

Owned Insights From ORGL 523

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One of the things discussed in ORGL 523 was the occasional separation between intention and impact. While this dichotomy was in reference to how our communication intentions are not always received with the intended impact on those around us and what might cause it, ORGL 523 impacted me beyond my intended goals for this class. I was originally intrigued by the class name and description, desiring to know what makes a leader tick the way they do. I did not expect to receive such monumental personal insights into how I tick and why I make choices the way I do. In this paper I will demonstrate how several of the practical approaches and areas of study in the class have impacted me in new awareness and insights into myself as a parent, spouse, child, employee, friend, and leader.

History

Parental Connection. When I was five my parents relocated their five children to Western Montana from Oklahoma to follow a calling from God to serve him through church building and evangelism. By moving his family north my father sacrificed a business that would have provided a more stable income by which to raise his family and the ability to pay for college educations for his kids. This meant as a family we were “all in” on our faith. I learned many lessons on how God meets needs in miraculous ways. However, along with embracing an amazing faith there was a legalistic structure that mandated every detail of our lives. The list of dos and don'ts associated with strict Christian faith was meted out through authoritarian enforcement. We were willful, bright, articulate, and occasionally precocious children that sometimes all received corporal punishment just for making our mom's day harder than it needed to be. The strict and often forced righteousness, was however, accompanied with a lot of laughter, silliness, encouragement, and instruction that helped form the fairly balanced adult I am

today. *Raising a Secure Child* by Hoffman, et.al. (2017) allowed me to more easily define that I came out of my early years with a secure parental attachment. It also painted a picture of how and why my parents' own "shark music" along with their intense need to be seen as upstanding, humbly righteous believers drove a more authoritarian parental style.

Studies mentioned by Murphy and Johnson (*The Leadership Quarterly*, 2011) referenced in Dr. Albert's *Psychology of a Leader Reader*, provided insight into why I might have matured differently than my older siblings due to a more relaxed approach my parents eventually migrated to. This transition allowed more humble authoritative guidance when I was in my early teens. "Teens with authoritative parents, who are given increasing independence as they mature, tend to be more socially competent and self-reliant than teens raised under other parenting styles" (Albert, p. 7).

My parents shark music became evident when I completed the Being With Circle discussed in *Raising a Secure Child* (2017, p. 145). Anger was seen as disrespect for elders. Shame accepted as humble and spirit-filled martyrdom of self. Sadness was deflected by reminding us of God's grace and love and how we really had nothing to be sad about in the big picture. Joy and love, however, were readily embraced and came easy for us.

I raised my own children, at least in their formative years, with this inherited shark music until, like my parents, I experienced a transformational period that allowed me to own what I believed on my own terms and allowed me to parent in a way that was much more natural and secure for me. This transformed my parental relationship with my children in their early teens and has grown into a trusted mentorship interaction that I also embrace in my leadership philosophy today.

While simultaneously aiding me in understanding why and how my parents worked the way they did, I came to terms through the same exercises with what my own shark music was and how I'm "wired" to certain responses.

Career. I have worked in offices since high school. As a matter of fact office work or what I call "corporate" is pretty much all I have ever experienced in my career. Although this does not mean I have longevity in any specific job. I have historically attributed my being a highly creative type to the reason for having a track record of never lasting longer than three years with any organization. As I shared in class, I have had several occasions where my best intentions resulted in detrimental impact, where I was viewed as a threat, as a malcontent, or as dispensable when corporate restructures took place. I have also experienced the worst of corporate executive leadership. First-hand experience seeing executives implement blatantly sexist policies, not walk their own talk, not exhibit empathy or self-control, and not put the well-being of the organization ahead of their own goals and greed are what drove my decision to seek a Master's in organizational leadership.

While I have been able to embrace "fate" in my career by embracing the silver linings more often than not, and by moving on when something negative took place, I now know that's just how I am wired and how my optimism has carried me forward to bigger and better things regardless.

New Insights

While my independent strength and strong moral compass has guided me in questionable ethical career situations since high school, learning about my "sensitivity" and my emotional intelligence has helped me understand career choices I have made through a new lens of awareness. I lean more heavily to an esteem sensitive personality type. Separation and safety are

just 2 and 3 points lower than my esteem score, but my Emotional IQ download session with Dr. Albert provided insights into how my career experiences of betrayal, poor leadership, and persecution for attempting to be true to myself might have led to wired responses that are more reflexive than reflective.

Being a more esteem driven person yet also being a pretty self-aware person that tries to operate from an authentic place has not always resulted in positive or fulfilling experience. I enjoy being perceived positively and gravitate to positions that I will be needed in and that might provide opportunities to “save the day.” Yet, on the flip-side I am not very compassionate. I am a “do something about it or stop complaining” kind of person that sometimes just focuses on “gettin’ ‘er done.” When I was younger this gave me a harder edge and became my “corporate” identity until I reached a period of spiritual transformation about a decade ago.

Today that edge is tempered with a bit more empathy and a healthier self-awareness that feeds my ability to work through awkward and difficult situations. I tend to want to talk through things so we are all on the same page whether we agree or not. My EQ analysis supported this awareness in that I am able to access a full range of positive and negative feelings in stressful situations. I have seen this professionally and personally and remain grateful for the insights into how and why I function the way I do.

I lean more self-centric than other-centric, but not by much and am able to take my own feelings seriously while also acknowledging others’ feelings at the same time. I am also able to readily access my thoughts, wants, and feelings which has established me as a reliable, stable, easily approachable, and trustworthy collaborator. My self-management relationship strategies, however, I see as tainted by my previous experiences on the job and my authoritarian upbringing.

I tend to give my power away when challenged in order to maintain the relationship and I end up disconnecting from situations after not being embraced when I allow myself to just be me.

Application One

After the immersion, readings, and the EQ download with Dr. Albert I had an opportunity to take these new insights and apply them to a decision between two new career opportunities. While both of the positions were with non-profits, one was an executive director (top spot) of a well-established, recognizable organization. The other position was as a development director for a not-so-well known small organization that was in desperate need of a new building. The executive director position might allow me to lead a team applying my own leadership vision and philosophy while the development position would “need” me and would provide great satisfaction in “meeting the need.”

Armed with new insights from ORGL 523 I was able to objectively ask hard probing questions about the executive position in order to gauge how much politics would be involved and whether I would be able to truly lead in that position. It also helped me to weigh my true talents and passions for both organizations and to trust my gut in the final decision. It ultimately came down to my desire to lead from the top—finally, or to embrace leading from the middle to its full extent and do what I do best, tell stories and build relationships.

Ultimately, I learned the lead-from-the-top position was going to be very political as the organization recovered from legal issues related to previous executive leadership embezzling from them. This drove the very large board to be more hands-on than ever before and would require reparations to be made internally and with their brand. The development position with the smaller organization was going to be pretty much ground up. A small *team* of leaders that would be building the organization into a new season of growth and impact on the community. While

one position would have allowed me to “fix” a very difficult situation and to lead the organization through a difficult period of transition, it also would have placed me in the middle of a political tempest, quite potentially tying my hands through board intervention.

Through ORGL 523 study I was able to view my personal career goals objectively and to embrace where I am at this exact moment. This helped me differentiate my own desires and how they aligned with the smaller organization and the impact we could make on the future of their service offering in the community. For the first time in my career, I fully owned my ability to lead from the middle which totally aligns with my personal project of authoring a book about leading from the middle. This position would also allow me to be true to myself by working with a team that has full faith in my relationship-building and creative storytelling.

Application Two

Throughout my organizational leadership coursework, I have felt a drive to go on to doctoral studies. I have struggled with identifying the true motivation for wanting a doctorate. Through ORGL 523 I was able to clarify that the driving force (at least right now) was my constant struggle to be enough. To be able to write an authoritative book about leadership that would allow my voice to be heard, I felt I needed a doctorate. This was not clear prior to the class. I kept thinking I might have something to add to the conversation at a higher level and that I might actually be destined to a higher education career.

The realization that my upbringing and previous experiences wired me to feel inadequate to the job of writing a book helped me *own* the faulty wiring instead of trying to “fix” it. Just that minor shift suddenly helped me fully embrace something I had been preaching for years.

While it is a daily struggle at times to remind myself of my adequacy, I am fully owning that **the beautiful story lies in the imperfections.** The book is in the works and the new job is absolutely brilliant.

References

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