Personality Types and Systems Engineers

I am an **I**ntroverted, i**N**tuitive, **T**hinking and **P**erceiving (INTP) person, as defined by the shortened Myers-Briggs Personality Test administered in class. Briefly, my personality type seems to indicate that I draw my energy from within myself, that I seek the big picture, that I analyze information in an objective manner, and that I take the world as it comes. However, I am not sure how accurate my results actually are since it was not the full test. I felt as if I am definitely introverted and intuitive, but I would have to say I am evenly split between thinking and feeling, and the test did not show I was clearly a judger or a perceiver. Nevertheless, the MBTI Type Today website stated as a INTP I,

"Seek to develop logical explanations for everything that interests them. Theoretical and abstract, interested more in ideas than in social interaction. Quiet, contained, flexible, and adaptable. Have unusual ability to focus in depth to solve problems in their area of interest. Skeptical, sometimes critical, always analytical."

I would agree that I seek logical explanations for most things that interest me if not everything, and that I am much more theoretical and abstract than some of my colleagues. I am not sure though if I am more interested in ideas than in social interaction. I feel many of my friends and family would say that I am constantly thinking, but I highly value social interaction. I feel social interaction is a great spring board for

ideas, and I try to use it as often as I can. I am very quiet and "contained", I guess, when meeting new people but that quickly fades as I get to know someone I like. I have always had many acquaintances but only ever two very close friends. I can be very skeptical, but I can easily draw conclusions without a full investigation, and I am critical to others only when the criticism is constructive.

However, I am skeptical about my type since I feel it is easy to write a paragraph that describes someone's good qualities and expect them to agree or feel that they align themselves with those qualities. I was interested in the "Temperament in Leaders" handout provide because it listed "blind-spots" and qualities needed from the other temperaments. Based on my type (INTP) I have the NT temperament or the "visionary" temperament. When dealing with colleagues my blind spots are that I may be oblivious to the feelings of others, that I can be seen as distant, and that I may expect too much from others. The handout also suggests that for a successful management team I need spontaneity, people orientation skills, and task orientation skills, which can all be fulfilled by one of the other three temperament types, respectively.

While it may be hard to accept some, I can see where I can come off as distant to people. I am quiet when meeting new people and even after getting to know someone I rarely share details of my personal life, but that doesn't mean I won't. I can also agree that I expect too much from other people, which is probably why I have rarely ever had more than a couple of very close friends. This blind-spot more than likely correlates to a particular blind-spot many of my friends have often spouted to me, and that is I believe people are generally good natured, tell the truth, and eager to work well. However, I do not think that this blind-spot translates into being oblivious to the feelings of others. In

fact, I will refute this particular blind-spot and suggest it is one of my personal strengths. I do feel I can relate very well to people on a personal level, recognize people's feelings and change my interaction with them accordingly. It is because of this strength I think I am fairly split between thinking and feeling. It should be noted that the "Leadership Styles" handout expresses that my style is "People-oriented, visionary, and autonomous", which maybe why I feel I am an exception to the rule for people-orientation. On the other hand, spontaneity and task orientation are definitely not my strengths.

As an INTP, I fall within one of the seven types that characterized the nine highly regarded systems engineers at JPL. I am delighted, but I am not sure this isn't just a mere coincidence. I do not feel or think that nine systems engineers, of which seven fall into different types, represents enough statistical significance to consider only those seven types to be ones marked for successful systems engineers. I find the fact that all of the nine fell within two of the four temperaments only slightly more convincing. A larger sample (at least 16) is needed to verify and thus act upon such results. With that said, I have often indicated to my managers, bosses and mentors that in order for me to work the best or most efficient I need to understand my place within the larger picture. Although, I am not sure I can say that I "view [a] system or subsystem as a non-linear web on 'connects' or 'disconnects' to be solved". I would agree that I am curious, self-confident, persistent, achievement-oriented, and that I am drawn to the challenge of solving complex and creative problems. Therefore, I think I will make a good systems engineer and have made it one of my career goals.