

Bass' Transformational Leadership Theory

Assumptions

Awareness of task importance motivates people.

A focus on the team or organization produces better work.

Description

Bass defined **transformational leadership** in terms of how the leader affects **followers**, who are intended to trust, admire and respect the transformational leader.

He identified three ways in which leaders transform followers:

- Increasing their awareness of task importance and value.
- Getting them to focus first on team or organizational goals, rather than their own interests.
- Activating their higher-order **needs**.

Charisma is seen as necessary, but not sufficient, for example in the way that charismatic movie stars may not make good leaders. Two key charismatic effects that transformational leaders achieve is to evoke strong emotions and to cause identification of the followers with the leader. This may be through stirring appeals. It may also may occur through quieter methods such as coaching and mentoring.

Bass has recently noted that authentic transformational leadership is grounded in moral foundations that are based on four components:

- Idealized influence
- Inspirational motivation
- Intellectual stimulation
- Individualized consideration

...and three moral aspects:

- The moral character of the leader.
- The ethical values embedded in the leader's vision, articulation, and program (which followers either embrace or reject).
- The morality of the processes of social ethical choice and action that leaders and followers engage in and collectively pursue.

This is in contrast with pseudo-transformational leadership, where, for example, **in-group/out-group** 'us and them' games are used to **bond** followers to the leader.

Discussion

In contrast to **Burns**, who sees transformational leadership as being inextricably linked with higher order values, Bass sees it as amoral, and attributed transformational skills to people such as Adolf Hitler and Jim Jones.