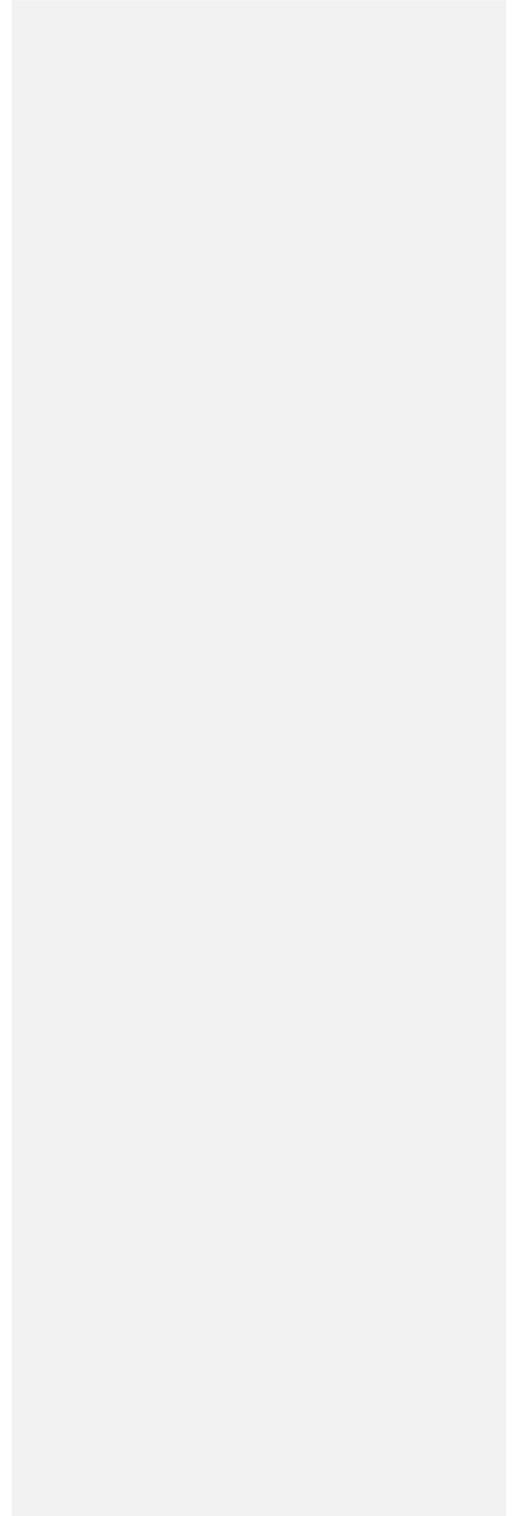Personal Inventory Analysis

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Personal Inventory Analysis

My view of myself has evolved over time – from worker to professional to leader. I would like to ascribe this progression as being a part of a coherent self-development strategy. However, to do so would be disingenuous. Rather, somehow my personality traits, character, education and experience have coalesced into a leadership identity uniquely suited to the roles and spaces I occupy. The activities of this summer session of the Educational Leadership program afforded me the opportunity to assess myself in a variety of ways. In this paper, I will discuss who I have discovered myself to be, my strongest effective leadership traits, and opportunities to improve. Finally, I will consider the impact of my learning on my leadership journey.

**Identity Congruence**

Identity congruence is defined as "the perception of similarity or fit between one's identity and a particular career" (Chan, 2018). I am surprised at the high level of identity congruence I have observed in myself over the course of this summer. My personality, learning patterns, and leadership orientation manifest in my leadership. I see my true self in my leadership which represents a change for me. As an INTJ on the Myers Briggs Type Indicator, MBTI, (Myers & Myers, 2018), in the past my introverted tendency caused me to hide myself behind logic, opinions and plans. I used to be skeptical of the MBTI, but the accuracy of the results speaks volumes about its validity and reliability. My assessment as an INTJ remained constant despite the span of years that has elapsed since I first took the inventory. I learned to adapt to overcome my introversion as a consequence of work and ministry roles that require frequent collaboration and team work.

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I am goal oriented as evidenced by my accomplishments undertaken to improve myself. Larry Demarest (1996) identified how leadership and MBTI type intersect. True to his findings, I believe the "best can be better". After earning the Bachelor of Social Work degree (summa cum laude), I earned the Master of Social Work and Divinity degrees (magna cum laude). I believe authority is derived from competence, so I strive to be competent. I have served in organizational contexts in which my supervisors displayed a lack of competence. I did not shrink from showing that I did not respect their authority.

I have always enjoyed learning, which for me is connecting patterns of information across different subjects. I am a life-long learner with a love of languages. Rather than drill down into a few topic areas of interest, I quickly become satisfied with knowledge content and move on to another interest. I used to think I bore easily or lacked the fortitude of others who become "experts" in one or two specific areas. Now I understand that this tendency is related to my highest scored use first pattern (32 out of 35), precision. I find comfort in knowing and believe knowledge is power and accurate knowledge is even more powerful.

Throughout my childhood, I was expected to know and perform well academically due to the aptitude I showed as a young girl. As a result, I still hold that expectation of myself as revealed in my analysis of the Leadership Skills Assessment: 360 Feedback assignment. The Learning Connections Inventory, or LCI, opened up a new way of understanding characteristics of myself that had not been affirmed in me in adolescence. My description as a strong-willed learner based on my scoring high in precision, sequence (28), and confluence (25) was very affirming. I did not realize I needed validation of my intellect, drive and ability to think broadly. Reflecting on my experiences, I recognize I withheld aspects of myself in certain personal relationships to avoid the vulnerability of being truly seen.

I am a multi-frame thinker. My leadership orientation, based on the ideas articulated by Bolman and Deal (2013), reveals a preference for the structural frame with a high score of 22 out of 24. This score aligns with my use first pattern of sequence and the "thinking" aspect of my INTJ type. I am curious as to whether my social work concentration in administration, programs and policy has provoked or reinforced my preference for the structural frame.

I operate in the symbolic (score 16) and human resources (score of 13) frames almost equally. Confluence as a use first pattern, my love for narrative and meaning-making contribute to my ability to view through a symbolic frame. When I prepare to preach and teach, I employ symbolic meanings of spiritual concepts of faith communities as a tool to connect with the congregation. As director of admissions, I use the symbolic frame to connect the vision parents have for the academic life of their child to the mission of Richmond Prep.

My belief in God through faith in Christ and my social work education developed my value for the human resources frame. My own personal experience as a young parent raising three children with limited physical support from the other parent sensitized me to social systems and employment situations that were less than beneficial for me and my family. On the other hand, I have benefited from individuals in those settings who gave me the means to achieve my larger goals to provide for myself and my children.

My relatively low score of nine in the political frame attests to my avoidance of conflict. Conflict is inherent in the political frame where resources are viewed as scarce and differences endure (Bolman & Deal, 2013). Therefore, power is an important asset. I did not have a healthy model for conflict growing up. In fact, I never heard my parents disagree with one another or even raise their voices in anger towards one another. I was labeled "hot headed" or "crazy" when I expressed my perspective through my temper. Rather than teach me how to handle my

emotions and engage properly in the conflict, I was silenced. As a result, I learned that conflict

was bad and should be avoided lest I be punished for speaking out, particularly if I was

passionate about a thing. My childhood experiences combined with my cynical opinion of

politics due to the negative examples I have seen. I have attempted to be apolitical. Kathryn, the

lead character in Lencioni's *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team,* expressed a definition of politics

that empowered me to think of the political frame differently. Kathryn states "politics is when

people choose their words and actions based on how they want others to react rather than based

on what they really think" (Lencioni, 2002, p. 88). Bolman and Deal's (2013) discussion of

manager as politician shed further light on my need to acquire greater skill in using the political

frame.

I am viewed by my colleagues as an "outstandingly effective" leader based on their

overall rating of my skills (Spencer, 2018) using the Leadership Skills Assessment: 360

Feedback survey. The colleagues who completed the survey spanned three organizations. I

served in different leadership positions. However, my leadership skills were apparently global as

opposed to specific to a particular job. Therefore, my leadership is a consequence of competence

rather than position. Analyzing their feedback helped me see the extent to which I have grown

into my leadership identity. I discovered I have strong effective leadership traits as well as areas

for improvement.

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### A Model for Strong Leadership

The call for leadership stems from a need to accomplish the work of leadership.

Furthermore, this work is organized in three central areas of responsibility – *setting direction,*

*creating and managing commitment,* and *facing adaptive challenge* (Drath, 2001). The

Leadership Skills Assessment: 360 Feedback survey organizes these concepts in two categories,

or traits – *leadership in the field* and *resolving complex problems* (Virginia Commonweath University, 2018). Based on the ratings my colleagues provided in this survey, these traits are my strongest effective leadership traits (Spencer, 2018).

      *Leadership in the field* is the way my professional identity manifests (Spencer, 2018). Three factors reveal proficiency in this trait. Effective leaders are recognized through setting direction, teamwork and sensitivity. Upon reflecting on my past experience, my leadership practice as founding dean of the Koinonia School of Race and Justice at Richmond Hill (KSRJ) is evidence of my mastery. In setting direction, I employed the symbolic and structural frames to cast a compelling vision that encouraged others to see themselves as an essential component in its fulfillment. Although few teams genuinely exhibit authentic teamwork, I managed to lead a dysfunctional team using sensitivity to accomplish its collective goal. Sensitivity combines aspects of the political and human resources frames (Bolman & Deal, 2013). Adopting this multi-frame lens, I balanced the needs, feelings, and concerns of individual team members with the overarching team needs. As a result, the team successfully implemented a unique adult-learning initiative designed to address racism and injustice. Despite competing agendas, varying levels of trust, and inconsistent commitment, we were able to be productive.

      *Resolving complex problems* is my second strongest leadership trait (Spencer, 2018). This trait reveals how I approach challenges that arise. Leaders effectively approach challenges using judgment, a results orientation, and organizational ability. Being a strong-willed learning INTJ with a structural leadership orientation makes me well suited to excel in this leadership trait. I must take into account the self-efficacy that emerged from my experience as the primary parent in a one-parent household. My personal leadership ability developed as I met every day challenges instead of cowering in defeat. I gathered and analyzed information in order to make

rational decisions. Because my choices directly impacted my vulnerable young children, I learned to carefully consider the implications of my decisions. Additionally, I made efficient use of my social network and material resources in implementing my problem-solving solutions. As a result, I honed the skills that contribute to my high proficiency in resolving complex problems.

Emotional intelligence undergirds my ability to resolve complex problems as well. I cultivated an awareness of myself and others enabling me to define problems without blaming. Bolman and Deal (2013) identified blaming people as a common misleading way of explaining organizational problems. Being able to handle my emotions in relationships has helped me remain calm when unforeseen events happened.

### The Best can be Better

Despite the glowing assessment from my colleagues, I identify two main opportunities of improvement in my leadership practice. I want to strengthen my ability to hold others accountable and enhance my use of the political frame. As leader of the faculty of KSRJ, I was not willing to call my peers on performance and behaviors that shut down sharing and stalled forward progress. I avoided the tension and discomfort that might have resulted from directly confronting my team mates dysfunction (Lencioni, 2002). As I progress in my career as a leader, I foresee an increased need to hold colleagues accountable for not following through with agreed-upon goals. Moreover, I avoided accountability because I was uncertain of my authority to address the team's performance behaviors. Serving as the founding dean of the faculty was my first team leader experience. I did not clarify the lines of authority with the co-pastoral directors. Considering both co-pastors were on the team as well, I was truly uncomfortable imagining that conversation. My structural frame desire for a clear, concise chain of command was not strong enough to override my conflict avoidance (Bolman & Deal, 2013).

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I will address my accountability avoidance proactively using the strategies outlined by Lencioni (2002). According to the strategies to hold team members accountable, expectations are established for team accountability. Goals and standards are publicly acknowledged often. Simple, regular performance reviews that measure actions against those published standards lay the groundwork for having the conversation when goals are not met. I am uncertain about the use of team rewards in my leadership practice. This strategy does not seem suited to the type of teams I typically lead.

My effective application of the political frame will serve me well. I recognize my underdevelopment in the political frame directly relates to my reluctance to acknowledge the power and authority in my leadership identity. As a result of this course, I know that my source of power is from the information and expertise I hold; the resulting reputation I have in my field; and my personal power (Bolman & Deal, 2013). I internally resist the idea of using my power politically because of the abuses of power I have witnessed from people in leadership positions. In order to grow comfortable with the idea of using my power, I will reflect to uncover positive applications of power in my professional experience.

Furthermore, I will exercise the four key skills employed by "the manager as politican" (Bolman & Deal, 2013). The four skills include *agenda setting; mapping the political terrain; networking and building coalitions;* and *bargaining and negotiating*. Having a framework gives me a plan of action from which to function which I need to satisfy my sequence use first pattern.

Mastery of the political frame could have enabled me to address a conflict between faith community volunteers and a local elementary school.

### Power Dynamics – a case study

When I assumed the role as program director of the Micah Association, my role entailed conflict mediation for the Associations 100+ faith community volunteers and their elementary

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**Commented [b4]:** and,

**Commented [b5]:** politician

**Commented [b6]:** not incorrect; however, would be better to reword to avoid using the same word "which" in the same sentence

school partners. I inherited an unresolved conflict between a long-time group of volunteers and an elementary school on the southside. The volunteers had served this school for more than 15 years, primarily seeking to improve literacy outcomes. The volunteers enjoyed such a rapport with the seasoned principal that she allowed them liberty to implement their activities with minimal input or restrictions. The conflict arose when the seasoned principal retired. A younger principal was hired and tasked with improving the reading and math scores for the school. The new principal applied constraints to all volunteers in the school, including the long-term volunteers. He focused on increasing instructional time as part of his strategy to move the academic needle. The leader of the long-term volunteers felt hurt and offended. She felt unappreciated for all their years of commitment to the students, faculty and staff of the school. The principal and his new staff members were unmoved by her perspective. The previous program director met with the lead volunteer, the principal and a fourth objective observer in an effort to resolve their conflict. I learned that a resolution had not been reached when I received a long email from the volunteer leader expressing her continued hurt feelings and dismay over her treatment by the principal. I attempted to meet with the lead volunteer and principal. The lead volunteer sent a more congenial volunteer to meet with me and the principal. Eventually, the lead volunteer stepped down from her leadership and the congenial volunteer assumed the leadership role. The principal moved onto another school at the end of the school year.

As an INTJ, I sought to discover the truth about the interpersonal conflict between the principal and the lead volunteer. My use first pattern of precision motivated me to discover the facts behind their interactions. I wanted to see the conflict in action in the hopes of surfacing the underlying issues. In order to overcome the team dysfunction, I sought to be a miner of conflict and foster trust and vulnerability. Establishing trust and the productive use of conflict can move teams toward functionality (Lencioni, 2002).

In a similar situation, before trying to directly address the conflict, I might take the time to set the agenda. I might create a vision of a reconciled volunteer-school partnership that takes into account the long-term interest of both parties. Then I could take the time to develop a strategy for achieving that vision that takes into account the competing internal and external forces at play. I tend to naively ignore the salient political assumption that within organizations, there are enduring differences in values, beliefs, information, interests, and perceptions of reality between individuals. Therefore, conflict is inevitable, and power is the most important asset (Bolman & Deal, 2013).

**Clarity in my leadership journey**

The learning from this semester has crystallized the image of my leadership. I previously thought my leadership was based on the "ladder of success" as defined by the right job opportunities. What was once framed in the boundaries of job descriptions and responsibilities is now outlined with skill, knowledge and artistry. I am more confident that I am equipped for the next phase of my career. Now I know the effectiveness of my leadership is squarely grounded in my personality, preferences, experiences and education. I have more trust for my process of leadership development as I recognize it is unique to my needs and competencies.

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# EDLP 700 Rubric for Final Assignment

**Q**

| 30 points total | 5 | 4-3 | 1 | 0 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mechanics **4.0** Several grammatical errors and one citation error | Consistently well organized with logical order of thought (including APA section headings); citation of sources and reference page; free of grammar/spelling errors | Somewhat organized and logical; some paragraphs too long/short; few mechanical or APA errors | Somewhat unorganized; logic hard to follow; no attention to paragraph formation; noticeable mechanical errors or APA errors interfering with ability to convey meaning | Lack of organization, mechanical control, which interferes with ability to convey meaning |
|  | **8** | **7-6** | **5-3** | **1-0** |
| Section 1 **8** | Clear, accurate, and thorough connections made to LCI, MBTI, and personal learning. Depth of concept understanding clearly conveyed. | Fairly clear connections made to LCI, MBTI, and personal learning. Cursory understanding of concepts conveyed. | Few connections made to LCI, MBTI, and personal learning with significant gaps. Weak understanding of concepts conveyed. | Inaccurate, incorrect, or few/no connections made to LCI, MBTI, and personal learning. Concepts misinterpreted. |
| Sections 2 and 3 **8** | Clear and thorough analysis of self and its impact on leadership supported by cited, accurate research. Depth of concept understanding clearly conveyed. | Fairly clear analysis of self and its impact on leadership; acceptable research. Cursory understanding of concepts conveyed. | Somewhat flawed or unclear analysis of self and its impact on leadership; weak research. Little understanding of concepts conveyed. | Inaccurate, incorrect, or missing analysis of self and its impact on leadership. Missing/inaccurate research. Concepts misinterpreted. |
|  | **9-8** | **7-6** | **5-3** | **1-0** |
| Section 4 **9** | Describes situation, actions, results Clearly reflects upon level of satisfaction Clearly describes what would be done differently. Accurately uses inventories' concepts throughout to analyze/explain rationale | Description of situation, actions, results, satisfaction, alternate actions fairly clear. Uses, though not consistently, inventories' concepts throughout to analyze/explain rationale | Description of situation, actions, results, satisfaction lacking in clarity. Does not describe clearly what would be done differently Cursory application of inventories' concepts | Cursory description of situation, actions results. Does not clearly/accurately address satisfaction, different actions, and/or inventories |

Total possible earned out of 30 points: _____ **29.0** _____

Content was excellent! Some grammatical errors, etc