

## **Revitalizing the Self: Assessing the Relationship between Self-awareness and Orientation to Change**

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### **Abstract**

*Change is a constant in organizations. This quantitative study measured self-awareness in relation to personal orientation to change style among graduate students enrolled in the Master of Science in Organization Development at Queens University of Charlotte. This study focused on self-reported emotional self-awareness. The literature review identified the relevance of self-awareness throughout the change process. Data was collected through two instruments: the Change Style Indicator assessment measuring individual orientation to change style, and the Emotional and Social Competency Inventory (ESCI) assessment measuring self-awareness. Only the quadrant of self-awareness was used for inquiry regarding correlation with change. After examining and discriminating items in the self-awareness quadrant of the ESCI assessment, the researchers established a positive correlation between self-awareness and change. These results led the authors to propose increased attention to the aspects of the person involved in the change effort.*

**Keywords:** self-awareness, change, consciousness, organizational development

### **1. Introduction**

The relationship between self-awareness and orientation to change begins at the molecular level with universal adaptations determining what is known and is being discovered. Within this background, human beings interact to create intimate lives, communities, and organization systems. The current times of economic scarcity, terrorist and drug wars, ideological and moral crises, alongside great technological successes, produce highly competitive and stressful environments that often squash self-awareness. This occurs particularly in organizations enforcing action-driven cultural values. Yet, this approach fails to engage employees beyond the professional or technical discourses and, ultimately, is not cost-effective. Assuming this tension continues to evolve, the researchers ask how can the self gain back its awareness?

In pursuit of an answer, this study addressed the research question what impact does self-awareness have on personal orientation to change? To support this question, the theoretical framework of change and self-awareness is addressed in four sections: change theories, self-theories, self-awareness theories, and Emotional Intelligence. The methodology will present the research design, measurement tools, and results. In the final section, discussion, limitations, and implications are presented. Ultimately it is determined that regaining a deeper sense of self-awareness offers individuals greater chances of experiencing life, while also increasing productivity and better enabling sustained change.

### **2. Literature Review**

The key tenets of current theoretical understanding of change and self-awareness are examined in this review with attention paid to change theories, self-theories, self-awareness theories, and Emotional Intelligence.

#### **2.1 Change Theories**

The roots of change theory are found in Lewin's (1940) field theory. Lewin (1940) defined "life space" as the spatial relation of psychological data that comprises the person and his behavior. Field theory operates in the realm of action, emotion, and personality.

The theory's basic tenets are "behavior has to be derived from a totality of coexisting facts" and "these coexisting facts have the character of a 'dynamic field' in so far as the state of any part of this field depends on every other part of the field" (Lewin, 1940, p. 25). Field theory stated that behavior depends on the present and has "certain time-depth that includes psychological past, psychological present and psychological future" (p. 27). His analytical method of causal relations formed the part of Lewin's change architecture offering a dynamic structure in which behavior (B) is a function (F) of the person (P) and the environment (E) or  $B = F(P, E)$ . Later, Lewin (1946) indicated the complexity of change by saying that "serious good-will" is not enough to carry on change unless this "could be transformed into organized, efficient action." Yet, he noted, "exactly here lies the difficulty. These eager people feel to be in the fog" (p. 34).

Lewin's works (1940, 1946, 1947) provided the ethical foundation of change necessary to achieve an increased quality of life at the organizational level where the individual is the generator and agent of change. Yet Burnes (2009) noted Lewin's approach, while both ethical and effective, contrasts with the "highly competitive environment of the last 25 years" (p. 361). Nevertheless, Burnes (2009) believed Lewin would return to prominence as in "the next 25 years, the challenges of social responsibility and environmental sustainability are unlikely to be met without returning to the type of ethically based approach to change promoted by Lewin" (p. 361). To further understand change at the individual and organizational level the Transtheoretical Model (TTM) of change is examined.

Prochaska and Diclemente (1982) identified six stages of change: (1) Precontemplation, (2) Contemplation, (3) Preparation, (4) Action, (5) Maintenance, and (6) Termination. The initial stages are verbal processes while action and maintenance stages are behavioral processes. Prochaska and Norcross (2001) emphasized the importance of recognizing the stage at which the individual shows up in order to design the process that follows. Prochaska, Norcross, and DiClemente (1994) went on to further strengthen TTM and integrate it cross-culturally by identifying elements of how individuals change from psychology's different schools.

Bridges' (1986) contribution on transition is integrated into the change discussion. Bridges (1986) noted that "difficulties with making new beginnings come not from a difficulty with beginnings per se, but from a difficulty with endings and neutral zones" (p. 30). Phases need closings in order to open to new possibilities. According to Bridges (1986), people are pressured towards change, but management does not allow for people to experience and live the process of change. For Bridges (2012), change is situational whereas transition is psychological. By pulling out the psychological layer that integrates change and stating its three-phase process within change: (1) letting go (2) repatterning, and (3) making a new beginning, Bridges made available a transformative perspective in which change participants would be prepared and aided throughout the transition until new behavior and beliefs are internalized. Cozolino (2010) posited the "neural architecture" of the change participant "continually changes in response to environmental challenges" (p. 19). The brain's recurrent change as the result of its interaction with its environment leads to Kegan and Lahey's (2001) Immunity to Change model focused on reframing assumptions to unblock barriers in order to unfold the change process.

Kegan and Lahey (2001) explained that many people are aware of the need to change, and even commit to change, but something blocks them from changing. For Kegan and Lahey (2001), the block comes from the rooted assumptions and belief system that, when reframed, allow the individual to recognize and to convert to truth or a new set of beliefs. When the individual reframes, the individual can see the effects of the assumption and might increase readiness to change. Kegan and Lahey's (2001) Immunity to Change assessment model consists of four categories: (1) the commitment, (2) the behavior, (3) the competing commitment, and (4) the bigger assumption. This model enables the discovery of hidden commitments that are ingrained in larger assumptions that block change as the individual is invited to observe and reflect about his or her behavioral patterns. Yet understanding Change Theories alone is insufficient for incorporating self awareness in organizational change. The next section examines Self Theories.

## **2.2 Self Theories**

The concept of self has remained largely unchanged since first conceptualized by James (1890) and Mead (1934). According to Gecas (1982), the self develops in "social interaction and is based on the social character of human language" (p. 3). Gecas (1982) further defined self as "the process of reflexivity which emanates from the dialectic between the I and Me."

Self-concept, in contrast, “is a product of this reflexive activity. It is the concept the individual has of himself as a physical, social, and spiritual or moral being” (Gecas, 1982, p. 3). Gecas (1982) further noted that “the process of reflected appraisals is the cornerstone of the symbolic interactionist perspective on self-concept formation” (p. 5). The differences between self-concept and the appraisals of others are explained by the norms of adult social interaction in the US culture which “inhibit honest appraisal of others, substituting ‘tact’ and proper ‘deference and demeanor’ to protect self-esteem. This often results in unawareness of what other think of us” (Gecas, 1982, p. 6). The dynamic aspect of the self is further developed by Markus and Wurf (1987) who note researchers have viewed the self-concept “as active, forceful, and capable of change” (p. 299). Self-concept has also been regarded as the interpreter and organizer of self-relevant actions and experiences, whose motivational consequences provide incentives, standards, plans, rules, and scripts for performance. The self-concept dynamically adjusts to challenges from environment. Self-concept is also viewed as “a system of self schemas or generalizations about the self — derived from past social experiences” (Markus & Wurf, 1987, p. 301). The authors called attention to the existence of at least three types of self-conceptions: the actual self, the ideal self, and the ought self. Quite stimulating is their affirmation that through “a story that makes the most coherent or harmonious integration of one’s various experiences,” the individual creates a flexible self-representation (p. 316). This, according to Markus and Wurf (1987) “makes the most coherent or harmonious integration of one’s various experiences” (p. 316). This autobiography or narrative operates as a superstructure to which individuals attach their current set of life experiences and revise their self-concept(s).

Markus and Wurf (1987) identified the information processing of the self-concept in five phases: (1) individuals show a heightened sensitivity to self-relevant stimuli (2) self-congruent stimuli are efficiently processed, (3) self-relevant stimuli show enhanced recall and recognition, (4) individuals make confident behavioral predictions, attributions, and inferences in self-relevant domains, and (5) individuals are resistant to information that is incongruent with the self-structure. Individuals tend to “make situational attributions for any behavior they enact that is inconsistent with their self-view” (p. 317). Within self-concept, regulation affect is a vital function, which involves “defending one’s self against negative emotional states” (p. 318) by keeping up stability with one’s views.

Baumeister (1999) defined self in three aspects: self-reflexive, interpersonal being, and the executive. The first category is described as the reflexive consciousness that starts by acknowledging the body but then moves towards more complex places in the matrix of social relationships. He stated, “the conscious human mind can turn its inquiring attention back toward its own source and seek the self” (p. 2). This self-concept encompassed the study of self-awareness as well as the study of how knowledge about the self is acquired, stored, used, and transformed. The second category, the interpersonal being, is the self-interacting with others. Baumeister (1999) stated, “the self is not created nor discovered in social isolation, through looking inward” (p. 2). The third aspect of the self is the executive function enabling choice and decision-making and including autonomy, volition, self-regulation, and self-defeating behavior. Another relevant concept proposed by Baumeister (1999) is objective self-awareness. This “is a state of consciousness in which attention is focused inward on the self, making the individual an object to his or her consciousness” (p. 26). This ability to think comes up also in Leary (2004) who affirmed that, “the self refers to the mental apparatus that allows people (and a few other species of animals) to think consciously about themselves” (p. 5). Leary (2004) classified five consequences in the ability to think about oneself or be self-aware: (1) planning, (2) decision making, (3) self conceptualization and evaluation (4) introspection, and (5) perspective taking. In conjunction with theories of change and self, this research also relies on understanding of the self-awareness theories detailed next.

### **2.3 Self-Awareness Theories**

Objective self-awareness is described as the process in which the self directs its attention inward whereas subjective self-awareness is when attention is directed away from the self. Silvia and Duval (2001) noted that, “just as people can apprehend the existence of environmental stimuli, they can be aware of their own existence” (p. 230). The authors delineated two types of self-awareness: objective self-awareness and subjective self-awareness. Also examining self-awareness, Diener and Srull (1979) assessed the likelihood that people would judge their behavior from a social perspective when they were self-aware or non-self-aware. The authors posited self-awareness should increase adherence to normative standards, proposing that a self-aware person “will be highly aware of any deviations between his or her behavior and these standards” and that perceived discrepancies would lead to negative affect.

This, in turn, would make people avoid antinormative behavior. Yet the authors found that “subjects relied more on their personal standards of accuracy for evaluating their performance when they were non-self-aware, whereas they relied more on the social standards of accuracy when they were self-aware” (Diener & Scrull, 1979, p. 422). This study showed that self-awareness could work against the person if the situation entails being observed by others. Searle (1998), Natsoulas (1998), and Ferrari (1998) presented a more philosophical perspective of self-awareness in their contributions to *Self-awareness: Its nature and development*. Each author’s article provided perspectives that treated self-awareness as a natural flow.

### **2.3.1 The relation of emotions, change, and motivations to self-awareness**

Gross (1999) pointed out that emotions rise when a person assesses something that is of importance to her/him; “the goals, standards, needs or wishes that underlie this evaluation may be central and enduring or peripheral and transient” (p. 527). They may be conscious or unconscious, biologically based or spring from culture, shared or personal, yet “whatever the source of the situational meaning for the individual, it is this meaning that triggers emotion” (Gross, 1999, p. 528). When individuals feel emotion, often it shows “through our verbal and nonverbal behavior” (p. 534). Gross (1999), identified “five points in the emotion generative process at which regulation may occur: (1) selection of the situation, (2) modification of the situation, (3) deployment of attention, (4) change of cognitions, and (5) modulation of responses” (p. 546). Relevant to this particular research study was Gross’s (1999) affirmation that “emotion requires that individuals imbue percepts with meaning, and evaluate their capacity to manage the situation” (p. 545). Also germane is the term cognitive change which refers to the many possible meanings a person chooses from “to construe the meaning of an event” (p. 545).

Leary (2007) indicated that the term self refers to phenomena that include features of personality as well as the cognitive processes that underlie self-awareness such as a person’s mental representation, the executive control center that mediates decision-making and self-regulation; in brief, the entire person. Self-motive establishes a specific type of self-awareness, self-representation, or self-evaluation. Leary (2007) called attention to the relation between the self and emotions by highlighting that self-awareness is the result of human beings’ evolutionary past and that self-reflection “came into play in a wide array of motivated actions and emotional responses that previously operated non-consciously (as they do in animals without a self)” (p. 332). Consequently, self-thought has engendered cognitive and emotional states that, before, ascended “only from the tangible satisfaction of particular needs or goals” (p. 333). Leary (2007) concluded that the development of self-awareness has produced radical changes in human “thought, emotion, and behavior” (p. 334). Self-awareness enabled “people to think about how they were perceived and evaluated by others and to regulate their behavior to bring about desired interpersonal outcomes” (p. 334). According to Leary (2007), these phenomena are rooted in the indispensable need for social connection. Self-enhancement, self-verification, and self-expansion, are in part the “pervasive concern” of being approved and accepted (p. 334). Being self-aware, therefore, can have negative effects on the image that a person creates and how others perceive him or her. Depending on the perception of the others, individuals might feel the need to modify themselves to be accepted. Consequently, this could hinder the change process of an individual, group or organization. The literature reviewed so far has introduced multiple concepts of self-awareness as being emotions and motivations. The following section addresses psychophysiology and neurophysiology of self-awareness.

## **2. 4 Emotional Intelligence**

There are several current models measuring emotional intelligence (EI). Cherniss, Goleman and Bennis (2001), for instance, set out EI as a framework to increase performance that includes self-awareness. For these authors, self-awareness — “the ability to sense, articulate, and reflect on one’s emotional states...key to realizing one’s own strengths and weaknesses” — is one of four quadrants alongside social awareness, self-management and relationship management (Cherniss, Goleman & Bennis, 2001, pp. 30 - 33).

This literature reviews shows the intricacy of self-awareness through the self, self-concept, and the dynamic of the self considering motivations (such as cultural adaptation to social standards produced by the environment) and emotions. All of these must be considered in the process of change whether it is at the individual, group, or organizational level.

### 3. Methodology

This quantitative research studied self-reported self-awareness and the orientation to change. This section will outline the two assessment instruments selected to measure the possible correlation between self-awareness and orientation to change style, and identify the research participants and methods of data collection.

#### 3.1 Operational definitions of the two variables

The two key variables in this research study are change and self-awareness. For the purpose of this study, the word change is defined in general terms by adopting the broader definition proposed in the Oxford English Dictionary “the act or instance of making or becoming different” (“Change,” n.d.). With regards to self-awareness, the framework used in this study is Leary’s (2007) definition that self-awareness represents a “person’s mental representation of him or herself, an executive control center that mediates decision-making and self-regulation, and the whole person” (p. 319). Using this framework, this study highlights the emotional aspect of self-awareness.

#### 3.2 Research question

In light of the literature reviewed and these term definitions, a research question was posed: what impact does self-awareness have on personal orientation to change?

#### 3.3. Measurement tools

The Change Style Indicator (CSI) and the Emotional and Social Competency Inventory (ESCI) were chosen for this study. The CSI is an assessment instrument designed by Discovery Learning Inc. This instrument measures an individual’s preferred style in approaching change and dealing with situations involving change. This instrument scores individuals change style in a continuum from a conserver style to an originator style (see Figure 1). The mid-range on the continuum is the pragmatist style. According to Discovery Learning’s CSI Style Guide, conservers prefer current circumstances over the unknown and prefer to use the available resources. This leads to preserving the existing structure. The conserver style is characterized by gradual and continuous improvement. Originators prefer a faster and more radical approach to change. Their goal is to challenge the existing structure, which leads to expansive and systematic changes. Pragmatists prefer to explore the existing structure in an open and objective manner. They advocate for change that is more reflective of the demands of the current circumstances. Pragmatists prefer change that is functional.

<b>Conserver</b>		<b>Pragmatist</b>		<b>Originator</b>
66	13	0	13	66

*Figure 1.* The Change Style Indicator. Adapted from Change Style Indicator style guide by Discovery Learning. Copyright 2011 by Discovery Learning Press.

The Change Style Indicator (CSI) is a 22-item self-assessment tool. The stronger preference for either a conserver or an originator approach to change will be on the far ends of the scale. The closer an individual is to the center, the stronger their preference for the pragmatist style. The three styles display different preferences and tendencies when dealing with change. To complete the test items, respondents are asked to distribute three points between two options, A and B. Based on how much they prefer one style they can rank the option from 0, 1, 2, or 3. They must make sure that both answers for each item always adds up to 3. According to Musselwhite (2000), over a four-month research period with 55 respondents, the CSI exhibited a test retest reliability of .92. When tested for factor analysis, all 22 items loaded one factor with factor loadings ranging from .47 to .70.

The Emotional and Social Competency Inventory assessment instrument, owned by the Hay Group, is based on the Boyatzis-Goleman Emotional and Social Intelligence Test. After the researchers submitted a proposal, the Hay Group authorized free access to this assessment for this study. While Goleman’s own Framework of Emotional Competencies measures a greater number of items while the ESCI measures 12 competencies organized within four clusters: Self-awareness, Self-management, Social Awareness, and Relationship Management. For the purpose of this study, the research focus is on the Emotional Self-awareness competency measured under the self-awareness cluster. In the ESCI User Guide (2011), The Hay Group defines emotional self-awareness “as the ability to understand our own emotions and their effects on our own performance” (p. 5).

To complete the test items, respondents are asked to choose one option on a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5, but are also given the option to respond “don’t know” which is not included in the scoring. The lowest score is one, representing the lowest level of emotional self-awareness and the highest score is five, representing the highest score of self-awareness. According to the Hay Group’s report, exploratory factor analyses were run to determine the suitability of the test. The Cronbach alpha’s for the Emotional self-awareness competency is 0.754 (Boyatzis & Gaskin, 2010). For 15 years the Hay Group has performed ongoing reviews and studies on ESCI’s validity. However, the reliability of this instrument is indeterminate. According to Boyatzis and Gaskin (2010), this instrument has no specific test-retest reliability studies. Participants who take the ESCI on multiple occasions have usually undergone some type of developmental activity between testing; therefore, changes are reflected in the scores.

### **3.4 Participants**

Three classes of the Masters of Science in Organizational Development (MSOD) at Queens University of Charlotte were selected to participate. The participants were enrolled in the courses of Introduction to OD, Introduction to Coaching, or Applied Research Methods and Statistics during the Fall academic semester of 2012. Fifty students voluntarily took the two assessments: CSI and ESCI. Forty of these participants were women and ten were men (a normal ratio for the MSOD program).

### **3.5 Data Collection and Analysis**

The researchers approached the students in their Queens’ classrooms at the beginning of a class session. Fifty students agreed to take both tests in paper form. No online testing was offered as only one of the tools was available online. The researchers wanted to dispense both tools in the same session and in a similar format to guarantee that responses were immediate, and students did not have the opportunity to forget.

The results of the CSI instrument’s 22 questions and the ESCI six questions related to emotional self-awareness were manually entered into an Excel document by one of the researchers. With the CSI, the researcher anticipated the total score of the test had to be a 66 value. The results, after input, were confirmed by checking that each total was of at least 66. With the ESCI, there was no way official way of double-checking, but the researcher was attentive to detail in entering the information into each of the 3,400 data cells. The mean, median, mode, and standard deviation were determined using the functions formula in Excel and were calculated for both assessments. In order to analyze the results, the CSI scale was coded from 1 to 133 to parallel the original scale from 66 to 0 to 66. Three sets of data were eliminated as two of the CSI responses were completed erroneously and one ESCI participant answered more than 75% don’t know to the emotional self-awareness competency. Based on the Hay Group recommendations, participants that answer more than 75% with “don’t know” should not be included in the assessment.

The Cronbach alpha analysis was done on both the emotional self-awareness test and CSI. The distribution of the CSI scores tended to cluster around the center scores with 1 and 2, but that was expected. No single item showed extreme skewing, so all 22 items were used. Four Pearson correlations were done. One including all six items of the emotional self-awareness competency, another one including five questions, a third one with three questions, and finally, a fourth, with two items of the emotional self-awareness competency. The effect size was calculated for the final results. The findings are detailed next.

## **4. Findings**

Self awareness is critical to our understanding of change. The researchers’ finding regarding self awareness among the participants benefit the discussion following. With the ECSI, the mean for the emotional self-awareness competency for the sample size of 47 was 4.098. The median was 4.000, and the mode was 4.170. The standard deviation was 0.526. The mean for the CSI for the sample size of 47, was 68.6. The median was 69.0, and the mode was 55, 67, 71, and 81. The standard deviation was 21. Eleven students scored in the conserver side of the scale, 14 students scored on the originator side of the scale, and 22 students scored in the pragmatist scale.

The original six items in the self-awareness competency were: Item 9: Show awareness of own feelings; Item 17: Are able to describe how own feelings affect own actions; Item 29: Acknowledge own strengths and weaknesses; Item 42: Are aware of the connection between what is happening and own feelings; Item 55: Describe underlying reasons for own feelings; and Item 58: Do not describe own feelings.

The Cronbach alpha for the emotional self-awareness competency including all six items was 0.771. Table 1 provides the detailed information of the relationship between each item per The Cronbach analysis. Item 58, which is the only reversed question in this part of the assessment, showed low scores in the inter-item correlation matrix (see Table 1). Four Pearson correlation analyses were done. The first Pearson correlation ( $r$ ) was done using the complete CSI assessment and all six questions for the emotional self-awareness competency. A result of .2267 was obtained. When comparing this result to the one-tail Pearson correlation table for 46 degrees of freedom ( $df$ ), the  $r$  statistic value was to the left of a .05 column, therefore the result was not significant. A second correlation excluded item 58, with five questions but the  $r$  statistic value decreased to .2060, which continued to lack significance.

To better understand both the CSI and ESCI, the item analysis was done to discriminate, if possible, questions that had more than 80% of the same scores. The CSI scores tended to cluster around 1 and 2, with fewer scores on the extremes 0 and 3. This was expected, and no single item showed skewing. On the other hand, three out of the six questions related to emotional self-awareness in the ESCI test, numbers 9, 29, and 42, showed the same score more than 80% of the time. The remaining questions were: Item 17: Are able to describe how own feelings affect own actions; Item 55: Describe underlying reasons for own feelings; and Item 58: Do not describe own feelings.

Two additional Cronbach analyses were done. The first, excluding the three items, 9, 29, and 42, failed to pass the item analysis. But, the Cronbach analysis results decreased from .771 to .664. This led researchers to look at the item analysis followed by inter-item correlations (see Table 2). A third Pearson correlation analysis was done, excluding these three questions from the correlation and the  $r$  statistic value increased to 0.2586. Looking at a one tail-test Pearson correlation table with 46  $df$ , the  $r$  statistic value was to the right side of a .05 column, showing evidence that the values are significant correlated. In order to have a  $r$  statistic value with .05 level of significance which means that 95% of the times you will get the same result, the correlation number had to be 0.2403. Because the Cronbach alpha analysis was low including item 58, a third Cronbach analysis was done excluding the three items 9, 29, and 42 that failed to pass the item analysis and also excluding item 58 showing low inter-item correlation scores. The Cronbach value increased to 0.813 and inter-item correlation (see Table 3).

The mean for the two questions (17 and 55) of the emotional self-awareness competency for the sample size of 47 was 4.021, the median was 4.000, and the mode was 4.000. The standard deviation was 0.759. A fourth Pearson correlation analysis was done excluding item 58 and items 9, 29, and 42 and a  $r$  statistic value of .2544 was obtained which continues to be on the right side of a .05 column showing evidence of significant correlation. Items 17: Are able to describe how own feelings affect own actions and 55: Describe underlying reasons for own feelings, were used in the fourth Pearson correlation analysis.

The effect size is a measure of the strength of the phenomenon. The effect size was calculated separating the data between originators, pragmatists, and conservers. The mean for the emotional self-awareness test was calculated for each group. The 4.18 mean for the 14 originators was subtracted from the mean (3.86) for the 11 conservers. This result was divided by the standard deviation of .759 for a result of 0.418, which reflects a moderate effect. With a larger sample, the probability might be more significant. After eliminating four out of the six questions of the ESCI assessment and running the Pearson correlation factor, a 0.2544 number was obtained which is to the right side of a .05 column showing evidence that the variables are significantly related. This indicates a positive effect of the correlation between self-reported self-awareness and the orientation to change. Also, the mean of the 11 students scoring on the conserver side was 3.86. The mean of the 22 students scoring on the pragmatist center was 4.00, while the mean of the 14 students scoring on the pragmatist side was 4.18.

## **5. Discussion**

Companies often train their executives and employees with action-driven beliefs and behaviors that fashion a tendency of automatism. This approach reduces self-awareness and leads to disengagement negatively impacting cost-effectiveness. In an attempt to understand how to re-engage self-awareness, this study aimed to answer the research question what impact does self-awareness have on personal orientation to change? The authors hypothesized increasing self-awareness would cause change to be more easily embraced.

In the literature review, Lewin (1940), suggested the means of recovering self awareness while producing cost-effective and sustainable change was best understood from the leader's perspective as well as that of the followers.

Prochaska and DiClemente (1982) emphasized the importance of raising consciousness through verbal process. Bridges (1986) highlighted the psychological need individuals have to internalize and embrace change situations. Kegan and Lahey (2001) brought attention to the individual's need to uncover the big assumptions that block the change effort by observing, reflecting, and reframing behavioral patterns. This leads us back to behavior as a function of the person and his/her environment. Self-awareness as a process of reflexivity occurs within the person's environment. Reflexivity and human language activate the process of meaning making, aligning thoughts, feelings, and actions. Therefore, instead of action-driven initiatives that generate disengagement and send self-awareness to a dormant state, reflective dialogue must be in the forefront of any change effort.

This study's findings show a positive correlation between self-awareness and change. The two items of the ESCI self-reported self-awareness test correlate with all items of the CSI Orientation to Change; feelings, actions, and reason were found to have a connection. These two items identified the individual as able to describe how his feelings affect his actions and able to describe underlying reasons for his/her feelings. The survey tool's term "describe" ties reflexivity to feelings, actions, and reason. During our assessment, three questions were eliminated due to the vague and overused colloquialism of terms such as "awareness" and "acknowledge." Natsoulas (1998) addressed the multiple meanings that awareness takes in the English language. This multiplicity might have blurred the deeper understanding of self-awareness as consciousness.

The term consciousness ought to be highlighted as a synonym of awareness to be more precise with the meaning. Some synonyms give greater insight about the dimensions and process of being aware. Among them are: cognizant, conscious, sensible, alive, or awake meaning having knowledge of something. These synonyms express with greater precision the understanding of self-awareness, which in the authors' native language, Spanish, is "conciencia." A vital state of alertness that gathers internal and external stimuli to reference back to the accumulated knowledge as a way of making sense of the new situation, which depends on the inner and outer experience of the person in constant dialogue and change.

## **6. Limitations**

**6.1 Potential sources of measurement error.** The authors acknowledge there were possible areas of error in measurement in this quantitative study. Both assessments were in paper form. This increases the margin of error during the transference of results to spreadsheet. The assessment environment — a classroom for MSOD students — may also have limited the findings. Most of the participants came directly from a long day of work and, due to low energy a few skipped one or more items. Also, some failed to notice or understand the negative construction for the reverse question.

**6.2 Instrumentation.** A better fitting instrument for self-awareness and its correlation with change could be found. The ESCI measures twelve competencies, yet this research looked only at one — Emotional Self-Awareness. This competency was tested using just six of the ESCI's 68 items. Three of the six were eliminated for showing high social desirability. One item contained the reversed statement — "do not describe own feelings" — which showed low inter-item correlation with the other items. Additionally, while the CSI is a good brief assessment another assessment could be used to better measure the person in relation to his/her specific change environment.

## **7. Recommendations**

Informed by the change and self-awareness theories reviewed, the quantitative methodology, and instruments used in this study, the following thoughts surfaced:

- Self-awareness needs to be understood within the person's environment. It is within this context that the person reflects, becomes cognizant, and prepares for desired outcomes. Aligning the various aspects of self-awareness is necessary in the change efforts while disregarding other perspectives that might be counterproductive.
- The relation between self-awareness and emotions is vital in the process of change. According to Leary (2007) an individual's thoughts are affected by current emotions, as well as those experienced in the past and anticipated in the future. Hence, the reaction to change is not just about the self by itself, but the self within a social context, its environment, and interaction with the present while being informed by past experiences.



- The relation of meaning making through consciousness and the rise of emotions that situational meaning triggers add an additional layer of significance to self-awareness. According to Gross (1999), an individual chooses from many possible meanings of an event. This highlights the work of the self, its awareness, intention, decisions, verbal productions, and actions. In order to succeed in change, it is necessary to understand the true integrative nature of self-awareness or consciousness.
- It is necessary to design the appropriate methodology tailored to the specific situation and the capabilities of the change agents –the leader and the followers.
- Despite the fact that time is a major constraint in most change scenarios, awakening self-awareness necessitates development of spaces for reflexivity and dialogue.
- The ethical dimension of change must be recovered in the current times. Burnes (2009) reminds us of Lewin's ethical aspect stating change matters not only for its economic effect, but also because of the improved quality of life experience change can bring. Change should bring quality of life experience for the organization and the individual regardless of the era and environment.

## 8. Conclusion

The awareness of the self requires openness, alertness, and intentionality to realize and make meaning of experiences (physical, psychological, social, etc.). Meaning making directs the self in construction of knowledge, new perceptions, beliefs, and ultimately impacts the interactions with others and feeds back the self. By reclaiming/regaining a deeper sense of self-awareness, individuals have greater chances of experiencing life, increasing productivity and creativity, while improving health. Neither change nor self-awareness is a simple process. Yet, recovering the self and its awareness and awakening the dormant self will revitalize the workforce in a challenging time. Being aware of the degree of self-awareness among our population, in planning and managing change, will bolster the opportunity to initiate and maintain sustained change.

### Tables

**Table 1**  
**Inter-item Correlation Matrix**

	q9	q17	q29	q42	q55	q58
Q9	1.000	.708	.278	.375	.630	.087
Q17	.708	1.000	.406	.578	.685	.208
Q29	.278	.406	1.000	.125	.286	.054
Q42	.375	.578	.125	1.000	.462	.050
Q55	.630	.685	.286	.462	1.000	.274
Q58	.087	.208	.054	.050	.274	1.000

**Table 2**  
**Inter-item Correlations Excluding 9, 29, and 42**

	q17	q55	q58
q17	1.000	.685	.208
q55	.685	1.000	.274
q58	.208	.274	1.000

**Table 3**  
**Inter-Item Correlation Matrix for 17 and 55**

	q17	q55
q17	1.000	.685
q55	.685	1.000

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