Transforming Self-Concept for Leader Development

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GRADING RUBRIC

1. **Thesis statement clear 5 points…/5**
2. **Introductory paragraph 5 points…/5**
3. **Main points, and overall coherence/unity of the essay 5 points…/4.9**

**4. Conclusion/closing paragraph 5 points../4.8**

**5. Mechanics: Grammar & APA 7 formatting 5 points…/4.5**

**Grading Scale: Total Points: 25 points/24.2 total points**

**A= 25**

**A-= 24-23**

**B+= 22-21**

**B= 20-19**

**B-= 18-17 NC=No Credit, needs revision**

Assignment #3 – Essay 1. Write a 5-page paper based on the description below: a. Synthesize and integrate all that you have learned thus far to write an essay on the following question: “Why are self-concept, spirituality, and moral development so critical for leadership?

Self-concept, spiritual development, and moral development are three lenses through which to explore the importance of personal growth for effective leadership. These three interact and reinforce one another to help form a holistic person with positive impacts on the leader. Leadership enhanced by a clear self-concept and mature spiritual and moral development has a positive impact on organizational performance especially in liminal times. Self-concept, spirituality, and morality are personal aspects that can be intentionally cultivated providing the leader with context-sensitive tools for leadership.

A leader whose identity has a strong spiritual and moral component will be placed to motivate people to positive participation and action. Fry (2003, as cited in Hseih, 2022) defines spiritual leadership as having the “values, attitudes and behaviors” that not only motivate the self but others to a sense of “well-being through calling and membership”. The spiritual leader can “create visions with positive influence on both individuals and organizations” …enhancing… “productivity and organizational commitment.” (p.28) Fairholm (1996, as cited in Hseih, 2022) found spiritual leaders not only develop their own morality and strong commitments to an organization but motivate others to do so as well. (p. 28) This secular understanding of spirituality and morality indicates the influence of transcendent “values, attitudes, and behaviors” but does not necessarily require the source to be from a religious basis.

Hukkinen reminds the Christian researcher that Biblical Christianity has a distinct view of spiritual development and corresponding moral development. In the Christian tradition, spiritual and moral growth find their roots in the work of God as the believer grows “in grace and knowledge of God and the Word.” (2023, p. 7) Where the secular world may put its focus only on self-directed inner development, the Christian is reminded inner growth comes from the external influence of the Holy Spirit working within the Christian through his situated life in community as well as through life events including suffering. (p.7) Hukkinen cautions against uncritically importing secular understandings of spirituality and morality into a Christian understanding of spirituality and morality. (p.7) The same is true for understanding self-concept. Within the Christian tradition, one’s value is not found in his/her inner maturity or outer productivity and commitment but is intrinsic and begins with the recognition that all people are created in the image of God and thus have worth. That said, natural knowledge, when it is true knowledge reflecting the created world of God and humanity, may be considered for answering spiritual questions. (See Romans Ch 1)

When an individual’s self-concept, understanding of spirituality, and morality are congruent, behavior harmonizes with internal values both in leaders and organizations. When there is incongruence, tension develops leading to potential negative outcomes. Gale found that when individuals experience a “mismatch” between their beliefs and values and their behaviors, or if their needs conflicted with their identified religion, tension would develop often leading the individual to abscond from their religion and their religious community. (2023, p.7) This suggests the importance not only of a well-developed self-concept, spirituality, and morality but also the importance of these aspects of life being in harmony with one another. Allen and Fry found that leaders whose spiritual development led to inner transformation also changed their outward behavior leading to moral action congruent with the self-understanding and spiritual worldview. The leader’s spirituality became “bound to their identity” producing “an inner place and source” to engage deep even difficult questions of “meaning, purpose, values, reality, and morality…” They also note that for the spiritual leader, given the significant amount of time spent in the workplace, the workplace becomes “…an essential outlet for spirituality” creating an atmosphere of “meaning, purpose, connection and belonging.” (2023, p.650) This seeding of the workplace environment highlights the importance of a strong self-concept, and spiritual and moral development for the leader.

Leaders with strong spiritual and moral development informing strong self-concept help to overcome shortfalls within the organizational environment. Allen and Fry note that too much focus on materialism and the ethical failures both of leaders and organizations have been detrimental to organizations. In contrast, strong spiritual leaders become anchors of “meaning, purpose, and connection.” (2023, p. 650) Such leaders help insulate organizations from ethical failure and elevate a vision of moral purpose connecting transcendent values to the community. Fry (2003, as cited in Hseih, 2022) suggests vision casting informed by personally integrated spirituality enhances employees' “productivity and organizational commitment.” (p. 28) For example, Hsieh found the more spiritual teachers perceived their principal’s behavior, the more the teachers experienced hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism leading to strong commitment to their school. (2022, pp. 37-38) Xue found that a leader having a strong sense of self, described here as a “sense of uniqueness” had a positive result on leaders seeing the leader as authentic. Such authenticity leads to trust and being motivated by their leader. (2020, p. 515) A clear self-concept integrated with well-developed spiritual and moral frameworks enhances leadership with positive outcomes for the organization as the members are encouraged with an environment fostering meaningful and purposeful work and community connection.

The Church and other communities stand at the threshold between the past and the future in a rapidly changing world requiring effective leadership. Steinke describes this as “living nowhere between two somewheres.” (2019, p. 3) Beaumont stresses that leading in a liminal time requires the development of specific leadership skills. Liminal times generate uncertainty and anxiety because the past is fading, and it is difficult to discern what the future will bring or how the past may inform it. She suggests that to facilitate discernment, the leader should focus on “presence” rather than “functionality” to help the group navigate the chaos, even embrace the potential in uncertainty rather than resolve the chaos. (2019, p. 134) This helps the group move beyond the status quo. (p.19) Presence leadership is “rooted in authenticity, free from ego, and guided by a divine connection.” (p.23) It is adaptive but spiritually grounded (p.134) Such leadership is open to being led by Christ so the church may thrive in ways that are not yet clear but may become clearer. (p. 58) Steinke notes that in such situations we are dealing with emotional forces. “Nothing complex or controversial happens without confusion, resistance, or emotional reactivity. The key to organizational productivity here is how the leader responds to the anxious system. (pp. 13-14) Steike discovered of all the major triggers and influences impacting anxiety in the congregation, the number one influence was the leadership. “How any one of them handled self in the emotional system was more determinate than anything else in terms of outcome.” (p. ix) A social system’s behavior improved, becoming less reactive when well-defined values and beliefs, and clear goals were promoted by leaders who had the same. (p. 115) An anxious leader focuses on what is happening on the outside and “forfeits calm reflection”. (p. 8) A self-differentiated leader, with a strong self-concept rooted in well-formed spiritual and moral values, in an anxious environment, will be self-aware of his/her reactions (p.8) and better able to moderate his/her behavior rather than being ruled by other’s emotional reactivity. (p.115) A self-differentiated leader is better able to avoid disconnection from others and becoming rigidly task-focused and avoids fusion with others and mercurial leadership. (p. 10) The leader is able to stand apart while standing with. (pp. 70-71) The self-differentiated leader maintains his/her distinctive personhood and place within the organization rising above the anxiety to provide meaningful leadership rooted in spiritual values.

Experience impacts a leader’s self-concept, and spiritual and moral development but these can also be developed through intentional action. Gale notes numerous forces that shape spirituality and self-concept. For instance, young children emulate their parents in these matters developing more autonomy during adolescence and young adulthood where individual growth and assimilation of spiritual worldviews into personal identity is facilitated through intentional events such as religious education and youth camps. (2023, p.7-11) Adult leaders can enhance their skills through intentional action such as seeking spiritual direction from one’s faith tradition or leaders or engaging in a process of conscious discernment through reflective activity of experience and emotion. (Allen and Fry, 2023, p. 657) Fowler’s seminal stages of faith suggest a process of spiritual and identity growth as one progresses through life where the individual moves from reactivity to intentionality. His higher stages of faith, Conjunctive Faith and Universalizing Faith, begin with a shift from reactive to reflective faith leading to less anxious and more inclusive spiritual beliefs and behavior that can ultimately transcend personal concerns with caring for others. (1987, 53-78) Fry and Kriger (2009, as cited Allen and Fry, 2023) Such a well-developed leader will have a range of tools in his/her toolbox ranging from the basics of being able to respond appropriately to a context, to the more advanced communication of moral and spiritual values, and inspiring actions based on love and service. (p. 651)

A well-formed self-concept, informed by well-developed spiritual and moral discernment, enables leadership that motivates through creating a climate of meaning, value, purpose, and courage that can transcend anxiety resulting in transformative outcomes for the organization and the people within it. The development of a strong self-concept rooted in spiritual and moral consciousness justifies the effort necessary to attain it.

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