

Impact of Transformational Leadership on Youth

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Abstract

Oppressed youth are stigmatized by their surrounding environments. The justice system and many at-risk youths have frequent encounters resulting in negative behavioral impacts and additional labeling. Some at-risk youths are incarcerated because the youths emulate their surrounding culture. And, these youths are unaware of available programs or declined opportunities to participate in a program. Though youth may acknowledge belonging to a group or having a family, their true relationships are one of isolation, loneliness, and self-serving. Oppressed youths require early intervention with an introduction to programs and leaders promoting change. Unfortunately, programs and leaders compete with the world for limited resources including time and personnel. Therefore, successful behavioral change requires committed programs and leaders. And, selected programs and leaders must model a leadership framework and attributes for changing youth behavior, removing labels, building networks of relationships, and restoring a community life with meaning and purpose. Additionally, these programs and leaders empower youth with a sense of belonging in a community where all members seek group interests rather than individual self-interests, and their voices for change are communicated, heard, and acknowledged by their internal and external communities.

Keywords: youth, oppressed, incarcerate, at-risk, justice system, transform, leadership, programs, Christian, character, community

Impact of Transformational Leadership on Youth

Transformational leadership inspires and motivates individuals creating positive change for an individual, group, and organization. However, many leaders still employ a transactional model that motivates through punishment. Many authors have researched and identified successful requirements and programs for changing oppressed youth behavior. Also, the authors have conducted in-depth research on leadership models to transform the behavior of incarcerated and at-risk youth. This paper initially discusses the background and behavior of oppressed youth and their relationship with the justice system. Research topics included oppressed youths' characteristics, transforming programs, and transforming leadership attributes. Evidential research supported transformational leadership comprised of role-model leaders and empowering programs. The following literature review confirms the impact on oppressed youth empowered with a voice for change through transformational leadership to acquire a sense of belonging.

Oppressed Youth

Demographics

Initial research started with identifying demographics for At-Risk youth. Donnelly (2024) introduces his article by outlining issues associated with the socio-economically disadvantaged. Issues included lack of income, inability to access education, and poor health. These issues influenced behavioral characteristics to include but not limited to mental health issues, drug dependency, homelessness, and a limited network of friends.

Self-Perception and Sense of Belonging

Without a positive network of friends, youth could not build a stable sense of belonging therefore negatively impacting their self-perception. Stiwich et al. (2022) identified self-perception as an issue for youth in developing a sense of belonging especially in under-served,

under-represented areas. Self-perception influences a youth's identity and future aspirations when self-evaluating in areas of value, respect, acceptance, support system, and safety—a negative self-perception results in feelings of rejection, isolation, and a lack of relationships.

Without relationships, youth cannot establish a sense of belonging to a networked community. According to Evans (2007), youth's need for a sense of community trends back to the earliest days of their development and their interaction with adults and a neighborhood. Per the author, less time around adults and outside their neighborhood results in a decrease in social identity thus a decrease in motivation and any aspiration to excel. Youth lacking a social connection develop apathy and loneliness. Unfortunately, according to the author, youth who would benefit the most but are categorized as the underprivileged, economically stressed, and socially oppressed miss opportunities to create social connections and a sense of purpose because of associated requirements such as transportation and cost.

Youth and the Justice System

Without an opportunity to establish a sense of purpose or relationships, many youths involuntarily become members of a community, the youth justice system. Brierley (2023) identifies the majority of children in the youth justice system, before entry, as having experienced a life of poverty, neglect, abuse, and family dysfunction. According to the author, incarceration only increases a youth's challenges including a sense of isolation and their perception that the people governing the justice system are unable to comprehend the reality of their life experiences.

According to Puvaneyshwaran (2024), youth offenders encounter multiple challenges as a result of incarceration. These challenges include stigma, limited opportunities, and lack of rehabilitative support. According to the author's article, youth offenders are not provided the

tools to build confidence and learn to navigate the challenging situations of life. Empowerment is one of the missing key tools. Empowerment changes an offender's behavior by providing youth with the necessary information and abilities to build a new life, make more informed decisions, and increase community participation. For this reason, transforming programs have been created to provide youths with life tools for changing behavior.

Transforming Programs

Incarcerated Youth Programs

Several transforming programs have been researched for lowering the incarceration rate of youth. For example, Miner-Romanoff (2016) discusses the impact of an art program on incarcerated youth. According to the author, approximately 4 million children grow up in environments of crime, poverty, unemployment, family incarceration, and family violence. These environments precede a decrease in self-perception and an increase in the need for control. The art program researched by the author provided oppressed youth with a means of empowerment and having a voice. The program offered social and vocational skills. The results of several questionnaires demonstrated the positive impact of the art program. In one survey, 87% identified the ability to achieve a goal, and 81% cited a healthier means for expressing themselves. Also, the questionnaire showed an increase in the following areas: cooperation by 63% and patience by 75%. In another survey, 93% of youth cited increased self-esteem resulting from decreased stress, increased pride, and accomplishing a goal. Additionally, a study by the author of the community's attitude towards juvenile offenders' value in society and hope for their future increased positively from 40% to 53%. The community could hear the youth's voices (joy, pain, hope, tears) and witness an increase in youth personal identifiers with a decrease in youth serious repeat offending and behavioral problems.

Brierley (2023) discusses research on another program developed for employing a staff of previously incarcerated personnel. In establishing this program, risk had to be assumed. However, the benefits outweighed the risks because the program allowed for establishing a trusting and authentic relationship between staff and youth. According to the author, the youth believed the staff members understood their perspective. This youth perception allowed for establishing relationships between previously incarcerated professionals and youth through constructive and challenging conversations while maintaining core values and principles. These relationships formed in the program moved the youth from isolation to a sense of belonging. Additionally, the program became known for creating community connections moving youth away from the youth justice system by role-modeling change, and inspiring hope in those feeling condemned by the justice system. The author's article noted the youth developed a new personification by constructing a non-offending identity with a sense of belonging.

Changing a youth's identity requires a transforming framework. According to Jumarali et al. (2019), a transforming framework lessens the repetitive meetings between youth and the justice system by disconnecting youth from the stigma assigned based on their families and communities. The authors' research identifies requirements for a framework with a transformative shift that de-stigmatizes and re-humanizes youth and returns youth to their former, impressionable, youth years. According to the authors, a framework must be implemented to end youth incarceration even if the job security for those in the justice system becomes a risk factor while holding the system accountable for youth transformation. Also, framework implementation requires discarding certain systems, and labeling language (incorrigible, defiant, at-risk, delinquent) for these youth exhibiting normalized, developmental

behavior (risk-taking, boundary testing). Finally, youth must be approached with the attitude of not being a problem requiring fixing.

At-Risk Youth Programs

To transform youth and provide a sense of belonging, authors have conducted a vast amount of research on various programs and their effects on youth. For instance, Aponte-Moreno (2018) describes the transformational effect of a music program, incorporated in over 40 countries, on youth from underprivileged socioeconomic backgrounds. The program socially changed youth by providing hope and purpose through free classical music classes with an individual focus on the youth's needs. According to the author, the youth's character and self-esteem were strengthened by challenging students in a safe environment emphasizing discipline, hard work, and voicing their thoughts. These safe environments inspired, influenced, motivated, and intellectually stimulated the youth.

Additionally, as noted by Aponte-Moreno (2018), the program incentivized the family to participate in the program by providing the parents a stipend and training in providing feedback and encouragement to the youth. The program fostered a sense of value between the family and their child raising the youth and family to higher levels of expectation exceeding their self-interests. Per the author, youths' lives forever changed as a result of the program along with their socioeconomic conditions causing youth to strive for continued excellence. And, youth created relationships, fostered a sense of community, and promoted a sense of value.

In another program, Donnelly (2024) highlights the success of transformational coaches in helping socio-economic disadvantaged youth overcome various issues through participation in a sports program participation. The coaches of the sports program articulated positive and meaningful futuristic visions, challenging old habits, and provided individualized support. The

author noted that youth in the sports programs increased their social development, self-reliance, motivation, discipline, emotional control, communication, competence, and teamwork. Also, according to Donnelly (2024), youths acquired leadership attributes that transferred from the field of sports to the field of life through coaches becoming intimately involved in shaping the youth through mentoring and developing professional relationships with high-performing expectations. Through the coaches and the program, youths developed resilience and life satisfaction inhabiting a sense of purpose, meaning, and belonging.

Youth, to become resilient and change their behavior, must encounter capacity-building educators. Sanders et al. (2016) researched marginalized youth in a New Zealand Youth Success Program (YSP). The program was known for its capacity-building practices for keeping youth in school. Through their research, the authors recognized youth school educators as providing the greatest possibility for life change from early intervention. The article notes that educators can promote well-being through developmental opportunities and teaching resilience-building skills. Without educators focusing on the well-being of youth, many youth face challenges beyond their control including the adults influencing them outside of school. Sanders et al. (2016) revealed that the longer a student remains in school, the greater the potential for building resiliency. In one study, the authors followed 506 youths identified as vulnerable through questionnaires referencing experiences (life, family, education, community), relationships, risk, and self-perception of success. 70% of the youth had been expelled or suspended at least once and 53% had skipped school at least 3 times per week. 73% had been receiving education out of a traditional school for reasons beyond their control. Yet, 83% of the youth interviewed still value education as important for success in life.

Sanders et al. (2016) research identified many youths as disengaged in mainstream school because of a feeling of not belonging. The mainstream school had emotionally stressed the students and provided them with a self-perception of never being good enough and never being able to achieve. According to the authors, the youths felt they received a lot of criticism and no praise. And, as their self-perception negatively increased as time passed, departure from the frightening, hostile, foreign, and unwelcoming environment became the logical solution. From the authors' research, the YSP provided opportunities for rebuilding a capable, strong, and successful self-image. The youth rebuilt their image by building positive, honest, encouraging, and empathetic relationships fostered with a sense of belonging. With this new image, school environments moved from frightening and hostile to a safe- haven allowing for opportunities to try again after making a mistake. Per Sanders et al. (2016), YSP youths became known for their warmth, perseverance, commitment, and highly valued attributes in their community. The majority of the youth enrolled in the program and followed for three years graduated successfully from school. The program resulted in an 89% retention rate after the first two years and a 96% retention rate at the end of the third year. Educators in New Zealand's YSP lowered the 30% exit rate from school for youth coming from low socio-economic status households. Sanders et al. (2016) research demonstrated that the Youth Success Program supported by transforming leaders assisted the youths in changing their self-image and fostering a sense of belonging.

Transforming Leaders

Research by numerous authors has demonstrated the success of multiple programs in changing youth behavior. However, the key to program success is inherently the results of the leaders and educators. They are the individuals responsible for implementing programs, influencing youth, and creating safe environments. Duckworth (2016) conducted multiple

interviews and reviewed numerous studies on the power of grit and its ability to change a person's life. The author's research revealed that every person can achieve with determined effort regardless of I.Q., talent, or circumstances. Also, Duckworth's (2016) research reveals surrounding culture shapes every aspect of a person's behavior, positively and negatively. However, behavior can't change without the intervention of transforming adult leaders. The author interviewed several leaders including a sports coach. The sports coach stated that to "become a great swimmer is to join a great team" (p. 246). Per Duckworth (2016), a challenging culture comprised of a great team has immense power to influence a person's grit. Culture affects every part of a person's character. An effective culture must be challenging, provide a personal identity with a sense of belonging, and inspire a person to exceed expectations and achieve. Additionally, according to the author, for achievement to occur, an individual takes ownership with confidence to overcome obstacles such as adversity, rejection, and failure. Though the cost and benefits of overcoming obstacles may not seem worth the pain and time, the person, who remains focused on achieving a goal by setting small milestones, realizes the benefits outweigh the cost.

In another study conducted by Abbu et al. (2022), leaders established successful culture attributes of open collaboration and transparent, effective communication. Using content analysis (automated and manual), the authors identified specific character traits. The content analysis identified the following: honesty, humility, courage, ethics, growth mindset, transparent agenda, inspire engagement, and storytelling. Additionally, per the authors, leaders demonstrated specific capabilities (acquiring necessary skills, knowledge sharing, participative) with a track record for delivering results. And, leaders modeled a positive attitude and developed trust through selfless behavior, valuing everyone's input equally, and gratefully accepting all constructive feedback.

With a positive attitude and trusting relationships, leaders could promote empathy, resilience, and creativity. Also, the authors noted the leaders' courage to accept needed change with a willingness to grow. The courage of the leaders with the distribution of accurate, relevant, transparent information inspired engagement among others with a sense of belonging. This sense of belonging created a deeper relationship between dedicated, empowered personnel with the leader's vision woven into cognitive emotional references.

Creating relationships and empowering individuals through transparent communication represents a few elements of transformational leadership. Rachman (2022) studied direct and indirect relationships between transformational leadership, interpersonal communication, discipline, and job satisfaction using a questionnaire model and the Likert scale with a five-category rating from strongly disagree to strongly agree. According to the author, transformational leaders provide open and clear communication. Additionally, the study linked a person's self-identity to a collective identity and a mission. Rachman (2022) stated that leaders knew their people's strengths and weaknesses and empowered individuals with a voice, inspired them by accepting the input of their ideas, and challenged them to take ownership of their work. The author's study demonstrated a positive and direct correlation between transformational leadership and interpersonal communication on discipline and job satisfaction. Rachman's (2022) study reflected increased honesty and trust through transformational leadership with interpersonal communication in community environments. The author's study demonstrated increased work output and job satisfaction through relationships created through transformational leadership, not discipline. Strong relationships create a collective identity with a sense of belonging increased work discipline, performance, and motivation to exceed levels of expectations.

Creating a team with a collective identity requires transformational leadership. Canal (2014) notes successful execution of transformational leadership involves affirmation and empowerment of the talents and abilities of the youth and adults partnered with communication and creative challenges to support a common, futuristic vision. With the appropriate leadership and empowerment, a leader not only has an opportunity to create motivated, inspired, and directed leaders but young, transformed, service-oriented disciples as well.

Transforming Leadership

Role of Leadership

When determining an appropriate leadership style, discussions typically involve two leadership models, transactional and transformational. Fauzi et al. (2012) authored an article discussing the difference between transactional and transformational leadership. Transactional leadership motivates individuals to achieve assigned tasks. Transformational leadership with empowerment stimulates a person intellectually and provides insight into their full potential. According to the authors, with this type of stimulation, followers no longer view themselves as replaceable. They begin thinking in new and creative ways for problem-solving, seeking others to share their knowledge with, and individual self-confidence increases moving an individual to achieve a level of excellence beyond their expectation. However, for this movement to occur, the leader must portray behavioral characteristics to build trusting relationships and inspire followers to model their behavior. According to Fauzi et al. (2012), leaders must promote intellectual stimulation, psychological empowerment, and motivation in an individual while maintaining group cohesiveness moving an individual beyond self-interest to the interest of a group with the same goals and vision.

Transforming leaders with the implementation of leadership components attributes identified in all successful leaders have an opportunity to grow individuals and communities. Canals (2014) authored an article defining leadership from his perspective because the term leadership and its definition vary depending on the person and audience. According to the author, though conclusive agreement does not exist on the definition of leadership, two similar components do exist for understanding leadership: process and influence. In Canal's (2014) review of these components, leaders must remember that "a", not "the" process exists to influence others. Per the author, the leadership process is ever-changing, dynamic, multi-action, and multi-faceted transforming the leaders as much as the followers working to achieve a common goal. Canals' (2014) article notes the required attributes of an effective transformational leader. Two key attributes identified by the author were charisma and a realistic, believable visionary. Other personal attributes included competence, confidence, and morality. Together, these components and attributes of transformational leaders create a strong role model empowering followers to shape not only their organization but also society by instilling hope, allowing creativity, and making the attainment of goals a reality.

Leaders and Relationships

For goals to become a reality, leaders must transform an individual's behavior and personality. Evans (2007) identifies personality and behavioral transformation as being influenced through the development of relationships and an understanding of society. According to the author, youth who establish long-term relationships with adults and in a community build strong emotional connections opening communications for sharing mutual concerns with others. Evans (2007) notes that youth are provided opportunities to learn new skills and then allowed to act on these skills to become a change agent empowered with a sense of voice for their

communities. Per the author, this change in youth requires positive interaction between youths and adults in developing skills, building confidence, and providing meaningful roles with direction because adults play the greatest role in the lives of youth by providing them opportunities to gain the necessary skills leading to a sense of belonging.

The effects of providing youth with opportunities to develop their youth capacities have been demonstrated during a social justice youth summit. Salisbury et al. (2023) examined 30 youths and the development of their capacities through a social justice youth summit program. The program developed youth by giving them a voice in making decisions in their school through interviews, focus groups, surveys, and planning social justice youth events. Additionally, youth developed confidence, competence, and a sense of belonging through leadership opportunities to recognize injustices and oppression. Their responsibility included but was not limited to scheduling town halls and marketing events, identifying issues, designing solutions, and sharing their work with school leaders. According to Salisbury et al. (2023), this educational experience of learning and actualizing promoted youth changes in the school by providing critical, encouraging, and constructive feedback. The feedback resulted in high-quality, shared work products from committed youth groups whose actionable thoughts focused on achieving a collective rather than an individual outcome. Per the author, together, youth from diverse backgrounds increased their collective knowledge, realized their competence, and brought awareness to oppressive issues. Salisbury et al. (2023) noted that each youth became a social change agent in their schools and communities with strong connections between committed youth, the school community, educators, and other youth outside their normal peer networks. The youth outcomes emphasize the importance of transformational leaders empowering youth with a voice in results.

The Effects of Empowerment

Ozaralli (2023) identifies successful transformational leaders as having the ability to influence individual attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors through empowerment and shared vision. According to the author, empowerment has been defined as "a process of enhancing the feeling of self-efficacy among organizational members through the identification of conditions that foster powerlessness". Ozaralli (2023) studied the direct correlation between transformational leadership attributes (charisma, individual-oriented, intellectual stimulation, inspiration, empathy, compassion, long-term commitment) and empowerment in building team effectiveness, individual satisfaction, job performance, and product quality. Individuals working for an empowering transformational leader rated team effectiveness favorably with a higher level of communication, performance, and goal achievement. Additionally, empowered individuals increased team innovation, cohesiveness, and effectiveness. Per the author, individual empowerment has been correlated to an initial replication of their leader until the individual begins establishing their leadership identity molded within a collectively, empowered group of leaders. These individuals were shown to exceed expected performance levels with greater levels of creativity through increased intellectual development. And, ultimately, these individuals became committed to collective interests over self-interests with a collective mission.

Leaders focusing on a long-term commitment to a group or mission transform individuals into committed followers. According to Abolade (2024), long-term, leadership commitment requires a focus on the physical, emotional, and social needs of a collective group as well as each individual while provisioning a sense of ownership. The author notes that individuals given ownership of a larger, shared vision, and goals of a mission acquire a sense of purpose and meaning motivating them to exceed their self-anticipated expectations. And, this motivation

leads to the development of a cohesive team with individuals reflecting the servant leadership style of Jesus, a sense of belonging comparable to followers of Jesus, and the framework for Christian ministries today.

Christian Leadership

To reflect the leadership style of Jesus Christ, an individual must understand not only the definition of transformational leadership but more specifically, Christian Leadership. Many leadership books have been written in an attempt to define leadership. Canals (2014) was disheartened and unsatisfied with the lack of definition for leadership involving youth and Christian ministry. So, the author relied on a document from The US Catholic Bishops defining leadership development as an extension of the church's ministry - "The ministry of leadership development calls forth, affirms, and empowers the diverse gifts, talents, and abilities of adults and young people in our faith communities for comprehensive ministry with adolescents". The author describes leadership as not being a trait of an individual but a process with influence that moves a group towards a common goal. According to Canal (2014), by today's standards, Jesus demonstrates the perfect model for transformational leadership. Jesus led by example with charisma, engaged others, and communicated expectations effectively discipling others towards accomplishing a shared mission. However, the author acknowledges leadership is only one of many components (interacting, empowering, inspiring, role-modeling, and vision development) of discipleship. Also, per Canal (2014), a transformational leader teaches, motivates, inspires, and empowers followers to reach their full potential, look beyond personal interests, and transform others. All these components as noted by the author result in the transformation of individual youths, communities, and societies with service being the heart of all actions to

develop more disciples. The author identifies transformational leadership as the most successful in transforming not only individual youths but entire groups.

Blanchard et al. (2005) supplement the research of Canal (2014) by discussing Jesus, the perfect transformational leader, and his many transforming leadership attributes. According to the authors, Jesus transformed his disciples by aligning their hearts, heads, hands, and habits towards a compelling vision with a clear purpose. He poured his life into his disciples and projected trust in them to build their confidence. Jesus equipped, coached, and empowered his disciples to accomplish all assigned tasks. And, before assigning any tasks, he role-modeled each task from a servant leader position and never compromised his values. Finally, Jesus' passionate leadership style resulted in relationships among motivated disciples with a shared vision and goals.

According to Patton (2015), successful transformational leaders must motivate followers by presenting followers with a realistic, attractive vision. The author chose the Apostle Paul to demonstrate the characteristics of a transformational leader. Paul was originally known as Saul and started his studies under a respected Rabbi around 12 years old to learn the perfect law of his fathers. Patton's (2015) research notes Paul began as an unethical, transactional leader sent to lead others back to the Jewish tradition by persecuting heretics who promoted the Christian beliefs of Jesus Christ. Saul believed he was doing the work of God, until one day, he and his followers heard the voice of Jesus but saw no one and he was blinded. Following the instructions of the voice, he was led by his followers. He entered a city where his sight was restored. His name became Paul. Ultimately, he was transformed from a transactional leader to a transformational leader. He became filled with the Spirit to spread the message of God to all ends of the World. In spreading the message of God, he formed networks of relationships and

mentored many individuals during his journey despite persecution. According to the author, through Paul's charismatic, role-modeling efforts, communication of expectations, and demonstration of confidence in his followers, his followers began looking beyond their self-interest. His followers became empowered through his persistence to overcome persecution. Paul's followers started imitating his behavior of high morality as Paul imitated the behavior of Christ.

Thomas (2018) discusses the leadership behavior of Jesus in transforming his disciples through reflection on the scriptural book. The author further defines a distinction between secular and Christian leadership. Though secular leadership may utilize moral and biblical principles of the Bible, Christian leadership emphasizes heart and action. Additionally, Christian leadership promotes a growth in holiness and the Kingdom of God. According to the article, Jesus personally chose, mentored, and shaped twelve learners who would become servants known as disciples. These disciples were transformed in less than 4 years through close, individual, intimate relationships with Jesus through empowerment. Also, Jesus remained patient while mentoring his disciples during their maturation requiring an increase of their faith, obtaining wisdom, removing their pride, and growing in patience. Thomas (2018) explains the importance of this mentorship to assist with decision-making for life progression, exposing opportunities that individuals would not have previously considered or known about, and achieving their full potential. The author notes that the transformational leadership of Jesus impacted millions even after the death of Jesus on the cross. After the death of Jesus, his disciples continued the mission impacting billions. The leadership of Jesus demonstrates that transformational leadership not only transforms an individual but can transform a world through empowering relationships in which individuals have a sense of belonging with a purpose.

Conclusion

This paper through the contributing research of multiple authors substantiates the impact of transformational leadership as the leadership model for oppressed youth to acquire a sense of belonging through empowerment with a voice for change. Oppressed youth behavior can change with the modeling of successful programs and committed, transforming leaders. The programs must create an empowering environment facilitating a sense of belonging to a group seeking to achieve a shared vision projecting a meaningful purpose. The leader must communicate clear, articulate goals, foster empowering teamwork, and model required behavior. Additionally, to inspire higher achievements, leaders and programs should promote support by family and community to acknowledge, accept, and advocate for the new voice of change. The research for this literature review strongly supported oppressed youth empowered with a voice for change through transformational leadership acquiring a sense of belonging.

Annotated Bibliography

Abbu, H., Mugge, P., Gudergan, G., Hoeborn, G., & Kwiatkowski, A. (2022). Measuring the human dimensions of digital leadership for successful digital transformation. *Research-Technology Management*, 65(3), 39–49. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08956308.2022.2048588>

Abbu et al. (2022) interviewed 13 leaders of successful digital organizations and their leadership attributes. The leaders had established successful culture attributes of open collaboration and transparent, effective communication. Using content analysis (automated and manual), the authors were able to identify specific character traits. The content analysis identified the following: honesty, humility, courage, ethical, growth mindset, transparent agenda, inspire engagement, and storytelling. Additionally, the leaders demonstrated specific capabilities (positive attitude, acquire necessary skills, knowledge sharing, participative) with a track record for delivering results. The leaders demonstrated a positive attitude and learned to develop trust through selfless behavior, valuing everyone's input equally, and gratefully accepting all constructive feedback. The positive attitude allowed leaders to promote empathy, resilience, and creativity. Also, leaders had courage to accept needed change with a willingness to grow even when difficult. The courage of the leaders with the distribution of accurate, relevant, transparent information sharing inspired employee engagement with a sense of belonging. This sense of belonging created a deeper connection between dedicated, empowered employees and organizational vision woven into cognitive emotional references.

Abolade, Gabriel. (2024). Transformational leadership approach for sustainable Christian mission engagement in the community. *Edumania-An International Multidisciplinary Journal*, 2(2), 60-74. <https://doi.org/10.59231/edumania/9038>

Abolade (2024) discusses the effects of transformational leadership on a group or mission when empowering an individual. Empowerment provides an individual with ownership of a larger, shared vision, and goals of a mission. This ownership provides a sense of purpose and meaning that motivates individuals to exceed their self-anticipated expectations. This motivation leads to the development of a cohesive team.

Transformational leadership requires an empathetic, compassionate, and committed leader. This long-term commitment requires focusing on the physical, emotional, and social needs of not only the individual but the group. The results of a transformational leader extend beyond the individual and the organization. Individuals begin extending their empowerment to the widows, orphans, and poor impacting their surrounding communities. The author's discussion on transformational leadership reflects the servant leadership style of Jesus, the belonging of his followers to a culture, and the framework for Christian ministries today.

Aponte-Moreno, M. (2018). Transformational leadership: lessons from the Venezuela's system of youth orchestras. *Journal of Leadership Studies*, 12(3), 40-47. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jls.21587>

Aponte-Moreno (2018) describes the transformational effect of a music program on youth from underprivileged socioeconomic backgrounds. The program has socially changed youth by providing hope and purpose through free classical music classes with an individual focus on their needs. The youth's character and self-esteem were

strengthened by challenging students in a safe environment emphasizing discipline, hard work, and voicing their thoughts. The classes inspired, influenced, motivated, and intellectually stimulated the youth. Additionally, the youth were not only trained but the family as well. The parents receive a stipend and training in providing feedback and encouragement. The family and their child fostered a sense of value. The effects on the family and youth required leaders to empower youth in a respectable, admirable, and trustful manner. The program not only raised the youth and family to higher levels of expectation exceeding their self-interests but leaders as well. Over 40 countries have incorporated a model of the program. Through the program, the youth created relationships, fostered a sense of community, and promoted a sense of value. The program created a drive in the youth for continued excellence transforming their lives forever and allowing them to change their socioeconomic condition.

Blanchard, K. H., & Hodges, P. (2005). *Lead like Jesus : lessons for everyone from the greatest leadership role model of all time*. Thomas Nelson.

Blanchard et al. (2005) discusses Jesus and his transforming leadership attributes. Jesus transformed the disciples by aligning their hearts, heads, hands, and habits. He poured his life into his disciples and projected trust in them. Jesus equipped, coached, and empowered his disciples to accomplish all assigned tasks. Before assigning any tasks, he demonstrated the task from a servant leader position and never compromised his values. Jesus was a role model for his disciples. He provided them with a compelling vision and a clear purpose. The passionate leadership style of Jesus resulted in relationships among motivated disciples with a shared vision and goals. His demonstrated trust in his disciples

built their confidence. The disciples remained committed to mission success and transformed many others daily.

Blanchard, K. H., & Miller, M. (2014). *The secret: what great leaders know and do*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.

Blanchard et al. (2014) articulate the characteristics of successful leaders. And, the authors remind readers that a great leader requires patience because great leadership does not happen in a moment but over a lifetime. Leaders must have a vision beyond 5 years supported by a non-superficial character. Leaders must be passionate, humble, and serving not self-serving doing everything possible to help each individual achieve success by moving them from one place to the next as a team. A leader invests and engages in the lives of their people. To invest properly in people, a leader must know their people's strengths and weaknesses at work and outside of work. The knowledge allows a leader to put each person in the right job immediately instead of later. Also, by leveraging individual strengths, weaknesses become irrelevant to a person. A great leader, then, uses this knowledge and engages the hands, hearts, and minds of every person to include themselves in building a team. As a collective team, individuals build synergy, share knowledge, and maintain accountability for each other including the leader.

Brierley, A. (2023). Experiential peers cultivate a participation culture in youth justice. *Safer Communities*, 22(2), 78-90. <https://doi.org/10.1108/SC-07-2022-0024>

Brierley (2023) identifies the majority of children in the youth justice system, before entry, as having experienced a life of poverty, neglect, abuse, and family dysfunction. Then, youth develop a sense of isolation and alienation with incarceration. The youth perceive the people governing the justice system as unable to comprehend the reality of

their life experiences. To resolve this perception, a program was developed employing a staff of previously incarcerated personnel. In establishing this program, risk had to be assumed. However, the benefits outweighed the risks because the program allowed for establishing a trusting and authentic relationship between staff and youth. The youth believed the staff members understood their perspective. The program proved successful because relationships were established between the previously incarcerated professionals and youth through constructive and challenging conversations while maintaining core values and principles. These relationships formed in the program moved at-risk youth from isolation to a sense of belonging. Additionally, the program became known for creating community connections moving youth away from the youth justice system by role-modeling change, and inspiring hope in those feeling condemned by the justice system. The youth developed a new personification by constructing a non-offending identity with a sense of belonging.

Canales, A. D. (2014). Models of Christian leadership in youth ministry. *Religious Education*, 109(1), 24–44. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00344087.2014.868207>

Canals (2014) initiates his discussion by defining leadership from his perspective because the term leadership and its definition vary depending on the person and audience. Many leadership books have been written in an attempt to define leadership. However, the author was disheartened and unsatisfied with the lack of definition for leadership involving youth and Christian ministry. So, the author relied on a document from The US Catholic Bishops defining leadership development as an extension of the church's ministry - "The ministry of leadership development calls forth, affirms, and empowers the diverse gifts, talents, and abilities of adults and young people in our faith

communities for comprehensive ministry with adolescents”. The author describes leadership as not being a trait of an individual but a process with influence that moves a group towards a common goal. Though conclusive agreement does not exist on the definition of leadership, two similar components do exist for understanding leadership: process and influence. In reviewing these components, leaders must remember that “a”, not “the” process exists to influence others. The leadership process is ever-changing, dynamic, multi-action, and multi-faceted transforming the leaders as much as the followers working to achieve a common goal. When reviewing the characteristics of an effective transformational leader, two key attributes identified were charisma and a realistic, believable visionary. Other personal attributes included competence, confidence, and morality. Together, these attributes create a strong role model empowering followers to shape not only their organization but society by instilling hope, allowing creativity, and making the attainment of goals a reality. Successful execution of transformational leadership requires affirmation and empowerment of the talents and abilities of the youth and adults. Youth empowerment requires communication and creative challenges to support a common, futuristic vision. With the appropriate leadership and empowerment, a leader not only has an opportunity to create motivated, inspired, and directed leaders but young, service-oriented disciples as well. A transformational leader teaches, motivates, inspires, and empowers followers to reach their full potential, look beyond personal interests, and transform others. The author acknowledges leadership is only one of many components (interacting, empowering, inspiring, role-modeling, and vision development) of discipleship. All these components result in the transformation of the individual youth, communities, and societies with service being the heart of all actions to develop more

disciples. The author identifies transformational leadership as the most successful in transforming not only individual youth but entire groups. By today's standards, Jesus is the perfect model for transformational leadership. As demonstrated by Jesus, this leadership style requires a leader to lead by example with charisma, engage others, and communicate expectations effectively moving others towards accomplishing a shared mission.

Donnelly, J., Arthur, R., Arthur, C., & Cowan, D. (2024). The indirect effects of transformational leadership in soccer programmes for socio-economically disadvantaged individuals: need satisfaction as a mechanism towards personal development. *International Journal of Sports Science & Coaching*, 19(1), 141-151. <https://doi.org/10.1177/17479541231158693>

Donnelly (2024) introduces his article by outlining issues associated with the socio-economically disadvantaged. These issues include lack of income, inability to access education, and poor health. Also, these issues influence behavioral characteristics to include but are not limited to mental health issues, drug dependency, homelessness, and a limited network of friends. Sports program participation highlights the success of transformational leadership in helping socio-economic disadvantaged youth overcome these issues. Youth in sports programs increase their social development, self-reliance, motivation, discipline, emotional control, communication, competence, and teamwork. These transformational leadership attributes transfer from the field of sports to the field of life. However, youth transformation requires more than peer-to-peer interaction. Transformation requires the coach to become intimately involved in shaping the youth through mentoring and developing professional relationships with high-performing expectations. A coach must articulate positive and meaningful futuristic visions,

challenge old habits, and provide individualized support. Sports programs have proven to build resilience and life satisfaction with a sense of purpose, meaning, and belonging.

Duckworth, A. (2016). *Grit : the power of passion and perseverance*. Scribner.

Duckworth (2016) conducted multiple interviews and reviewed numerous studies on the power of grit and its ability to change a person's life. The author's research revealed that every person can achieve with determined effort regardless of I.Q., talent, or circumstances. Also, the author acknowledges that a person's surrounding culture shapes every aspect of their life, positively and negatively. The author interviewed a sports coach who said to "become a great swimmer is to join a great team" (p. 246). A challenging culture comprised of a great team has immense power to influence a person's grit. Culture affects every part of a person's character. An effective culture must be challenging, provide a personal identity with a sense of belonging, and inspire a person to exceed expectations. But, if everyone receives the same acknowledgment for less effort, a sense of achievement diminishes. For achievement to occur, an individual takes ownership with confidence to overcome adversity, rejection, and failure. At first, the cost and benefits may not seem worth the pain and time. But, the person, who remains focused on achieving a goal by setting small milestones, realizes the benefits outweigh the cost. Many have discovered that in the deepest and darkest times of their life, goals can still be accomplished if they put one foot in front of the other and keep moving forward even when the chances for achieving their goals seem unreasonable. And, when everyone else quits, the person continues moving forward through resilience and creativity. But results are not achieved by the person alone. Relentless, encouraging leaders and coaches play an important role in the life of an individual and group of individuals. A leader must role

model desired attributes including empathy and respect with clear communication of expectations. Communicating, meaning not just what is said but how it is said, is an essential factor in changing a person's life. Over time, a person grows. Every person around them becomes significant, and matters. They become proud of belonging to their culture whether at work, in the community, or at home.

Evans, Scot D. (2007). Youth sense of community: Voice and power in community. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 35(6), 694-709. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop>

According to Evans (2007), young adults' sense of community trends back to the earliest days of their development and their interaction with adults and a neighborhood. Per the author, the less time around adults and outside their neighborhood results in a decrease in social identity thus a decrease in motivation and any aspiration to excel. Also, personality and behavioral transformation are influenced through the development of relationships and an understanding of society. Youth who establish long-term relationships with adults and in a community build strong emotional connections opening communications for sharing mutual concerns with others. Youth lacking a social connection develop apathy and loneliness. Unfortunately, youth who would benefit the most but are categorized as the underprivileged, economically stressed, and socially oppressed miss opportunities to develop social connections and a sense of purpose because of associated requirements for transportation and cost. A study demonstrated that youth provided opportunities to learn new skills and then allowed to act on these skills became a change agent empowered with a sense of voice for their communities. This change in youth required positive interaction between youths and adults in developing skills, building confidence, and providing meaningful roles with direction. Adults play the greatest role in the lives of youth by

providing the structure to gain the necessary skills and opportunities leading to a sense of belonging. The youth are waiting for their community invitation.

Fauzi, M.A., Martin, T., & Ravesangar, K. (2021). The influence of transformational leadership on Malaysian students' entrepreneurial behaviour. *Entrepreneurial Business and Economics Review*, 9(1), 89-103. <https://doi.org/10.15678/EBER.2021.090106>

Fauzi et al. (2012) initiate the article with a discussion on the difference between transactional and transformational leadership. Transactional leadership motivates individuals to achieve assigned tasks. Transformational leadership with empowerment stimulates a person intellectually and provides insight into their full potential. This insight moves a person beyond compliance to commitment. However, for this movement to occur, the leader must portray behavioral characteristics to build trusting relationships and inspire followers to model their behavior. A leader must promote intellectual stimulation, psychological empowerment, and motivation in an individual while maintaining group cohesiveness. A successful leader increases the self-confidence of an individual. This self-confidence results in the individual seeking a level of excellence beyond their expectation. This achievement moves a person beyond self-interest to the interest of a group with the same goals and vision. In return, followers no longer view themselves as replaceable. They begin thinking in new and creative ways for problem-solving and seeking others to share their knowledge with.

Jumarali, S. N., Mandiyan, D., & Javdani, S. (2019). Centering justice: transforming paradigms of approach, design and implementation. *Journal of Prevention & Intervention in the Community*, 47(2), 171–178. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10852352.2019.1582143>

Jumarali et al. (2019) discuss the youth, justice system, and repetitive cycle of the two meeting. The authors identify the requirement for a framework with a transformative shift that return youth to their former, impressionable, youth years. The framework would de-stigmatize and re-humanize youth. For the framework to work, certain system language (incorrigible, defiant, at-risk, delinquent) labeling youth must be discarded for these youth exhibiting normalized, developmental behavior (risk-taking, boundary testing) for their age. Additionally, youth must be approached with the attitude of not being a problem requiring fixing. This framework requires disconnecting youth from the stigma assigned based on their families and communities. The goal of implementing the framework is to end youth incarceration even if the job security for those in the justice system becomes a risk factor while holding the system accountable for youth transformation.

Miner-Romanoff, K. (2016). Voices from inside: The power of art to transform and restore. *Journal of Correctional Education (1974-)*, 67(1), 58–74. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26506627>

Miner-Romanoff (2016) discusses the impact of an art program designed for at-risk and incarcerated youth. Approximately 4 million children grow up in environments of crime, poverty, unemployment, family incarceration, and family violence. These environments precede a decrease in self-perception and an increase in the need for control. The art program provided the youth with a means of empowerment and having a voice. Also, the program noted a decrease in serious repeat offending and behavioral problems with increased personal identifiers such as self-perception. Also, the program provided skills to include social and vocational. Through art, the community could hear and view the youth's voices (joy, pain, hope, tears). The results of several questionnaires demonstrated

the positive impact of the art program. In one survey, 87% identified the ability to achieve a goal, 81% cited a healthier means for expressing themselves, 63% - increased cooperation, 75% - increased patience, and 77% - increased self-esteem. In another survey, 93% of youth cited increased self-esteem resulting from decreased stress, increased pride, and accomplishing a goal. A study of the community attitude towards juvenile offenders increased positively from 40% to 53%. This attitude change included viewing youth as having value in society and hope for their future.

Ozaralli, N. (2003). Effects of transformational leadership on empowerment and team effectiveness. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 24(5), 335-344.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/01437730310494301>

Ozaralli (2023) studied transformational leadership and its correlation to empowerment and building team effectiveness. The heightened awareness draws from the attention of social scientists over decades on leadership. Leadership has transitioned from a transactional to a transformational model with four attributes: charisma, individual-oriented, intellectual stimulation, and inspiration. Studies on transformational leadership have drawn a direct correlation between employee satisfaction, job performance, and product quality. Employees were shown to exceed expected performance levels with greater levels of creativity through increased intellectual development. Ultimately, employees became committed followers pursuing collective interests over self-interests with a collective mission. Leaders demonstrated an ability to influence employee attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors through empowerment and shared vision. Empowerment has been defined as “a process of enhancing the feeling of self-efficacy among organizational members through the identification of conditions that foster

powerlessness”. A study was conducted on empowerment and its effect on individuals and teams. Employees working for an empowering transformational leader rated team effectiveness favorably with a higher level of communication, performance, and goal achievement. This environment increased team innovation, cohesiveness, and effectiveness by providing a goal with meaning. Additionally, employee empowerment has been correlated to an initial replication of their leader until the individual begins establishing their leadership identity molded within a collectively, empowered group of leaders.

Patton, C. (2015). Asoka and Paul: transformations that led to effective transformational leadership. *Leadership and the Humanities*, 3(2), 133–144.

<https://doi.org/10.4337/lath.2015.02.04>

Patton (2015) begins the article by identifying transformational leaders as having the ability to motivate followers. To motivate, a leader must present followers with a realistic, attractive vision. The leader must role-model behavior and influence collaboration between followers to achieve a common goal. The author chose the Apostle Paul to demonstrate the characteristics of a transformational leader. Paul was originally known as Saul and started his studies under a respected Rabbi around 12 years old to learn the perfect law of his fathers. He began as an unethical, transactional leader sent to destroy heretics who promoted the Christian beliefs of Jesus Christ and lead others back to the Jewish tradition through persecution. He believed he was doing the work of God. Until one day, he and his followers heard the voice of Jesus but saw no one and he was blinded. Following the instructions of the voice, he was led by his followers. He entered a city where his sight was restored. His name became Paul. Ultimately, he was transformed

from a transactional leader to a transformational leader. He became filled with the Spirit to spread the message of God to all ends of the World. In spreading the message of God, he formed networks of relationships and mentored many individuals during his journey despite persecution. His followers began looking beyond their self-interest and became empowered through his persistence to overcome persecution through his charismatic, role-modeling efforts, communication of expectations, and demonstration of confidence in them. The followers started imitating Paul's behavior of high morality as Paul imitated the behavior of Christ.

Puvaneyshwaran, D. (2024). Empowering the marginalised: exploring the potential of Theatre of the Oppressed as an intervention for youth offenders in social work practice. *Journal of Social Work, 24*(3), 375-396. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14680173231222614>

Puvaneyshwaran (2024) begins his article by outlining the challenges identified by youth offenders. These challenges include stigma, limited opportunities, and lack of rehabilitative support. With the correct tools, offenders build confidence and learn to navigate the challenging situations of life. Empowerment, a key tool, changes an offender's behavior by providing youth with the necessary information and abilities. With these tools, these offenders build a new life, make more informed decisions, and increase their community participation.

Rachman, M. M. (2022). Measurement of Job Satisfaction: Transformational leadership and interpersonal communication impact on work discipline. *Jurnal Manajemen, 26*(2), 296-314. <https://doi.org/10.24912/jm.v26i2.966>

Rachman (2022) studied the direct and indirect relationships between transformational leadership, interpersonal communication, discipline, and job satisfaction in 200

employees and their organizations. The study was completed using a questionnaire model and the Likert scale with a five-category rating from strongly disagree to strongly agree. According to the author's research, transformational leaders provide open and clear communication. Additionally, they linked their employee's self-identity to a collective identity and the organizational mission by understanding their employees' strengths and weaknesses. They empowered their employees with a voice, inspired them by accepting the input of their ideas, and challenged their employees to take ownership of their work. The author's study demonstrated a positive and direct correlation between transformational leadership and interpersonal communication on discipline and job satisfaction. Before the study discipline was lacking and organizational goals were not being met. But, through transformational leadership with interpersonal communication, the organizational environment improved in the areas of honesty and trust. The author's study demonstrated increased work output and job satisfaction through relationships created through transformational leadership, not discipline. Strong relationships creating a collective identity with a sense of belonging increased employee work discipline, performance, and motivation to exceed levels of expectations.

Sanders, J., & Munford, R. (2016). Fostering a sense of belonging at school—five orientations to practice that assist vulnerable youth to create a positive student identity. *School Psychology International*, 37(2), 155–171. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0143034315614688>

Sanders et al. (2016) researched data on marginalized youth in New Zealand and capacity-building practices for keeping these youth in school. The authors recognized youth school educators as providing the greatest possibility for life change from early intervention. Educators can promote well-being through developmental opportunities and

teaching resilience-building skills. Educators in New Zealand lowered the 30% exit rate from school for youth coming from low socio-economic status households. Without educators focusing on the well-being of youth, many of the youth will face challenges beyond their control including the adults influencing them outside of school. So, the focus must not only be on the students and the school environment but community and family environments impacting their capacity building upon departure from school. The longer a student remains in school, the greater the potential for building resiliency. One study followed 506 youths identified as vulnerable for three years enrolled in a program that successfully graduated youth from school. The youths were identified as vulnerable through questionnaires referencing experiences (life, family, education, community), relationships, risk, and self-perception of success. The program resulted in an 89% retention rate after the first two years and a 96% retention rate at the end of the third year. 70% had been expelled or suspended at least once and 53% had skipped school at least 3 times per week. 73% had been receiving education out of a traditional school for reasons beyond their control. Yet, 83% of the youth interviewed still value education as important for success in life. Many youths had become disengaged in mainstream school because of a feeling of not belonging. The mainstream school had emotionally stressed the students and provided them with a self-perception of never being good enough and never being able to achieve. The youth felt they received a lot of criticism and no praise. Their self-perception negatively increased as time passed. Departure from a frightening, hostile, foreign, and unwelcoming school became a logical solution. The youth success program assisted the youth in changing their self-image and fostering a sense of belonging. The school program provided opportunities for rebuilding a capable, strong, and successful

self-image. Youth rebuilt their image by building positive, honest, encouraging, and empathetic relationships fostered with a sense of belonging. The school environment moved from frightening and hostile to a safe- haven allowing for opportunities to try again after making a mistake. The youth became known for their warmth, perseverance, and commitment, highly valued attributes, in their community.

Salisbury, J. D., Sheth, M. J., Spikes, D., & Graeber, A. (2023). “We have to empower ourselves to make changes!”: Developing collective capacity for transformative change through an urban student voice experience. *Urban Education.*, 58(2), 221–249.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085919857806>

Salisbury et al. (2023) examined the development of youth capacities through transformational leadership through a social justice youth summit. The summit demonstrated the power of giving youth a voice in making decisions in their school through interviews, focus groups, and surveys. The youth took action in identifying issues, designing solutions, and sharing their work with school leaders. This educational experience of learning and actualizing promoted youth changes in the school - the development of the youth's confidence, competence, and sense of belonging. The program established an individual sense of belonging and a collective sense of belonging of committed youth. This collective belonging built strong connections between committed youth, the school community, educators, and other youth outside their normal peer networks. The program built competence through leadership opportunities to recognize injustices and oppression. 30 youths selected during a study were responsible for planning social justice youth events. Their responsibility included but was not limited to scheduling town halls and marketing events. The program increased their sense of

belonging by providing them with critical, encouraging, and constructive feedback with improved confidence. This feedback resulted in high-quality, shared work products from committed groups. Youth vocabulary transitioned from I to we. Their actionable thoughts focused on achieving a group rather than an individual outcome. Together, these youth from diverse backgrounds increased their collective knowledge, realized their competence, and brought awareness to oppressive issues. Each youth became a social change agent in their schools and communities.

Stiwich, K. D. & Ross, V. (2022). Victoria increasing students' sense of belonging at research conferences. *Scholarship and Practice of Undergraduate Research*, 5(4), 9-15.

<https://doi.org/10.18833/spur/5/4/5>

Stiwich et al. (2022) identified self-perception as an issue for youth in developing a sense of belonging especially in under-served, under-represented areas. Self-perception influences a youth's identity and future aspirations when self-evaluating in the categories of value, respect, acceptance, support system, and safety - a negative self-perception results in a feeling of rejection, isolation, and a lack of relationships. A change requires an environment of social, physical, and personal engagements. Also, changing self-perception requires the commitment and perseverance of the youth. Programs with sufficient support and the appropriate amount of time reported a change in the self-perception of underserved youth and an increase in their sense of belonging.

Thomas, M. (2018). The indispensable mark of Christian leadership: implications from Christ's methods of leadership development in Mark's gospel. *Perichoresis: The Theological Journal of Emanuel University*, 16(3), 107-117. <https://doi.org/10.2478/perc-2018-0019>

Thomas (2018) discusses the leadership of Jesus in transforming his disciples through reflection on the scriptural book. The author further defines a distinction between secular and Christian leadership. Though secular leadership may utilize moral and biblical principles of the Bible, Christian leadership emphasizes heart and action. Additionally, Christian leadership promotes a growth in holiness and the Kingdom of God. Jesus personally chose, mentored, and shaped twelve learners who would become servants known as disciples. These disciples were transformed in less than 4 years through close, individual, intimate relationships with Jesus through empowerment. Jesus poured into his disciples while maintaining oversight of their actions. Also, Jesus remained patient with the disciples during their maturation requiring an increase of their faith, obtaining wisdom, removing their pride, and growing in patience. The author explains the importance of this mentorship to assist with decision-making for life progression, exposing opportunities that would not have previously been considered or known about, and achieving their full potential. Through the leadership of Jesus, he and his disciples impacted millions. After the death of Jesus on the cross, his mission continued with the disciples impacting billions. The leadership of Jesus demonstrated not only the transformation of an individual but also the transformation of the world.