in understanding how the participants view the element of competence in general. Hence, it was not surprising that competence received the second lowest number of coded responses (118 or 13%) and had the least number of themes (four themes).

These responses appear to be in sharp contrast with the literature on trust. The literature affirmed that competence or ability is undoubtedly the most commonly examined component of trustworthiness (Blanchard et al., 2013; Colquitt et al., 2007; Legood, 2013). Furthermore, a glance at the list of antecedents to trust provided by Mayer et al. (1995) shows scholars who have examined trustworthiness as comprising ability using the same or similar constructs. Accordingly, several synonyms are used to denote ability: expertise, competence, expertness, and perceived expertise.

Notwithstanding these responses, the major superiors invest in personal and professional training to improve their leadership skills and abilities. It was interesting to observe four major superiors reference the book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* (S. R. Covey, 1989), as a resource they use both as individuals and as religious communities. One religious community published a handbook entirely centered on “The

7 habits,” incorporating their spirituality into the principles proposed in the book.

Particularly interesting is the discovery that a religious community had invited notable authors/scholars on trust (S. M. R. Covey, 2006; Lencioni, 2002), or attended exclusive workshops with these scholars to learn about trust-building strategies.

An additional unexpected finding was that in the theoretical framework for this study, Weisman (2016) conceptualized the five C’s of trust model as founded upon Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. Based on this model, the satisfaction of the fundamental or rational needs (competence and consistency) is a precondition for higher needs of emotional and self-actualization. However, the findings of this study, which show the highest number of coded frequencies in the emotional and self-actualization factors (concern and connection) and the lowest number of coded frequencies in the rational factors of competence and consistency seem contrary to TVI’s model. Even, the major superiors found surprising the inclusion of the competency domain as necessary for building trust, hence the unexpected finding. Consequently, this finding raises questions about the hierarchical model (pyramid of trust) of the theoretical framework, the five C’s of trust model, and the manner in which trust progresses.

### **Conclusions**

Having conducted this research exploring the trust-building strategies of the major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes using the theoretical framework of the five C’s of trust model—competence, consistency, candor, concern, and connection, the following are the conclusions based on the study major findings, supported by the literature.



## **Conclusion 1—Concern**

Based on the findings of this study and supported by the literature, it is essential that the major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes who are committed to fostering an atmosphere of trust should behave in ways that demonstrate genuine care, love, and respect to the members of their religious institutes. They can do this through showing consideration for and being sensitive to the members' needs and well-being, inviting participation and including others, visiting and spending the time to get to know the members, and supporting and protecting their personal and professional interests. Trust entails vulnerability on the part of the trusting party or the trustor; concern is connected with that aspect of vulnerability in trust whereby the trustor has confidence that he or she will not be exploited (Mayer et al., 1995). Furthermore, Weisman (2016) argued that concern deals with the genuine care and love shown to others and is expressed through interactions not directly related to business or tasks, but which serve to create the bond needed in the organization.

The major superiors in this study demonstrated concern through expressing genuine care and love, being sensitive to the members' needs, and treating them with respect and consideration. Showing concern involved doing little acts of kindness for the members and expressing care and love verbally, checking up on the members, and being sensitive to and taking care of their needs. Mayer et al. (1995) argued that in benevolent trustworthiness, the trustee acts in manners congruent with the needs and desires of the trustor. Hence, not only is the leader performing benevolent acts, but the actions are congruent with the needs and desires of the stakeholders. The major superiors frequently

emphasized the attention taken to ensure that their actions were congruent with the needs and preferences of the members.

Furthermore, the members felt valued and cared for when they were invited and included in discussions. The major superiors referenced inviting participation and including others as helping to create a collaborative environment, increase engagement, and foster trust. According to Joseph and Winston (2005), early involvement of employees is one of the servant leader behaviors that engender trust. Hence, behaving in ways that demonstrate genuine care, love, and respect increases the trust between the major superiors and their members. This conclusion was supported by the highest number of frequency count—268 (29%) of the coded responses recorded in the component of concern. All of the major superiors referenced showing care and love 72 times in 21 sources, being sensitive to the needs of others 66 times in 24 sources, inviting participation and including others 53 times in 18 sources.

### **Conclusion 2—Connection**

Based on the findings of this study and supported by the literature, it was concluded that in order to build trust, the major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes need to devise various means to establish and maintain deep-level relationships with the professed members of their religious institutes. These relationships are developed at the individual and organizational levels. All the major superiors indicated that taking time to build relationships through keeping in touch with members, listening with open mind and heart, involving others in decision making, and just being with them and for them help to develop and maintain trust with the members. The theme of building connection through establishing and maintaining relationships was referenced 67

times by all the participants in 19 sources. Altogether, the component of connection was referenced 256 times.

Fundamental to building connection is developing the deep bond between leaders and followers, which necessitates deep commitment. This bond is strengthened through sharing the values of the religious institute. The major superiors showed how the values of their religious institutes and the vision and mission statements all helped them build connection with the members. According to Shockley-Zalabak et al. (2010), at the organizational level, individuals develop a personal connection with management and coworkers based on perceived value congruence. Among the major superiors, shared values are so much a part of the life and mission of the sisters that it is difficult to think of not having them. One participant stated, “Our values are just so much a part of us. And I think you could go to any of our houses and say, ‘Tell me a little about what family spirit means to you,’ they would be able to tell you.”

The major superiors considered common values as essential to building trust given that the theme was referenced 59 times by all the participants in 20 sources. In arguing the importance of shared values to building connection, a major superior asserted, “Without shared values, there is no foundation upon which to build communion.” Leaders inspire loyalty when they can develop an authentic relationship with employees and customers by continually living out their values through an understanding of and alignment of their brand to what these stakeholders need and value (Horsager, 2012; Weisman, 2016).

### **Conclusion 3—Candor**

Based on the findings of this study and supported by the literature, it is concluded that the major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes must regularly communicate honestly and transparently with the members of their religious institutes in order to foster an environment of trust. The major superiors in this study were intentional about routinely communicating with the members of their religious institutes through sharing information honestly and transparently, inviting feedback, and being physically present to the sisters. In exercise of candor, they strove to maintain confidentiality where necessary, both as a means to respect others' reputation and to keep confidences.

Candor is the leader's openness and honesty when communicating with subordinates. It involves both the truthfulness of information being transmitted and the authenticity and appropriateness of how it is communicated (Weisman, 2010). Effective communication has been found to impact trust development among leaders and followers as well as among teammates. Furthermore, open communication was found to be a critical factor in interpersonal trust (Boies et al., 2015). Blanchard et al. (2013) considered communication and sharing of information as helping to build the connectedness necessary for trust. Accordingly, a leader's consistency and integrity are deeply connected with candor. The major superiors pointed out that part of their transparency in communication involved letting the sisters know what they, the members of the leadership team, know, even when they do not have the complete information. Hence, one participant expressed that "too much communication is better than not enough."

Essential to communicating openly and transparently is the frequency of communication. The major superiors in the study manifested behaviors that betoken a regular system of sharing information with the members of their religious institute. Hence, on the average, the major superiors shared information with the members on a monthly basis, and some as frequently as every 2 weeks. Candor consists of the quality (timeliness, accuracy, and usefulness) and quantity (sufficiency) of information (Thomas et al., 2009). In fact, the higher the frequency of a message, the greater the clarity, and the more the leader inspires trust (Horsager, 2012). Part of sharing information is keeping the members apprised of what is going on in the institute, the decisions of the leadership team, and soliciting feedback on upcoming projects. The goal is to keep the members informed and involved in what is going on in the religious institute. Again, keeping members informed and involved through communicating openly and transparently in a regular manner foster engagement and contribute in maintaining bonds and building trust. The artifacts, observations, and interviews obtained in connection to the study support this conclusion. All of the major superiors referenced honest and transparent communication 48 times in 20 sources and inviting feedback 33 times in 18 sources.

#### **Conclusion 4—Competence**

Based on the findings of this study and supported by the literature, it was concluded that in order to promote trust, the major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes must build leadership competency by providing personal and professional development opportunities for themselves and others. The major superiors in the current study suggested that previous experiences of leadership facilitated their problem solving

and decision-making skills, thereby enhancing their credibility and engendering trust. Such previous experiences were obtained through empowerment and development opportunities provided by those in leadership. Consequently, the major superiors provide the same development opportunities to the members of their religious institutes in order to empower and provide them with the skills and abilities needed to perform their tasks efficiently.

According to Northouse (2016), ensuring that employees successfully complete their tasks communicates the leader's competence and, in turn, generates confidence in the leader, resulting in trust. Weisman's (2016) assertion that an employee's readiness is a primary indicator of competence is consistent with the leader's ability to create such an enabling structure. When employees work in a flexible environment, are empowered to self-correct, and have access to necessary information, they perceive the leader not only as competent but also as caring, through the operating functional norms (Burke et al., 2007). Thus, providing opportunities for collaboration and sharing, as well as professional and personal growth and development, increases trust in the members. This conclusion is further supported by the coded responses from the interviews, observations, and artifacts. All of the major superiors referenced using years of experience to handle problems and decisions, and applying leadership skills and abilities to provide opportunities for collaboration and sharing, over 40 times in more than 15 sources.

### **Conclusion 5—Consistency**

Based on the findings of this study and supported by the literature, it was concluded that the major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes who want to build trust must have a regular, consistent system of reporting and soliciting input and

must demonstrate reliability and dependability by following through on promises. The major superiors in this study were consistent in communicating with and soliciting input from their members. Particularly, they demonstrated reliability and dependability by following through on promises and showing integrity. They stood by their convictions, matched words with actions, accepted personal responsibility and held themselves and others accountable.

Trust is built gradually over time, requiring effort, diligence, and character (Horsager, 2012). Yet, trust can be destroyed in an instant. Hence, consistency requires stability and reliability as well as the ability to deliver on a promise. Consistency means being predictable so that people will know what to expect at each moment. Also conceptualized as integrity, consistency involves matching words with actions and walking the talk as well as fidelity to sets of principles and values deemed important by the trustor (Mayer et al., 1995; Weisman, 2016). A leader's consistency and integrity are deeply connected with candor. For S. M. R. Covey (2006), intent could be likened to candor relating to a leader's genuine care of others, with no hidden agenda. Leaders are open and honest to the extent their words match their actions (Avolio, 2016). This conclusion is supported by the responses of the major superiors in the interviews, observations, and review of artifacts. Eight of the 10 participants shared having regular means of soliciting input and reporting, as well as being reliable and standing by convictions, through matching words with actions.

An overall observation of the study findings reveals considerable overlap and interrelatedness of the study variables. Specifically, the variables of concern and connection shared many similar responses. While it is imperative to show care and

concern in order to build a connection, it is also impossible to be connected without showing concern. Also, one of the ways to establish relationships in connection is through openness and transparency in communication (candor). The participants referenced these interconnections in various ways during the interviews. Indeed, the findings show that the trust-building behaviors of the participants follow a system's process, according to which behaviors affect and are affected by each and all (Senge, 2006).

These interconnections between the variables are not surprising; they corroborate the literature on the theoretical framework. According to Weisman (2016), connection is the culmination of all the trust components. It is that relationship between self, others, the environment, and a higher being (Stovall & Baker, 2010). Connection develops through conversations and sharing of information, which reveals areas of commonalities (Horsager, 2012). Thus, the overlap and the interconnections of the variables, especially those of concern and candor with the connection variable are justified. For one to build the deep-level relationship and bond in connection, it is expected that the requirements of the other variables have been met. Concern emerged with the highest number of frequencies with 268 counts (29%), connection follows with 256 frequency counts (28%), and candor has 186 frequency counts (20%). The major findings highlight building and maintaining relationships, sharing the values of the religious institutes, expressing love and care, and openness and honesty in communication.

### **Implications for Action**

The topic of leadership trust, especially within the Catholic Church, is both critical and timely. This research offered an excellent opportunity to explore how to



build and maintain trust. The major findings of the study, along with the literature on trust, provide a clearer understanding of the strategies leaders use to build trust with stakeholders. Consequently, the implications for action derived from this study would, hopefully, assist all major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes, national and international leadership conferences of Catholic women religious institutes, Catholic women religious in leadership, those responsible for training religious women, and the leaders of Catholic Church in general, to become and remain trustworthy leaders.

Specifically, the findings in this study show that leaders build trust through engaging in the behaviors that demonstrate competence, consistency, candor, concern, and connection. Hence, the practical implications resulting from the findings of the study challenge the major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes, and indeed, all leaders in the Catholic Church to embrace the following trust-building tools in their leadership practices:

### **Practical Implication—Competence**

The findings of this study suggest that competence is invaluable for building trust. The major superiors cited preparations in different fields, leadership experiences at lower levels, developing leadership skills and abilities, and years of experience in leadership as ensuring their competence and credibility. Consequently, leaders of Catholic women religious institutes need to provide opportunities for newly elected leaders and members to hone requisite skills and abilities for current and future responsibilities. To that effect, the following practical actions are recommended:

1. Institute a leadership skills' training program for all those elected into leadership positions, whether at the local, departmental, or religious institute level.

2. Ensure that qualified candidates are elected or assigned to leadership positions. While it is fundamental to remain open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, making informed decisions and choices that are reasonable and practicable is also critical.
3. Develop policies for best practices regarding assigning members to ministries, especially those with leadership and managerial responsibilities.
4. Create and maintain effective and efficient leadership succession planning programs, especially for the top leadership positions.

### **Practical Implication—Consistency**

This study showed that integrity, reliability, and dependability engender trust. Holding oneself and others accountable and ensuring a regular system of reporting and soliciting input were indicated as some of the practices that show consistency and foster trust. Accordingly, developing character through personal development and mastery for all members should be the focus of all training and formation initiatives, especially during the years of initial formation. The following actions are recommended:

1. Implement training initiatives to address the religious institute's strategic plans and goals, ensuring they align with the vision and values of the institute. Also, offer training on regular system of evaluation of people and programs to guarantee consistent outcomes and results. Other training initiatives focused on character formation and workplace and relationship ethics for all the members of the religious institutes on the importance of matching words with actions to improve consistency and integrity. In addition to the requirements of living out the religious consecration, religious women are called to know and practice integrity at all times. Fidelity to the

vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience would naturally flow into fidelity (integrity) in their undertakings.

2. Develop a clear and regular system of accountability reporting for all those in leadership, to ensure transparency and openness.
3. Implement a biannual performance management system for all the leaders at the religious institute level, by an independent committee chosen from among the members of the religious institute under the direction of experts as a means to guarantee congruence between the leaders' activities and results and the organization's goal.
4. Conduct, on a yearly basis, performance appraisals for all the members of the religious institute to identify and discuss each member's strengths and weaknesses in the job and develop plans for improvement.

#### **Practical Implication—Candor**

The study found candor as essential in building trusting relationships. According to the findings of the study, openness, honesty, and transparency in communication were particularly deemed as important as regular and constant sharing of information. Not only is honest and transparent communication necessary, providing regular communication to keep the members aware at each point was the strategy the major superiors adopted in being open and honest. Also, involving others through the provision of opportunities for feedback and sharing of ideas emerged as invaluable tools that organizations need to foster trust. Therefore, the following implications for action were adduced:

1. Include as part of the responsibilities of the major superior and all the leaders in the religious institute, an obligation to keep the members informed.
2. Mandate regular communication, at least once a month, as part of the major superior's responsibility, dedicated to sharing information at all levels of administration in the religious institute, to ensure that members do not hear from the superior only when they want something. Sharing the minutes or the outcomes of council meetings could be one of the means through which the members are kept informed of what the leadership is doing.
3. Provide a regular system of inviting feedback and involving the members in decision making. Include members in committees and directly solicit feedback from members.

#### **Practical Implication—Concern**

The findings from this study indicate that concern involves doing everything that promotes the well-being and welfare of the members of the organization. Some of the specific behaviors indicative of concern include genuinely expressing love and caring for the others, being sensitive to the needs of others, and visiting and spending time with others. Accordingly, the following are recommendations to ensure leaders show care and concern:

1. Conduct an audit of the organizational culture to ensure that it is perceived by professed members as supportive and caring.
2. Ensure that only members who demonstrate care and support are assigned to leadership positions.
3. Implement coaching and mentoring programs for both the personal and professional needs of the members of the religious institute.

4. Design and implement effective human resources management systems (HRM) at the central and regional levels within the religious institute. The HRM systems will ensure that effective human resources strategies and best practices are implemented across the religious institute.

### **Practical Implication—Connection**

The findings in this study corroborate research findings, which show that connection is the culmination of all the trust-building strategies. Connection, from the findings, is the relationship, the bond, which exists between leaders and members. Connection is built through showing competence, consistency, candor, and concern. Specifically, establishing and maintaining relationships and sharing the values of the religious institute are two major ways of building connection with others, thereby engendering trust. Hence, the following are recommendations for this component:

1. Schedule regular times to visit with members of the religious institute on one-on-one and face-to-face basis.
2. Organize opportunities for members to come together to share, build relationships, and bond with one another.
3. Ensure that the religious institute's vision and value statements are clear, able to commit to memory, and used in crafting strategic plans as well as guide in decision making.
4. Revise the vision of the religious institute every 3 years and ensure alignment with current needs and goals.

At the general level, some practical implications for this research include the following:

1. Institute leadership and management programs for the formation program of new members and as an ongoing formation program for the professed members.
2. Provide professional development programs for religious institutes using the findings from the research as a foundation for building successful and effective religious institutes.
3. All newly elected major superiors should be required to attend training and workshops on trust-building strategies.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

The current study discovered major findings in the trust-building behaviors of the major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes in Southern California. Based on these findings and the conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are made for further research:

1. A comparative study that focuses on both the major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes and their professed members. The current study focused on the major superiors and the strategies they use to build trust with members. Another study incorporating the perceptions of the professed members about their leader's trustworthiness compared to the leader's perception of trustworthiness should be conducted to gain a balanced perspective.
2. A replication study with local superiors (supervisors) of Catholic women religious institutes and the professed members of their local communities. Research shows that trust in direct leaders leads to trust in top leaders (Fulmer & Ostroff, 2017). The current research focused on top leaders or the major superiors; hence, another study

examining how direct leaders (local superiors) of religious institutes build trust with the members of their local community is needed.

3. Another study to explore whether there are emphases on the components used to build trust by the major superiors. An unexpected finding of this study showed that less attention was paid to the component of competence. Another study exploring whether different populations accentuate some components as opposed to others is recommended.
4. A comparative study with major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes belonging to the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) and those belonging to the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious (CMSWR). These two conferences hold distinct, yet fundamental views of the religious life, which are vital to understanding the Catholic women religious in the United States. The current study included major superiors belonging to either of the two national leadership conferences of women religious. The recommended study would explore whether there are differences in the strategies used by members of these two conferences.
5. A comparative study with major superiors from various cultural backgrounds and countries. Though trust-building strategies appear to transcend cultural and national boundaries, future studies should explore whether there are differences in the trust-building behaviors of major superiors from different cultural backgrounds and nations. For example, a study could be conducted on how major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes in Africa build trust with the professed members of their religious institutes.

6. A single longitudinal case study of an exemplary religious institute, examining the trust-building behaviors of leaders and professed members.
7. A similar study with major superiors of Catholic women religious institutes and the employees. The current study was limited to the professed members. Another study extending the research to other stakeholders exploring the trust-building behaviors with these stakeholders could possibly explore whether there are differences in the trust-building strategies used with different stakeholders.
8. A similar study with Catholic women religious who are leaders in other organizations within the Catholic Church and Catholic institutions.
9. A similar study with Catholic women religious who are leaders in non-Catholic and nonreligious institutions.
10. A similar study on the trust-building strategies of Catholic priests with their stakeholders.

### **Concluding Remarks and Reflections**

Yesterday, I was clever, so I changed the world. Today I am wise, so I am changing myself.

—Rumi

The above quote articulates the transformational process I experienced during the process of this dissertation. I engaged in this research on leadership trust because of a few reasons: a longstanding personal interest in the topic, a result of the needs assessment conducted in my religious institute, and the current and urgent demand for trust in today's society, especially in the Catholic Church. I set out to learn about trust in order to add to the body of research and fill some of the gaps in the literature, especially regarding



similar research in the setting of Catholic women religious institutes. I feel confident that I achieved my objective. Additionally, I was not consciously looking to undergo a fundamental and profound personal change in the process. However, I did; and I am very grateful.

The opportunity afforded me by this research to interview 10 outstanding major superiors of Catholic women religious institute in Southern California was life changing. Also, I had the opportunity to observe the major superiors in action while interacting with the members of their religious institutes and with other stakeholders. I have learned quite a bit through interacting with these women of God—not just about trust-building strategies but also about life as a religious woman. At several points during the interviews, I was tempted to digress from the interview questions in order to learn more about particular issues about which the participants shared. It was apparent how deeply involved they were in their leadership roles and responsibilities. A few insights stood out to me concerning the trust-building strategies of the major superiors.

I learned that trust is about relationships. Relationships are created over time, intentionally and consistently. All of the participants shared how they intentionally establish and maintain relationships with the members of their religious institutes. They go beyond the demands of their responsibility to ensure that they are connected to and with the members and nurture the bond necessary for building trust. When relationships are established, it becomes easier to show care and concern. As the participants shared, it is easier to know people's needs and preferences because you know them. One participant stated that trust is built on knowledge. She emphasized, "I trust someone when I know them, and they are reliable, day by day, situation to situation."

As some of the participants expressed, it is not easy to give of one's time when one has responsibilities and deadlines to meet. However, consciously putting into practice the maxim that "people are the greatest asset to organizations" means making them feel important and valued, not by fidgeting or looking at one's watch, but by giving them the time they need, and truly listening to them. Building relationships does not require a great deal of effort. It could be as simple as writing an e-mail: "How are you?" "How are you getting on in your new place, new ministry, or studies?" It could mean visiting and spending time with others. On my part, not only have I been opportune to experience this interaction firsthand and learn from the major superiors, I have, through this research, gained the acquaintance of remarkable religious women, a relationship I intend to keep and maintain.

Another insight gained from this research is that trust is built on integrity and consistency. The participants proved themselves as authentic religious women. Through the interaction with them, their authenticity as religious women was revealed. They knew what it meant to be religious, and they lived it out in their lives. As one participant noted, "I do have the competence of being a sister of [name of religious institute], and knowing the struggles and being a woman of prayer and knowing what that means." Trust is about being authentic and being vulnerable to share one's weaknesses and limitations. It entails openness and transparency. At the same time, it entails the willingness to better oneself and keep making positive changes. At the end of the interview, when invited to share any other thoughts on trust, a participant shared the following:

I think you don't get trust; you have to model it. You give people reasons to trust you by your competency, by your candor, by your consistency, by all of these things that you've mentioned. It's a gift, trust is a gift given to the leader, but it's mutual because if a member does not feel trusted, feels judged, feels misjudged, that's going to break the trust relationship also. So I think to be consistent, to not be afraid to show our vulnerability. . . . I think to be a genuine member of the community. You're not going to be different as a leader, I don't think, than you were as a member. And that's why Donna [an author] says, "The effective leader comes from responsible membership."

This quote summarized the perspectives of the major superiors on trust. They each strive to live in a trustworthy manner each day, with every interaction, and in each decision.

Finally, I learned that my interest in the topic of trust is justified. While examples abound regarding lack of trust, betrayals of trust, and continuous trust decline at the global, national, state, organizational, and individual levels, there is still hope. Some leaders behave in a trustworthy manner, albeit they may be in the minority. The Catholic Church has, in recent years, been assailed with sexual abuse and scandals of her leaders. Yet, within the Catholic Church, these women religious have demonstrated the possibility to live in a trustworthy manner, through showing competence, consistency, candor, concern, and connection in their leadership behaviors and practices. While it is critical to eschew and denounce every form of abuse and scandal, it is also important to showcase trustworthy leaders and the strategies they use to build trust. This research, hopefully, has been able to fulfill this vital aspect. The Catholic Church is particularly in need of such positive models and publicity. One participant remarked, validating the study,

I just want to say that this [the research] is probably one of the most important topics in religious life right now because we've gone through so much in our maturation, in communication, and community, that I think this is really the next healthy step for everyone, I mean the entire Church. What we're going through right now in the Church has a lot to do with this. I mean it's the foundation. And so every religious community has to look honestly at: "How are they building trust amongst their members?" So that it truly is a safe environment to grow into a healthy organization.

As I conclude this dissertation, my next task is to apply the experiences and insight gained through the Ed.D. program and particularly this dissertation journey in my personal and professional life. The imperative is to live and work in the values economy—using competence, consistency, candor, concern, and connection in all my interactions, and then, helping others learn how to build trust using competence, consistency, candor, concern, and connection (Weisman, 2016).

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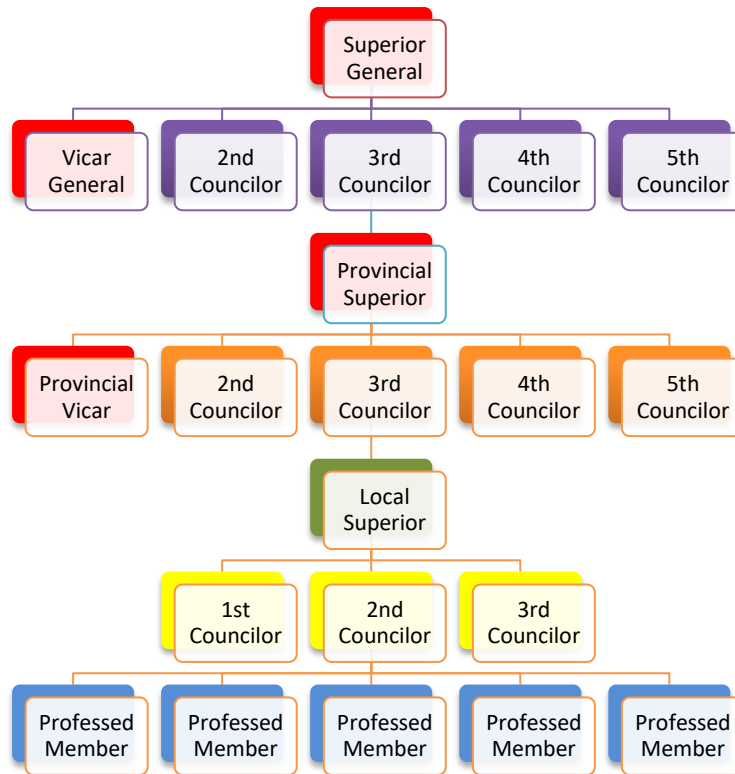


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## APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

**A Generic Organizational Chart of a Catholic Women Religious Institute**



Legend: Major Superiors are in red squares

## APPENDIX B

### Interview Questions

#### Connection

1. How have you developed positive relationships and rapport with the professed members of your religious institute?

**Prompt:** Can you share a time when you connected with the professed members of your religious institute and were able to build positive relationships and rapport?

2. In what ways have you developed shared values with the professed members of your religious institute?

**Prompt:** How do you see the establishment of shared values as contributing to trust with the professed members of your religious institute?

#### Concern

3. Research shows that leaders develop trust when they care for their employees' well-being. Tell me about some of the ways that you show you care for the professed members of your religious institute and their wellbeing.

**Prompt:** Can you share a story about a time when you showed concern for the professed members of your religious institute's professional or personal well-being?

4. What are some of the ways you create a collaborative work environment for the professed members of your religious institute?

**Prompt:** Can you provide some examples of how you make the professed members of your religious institute feel safe to dialogue in a collaborative environment?

**Prompt:** How do you manage failures among the professed members of your religious institute?

#### Candor

5. Please share with me some ways that have worked for you as the leader of your religious institute in communicating openly and honestly with your professed members?

**Prompt:** Can you describe a time when you perceive your communication with the professed members may have contributed to developing trust?

6. Two characteristics of a transparent leader are accessibility and being open to feedback. Please share some examples of how you demonstrate accessibility and openness to feedback.

**Prompt:** Can you share a time when you gave honest feedback to a professed member of your religious institute and how was it received?

**Competency**

7. Can you describe a time in which you feel your competence as a leader contributed to developing trust?

**Prompt:** Please share with me some examples in which you feel you established credibility with the professed members of your religious institute by demonstrating your competence.

8. Competent leaders value the expertise of others and invite participation of team members to solve problems through shared decision making. Please share with me some ways that have worked for you as the leader of your institute in inviting participation in decision making with the professed members?

**Prompt:** Can you describe a time when you perceive your members' participation in decision making may have contributed to developing trust?

**Consistency**

9. What are some of the ways that you model leadership that is reliable and dependable?

**Prompt:** How do you establish expectations that help you to lead the professed members of your religious institute in a way that is dependable?

10. Can you provide an example of a crisis situation when your leadership was dependable and steadfast and developed trust with and between the professed members of your religious institute?

**Prompt:** How do you ensure that your message to the professed members of your religious institute is consistent and true during a time of crisis?

## APPENDIX C

### Field-Test Feedback Reflection Questions

#### Observer Reflection Questions

1. How long did the interview take? Did the time seem to be appropriate?
2. How did you feel during the interview? Comfortable? Nervous?
3. Going into it, did you feel prepared to conduct the interview? Is there something you could have done to be better prepared?
4. What parts of the interview went the most smoothly and why do you think that was the case?
5. What parts of the interview seemed to struggle and why do you think that was the case?
6. If you were to change any part of the interview, what would that part be and how would you change it?
7. What suggestions do you have for improving the overall process?

#### Field Test Participant Feedback Questions

While conducting the interview you should take notes of their clarification request or comments about not being clear about the question. After you complete the interview ask your field test interviewee the following clarifying questions. **Try not to make it another interview; just have a friendly conversation.** Either script or record their feedback so you can compare with the other two members of your team to develop your feedback report on how to improve the interview questions.

*Before the brief post interview discussion, give the interviewee a copy of the interview protocol. If their answers imply that some kind of improvement is necessary, follow up for specificity.*

1. How did you feel about the interview? Do you think you had ample opportunities to describe what you do as a leader when working with your team or staff?
2. Did you feel the amount of time for the interview was ok?
3. Were the questions by and large clear or were there places where you were uncertain what was being asked? *If the interview indicates some uncertainty, be sure to find out where in the interview it occurred.*
4. Can you recall any words or terms being asked about during the interview that were confusing?
5. And finally, did I appear comfortable during the interview... (I'm pretty new at this)?

## APPENDIX D

### **Thematic Interview Protocol Template Draft**

**Start Interview:** “My name is Mary Amanda Nwagbo and I am religious sister undergoing training for future educational leadership position in my religious community. Currently, I am a substitute teacher with Pomona Unified School District. I’m a doctoral candidate at Brandman University in the area of Organizational Leadership. I’m a part of a team conducting research to determine what strategies leaders use to build trust with stakeholders.

Our team is conducting interviews with leaders like yourself. The information you give, along with the others, hopefully will provide a clear picture of the thoughts and strategies that leaders use to build trust with stakeholders and will add to the body of research currently available.

The questions I will be asking are the same for everyone participating in the study. I will be reading most of what I say. The reason for this is to guarantee, as much as possible, that my interviews with all participating doctoral candidates will be conducted pretty much in the same manner.”

#### **Informed Consent (required for Dissertation Research)**

I would like to remind you that any information that is obtained in connection to this study would remain confidential. All of the data will be reported without reference to any individual(s) or any institution(s). After I record and transcribe the data, I will send it to you via electronic mail so that you can check to make sure that I have accurately captured your thoughts and ideas.

Did you receive the Informed Consent and Brandman Bill of Rights I sent you via email? Do you have any questions or need clarification about either document? (*Collect signed documents at this time*).

We have scheduled an hour for the interview. At any point during the interview you may ask that I skip a particular question or stop the interview altogether. For ease of our discussion and accuracy I will record our conversation as indicated in the Informed Consent.

Do you have any questions before we begin? Okay, let’s get started, and thanks so much for your time.

“Here are five elements of trust that research suggests are necessary in a high quality trust environment. You have already received both the definitions of trust and the five elements. What are your thoughts about them? Looking at them, would you agree that these are all important?” (*display on a 3 x 5 card*).

*Possible Probes for any of the questions:*

1. “*Would you expand upon that a bit?*”

2. *“Do you have more to add?”*
3. *“What did you mean by .....”*
4. *“Why do think that was the case?”*
5. *“Could you please tell me more about.... “*
6. *“Can you give me an example of .....”*
7. *“How did you feel about that?”*
8. *When you review please add others you think would be appropriate.*

**End Interview:** “Thank you very much for your time. If you like, when the results of our research are known, we can send you a copy of our findings.”



## APPENDIX E

### **Leadership Trust: A Phenomenological Study of How Major Superiors of Catholic Women Religious Institutes Build Trust With Professed Members**

#### **Operational Definitions of Major Study Variables**

The present study identified The Values Institute's (TVI) trust model as the proposed trust theory. To understand the trust-building process, Weisman (2016) developed the pyramid of trust, or the 5 C's of trust model, including competence, consistency, concern, candor, and connection.

**Trust:** An individual's willingness, given their culture and communication behaviors in relationships and transactions, to be appropriately vulnerable based on the belief that another individual, group or organization is competent, open and honest, concerned, reliable and identified with their common values and goals (Weisman, 2010, p. 1).

**Connection:** Connection is a shared link or bond where there is a sense of emotional engagement and inter-relatedness (Sloan & Oliver, 2013; Stovall & Baker, 2010; White et al. 2016).

**Concern:** Concern is the value placed on the well-being of all members of an organization, promoting their welfare at work and empathizing with their needs. Concern entails fostering a collaborative and safe environment where leaders and members are able to show their vulnerability, support, motivation, and care for each other (Anderson & Ackerman Anderson, 2010; Covey, 2006; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Livnat, 2004; Weisman, 2016).

**Candor:** Candor involves communicating information in a precise manner and being truthful even if one does not want to provide such information (Gordon & Giley, 2012; Tschannen-Moran, 2014; O'Toole & Bennis, 2009; Weisman, 2016).

**Competence:** Competence is the ability to perform a task or fulfill a role as expected (Covey, 2009; Farnsworth, 2015; Handford & Leithwood, 2013; Tschannen-Moran, 2014).

**Consistency:** Consistency is the confidence that a person's pattern of behavior is reliable, dependable and steadfast (Tschannen-Moran, 2014; Weisman, 2016).

## APPENDIX F

### **Brandman University Institutional Review Board (IRB) Research Participant's Bill of Rights**



#### **BRANDMAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD**

#### **Research Participant's Bill of Rights**

Any person who is requested to consent to participate as a subject in an experiment, or who is requested to consent on behalf of another, has the following rights:

1. To be told what the study is attempting to discover.
2. To be told what will happen in the study and whether any of the procedures, drugs, or devices are different from what would be used in standard practice.
3. To be told about the risks, side effects or discomforts of the things that may happen to him/her.
4. To be told if he/she can expect any benefit from participating and, if so, what the benefits might be.
5. To be told what other choices he/she has and how they may be better or worse than being in the study.
6. To be allowed to ask any questions concerning the study both before agreeing to be involved and during the course of the study.
7. To be told what sort of medical treatment is available if any complications arise.
8. To refuse to participate at all before or after the study is started without any adverse effects.

9. To receive a copy of the signed and dated consent form.
10. To be free of pressures when considering whether he/she wishes to agree to be in the study.

If at any time you have questions regarding a research study, you should ask the researchers to answer them. You also may contact the Brandman University Institutional Review Board, which is concerned with the protection of volunteers in research projects. The Brandman University Institutional Review Board may be contacted either by telephoning the Office of Academic Affairs at (949) 341-9937 or by writing to the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Brandman University, 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA, 92618.

## APPENDIX G

### **Informed Consent and Audio Recording Release**

**INFORMATION ABOUT:** The strategies that leaders use to build trust with their organizational stakeholders through using the components of five C's of trust model: competence, consistency, candor, concern, and connection.

**RESPONSIBLE INVESTIGATOR:** Mary Amanda Nwagbo, IHM

#### **PURPOSE OF STUDY:**

You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Mary Amanda Nwagbo, a doctoral candidate of Organizational Leadership from the School of Education at Brandman University. The purpose of this phenomenological research study is to explore how Major Superiors of Catholic women religious institutes build trust with professed members, using the five domains of competence, consistency, candor, concern, and connection.

Your participation in this study is voluntary and will include an interview with the identified student investigator. The interview will take approximately 60 minutes to complete and will be scheduled at a time and location of your convenience. The interview questions will pertain to your perceptions and your responses will be confidential. Each participant will have an identifying code and names will not be used in data analysis. The results of this study will be used for scholarly purposes only.

#### **I understand that:**

- a) The researcher will protect my confidentiality by keeping the identifying codes safe-guarded in a locked file drawer or password protected digital file to which the researcher will have sole access.
- b) The interview will be audio recorded. The recordings will be available only to the researcher and the professional transcriptionist. The audio recordings will be used to capture the interview dialogue and to ensure the accuracy of the information collected during the interview. All information will be identifier-

redacted and my confidentiality will be maintained. Upon completion of the study all recordings, transcripts and notes taken by the researcher and transcripts from the interview will be destroyed

- c) My participation in this research study is voluntary. I may decide to not to participate in the study and I can withdraw at any time. I can also decide not to answer particular questions during the interview if I so choose. Also, the Investigator may stop the study at any time.
- d) If I have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Mary Amanda Nwagbo, at mnwagbo@mail.brandman.edu or by phone at 909-671-2655; or Dr. Patricia White (Advisor) at pwhite@brandman.edu.
- e) No information that identifies you me will be released without my separate consent and all identifiable information will be protected to the limits allowed by law. If the study design or the use of the data is to be changed, you I will be so informed and consent re-obtained. There are minimal risks associated with participating in this research.
- f) If I have any questions, comments, or concerns about the study or the informed consent process, I may write or call the Office of the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Brandman University, at 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA 92618, (949) 341-7641.

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this form and the “Research Participant’s Bill of Rights.” I have read the above and understand it and hereby consent to the procedure(s) set forth.

_____	Date: _____
Signature of Participant or Responsible Party	
_____	Date: _____
Signature of Principal Investigator	

## APPENDIX H

### IRB Approval to Conduct Research

BUIRB Application Approved As Submitted: Mary Amanda Nwagbo



Inbox × Dissertation ×

**Institutional Review Board** <my@brandman.edu>  
to me, pwhite, buirb, ddevore ▾

Sep 7, 2018, 3:53 PM ☆ ↶ ⋮

Dear Mary Amanda Nwagbo,

Congratulations, your IRB application to conduct research has been approved by the Brandman University Institutional Review Board. This approval grants permission for you to proceed with data collection for your research. Please keep this email for your records, as it will need to be included in your research appendix.

If any issues should arise that are pertinent to your IRB approval, please contact the IRB immediately at [BUIRB@brandman.edu](mailto:BUIRB@brandman.edu). If you need to modify your BUIRB application for any reason, please fill out the "Application Modification Form" before proceeding with your research. The Modification form can be found at the following link: <https://irb.brandman.edu/Applications/Modification.pdf>.

Best wishes for a successful completion of your study.

Thank you,

**Doug DeVore, Ed.D.**

Professor

Organizational Leadership

BUIRB Chair

[ddevore@brandman.edu](mailto:ddevore@brandman.edu)

[www.brandman.edu](http://www.brandman.edu)

APPENDIX I

**NIH Certificate of Completion**



## APPENDIX J

### Letter of Invitation to Participate in the Study

Dear Sister \_\_\_\_\_,

I am a doctoral candidate of Organizational Leadership at Brandman University, conducting a study on trust-building strategies of Major Superiors of Catholic Women Religious Institutes in Southern California. Your name has been referred to me by \_\_\_\_\_ as someone fitting the criteria of having the reputation of trusting relationship with members of your religious institute. I would very much appreciate including your experiences and thoughts on trust-building strategies in my study. If you volunteer to participate, I would want to schedule a time to interview you and observe one of your team meetings or just being present in the religious community to watch how sisters interact with each other and discuss projects, preferably on the same day. I would also request from you written documents (newsletters, emails (redacted if necessary), websites, brochures, handouts, meeting agendas, letters, awards, minutes, etc.) showing trust-building strategies. Attached are the informed consent and audio recording release form and Research Participant's Bill of Rights. Please let me know if you would be willing to help contribute to this important study. Should you be willing to contribute to this study, may I have the name and email address of the person that I should work with to schedule the interview. For additional information, please feel free to contact me at [mnwagbo@mail.brandman.edu](mailto:mnwagbo@mail.brandman.edu) or XXX-XXX-XXXX.

Regards,

Mary Amanda Nwagbo, IHM, M. Ed., MAOL

Doctoral Candidate, Brandman University