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Exploring individual self-awareness as it relates to self-acceptance and the quality of interpersonal relationships

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EXPLORING INDIVIDUAL SELF-AWARENESS AS IT RELATES TO

SELF-ACCEPTANCE AND THE QUALITY OF

INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

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Abstract

Most people spend a significant amount of time at work. Because many workplaces steer away from individual work toward collaboration, the need for high-quality, productive workplace relationships continues to increase. This study examined self-awareness, self-acceptance, and relationship quality to determine the implications for organizations. The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of self-awareness and how it relates to an individual's degree of self-acceptance and quality of relationship with others. The research questions were:

1. Do people who show higher degrees of self-awareness report higher degrees of self-acceptance?

2. Do people who show higher degrees of self-awareness report experiencing higher quality relationships with others?

This study used a mixed method design involving a quantitative survey and qualitative interview. Convenience and snowball sampling strategies were used to draw 50 survey respondents and 16 interviewees for the purpose of gathering data about the participants' self-awareness, self-acceptance, and quality of relationships. Analyses were performed on the three variables to determine possible relationships among them.

The study found that self-awareness is positively and significantly correlated with self-acceptance and quality of interpersonal relationships. It was also noted that most participants indicated that they experience the lowest quality relationships in the workplace, as compared to those in their personal or family life.

It is recommended that leaders adopt a mindset that values relationships in the workplace in order to create work cultures that support employee engagement. As self-awareness has been shown to be positively correlated with self-acceptance and quality interpersonal relationships, self-awareness training should be made available to a broad range of staff in efforts to tap in to individual potential and support genuine team work. Managers should commit to an intentional, planned-change effort targeted at shifting the organization's culture to one that values its people and the relationships between them. It is only when leaders recognize the potential within and between its people that these valuable resources can be utilized. In order to help facilitate this effort, leaders may utilize an internal consultant or employ an external organizational development consultant. Leaders should also invest in the social aspect of work by intentionally designing social activities to support productive relationship building. Lastly, cross-training is a simple way to help employees gain a broader perspective over work related issues, and reduce misunderstandings and conflicts.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

An organization can be viewed as a group of people working together to meet a set of objectives (Crowston & Short, 1998). Two critical points are evident in Crowston and Short's statement. First, organizations are made up of people: people with emotions, history, and memory, and people with awareness of themselves and others to varying degrees (Goleman, 1995). Second, organizations require the concerted, smoothly collaborating efforts of these complex individuals. Thus, organizations are not simply concepts, structures, and machines that employ the intelligence and labor of humans (Crowston & Short, 1998). Instead, they are created, maintained, and driven by people—their whole selves, emotions and all. However, working together is no easy task. Crowston and Short observed,

> a huge amount of human pain and wasted resources that take place in organizations is preventable and certainly correctable. These costs are seldom because of malevolent intent or difficult individuals, but because of interactions that produce missing, misattributed, misinterpreted information. (p. 2)

Many organizations recognize this issue to some degree and have employed efforts to improve the communication skills of their leaders and employees (Crowston & Short, 1998). While communication training is on the right track, the training rarely goes deep enough to build the self-awareness needed for truly effective communication and quality relationships to result.

Simultaneously, the last 30 years have shown that the way that large organizations do business has dramatically changed. Bushe (2001) explained that the microprocessor revolution is prompting businesses to abandon the times

of command-and-control leadership in favor of empowering employees with the authority to take initiative, take control, and make decisions. Partnerships, teams, and creativity have become more prevalent across organizations today. Being able to engage in this type of organization requires employees to have social competence, meaning an ability to create and maintain satisfying relationships with others.

However, instead of strong social competence, Bushe (2001) argued that organizations are mired by *interpersonal mush*, which he stated "exists where people are trying to make sense of each other without clear, descriptive interactions. Instead, [people] make up stories to explain what [they] see, and these stores get acted on as if they were reality" (p. ix). Worse, people tend to allow their stories to persist unchallenged. Relationships thus stay at a surface level, misunderstanding abounds, and relationships and self-awareness are both impeded.

Interpersonal mush poses a big problem for organizations in light of the general trend of businesses becoming more people and relationship focused. Bushe identified four key outcomes of interpersonal mush. First, interpersonal mush leads to unhappy people with unresolved issues. Interpersonal mush leads to story-making, gossip, and unfortunately in many cases, a toxic work environment. Second, interpersonal mush breaks down individual productivity and unrealized potential. Many studies have shown that low morale leads to low productivity and wasted resources or energy. Third, interpersonal mush leads to breakdown of teamwork, synergy, and collective creativity. Without awareness, clear and honest communication is difficult. Without clear and honest

communication, teams experience difficulty working together. At best, they work together at a surface level. Synergy and collective creativity, which are competitive advantages for businesses, are lost. Fourth, interpersonal mush renders leadership ineffective. Top leaders can experience all the same symptoms described above. However, their communication with each other and the way they relate to each other impact the organizational culture and set an example for their staff members. Furthermore, their decisions have widespread influence. It is ever more important for leaders to become clear about their intentions and the impact of their actions.

Past literature suggests that improved collaboration and beneficial business outcomes can result if three factors are in place: self-awareness (a deep understanding of one's own emotions and thoughts), self-acceptance (high positive regard for oneself), and high-quality relationships (Baril, Julien, Chartrand, & Dube, 2009; Freshman & Rubino, 2004; Hanson, 2000; Rogers, 1961). However, the relationships and influences among these variables bear further investigation.

Purpose and Significance of Study

This study endeavored to gain a better understanding of self-awareness and how it relates to an individual's degree of self-acceptance and quality of relationship with others. The research questions were:

1. Do people who show higher degrees of self-awareness report higher degrees of self-acceptance?

2. Do people who show higher degrees of self-awareness report experiencing higher quality relationships with others?

Quinn (1996) emphasized, "We can change the world only by changing ourselves" (p. 9). If organizations are to adapt to today's rapidly changing environment, the first step will be to understand the impact of self-awareness in people's lives. This study will not address additional skills involved in interpersonal communications.

Methodology

This study used a mixed method design involving a quantitative survey and qualitative interview. Convenience and snowball sampling strategies were used to draw 50 survey respondents and 16 interviewees. Survey and interview procedures were used to gather data about the participants' self-awareness, self-acceptance, and quality of relationships.

Organization of the Study

This chapter provided the background for the study. The purpose and significance and methodology also were discussed.

Chapter 2 provides a literature review of existing research on the human relations school, self-awareness, self-acceptance, quality of relationships with others, and transactional analysis. A review of the human relations literature also is provided.

Chapter 3 outlines the methodology of the study. The research design is discussed. A description of the procedures to recruit research participants and the ethical measures taken to protect them also are provided. Data collection and data analysis procedures are then outlined.

Chapter 4 describes the data collected and presents findings. Survey findings, interview findings, and a synthesis of the data are discussed.

Finally, chapter 5 presents a discussion of the findings as they relate to methodology and study context. A summary of the findings is presented, followed by conclusions, limitations, suggestions for research, implications for organization development practitioners, and recommendations to managers.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

This chapter provides an examination of literature relevant to the present study. Topics related to employee self-awareness and self-acceptance as well as concerns about the quality of relationships fall squarely within the domain of the human relations school. Therefore, an overview of this body of research is presented first. Self-awareness, the independent variable in the present study, is discussed next. Discussions of self-acceptance and then quality relationships follow. The relationships among these variables also are explored. Finally, transactional analysis, a theory that addresses both self-awareness and the quality of relationships, is examined.

The Human Relations School

The human relations school of thought emerged in the early 1900s, a time when leaders were faced with escalating tension between management and labor as well as between government and civilians (Carson, 2005). From a world embroiled in strikes and economic depression emerged a growing concern for individual needs and well-being. Theories and studies that fall within the human relations school include the Hawthorne studies (Homans, 1950; Mayo, 1945; Roethlisberger & Dickson, 1939); McGregor's (1960) Theories X and Y; Lewin's sensitivity training (as cited in Golembiewski & Blumberg, 1973) and T-group training (Benne, 1964); and job redesign (Herzberg, 1966), which specifically looked at supervisor relations.

The Hawthorne studies were a series of research studies at Lincoln Electric Works that began in 1924. The aim of the research was to identify the

factors that contribute to higher worker productivity. Illumination levels in the workplace were raised and lowered to determine the effects of lighting conditions. On some occasions, illumination reductions resulted in productivity increases. On other occasions, illumination increases produced the same outcome. Other researchers examined the role of fatigue and rest periods in productivity (Mayo, 1945; Roethlisberger & Dickson, 1939). Over time, researchers discovered that people simply worked harder because they were part of the experiment and they wanted to do the best they could for the researchers and the company. Other Hawthorne studies (relay-assembly group, mica-splitting, bank wiring) all showed that workers are not simply motivated by economic self-interest, but that they have complex motives and values, such as the desire to be members of social groups. Researchers concluded that social-psychological effects were often stronger than economic effects. The results of the Hawthorne studies inspired more study of informal group processes in organizations (e.g., Homans, 1950; Maier, 1952; Whyte, 1959). The Hawthorne studies shed light on the role of attention and relationships on productivity.

Another human relations theory was McGregor's (1960) Theory X (classical systems theory) and Theory Y (human relations theory). According to Theory X, workers are assumed to avoid and dislike working, have little ambition, and prefer strong direction. The consequences are that managers must goad workers to perform through coercion, threats, and various control schemes. Theory Y, in contrast, holds the people consider work as natural as play or rest. The consequences are that productivity is encouraged through rewards such as the satisfaction of ego and self-actualization needs. Although Theories X and Y

actually were not the unique thought of McGregor (1960), he put the theories into an easily applicable form. Theory X originated from the military and was continually promoted by philosophers like Weber (1948). The foundation for Theory Y was established by Locke (1690/1975) and Smith (1776/2010), who encouraged individual expression and accomplishment. Theories X and Y reveal the types of relationships that exist between supervisors and their direct reports.

Sensitivity training, pioneered in the mid-1940s by Kurt Lewin (as cited in Golembiewski & Blumberg, 1973) and T-group training (Benne, 1964) are two interventions that emerged from a desire to improve worker morale. These trainings ultimately formed the cornerstones of the National Training Laboratory. The aim of both sensitivity training and T-groups is to enhance self-awareness. In these unstructured group dialogue situations, the T-group participant learns from his or her own and others' immediate experience by researching it, giving and gaining accurate and open information about it, and engaging in a shared process of making sense of events. T-groups today are used as a means to help participants become sensitive to face-to-face relations between people and to help them enhance the quality of those relationships (Potter, 1993).

Job redesign was another topic of human relations researchers, who advised against excessive formalization and specialization, as they believed these measures led to alienation and low morale among workers. Instead, they advocated for job enrichment and job rotation programs to help foster connection among workers throughout the organization and to increase worker commitment and satisfaction—especially among employees doing routine work (Herzberg,

1966). Also of concern was the nature of the supervisor-worker relationship, as Herzberg found it to be one of the leading causes of dissatisfaction at work.

In summary, a review of the human relations literature shed light on the relationships in the workplace by examining various factors. The Hawthorne studies produced insight on the role of attention and relationships on productivity. Theories X and Y reveal two ways to perceive worker attitudes towards work, and thus suggest different styles of management that are needed. Sensitivity training, which led to the development of T-groups, helped participants increase their sensitivity to face-to-face relations and enhance the quality of their relationships. Job redesign advocated for job enrichment and job rotation to encourage connection between those in routine jobs. Also of interest was Herzberg's discovery that poor relations between supervisor and direct report are one of the leading reasons behind job dissatisfaction.

The following sections review the topic areas specific to this study. Self-awareness is discussed first, followed by self-acceptance, and quality of relationships. Transactional analysis, a theory that incorporates both the concerns of self-awareness and the quality of relationships, is then presented.

Self-Awareness

Self-awareness, among other concepts of self, was first studied by those in the field of psychology and, in particular, by psychological clinicians due to their focus on enhancing self-awareness through therapy (Hanson, 2000). For example, the construct of self-awareness began with the focus on the self as an agent of change in psychotherapeutic processes, introduced in the work of Rogers (1961). Authors and researchers have usually been clinicians,

psychologists, and psychiatrists. In recent years, many clinicians have added organizational development and consulting to their scope of practice. However, the study of the self and, therefore, self-awareness has evolved from its roots in the merging of psychology and organizational development.

History and Definitions of Self-Awareness

The construct of self-awareness has endured without much criticism. Hansen (2009) noted that self-awareness rests on four core assumptions: (a) the self must exist, (b) this self must be available for introspection, (c) the self must have an enduring essence, and (d) the self must be able to be represented by language.

Hansen (2009) argued that awareness errantly suggests finality and accuracy; therefore, he suggested using the term self-storying. Hansen elaborated that one's self-knowledge develops from ongoing, internal narratives. Consequently, the self is not final and people may not be able to accurately know themselves. Similarly, stories are not final, objective truth. They can change as the individual changes. Storying also encourages active generation of new narratives on a continuing basis. The storying concept bears some similarity to the human's "constant state of recreating the self" (Hanson, 2000, p. 98) and Adler's (1964) concept of the *creative self,* wherein humans strive to achieve their full potential through self-awareness. Nevertheless, Hansen's suggestion to change the term from self-awareness to self-storying is fairly recent and has not received much attention, whether as praise or criticism, although Weis, Hanson, and Arneson (2009) echoed that all of self-awareness, no matter how accurate, is ephemeral and transitory, meaning it will be different in 2 hours than it is now.

There is much more agreement seen among research conducted over the last 30 years on the definition of self-awareness. Self-awareness has been defined as the ability to observe and identify one's own thoughts, feelings, mental states, actions, reactions, and interactions in any present situation (Hanson, 2000). Deikman (1983) coined the term *observing self* to describe the self taking on the role of a witness noticing what is going on inside oneself without judgment or evaluation. Thus, self-awareness involves thinking about one's own thoughts and affective processes. It also involves being simply aware of oneself in the moment—absent any judgment or analysis. Although Lindsay (1978) agreed that self-awareness is recognition of one's own behavior, he did not comment on whether judgment or analysis is present. However, he did add that self-awareness involves identifying attitudes, feelings, and values that accompany the behavior. In other words, the inner source of behavior is recognized. This presents a somewhat deeper definition than that of Hanson (2000).

Goukens, Dewitte and Warlop (2009) defined self-awareness somewhat differently. In their article, self awareness is general attention focused on oneself. This attention can be classified as public and private self-awareness. Public self-awareness involves "the awareness of oneself from the imagined perspective of others" (p. 683). Private self-awareness refers to "awareness of oneself from a personal perspective" (p. 683). Attention to the private self normally produces behaviors that stem from personal attitudes, whereas the public self generates actions that meet societal expectations.

Hanson (2000) presented yet another way of thinking about self-awareness. He briefly explained that the early roots of awareness stem from

Freudian theory about conscious versus unconscious thought. Freud held that awareness of self resides in the unconscious and is usually inaccessible. Adler, a former student of Freud, rejected these theories and posited that rather than self-awareness requiring the movement of thoughts from unconsciousness into consciousness, self-awareness is an ongoing process of education from obscurity to clear understanding (as cited in Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956). Adler's theories imply that increasing self-awareness is possible.

Self-awareness also has been discussed in the literature on emotional intelligence (EI). Goleman (1995) defined self-awareness as knowing oneself and being aware of one's emotions as they occur. It is through the knowledge of emotions that individuals are able to have empathy and compassion for others. Similarly, Akers and Porter (2003) argued that self-awareness consists of emotional awareness, the ability to recognize one's own emotions, and self-confidence, a feeling of certainty about self-worth and capabilities.

Expanding on the private and public definitions of the author, Roysircar (2004) conceptualized *cultural self-awareness*. He explained that a culturally self-aware individual is one who has the ability to become aware of his or her own values, pre-conceived notions, basic values, limitations, and assumptions about human behavior. In this sense, cultural self-awareness is similar to self-awareness as described by other scholars. However, cultural self-awareness emphasizes the derivations of the source of behavior. In other words, this description takes self-awareness to an even deeper level, identifying cultural heritage as the source of values, assumptions, and feelings that in turn produce

outward behavior. Roysircar continued by identifying family as the basic unit from which individuals learn about society's values, practices and religion.

From an operational definition standpoint, Velsor, Taylor, and Leslie (1993) defined self-awareness as self-rater agreement, given that this has been the accepted definition by the many multi-source, multi-rater systems (e.g., 360-degree feedback) that have gained popularity in recent years. In these systems, the rater (called the *target*) rates oneself on a number of dimensions and then receives feedback on those same dimensions from several different sources. The more similar the target's ratings to the aggregated ratings of the raters, the more self-aware the target is said to be. In other words, the target is self-aware if his or her self-perceptions are consistent with others' perceptions of him or her.

Although self-rater agreement provides a concrete method for measuring self-awareness, it yields an incomplete picture of what self-awareness is and what it encompasses. The Johari Window Model (Luft & Ingham, 1955) segmented self-awareness in four quadrants created by two dimensions: what is known to self and what is known to others (see Figure 1). For example, the *public persona* or *open self* is what is known to self and others, whereas the *unknown self* is unknown to self and others. This unknown self holds untapped potential.

What is known to others but not to the self is the *blind self*, which consists of behaviors or traits the individual represses, rejects, or disowns from one's awareness. This window can be enlarged through feedback.

In contrast, the *hidden* or *private self* is known to self but not to others. This comprises the self-knowledge that the individual withholds from others. This window can be enlarged through disclosure, which can be encouraged through

trust building. Based on this model, self-awareness includes both the open and

hidden windows. Complete awareness is not possible, as there will always be an

aspect of the self (e.g., the unconscious) that is unknown to the self and to

others. Evaluating Velsor et al.'s (1993) definition of self-awareness as self-rater

agreement in light of the Johari Window Model, it becomes apparent that their

definition does not address the hidden or private self (Goukens et al., 2009).

	Known to Self	Unknown to Self
Known to Others	Open	Blind
Unknown to Others	Hidden	Unknown

Note. Based on "The Johari Window, a Graphic Model of Interpersonal
Awareness," by J. Luft and H. Ingham, 1955. Proceedings of the Western
Training Laboratory in Group Development, University of California, Los Angeles.

Figure 1

Johari Window Model

For the purposes of this study, self-awareness is operationally defined as

information and behaviors about the self that is known to the self as well as both

known and unknown to others. This corresponds to the open and hidden

windows of the Johari Window Model (Luft & Ingham, 1955). This awareness

may or may not be accompanied by analysis, judgment, or evaluation.

Self-Awareness: A Neurological Perspective

The majority of literature on self-awareness has been focused on the

abstract concept of self-awareness. After reviewing a range of published studies,

Rock (2009) presented a different perspective of self-awareness by focusing on

the neurological manifestations of social interactions. Social interactions pervade every aspect of life. For example, even though work may be seen as an exchange of monetary compensation for labor, the brain understands the workplace primarily as a social system. Brain studies using electroencephalography and functional magnetic resonance imaging have demonstrated that social situations trigger both threat and reward responses; however, the threat responses tend to be more intense and lasting.

Eisenberger and Lieberman's studies (2004) on magnetic resonance imaging of the brain's response to social and physical pain have shown that the brain codes social needs in the similar ways to survival. In other words, the brain of a person in social pain shows activity in the same areas as the brain of someone in physical pain. People undergoing social threats and stress have less energy and attention to focus on work. In contrast, when people are free of threats, their brains are highly plastic and neural connections can be reformed. In other words, old behaviors can be modified and new behaviors can be learned.

Rock (2009) argued that mindfulness enables people to "free up" their brains. He argues that the only way organizational behavior can be changed is through developing greater self-awareness in its people. This will lead to better social connections, and therefore, more fruitful working relationships.

Benefits and Importance of Self-Awareness

Self-awareness enables people to understand their own values, wants, needs, tendencies, strengths, and weaknesses. Given self-awareness, they also can identify behaviors they would like to change. This opens up different options and allows them greater freedom to make choices and act in ways that are more

congruent to their internal state of being (Hanson, 2000; Rock 2009). Through reflection, awareness, and mindfulness training, one can identify self-defeating beliefs and fears that are linked to negative, painful feelings. These can then be addressed. The individual is then faced with options other than projecting their own assumptions, beliefs, and fears onto others. Awareness helps to distinguish perceptions from reality and prevents the individual from getting trapped in interpersonal mush, defined as people making up and acting on their stories based on incomplete information and fuzzy interpretations (Bushe, 2001). Reality is more likely to be accepted without undue stress and struggle (Lindsay, 1978).

From self-awareness comes internal power and confidence. Self-awareness can be considered an aura that radiates. Some call it charisma (Garwood, 2007). Those with increased self-awareness tend to accept themselves and the responsibilities resulting from their choices and actions (Lindsay, 1978).

Buckingham (2006) emphasized that helping people become more of who they already are can lead to world-class performance in every role. For example, employees who dedicate themselves to excellence in their specific role and enjoy working on their own may become the high performers that comprise the backbone of the company, while employees who excel in adapting to various environments and becoming conversant in a variety of functional areas may become the general managers that lead the organization. Consequently, Buckingham (2007) asserted that it is important to become familiar with one's strengths and weaknesses. He added that one should build on one's strengths and minimize one's weaknesses. This demonstrates how self-awareness (and

acceptance of one's strengths and weaknesses) contributes to high organizational performance (Buckingham, 2007). However, for high performance to occur, leaders in the organization need to provide followers with opportunities to develop and capitalize on their strengths (Buckingham, 2008).

Self-awareness also has been discussed at the level of leadership. Buckingham (2008) argued that self-aware leaders are more in tune with the experiences of their followers and thus are better equipped to build relationships with them, engage them in the workplace, and inspire them toward a common goal. He essentially agreed with Herzberg and went further to say the most powerful success factor in employee performance is the relationship one has with one's immediate manager (Buckingham, 2006). Thus self-awareness has an impact on the quality of relationships between supervisors and their direct reports. These high-quality relationships, in turn, can lead to enhanced performance. From a worker perspective, Buckingham claims that the most satisfied workers are those who have a best friend at work.

Cashman (1997) discussed his theory of leadership from the inside out based on his experience as chief executive officer of LeaderSource and the Executive to Leader Institute. Cashman concluded that leadership is not simply leadership behaviors enacted in response to the external environment. Instead, he asserted that leadership begins with knowing oneself authentically—in other words, deep awareness of self. He explained, "Leadership is a process, an intimate expression of who we are. It's our being in action. At its deepest level, leadership is authentic self-expression that creates value" (para. 3). Only once self-awareness is established can the other inside-out leadership competencies

emerge. These include listening authentically, expressing oneself authentically, appreciating authentically, and serving authentically. Cashman emphasized that authenticity connects people at a deeper level than the operational or intellectual level. Therefore, leading with authenticity deeply motivates and inspires followers. Based on Buckingham's (2006, 2008) and Cashman's (1997) work, it is apparent leaders who have self-awareness produce strong benefits for their organizations in terms of being able to connect with and build better relationships with followers and in terms of enhancing organizational performance and productivity.

In contrast, when one is without self-awareness, the tendency is for one to project his or her own motives and intentions onto others without the ability to distinguish between his or her own perceptions from reality (Hanson, 2000). These projections then get acted on as if they were reality (Bushe, 2001). This creates self-fulfilling prophecies about others and causes the very behavior that one projected (Hanson, 2000). Low or a lack of self-awareness also inhibits one from being able to differentiate between one's own boundaries from those of another. This causes difficulties accepting other's opinions, thoughts, and feelings that are different from one's own.

In light of current trends of organizations relying more heavily on collaboration, creativity and partnerships, it is ever important to understand how self-awareness can improve human interactions. This is important not just between leaders or leaders and followers, but also among staff of all levels of the organization.

Additionally, increases in EI (which requires self-awareness) has been associated with bottom-line impacts. For example, EI skills boost productivity and increase organizational effectiveness (Freshman & Rubino, 2004; Lam & Kirby, 2002; Lusch & Serpkenci, 1990; Pilling & Eroglu, 1994) and EI levels are an indicator of self-awareness (Bar-On, 2006; Goleman, 2006). Goleman (1995) cited the story of a Manhattan bus driver whose cheerful, talkative disposition would slowly convert those of sullen passengers into equal good humor. Related studies have shown that workers' perceptions and attitudes influence productivity (Avey, Wernsing, & Luthans, 2008; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Issues in Measurement

Although the concept of self-awareness has existed for decades in psychology, there has yet to be agreement among researchers as how best to measure and represent this concept statistically (Fletcher & Baldry, 2000).

Goleman (1995) explained that it is difficult to measure one's own EI because it involves self-examination. Thornton (1980) and Holzbach (1978) both concluded that self-appraisals tend to be more lenient and exhibit less soundness and dependability than peer (or other) assessments (Applegate, Timur, & Locklear, 2009).

This explains why the most common method of assessing self-awareness is multi-source, multi-rater systems, popularly known as 360-degree feedback systems (Bailey & Fletcher, 2003). First introduced in the early 1990s, multi-source multi-rater systems have been used only for 20 years. However, they have experienced rapid adoption as a performance measurement tool based on their perceived benefits. Involving others in a 360-degree assessment increases

the validity of the measure and allows one to examine those areas where there is a discrepancy between personal assessments and peer and boss assessments (Goleman, 1995).

Perhaps the most compelling reason for adoption a multi-source multi-rater system is that it offers evaluations which are made from several perspectives, not just a top-down or manager-subordinate perspective. It is also an empowering mechanism that can provide subordinates and peers an opportunity to evaluate the way they are managed, or the people with whom they work.

From an organizational perspective, multi-source, multi-rater systems increase individual awareness of the organization's values (as the target is often evaluated against the company values). Therefore, they can be powerful tools for learning and development. They also can facilitate a culture change whereby employees become more skilled at seeking, providing, and accepting feedback openly and constructively.

Perhaps one of the most overlooked reasons for adopting a 360-deree performance assessment is the potential shift in self-awareness that often results from receiving feedback from many sources. This outcome is particularly beneficial, given the general belief that increasing self-awareness has a positive impact on individual performance. According to Nasby (1989), people with high self-awareness are more able to integrate feedback into their existing self-perception, while those with low self-awareness are more likely to overlook or downplay feedback. As a result, the latter group is more likely to experience career setbacks and hold negative attitudes toward work (Ashford, 1989).

One of the most common ways of representing the gap between self-ratings and other-ratings in 360-degree feedback systems is known as congruence-d. This is calculated by subtracting the average Other scores (provided by other raters) from the Self score (provided by the target) for each questionnaire item. The difference is then divided by the pooled standard deviation of those scores (Warr & Bourne, as cited in Fletcher & Bailey, 2003). Essentially, congruence-d represents the gap between the target's self-scores and the other raters' scores. Put differently, if congruence-d equals zero, the target has achieved "ultimate" self-awareness. Despite being one of the most common ways of measuring self-awareness, congruence-d has received substantial criticism, as others' perceptions are comprised both of others' projections as well as their reflections of the target. The target also may be widely misunderstood, especially if he or she is accustomed to keeping to himself or herself.

Thus, congruence-d score means little as feedback. In addition, achieving "ultimate" self-awareness within the context of congruence-d simply means that one is able to see him or herself as others do. Just because one has low congruence-d, one can still be unpleasant and difficult to work with. Self-awareness in this context does not guarantee EI or interpersonal competence. The concept of congruence-d lacks an element of introspection (i.e., the private self, the hidden window). There is more to the self than what others are able to observe. In short, this method of measurement captures an incomplete picture of self-awareness.

One of the most popular alternatives to congruence-d is congruence-r, relative self awareness (Fletcher & Bailey, 2003). Research shows that individuals typically have a tendency to overestimate their own level of competency (Kruger & Dunning, 1999). As long as overestimation (or underestimation, in some cases) is consistent across all items and there is a positive correlation between self and other ratings, one is said to have more relative self awareness. In other words, relative self-awareness is higher when more agreement is shown between self and others for the target's strengths and weaknesses.

The main criticism of congruence-r is that relative self-awareness can be achieved if the self and other ratings covary. This means the target can rate him or herself as exceedingly competent in all areas, while others consistently rate the target as incompetent. Congruence-r would suggest that there is relative self-awareness here, when in fact, there likely is not.

Although the relationship between self-awareness and self-rater agreement is still unclear, self-rater agreement measurements such as 360-degree feedback systems are still used as an operational definition for self-awareness (Fletcher & Bailey, 2003; Fletcher & Baldry, 2000; Van Velsor, Taylor, and Leslie, 1993). One addition that Van Velsor et al. (1993) added to the body of literature was their use of average other-ratings, rather than single ratings. They have found that average other-ratings most closely matched the target's self-ratings than any single rating on its own.

Upon further examination of what accounts for self-rater discrepancy, Van Velsor et al. (1993) found no gender differences between the underrater group

sample, agreement group sample and overrater group sample. On the other hand, Fletcher (1999) found that women significantly underrate their performance and recalled more occurrences of task failure than had happened when it comes to masculine gender-typed tasks. However, there was no difference when it came to neutral or feminine gender-typed tasks.

In addition to doing a self-rater agreement study similar to that of Fletcher and Bailey (2003) and Vingoe (1967), Van Velsor et al. (1993) differentiated their study population into three samples: underrater group, agreement group, and overrater group. What they found was that underraters had high self-rater discrepancy. However, they also received the highest self-awareness scores from others. It may be that for this group, self-awareness and self-rater discrepancy are not the same phenomenon. In this case, self-rater agreement is not a valid measure of self-awareness. However, overraters rated themselves as most self-aware, but were given the lowest self-awareness scores of all three samples. This case suggests that self-rater agreement is a valid measure for self-awareness (or lack thereof). These contradictions suggest that self-awareness remains one of the most difficult traits to measure.

According to Van Velsor, Ruderman, and Phillips (1989), researchers also have used self-reports as a means of measuring self-awareness with some success. Accurate self-reports have been shown to be linked to traits such as effective leadership, self-esteem, intelligence, achievement, locus of control and private self-consciousness (Farh & Dobbins, 1989; Froming & Carver, 1981; Mabe & West, as cited in Van Velsor et al., 1993; Nasby, 1989).

One distinct difference between self-reports and self-rater agreement methods is that self-reports account for the private self (i.e.. private self-consciousness or the hidden Johari window). This area is of particular interest because it has been overlooked in much of the existing research on self-awareness. A likely reason for this is because it is difficult to verify its accuracy. At least one study (Nasby, 1989) attempted to verify the reliability of self-reports via a test-retest method. The two studies Nasby performed found that individuals high in self-awareness provide self-reports of greater reliability across time than individuals low in self-awareness.

In summary, self-rater agreement has been the most widely used method of measurement in self-awareness research. In addition, it has become widely adopted by organizations as a performance evaluation tool because it allows for information gathering from multiple sources, not just a top-down approach. However, self-rater methods of measurement yield an incomplete representation of self-awareness mainly because they lack an element of introspection. Self-report methods are one way around this problem. However, it also presents an incomplete picture of self-awareness, as it lacks the public persona aspect of the self. Studies have shown that when done over time, self-report methods can be verified for accuracy.

Applications

According to Hansen (2009), self-awareness is deeply valued by the counseling profession. Organizational consultants turn inward to understand what personal resources they can offer their clients. This overlaps with the literature from humanistic psychology (referred to in the 1950s as self-

psychology). What both organizational consultants and psychotherapeutic professionals have in common is that both create helping relationships with clients and both adopt a process orientation where they help clients build their own capacity for problem solving. During this process, "the helper needs to maintain a clear image of self and his or her needs and boundaries," (Hanson, 2000, p. 95). This need, along with the client's presumed need to build capacity, has spurred the interest in self-awareness as a trait of value.

Helping requires the individual to set self aside to focus on the person being helped (Egan, 2009). This requires a certain level of self-management, which cannot occur without self-awareness (Goleman, 2006). Thus, self-awareness ultimately is needed to make helping behaviors possible (Egan, 2009). In Egan's approach to helping, the first step of helping is supporting the client in building his or her own self-awareness and gaining clarity about what is preventing him or her from thriving. Once this awareness is in place, it is possible to help the individual leverage his or her strengths. Egan described this type of helping relationship as high-quality.

Self-Acceptance

Rogers (1961), who based his client-centered therapeutic approach on the concept of acceptance, defined self-acceptance as unconditional positive regard for oneself, including one's experiences, thoughts, feelings, and very being. He added that self-acceptance consists of understanding one's viewpoint and oneself without an accompanying diagnostic or moral evaluation. This could be characterized as having the primary belief that one is always and inherently "enough" right now, yesterday, tomorrow, and on the day of birth (Goleman,

1995). These views are foundational to self-acceptance. Goleman encouraged people to embrace what is*:* one's inherent right to exist, exactly as one is. Therefore, unconditional self-acceptance means fully accepting oneself as a valuable and enjoyable human, whether or not one is self-efficacious and whether or not others approve of or love him or her (Ellis, 1996).

Without a primal level of self-acceptance, no amount of change or success or accomplishment will lead to other desired outcomes, such as effective EI (Goleman, 1995), self-actualization (Maslow, 1954), optimal functioning (Ellis, 1996), and maturity (Ellis, 1996). Consequently, self-acceptance is a central feature of mental health. High self-acceptance is characterized by having a positive attitude toward oneself, acknowledging and accepting multiple aspects of self (both the positive and the negative), and being positive about past (Ryff, 1989). Low self-acceptance is characterized by feeling dissatisfied with oneself and disappointed with past. Additionally, the person might feel troubled about some personal qualities and wish to be different than who he or she is today.

A significant step toward self-acceptance is recognizing that emotions are always true and should not be assigned values of right or wrong (Weis et al., 2009). When self-acceptance is cultivated, the more fully the person is understood and accepted. In turn, the individual tends to drop the false fronts with which he has been meeting life and moves in a positive direction (Rogers, 1961). This description suggests that a relationship exists between self-awareness and self-acceptance: when self-acceptance exists, it becomes safer for the person to become self-aware. Therefore, the hidden, repressed, and rejected parts of the self move into consciousness as they can now appear

without painful moral judgment (Weis et al., 2009). Rogers (1961) voiced similar views that self-acceptance makes self-awareness more possible.

Few research studies, however, have examined the relationship between self-awareness and self-acceptance. One study concluded a relationship between the two variables because they were both believed to be associated with good interpersonal relationships (Vingoe, 1967). Vingoe measured self-acceptance by having research subjects rate themselves on a number of traits such as dominance, responsibility, sociability, psychological mindedness, self-acceptance, and extroversion. He then had subjects indicate how they would like their peers to rate them on the same items. The discrepancy was used to indicate that individual's level of self-acceptance on each item, wherein the smaller the discrepancy, the higher the degree of self-acceptance.

A key problem with measuring self-acceptance is that many studies use the self-ideal discrepancy as the key measurement. Schroeder (1964) stated that this is a problem because one might detect a difference between one's current and ideal self and yet fully love and accept one's current self. Instead, she suggests that a measure of the opposite of self-acceptance (defensiveness) may be a more accurate measure. The rationale is that defensiveness suggests anger, shame, or other negative feelings (lack of acceptance) about one's current self.

Overall, self-acceptance has been shown to be associated with self-awareness. However, the direction of causation is unclear. Research has shown that self-awareness allows for one to become more self-accepting. However,

other studies have shown that self-acceptance makes it safe to become self-aware.

<center>*Quality of Relationships*</center>

Cacioppo and Patrick (2008) have emphasized that humans need relationships with others. High-quality relationships have been defined as consisting of social, informational, and instrumental support (Denissen, Penke, Schmitt, & van Aken, 2008). Ryff (1989) defined this type of relationship as consisting of warm, trusting, and satisfying interpersonal relations; being concerned about others' welfare; and being capable of strong empathy, affection, and intimacy. Having high-quality relationships also requires understanding the give-and-take of human relationships. Hartup and Stevens (1997) added that high-quality relationships tend to feature communicative compatibility, supportive behaviors (e.g., dependability, understanding, acceptance, trustworthiness), and shared interests and common experiences.

People who lack high-quality relationships tend to have few close, trusting relationships with others; find it difficult to be warm, open, and concerned about others; are isolated and frustrated in interpersonal relationships; and often are not willing to make compromises to sustain important ties with others. While some elements of this definition are consistent with other authors (Guyll, Cutrona, Burzette, & Russell, 2010; Hartup & Stevens, 1997), Matthews (1986) identified three types of people differentiated by friendship styles: (a) independents, who enjoy friendly, satisfying social relationships throughout their lives but never have close or intimate friends; (b) discerning individuals, who report having a small number of very close friends throughout childhood,

adolescence, and adulthood; and (c) acquisitive individuals, who always have a relatively large number of friends and expect friends always to be available. Therefore, the definition of high-quality would vary across these types.

Additionally, gender differences affect the definitions of high-quality relationships. Whereas women's friendships are characterized by high levels of trust, men's friendships are more based on shared activities (Baril et al., 2009). Whereas women are likely to support each other during difficult life circumstances because it is a way of maintaining and reinforcing the relationship, men avoid this practice, as seeking help often is associated with dependency and incompetence for men.

Antecedents to High-Quality Relationships

Various authors have examined the antecedents and correlates to having high-quality relationships. Ryff (1989) posited that people who seek self-actualization tend to have strong feelings of empathy and affection for all human beings. As a result, they tend to be capable of greater love, deeper friendship, and more complete identification with others.

Baril et al. (2009) emphasized the importance of the family of origin in establishing a foundation for an individual to have high-quality relationships. Baril et al. explained that the family is the microsystem from which communication skills are learned and confidence in social resources is developed. These learnings are then applied to social systems beyond the family and at other stages of life. The nature of the early relationship becomes a model for later relationships, leading to expectations and beliefs about oneself and others that influence social competence and well-being throughout life (Collins & Read,

1990). Thus, people who had positive, high-quality relationships with family members—particularly with parents—tend to have positive, high-quality relationships later in life (Baril et al., 2009; Collins & Read, 1990). Baril et al. (2009) studied 31 couples and their daughters regarding the contribution of family and friendship relationships in adolescence, and of daughter-friend communication in adulthood to the adult daughters' perception of friendship support in adulthood. Researchers found that the mother-daughter relationship accounts for the greatest variance in the individual's quality of relationships based on questionnaires and direct observation of communication skills that evaluated marital quality, parental quality, and friendship quality at Time 1 and Time 2 (7 years later). The quality of the parents' marital relationship also has been shown to be associated with the children's quality of relationships with their peers. Contrary to expectations, quality of relationships during adolescence was not an indicator of the individual's quality of relationships in adulthood.

Finally, relationship quality depends upon the individual's beliefs about a relationship partner's responsiveness—that is, the perception of whether the partner understands, values, and supports important aspects of the individual's self. People who perceive their relationship partners as responsive feel close, satisfied, and committed to those relationships (Reis, Clark, & Holmes, 2004).

Canevello and Crocker (2010) added that responsiveness is a dyadic process, in addition to a process of projection. In other words, responsiveness can result from alteration of behavior between two people through a dyadic process, or a process involving a single party where that party views himself or herself as responsive and projects that responsiveness onto the other party.

Outcomes of Having Quality Relationships

Having high quality relationships has been associated with heightened individual well being (Baril et al., 2009; Canevello & Crocker, 2010), higher self-esteem (Canevello & Crocker, 2010; Denissen et al., 2008), enhanced human potential (Egan, 1973), and improved ability to adapt to difficult events and stressful circumstances (Baril et al., 2009). Guyll et al. (2010) found that high-hostility individuals in the African American population experienced fewer health problems if they were in committed, warm and supportive relationships, characterized by good communication. Children who have friends are more socially competent than those who do not, as they tend to be more sociable, cooperative, altruistic, self-confident, and less lonely (Newcomb & Bagwell, 1995). Children, adolescents, and adults seeking clinical referrals or other forms of assistance with psychosocial problems were more likely to be friendless than better adjusted individuals (Rutter & Garmezy, 1983). Individuals with friends enjoy greater psychological well-being throughout adulthood and old age than individuals who do not have friends (Brown, 1981; Gupta & Korte, 1994; Larson, 1978).

Other outcomes of increased quality of relationships extend into the workplace. Buckingham (2008) argued that the most powerful influence on employee performance and productivity is the relationship one has with one's immediate manager (Buckingham, 2006). Thus self-awareness, assuming it is linked to behaviors that foster high quality relationships, such as the ability to perceive oneself the way a supervisor or other coworkers perceives oneself, has an impact on the quality of relationships between supervisors and their direct

reports. These high-quality relationships, in turn, can lead to enhanced performance.

Additionally, some studies suggest that the absence of negative relationships is more closely associated with well being than the presence of supportive relationships (Hartup & Stevens, 1997). Canevello and Crocker (2010) elaborated that poor quality close relationships create stress and undermine health and well-being.

Association between Self-Awareness and Quality Relationships

Hartup and Stevens (1997) posited that having friends requires an individual to develop social skills. Further, of the Big Five personality traits, quality of relationships was most closely associated with agreeableness (Sturaro, Denissen, van Aken, & Asendorpf, 2008). Oyamot, Fuglestad, and Snyder (2010) conducted a study on self-monitoring as it related to relationship satisfaction. Self-monitoring has a large impact on relationships at all stages–from initiation to dissolution. High self-monitors have the ability to adjust their behaviors and self-presentations to suit a given situation. Though there is no explicit mention of self-awareness in this study, it is assumed that a certain level of self-awareness is necessary for one to possess the skill to monitor and alter his or her own behavior.

Oyamot et al. (2010) found no direct correlation between general relationship satisfaction, and self-monitoring. Due to the operational definition of low self-monitors being those who would rather express their values and beliefs regardless of the situation, these findings are rendered inconclusive with respect to self-awareness. In other words, while self-awareness is a prerequisite of high

self-monitoring, it is irrelevant when it comes to low self-monitors. It may be a low self-monitor's intentional choice to act in a manner that seems true to oneself, regardless of the given situation, or they may simply lack the self-awareness to monitor and alter their own behavior.

Goleman (2006) has written extensively on self-awareness and its impact on quality relationships within the context of EI. His model of EI consists of four elements: (a) self-awareness, the ability to recognize one's own emotions as they happen; (b) self-management, the ability to control one's emotions and adapt them to changing circumstances; (c) social awareness, the ability to recognize, understand and react to other's emotions; and (d) relationship management, the ability to influence, inspire and manage conflict with others. He argued that self-awareness is the cornerstone of EI. When this intimate understanding of one's own emotions and experiences happen, empathy—the ability to understand others' emotions and experiences—is unleashed. Understanding others leads, in turn, to an enhanced ability to interact and develop relationships with others. Consequently, according to EI, self-awareness and quality of relationships go hand-in-hand.

Egan (1973) emphasized that self-awareness is part of the development toward deeper human connection with others. He explained that self-awareness forms a foundation for competencies such as understanding and empathy that become tools for building relationships. In a later work, he explained that when one's interactions with others are characterized by clarity, openness, trust, authenticity, empathy and good intention, the quality of one's relationships improve (Egan, 2009). Egan further emphasized that high-quality helping

relationships cannot occur without self-awareness and self-mastery being in place first. These are necessary so that the helper's issues do not get entangled in the client's issues. He added that high quality relationships rarely happen because people are entangled in their own conscious or subconscious issues.

Goleman (1995) posited a link between self-awareness and quality relationships. He claimed that knowledge of one's own emotions and thoughts often leads to empathy and compassion for others. Hartup and Stevens (1997) added that having friendships requires an individual to be self-oriented as well as other oriented.

Transactional Analysis

One theory that addresses self-awareness and its role in relationship quality is transactional analysis theory, developed by Eric Berne during the late 1950s (Berne, 1986). The theory integrates psychology and psychotherapy and centers on concepts of personal growth and personal change.

Berne (1986) argued that three basic ego states exist and these inform how one perceives, thinks and feels, and interacts with others. One ego state is the parent, which can be nurturing (supportive and sympathetic) or controlling (dogmatic and disapproving). The parent helps save the individual's energy, as decisions are automatic and anxiety is lessened.

Another ego state is the adult, which represents an independent state of feelings, attitudes, and behaviors adapted to the current reality. This ego state is believed to have the most objective grasp of reality, as it is not influenced by the other ego states. The adult ego state can be present at any age and it represents the quality of the thinking and resourcefulness available to that particular person

at the time. The adult weighs the different options available to him or her and selects the best response to the current situation.

The final ego state is the child, which can be *adapted* (well-behaved and compliant or avoidant) or *natural* (curious, open, impulsive, and self-indulgent). This ego state is a relic of the individual's own childhood. Berne called the child the most valuable ego state, as it can make the greatest contribution to vitality and happiness if it can find healthy ways of self-expression and enjoyment.

Another tenet of transactional analysis is that people make meaning of their life and what has happened to them through routine stories that Berne (1986) called *scripts*. For example, a person who endured various forms of neglect during childhood might have the guiding story of "I am worthless," while a person who enjoyed loving and attentive care from his or her parents and family members might have the guiding script of "I am a good person and good things happen to me." Stories are formed early in life and repeatedly reinforced thereafter. As a result, these often operate powerfully but unconsciously. Thus, the script becomes the guiding vision or driving force for one's life. If one engages in personal growth and change through self-awareness, he or she is more likely to be aware of how his or her actions are being influenced by these scripts. The individual then gains a heightened awareness of alternatives to automatic behavioral responses driven by scripts. The individual can be more choiceful.

Berne (1986) added that people tend to adopt routine ways of interacting that are influenced by their personal history, ego states, and scripts. These routine ways of being are called *games*, which are formed early in life as a

means of meeting their needs and wants despite limited resources and limited reasoning ability. Berne (1986) identified eight primary types of games, which focus on diverting blame and failure to others, claiming helplessness, or instigating conflict among others. Games typically are reinforced over the course of childhood due to their effectiveness. However, when the games are used in adulthood, they undermine true communication and reinforce the child ego state's way of being. Generally, the outcomes are negative and include lower achievement, poor morale, hurt feelings, distrust, and poor communication (Villere, 1981). Clearly, these games undermine the quality of relationships. They do so by obstructing intimacy, communication, and meeting one's needs in healthy ways. As with the scripts, personal growth through self-awareness can help a person to become aware of these games and to become choiceful with their actions.

Berne's (1986) theory describes the powerfully self-reinforcing cycle established by the interplay and use of the ego-states, scripts, games, and interactions. While these various tools were useful for sense-making and navigating through life as a child, they often become maladaptive in adulthood. Berne (1986) maintained that scripts could be changed. However, change takes significant effort and time to surface the script through self-awareness, change the script through mindful choices, and then reinforce the new script through new behaviors. Furthermore, change can only happen with self-awareness. However, finding freedom from the scripts and games leads to more autonomous, conscious choice and learning.

Summary

The human relations school of thought forms a foundation for the present study. This body of literature included breakthrough research on the influence of work conditions, self-awareness, interactions with supervisors, and interactions with others on productivity (Benne, 1964; Blake & Mouton, 1964; Golembiewski & Blumberg, 1973; Homans, 1950; Mayo, 1945; McGregor, 1960; Roethlisberger & Dickson, 1939).

Self-awareness is valued by the organizational consulting and psychotherapy fields. Consequently, most studies have been conducted in the context of examining the self-awareness of consultants, organization leaders, psychotherapists, or others in helping profession. Buckingham (2006, 2007) asserted that self-awareness about one's strengths, self-acceptance of one's strengths and weaknesses, and ultimately building on one's strengths has a substantial impact on performance. Buckingham (2008) and Cashman (1997) examined the role and impacts of self-awareness among leaders. These authors argued that self-awareness at this level fosters effective leadership and motivation as well as sound supervisory relationships and productivity. Cashman added that the core of effective leadership is self-awareness. Goleman (1995) further elaborated that self-awareness is central to EI, which leads to effective relationships and organizational performance. However, research about self-awareness of staff at large in organizations is only at beginning stages. The present study aims at bridging some of the gaps in existing research.

This study added to literature by studying the general population, not just organizational leaders, consultants, psychotherapists and those in helping

professions. This led to exploratory findings that future studies could build upon. This study also used a more inclusive definition of self-awareness and examined the largely assumed relationship between self-awareness and self-acceptance. Finally, this study helped bridge a gap by exploring the relationships between self-awareness and quality of relationships. The next chapter describes the methods used in this study.

Chapter 3

Methods

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of self-awareness and how it relates to an individual's degree of self-acceptance and quality of relationship with others. The research questions were:

1. Do people who show higher degrees of self-awareness report higher degrees of self-acceptance?

2. Do people who show higher degrees of self-awareness report experiencing higher quality relationships with others?

This chapter describes the methods used in the study. The research design is described first, followed by a discussion of the procedures related to participants, ethical considerations, data collection, and data analysis.

Research Design

This study used a mixed method design involving a quantitative survey and qualitative interview. All the data were self-reported. A mixed-method research design is defined as "the class of research where the researcher mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts or language into a single study" (Johnson & Onwuebuzie, 2004, p. 17). This type of design allows for the discovery of patterns, testing of theories and hypotheses, and the discovery and selection of the best explanation(s) for the study results (de Waal, as cited in Johnson & Onwuebuzie, 2004). It is an expansive form of research—inclusive, pluralistic, and complementary in nature.

The core belief underlying mixed methods is that a study's method should fit the research question (Johnson & Onwuebuzie, 2004). If a research question requires multiple forms of data to arrive at an answer, this paradigm allows the researcher to select the most appropriate qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis approaches that will best answer the research question.

A mixed-method design allows for the strengths of qualitative and quantitative methods to be brought to bear in the same study (Johnson & Onwuebuzie, 2004). Words, pictures, and narratives can add meaning to quantitative data, whereas numerical data can add precision to words, pictures, and narratives. This type of study can help answer a broader range of research questions by yielding a more complete set of data from which to draw conclusions. The researcher can use the benefits of one type of study to offset the weaknesses of another and strengthen conclusions through convergence or corroboration of findings. The researcher also can use this method to enhance the generalizability of results. Overall, a mixed-method research design produces more complete results that can be used to inform theory and future practice.

A drawback of mixed method research is that it can be difficult for a single researcher to conduct, particularly if qualitative and quantitative studies need to be carried out simultaneously (Creswell, 2008). In such cases, additional resources may be needed, such as assistant researchers or additional funds, materials, time, or training on possible research approaches and how they may be mixed.

A mixed-method design was selected for this study because the variables of self-awareness, self-acceptance, and relationship quality are highly subjective

and difficult to operationalize as quantitatively measured constructs. The relationships between them also are not widely understood or agreed upon. Thus, this study allowed the researcher to make some quantitative measure of the variables and their relationships but also gathered open-ended information to help further define the constructs through the qualitative interview. The interview, in particular, allowed for the emergence and unfolding of natural patterns that might not be currently known and may otherwise be missed by a strictly quantitative study design.

Research Participants

The survey sample size for this study consisted of 50 participants. The interview sample included 16 participants drawn from the 50-person sample. The only selection criterion was that the participant was an adult (18 years or older). The researcher drew a sample that was diverse in age, gender, and personal and professional background.

The researcher utilized strategies of convenience sampling (drawing from her own personal and professional network) and snowball sampling (asking participants to identify additional study candidates) to recruit participants (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This approach allowed the researcher to quickly gather the needed number of participants. The drawback of these sampling approaches are the risks of (a) drawing a sample that is very similar to the researcher and (b) introducing biases due to hypothesis guessing and socially desirable answering. First, the social circles of the researcher include those from a number of backgrounds that could affect any of the variables being examined. For example, it could be that self-awareness is affected by level of education and many

participants in the researcher's social circles hold college or advanced degrees.

Second, the personal relationship the researcher had with many of the

participants might have subconsciously motivated the participants to "help" the

researcher by telling her what they think she wanted to her. The participants also

might have been motivated to present themselves in the best possible light rather

than provide the most accurate data.

The researcher followed a script to recruit participants (see Appendix A). If

the candidate declined to participate, the researcher thanked the candidate for

his or her time. If the candidate answered "Yes," the researcher gave him or her

the packet, which contained the study survey, and asked, "Do you know anyone

you think would also be interested in participating in this study?" Candidates who

answered affirmatively were asked how many people they knew who would be

interested and then were given the same number of additional packages. The

researcher then asked the candidates to forward the packages to anyone they

thought would be interested in participating.

Participants who provided their consent and contact information on the

survey and indicated willingness to participate in an interview were contacted by

email (see Appendix B). A total of 16 participants responded to the email and

indicated that they were still interested in participating in the interview. Times

were set up with these participants and the researcher met face-to-face with all

but one participant, who preferred to complete an interview via telephone.

Ethical Procedures

This study was reviewed by the Institutional Review Board at Pepperdine

University and complied with requirements regarding the university's policies and

procedures. Participation was completely voluntary. People were allowed to decline answering any question of their choosing and could withdraw without penalty at any time. The researcher took precaution to maintain the confidentiality of participant responses by locking digital information on the researcher`s password-protected personal computer. Hard-copy information was stored in the researcher`s locked file cabinet.

Data Collection

Data were collected through two methods: a survey and an interview. These are described in the following sections.

Survey

The survey consisted of three subscales to measure the three variables of self-awareness, self-acceptance, and interpersonal relationship quality.

Self-awareness. Self-awareness was measured using the 15-item Mindfulness Awareness Attention Scale (MAAS). The MAAS was developed by Brown and Ryan (2003) to assess the presence of a receptive state of mind, meaning the degree to which attention is given to what is taking place in the present. Questions on the MAAS were rated on scale from 1 (almost always) to 6 (almost never). Internal consistency levels for the MAAS generally range from .80 to .90. The MAAS has demonstrated high test-retest reliability, discriminant and convergent validity, known-groups validity, and criterion validity.

Self-acceptance. Self-acceptance was measured using an original 4-item scale created for this study to assess participants' liking and acceptance of themselves as they are:

1. It feels natural for me to accept compliments from others. This item was inspired by Ellis (1996), who argued that unconditional self-acceptance means fully accepting oneself as a valuable and enjoyable human, whether or not one is self-efficacious and whether or not others approve of or love him or her. Thus, someone who has unconditional positive regard for oneself would believe and be able to accept others' positive comments about oneself.

2. I like the way I am. This item was created based on Goleman (1995), who explained that self-acceptance included the primary belief that one is always and inherently "enough" right now, yesterday, tomorrow, and on the day of birth.

3. If I do not reach a personal goal, I can learn from it and try again. Ryff (1989) explained that high self-acceptance is characterized by having a positive attitude toward oneself, acknowledging and accepting multiple aspects of self (both the positive and the negative), and being positive about past. Thus, whether one does or does not reach a personal goal, the individual remains positive, future-oriented, and keeps striving for success.

4. I may not be perfect, and that is ok with me. This question is consistent with Rogers' (1961) contentions that self-acceptance is unconditional positive regard for oneself, including one's experiences, thoughts, feelings, and very being. He added that self-acceptance consists of understanding one's viewpoint and oneself without an accompanying diagnostic or moral evaluation. Items were rated on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

Quality of interpersonal relationships. The quality of interpersonal relationships was measured using another four-item scale created for this study. The scale assessed others' response to and understanding of the respondent

and the respondent's ease of connection with others and satisfaction with their relationships. The items were:

1. I find that others respond well to me. This question was related to Hartup and Stevens (1997), who stated that high-quality relationships tend to feature communicative compatibility, and supportive behaviors (e.g., dependability, understanding, acceptance, trustworthiness).

2. It is easy for me to connect with others. Ryff (1989) stated that those with high quality relationships are capable of strong empathy, affection, and intimacy.

3. I often feel understood by others. This item was consistent with Reis et al. (2004), who stated that relationship quality is associated with feeling understood, valued, and supported.

4. I find the interpersonal relationships in my life fulfilling (friendships, romantic relationships, family relationships, professional relationships). This item was consistent with Ryff (1989), who defined high quality relationships as consisting of warm, trusting, and satisfying interpersonal relations. Items were rated on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

The total survey required 10 to 15 minutes to complete. Hard copy surveys were distributed in sealed envelopes containing self-addressed stamped envelopes for return to the researcher. The envelope also contained a cover letter explaining the study and the consent procedures. The survey was given to 65 participants randomly selected by the researcher from a pool of potential candidates who have a personal connection to the researcher through her place of employment, religious community, or circle of family and friends. The final pool

of participants included a wide range of age groups, ethnic backgrounds, and professional backgrounds. Participants completed the survey and mailed them back or personally returned them to the researcher at their convenience. A total of 50 surveys were completed for a response rate of 77%.

Interview

The interview script (see Appendix C) gathered data about each of the variables measured in the study:

1. Self-awareness. Two questions gathered information about the participants' perceived public persona and the congruence between their public and private personas. One question asked, "If all the people in your life were gathered in a room without you, what would they say about you?" Question 2 asked, "Would you agree with these statements? Please explain." These questions were selected as they inquire about the participants' perception of public persona as opposed to their perceived level of awareness of individual experience captured by the MAAS.

2. Self-acceptance. Three questions gathered data about the participants' ideal self and the gap between their current and ideal selves. For example, Question 3 asked, "How would you like others to describe you?"

3. Quality of relationships. Four questions gathered data about participants' definition of a high-quality interpersonal relationship, what proportion of their relationships are high quality, where they experience the most relationships that are high quality, and what they would change about their relationships. For example, participants were asked, "Please describe your idea of a high quality interpersonal relationship. What type of person are you drawn

to? How much time would you spend together? What impact would this person have in your life? What impact would you like to have on his or her life?"

At the beginning of each interview, the researcher explained the interview process with the following script:

> Thank you for taking the time to complete the survey and now an interview. Today's interview should take 20 to 30 minutes, depending on your answers. For transcription purposes, I will be tape recording the interview and taking notes. There are no right or wrong answers. The intention is just to gain a better understanding of self-awareness and its relationship to self-acceptance and quality of interpersonal relationships. Please respond to the questions based on your experience. If you feel uncomfortable at any time, please let me know and we can skip a question or stop the interview altogether. This is an interview consent form. Please have a read over it. When you have done that and understand the details of your participation, please send and date on the space provided.

Each interview lasted 20 to 30 minutes. The data were audio-recorded and later transcribed. Fifteen interviews were conducted in person and one was conducted by telephone.

Data Analysis

Fifty completed surveys were received and 16 interviews were conducted. When the data collection phase was complete, the consent forms, surveys, and interview transcripts were separated. Consent forms were stored in a locked cabinet. Survey data were entered into an Excel spreadsheet for analysis and then the hard copy surveys were stored along with hard copy interview notes in a locked cabinet separate from the consent forms.

Range, mean, and standard deviation were calculated for each of the survey subscales. Means were compared using analysis of variance (ANOVA) and *t* tests to determine whether the means were statistically different based on

age or gender. Spearman's *rho* was calculated to determine the relationships among the three variables.

The following steps were used to analyze the interview data:

1. Self-awareness. Question 1 was used to capture the participant's perception of his or her public persona. Question 2 evaluated the participant's agreement with the perceived public persona. Participants were given a score of 1 (low self-awareness) if they did not know their public persona, 2 (medium self-awareness) if they were aware of their public persona but it did not match their true selves, and 3 (high self-awareness) if they were aware of their public persona and it matched their true selves. This analysis approach was influenced by Goukens et al.'s (2009) definition of public versus private self-awareness and Fletcher and Bailey's (2003) self-rater agreement.

2. Self-acceptance. Answers to Questions 3–5 were analyzed to provide a qualitative measure of self-acceptance. Question 3 indicated participants' ideal public persona, Question 4 indicated the gap between their current and ideal public personas, and Question 5 indicated participants' perceived needed changes. These answers were compared to produce a rating for each participant. Participants whose answers revealed self-judgment were given a rating of 1 (low self-acceptance). Participants whose answers revealed some (but not complete) acceptance of themselves were given a rating of 2 (medium self-acceptance). Participants whose answers revealed complete acceptance of themselves were given a rating of 3 (high self-acceptance).

3. Quality relationships. Participants were organized into three groups based on the proportion of their relationships they rated as high quality (based

on their own definitions of high quality). A participant was given a score of 1 (low) if they reported that 0% to 25% of their relationships were high quality. Participants who reported that 26%-74% of their relationships were high quality received a score of 2 (medium). Participants who reported that 75%-100% of their relationships were high quality received a score of 3 (high).

4. Subgroup profiles. Participants were organized into high, medium, and low subgroups for each variable. Common themes were then determined for each subgroup.

5. Correlations. Correlational analysis was conducted based on the interview data by examining the ratings for each variable for each interviewee. Where the variable scores matched (e.g., high self-awareness and high quality of relationships), the relationship was determined to be positive. Where the variable scores were opposite (e.g., high self-awareness and low quality of relationships), the relationship was determined to be negative. Where the variable scores were any other combination (e.g., medium self-awareness and high quality of relationships), the relationship was determined to be inconclusive.

Summary

This study used a mixed method design involving a quantitative survey and qualitative interview. Convenience and snowball sampling strategies were used to draw 50 survey respondents and 16 interviewees. Survey and interviews gathered data about the participants' self-awareness, self-acceptance, and quality of relationships. Descriptive statistics, inferential statistics, and correlations were performed on the quantitative data to measure the three

variables and determine the relationships among them. Thematic analysis and

qualitative correlations were performed on the interview data to produce

additional measures. The next chapter reports the results of the study.

Chapter 4

Results

This chapter presents the findings of the study, beginning with the survey

findings, followed by a report of the interview findings. The quantitative and

qualitative findings are then compared and contrasted.

Survey Findings

Table 1 presents a Cronbach's Alpha reliability test for all three variables.

Based on Nunally's (1994) benchmark of a minimum alpha coefficient of 0.70,

the Self-Awareness scale is sufficiently reliable (α = 0.89). The Quality of

Interpersonal Relationships scale also is reliable (α = 0.72). The Self-Acceptance

scale achieved the lowest reliability (α = 0.68), which was slightly below Nunally's

threshold.

Table 1

Reliability Coefficients

Scale	Cronbach's Alpha
Self-awareness	.89
Self-acceptance	.68
Quality relationships	.72

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics for each variable. Self-

awareness, the independent variable, was rated on a 6-point scale. The lowest

score was 1.80, indicating very low self-awareness, and the highest score was

5.73, indicating high self-awareness. The mean score for all respondents was

slightly low at 3.92 (*SD* = 0.78).

Self-acceptance, a dependent variable, was rated on a 7-point scale. The

lowest score was 2.75, indicating low self-acceptance, whereas the highest score

was 6.75, indicating high self-acceptance. The mean score was slightly high at

5.29 (*SD* = 0.90).

Quality of interpersonal relationships, another dependent variable, was

was rated on a 7-point scale. This variable exhibited the widest range of

responses. The lowest score was 2.25 (low) and the highest score was 7.00

(very high). The mean score was slightly high at 5.10 (*SD* = 0.95).

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	*SD*
Self-Awareness[1]	1.80	5.73	3.92	.78
Self-Acceptance[2]	2.75	6.75	5.29	.90
Quality Relationships[2]	2.25	7.00	5.10	.95

N = 50; [1]Self-Awareness Scale: 1 = very low, 2 = low, 3 = slightly low, 4 = slightly high,
5 = high, 6 = very high; [2]Self-Acceptance and Quality Relationships Scale: 1 = very low,
2 = low, 3 = slightly low, 4 = neutral, 5 = slightly high, 6 = high, 7 = very high

The mean scores were compared based on gender (see Table 3) and age

groupings (see Table 4) based on the 26 respondents for whom demographic

data were gathered. The results show no significant differences between age

groupings or gender for self-awareness.

Table 3

Comparison of Means by Gender

	t	df	Sig.	Mean Diff.	SE Diff.	95% C.I. of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
Self-Awareness	0.91	24	0.37	0.35	0.38	-0.44	1.13
Self-Acceptance	0.15	24	0.88	0.06	0.38	-0.72	0.84
Quality Relationships	-1.06	24	0.30	-0.40	0.38	-1.18	0.38

N = 26

Table 4

Comparison of Means by Age Bracket

		SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Self-Awareness	Between Groups	4.15	7	.59	.67	.69
	Within Groups	15.85	18	.88		
	Total	20.01	25			
Self-acceptance	Between Groups	3.37	7	.48	.56	.78
	Within Groups	15.62	18	.87		
	Total	18.99	25			
Relationships	Between Groups	4.26	7	.61	.71	.67
	Within Groups	15.53	18	.86		
	Total	19.79	25			

N = 26

The correlational analysis (see Table 5) indicates that self-awareness was positively and significantly correlated with self-acceptance (r = .42, p = .00) and quality relationships (r = .28, p = .05). Self-acceptance and quality relationships were positively correlated (r = .24); however, this relationship was not significant. It is important to note that correlation does not suggest causality. This means, for example, that self-acceptance tends to increase as self-awareness tends to increase. However, it is unclear whether self-awareness influences self-acceptance or self-acceptance influences self-awareness. Further, it is possible that a third variable could be responsible for influencing both of these variables. Further research would be needed to determine the direction of influence, if any, among these variables.

Table 5

Correlational Analysis

	Self-Awareness	Self-Acceptance	Quality Relationships
Self-Awareness	1		
Self-Acceptance	.42 (.00)**	1	
Quality Relationships	.28 (.05)*	.24 (.10)	1

N = 50;* significant at the .05 level, **significant at the .01 level

Interview Findings

Respondents were divided into groups that reflected whether they exhibited high, medium, or low ratings for each variable. Interview data were analyzed by variable. Table 6 reports the number of participants for each group. The following sections describe the findings by variable and grouping.

Table 6

Interview Groupings by Variable

	Self-awareness	Self-acceptance	Quality relationships
Low	1 participant	3 participants	4 participants
Medium	4 participants	7 participants	7 participants
High	11 participants	6 participants	5 participants

N = 16

Self-Awareness

The participant who exhibited lowest self-awareness based on her interview responses expressed that she was an independent non-conformist who was very private and did not concern herself with others' opinions. During the interview, it was unclear what her thoughts and feelings were and whether they were apparent to her. Regarding her public persona, she shared,

> I can only judge by what I hear. . . . Nice, eccentric, fun, exciting, I
> do it my way. No, not really. People only see my actions, but not

the thought behind them. They think it is spontaneous. I don't share
my process. People see only the beginning or the end.

The four participants who exhibited moderate self-awareness, identified

both positive traits (e.g., funny, goofy, helpful) and less positive traits (e.g.,

getting bored easily, having fears). However, they also described being

somewhat private and expressed the sense that others did not fully understand

them. Two examples of these participants' self-descriptions were:

> Athletic, kind, open, easily distracted, well rounded, lots of friends,
> goofy, keep to myself. . . . Lots of people only see a part of me.

> Cheerful, optimistic, have a decent life, fortunate, successful. . . .
> They think my life is easy. They don't see the full picture. They don't
> see that I do work hard for what I have. They don't see my doubts
> and fears.

The 11 participants who exhibited high self-awareness shared a lot of

descriptors about themselves—many of which were complimentary. They also

appeared to value relationships. Four examples of these participants' self-

descriptions were:

> Organized, kind, soft-spoken, diplomatic. . . . I feel it reflects my
> personality

> Funny, loyal, conscientious, stubborn, sympathetic, best mommy
> ever, pretty, determined. . . . I am open with the good, the bad and
> the ugly

> Social, gatherer of people, inclusive, intelligent, funny, loving,
> considerate, put others before self. . . . I agree [this reflects me].

> Reliable, loyal, tardy, funny, shy, guarded, personable,
> compassionate, tough, good friend, good daughter and family
> member. . . . People know who I am.

Self-Acceptance

The three participants who exhibited low self-acceptance exhibited a

sense of self-judgment, meaning they seemed to find themselves lacking in some

way. Rather than stating "I want to be more . . .," they phrased their answers as,

"I'm not _____ enough." One participant answered she was close to where

she wanted to be, but that she was "not selfless enough. Not as selfless and

independent as I would like to be." Another explained,

> There is a lot in my life I need to get sorted. I don't want to be seen
> as overly goofy and not taken seriously. I also have difficulty
> making decisions and being spontaneous. I overly worry. . . . I am
> not confident.

The seven participants who exhibited moderate self-acceptance explained

that they had room for improvement and generally phrased this ideas as, "I would

like to be more _____." Participants answered,

> I want to better my ability to see things in a different way. . . . I want
> to be more laid back and flexible.

> I could do more to be accomplished. Not a massive difference, I
> would just like to be more accomplished. Sometimes I am ok with
> myself, sometimes not.

> Understanding, caring, giving, helpful, make a positive impact or
> make a difference in people's lives. I think people see some of this,
> but I would like it to be more pronounced.

> [I am] close [to my ideal], but can be more caring, dependable, etc.
> Because sometimes, I cannot be there for people. [I want to]
> continue to grow.

The six participants who exhibited high self-acceptance talked about

accepting the not-so-great parts of themselves. This means that they generally

seemed to have a goal or ideal self in mind; however, they voice being fully okay

with who they are today. They also expressed that others saw them roughly as

they are. Participants explained,

> I think people see 75% of the authentic me. I am getting to where I
> want to be. I am much more connected to my authentic self now
> than before. . . . I am doing a better job of showing my authentic
> self now, so people get a clearer picture quicker.

> It is a work in progress. Some would say I am stubborn, but I don't think so. I have mixed feelings about this. Not many would describe me as confident, but I would like to be described as confident. People think I am polite, but not personable or relatable. I accept this. It is a work in progress.

Quality Relationships

Four participants described having few quality relationships, reporting that only 10-15% of their relationships were of high quality. These participants described looking for a place to belong, striving to stay in touch with others, and trying to achieve greater depth in their relationships. For example, one participant expressed wanting "Quality over quantity" and that these relationships were typically found with friends and family. She explained that high-quality relationships generally are not found in the workplace "because there is an emphasis on getting work done, which hinders building rapport. No time to socialize." She added, "I am close to very few. Not that I don't care. The depth is just not there." Another participant characterized high-quality relationships as

> openness, trust, [and] be[ing] together by choice (not by convenience), shared interest, support, some similar characteristics, . . . availability and more time spent together, sense of belonging, depth.

Seven participants described that roughly half of their relationships were high quality. These participants described looking for people to grow with and having relationships characterized by openness and acceptance. The sentiment appeared to be, *I have the relationships, but now I want to deepen them so we all can be more freely ourselves.* One participant listed their desired relationship traits:

> Depth, honesty, equality, growth, learning, listening, common interests, amount of time spent irrelevant. . . . [In my relationships, I

want there to be] more confidence, more optimism, more open expression and willingness to work through problems. Give and take.

Trust, openness, acceptance, listening, willingness to communicate, proactive communication [and] . . . more communication frequency. Increase quality of communication

Mutual understanding, acceptance, easy to talk to, dialogue. Can share things with each other. Support, fun or lightheartedness. Good communication. Quality over quantity. . . . I think [spending] more time [together] will lead to deeper relationships. [I need to] rearrange [my] priorities to put relationships higher.

Five participants reported that most of their relationships were high quality. These individuals explained that they let go of low-quality relationships and that there was chemistry in their high-quality relationships or that those relationships just "clicked." These individuals described having a high degree of emotional and practical synergy. These participants explained,

I can't exactly describe it. There is a "click." They are good to me. [There is] creativity and imagination, positive outlook on life, trust, respect, support. They are interested in my life. Humor, shared hobbies, shared values, warmth, willingness to work at relationship.

Trust, positive energy. [It's] hard to describe, open minded, can share experiences, learn together, . . . amount of time spent irrelevant. I tend to attract people I want to attract. . . . [My high-quality relationships have] . . . more openness and trust, . . . more chemistry and connection.

Table 7 presents a summary of the qualitative results. Saturation and key themes for low, medium, and high self-awareness, self-acceptance, and quality relationships are reported.

Correlational Analysis

A correlational analysis was conducted based on the interview data by examining the ratings for each variable for each interviewee. Where the variable scores matched (e.g., high self-awareness and high quality of relationships), the

Table 7

Summary of Qualitative Data

	Self-awareness	Self-acceptance	Quality relationships
Low	$N = 1$ Private and nonconformist. Did not care about others' opinions. Her thoughts and feelings appeared to be unclear.	$N = 3$ Self-judging. Found themselves to be lacking.	$N = 4$ Looking for a place to belong. Trying to stay in touch with others. Trying to achieve depth in relationships.
Medium	$N = 4$ Identified positive and less positive traits in themselves. Somewhat private, felt somewhat misunderstood.	$N = 7$ Believed they had room for improvement. Wanted to be more _____.	$N = 7$ Had relationships, now they wanted to deepen them. Wanted mutual openness, acceptance, and growth with others.
High	$N = 11$ Shared many self-descriptors, many of which were positive.	$N = 6$ Had goals, but fully accepted themselves as they are.	$N = 5$ Let go of low-quality relationships. "Clicked" and had chemistry and synergy with valued others.

$N = 16$

relationship was determined to be positive. Where the variable scores were opposite (e.g., high self-awareness and low quality of relationships), the relationship was determined to be negative. Where the variable scores were any other combination (e.g., medium self-awareness and high quality of relationships), the relationship was determined to be inconclusive (see Table 8).

This analysis reveals that 50% of the participants exhibited a positive relationship between self-awareness and self-acceptance (31% exhibited an inconclusive relationship, 19% exhibited a negative relationship). Additionally, 44% of participants showed a positive relationship between self-awareness and quality relationships (50% showed an inconclusive relationship, 6% showed a negative relationship). Finally, 44% showed a positive relationship between self-acceptance and quality relationships (44% inconclusive, 13% negative).

Table 8

Correlational Analysis of Themes Based on Interview Data

Interview	Variable			Relationships		
	Self-Awareness	Self-Acceptance	Quality of Relationships	Self-Awareness—Self-Acceptance	Self-Awareness—Quality Relationships	Self-Acceptance—Quality Relationships
1	High	Medium	Medium	Inconclusive	Inconclusive	Positive
2	High	High	High	Positive	Positive	Positive
3	High	High	High	Positive	Positive	Positive
4	High	Medium	High	Inconclusive	Positive	Inconclusive
5	High	Low	Low	Negative	Positive	Negative
6	High	Medium	High	Inconclusive	Inconclusive	Positive
7	High	High	Low	Positive	Negative	Negative
8	Medium	Low	Low	Inconclusive	Inconclusive	Positive
9	Low	High	Medium	Negative	Inconclusive	Inconclusive
10	Medium	Medium	Low	Positive	Inconclusive	Inconclusive
11	High	Low	Medium	Negative	Inconclusive	Inconclusive
12	Medium	Medium	Medium	Positive	Positive	Positive
13	Medium	Medium	Medium	Positive	Positive	Positive
14	High	Medium	High	Inconclusive	Positive	Inconclusive
15	High	High	Medium	Positive	Inconclusive	Inconclusive
16	High	High	Medium	Positive	Inconclusive	Inconclusive
			Positive	8 (50%)	7 (44%)	7 (44%)
			Inconclusive	5 (31%)	8 (50%)	7(44%)
			Negative	3 (19%)	1 (6%)	2 (13%)

Synthesis of the Data

Based on the study's 50 survey respondents, self-awareness was generally showed mid to high scores (mean = 3.92, *SD* = 0.78, range: 1.80–5.73), self-acceptance showed slightly high scores (mean = 5.29, *SD* = 0.90, range: 2.75–6.75), and quality of interpersonal relationships showed slightly high scores (mean = 5.10, *SD* = 0.95, range: 2.25–7.00). No significant differences in the mean were detected based on gender or age.

Based on the interview data, self-awareness ranged from lacking clarity about one's own thoughts and feelings and not caring about others' views (low self-awareness), to having a balanced view of oneself but feeling misunderstood by others (medium self-awareness), to having a very positive view of oneself (high self-awareness). Self-acceptance ranged from having substantial self-judgment and finding oneself lacking (low self-acceptance), to wanting to be more _____ (medium self-acceptance), to fully accepting oneself as one currently is (high self-acceptance). Quality relationships ranged from looking for belonging, connection, and depth (having few quality relationships); to wanting to deepen one's relationships (having some quality relationships); to letting go of low-quality relationships while enjoying chemistry and synergy with valued others (having many quality relationships).

Correlational analysis of the quantitative data showed significant positive relationships between self-awareness (the independent variable) and the two dependent variables of self-acceptance (*r* = .42, *p* = .00) and quality relationships (*r* = .28, *p* = .05). Correlational analysis of the interview data showed that roughly

half the interviewees exhibited positive relationships between each of the study variables. However, some negative variable relationships also were shown and one third to one half of the variable relationships were inconclusive. The next chapter provides a discussion of these results.

Chapter 5

Discussion

This study aimed to gain a better understanding of self-awareness and how it relates to an individual's degree of self-acceptance and quality of relationship with others. The study questions were:

1. Do people who show higher degrees of self-awareness report higher degrees of self-acceptance?

2. Do people who show higher degrees of self-awareness report experiencing higher quality relationships with others?

This chapter provides a summary of findings, their implications on the practice of organization development, limitations, and suggestions for future research.

Summary of the Findings

1. Relationship between self-awareness and self-acceptance. Survey respondents exhibited, on average, slightly low self-awareness (mean = 3.92, *SD* = 0.78, range: 1.80–5.73) and slightly high self-acceptance (mean = 5.29, *SD* = 0.90, range: 2.75–6.75). Among interviewees, self-awareness varied in terms of the amount of one's own positive and negative attitudes toward oneself and how accurately they believed others perceived them. Self-acceptance varied in terms of the degree of unconditional positive regard they had for themselves.

Correlational analysis of the quantitative data showed significant positive relationships between self-awareness and self-acceptance (r = .42, p = .00). Correlational analysis of the interview data showed that half the interviewees

exhibited positive relationships between self-awareness and self-acceptance, although 31% of the relationships were inconclusive and 19% were negative.

In summary, some quantitative and qualitative evidence exists that a positive relationship exists between self-awareness and self-acceptance. This means that self-acceptance and self-awareness tend to increase and decrease together, although it is unclear whether self-awareness tends to lead to higher self-acceptance or vice versa. For example, some authors have posited that self-acceptance makes greater self-awareness possible (Rogers, 1961; Weis et al., 2009). However, confirming the direction of influences requires additional research.

2. Relationship between self-awareness and quality of relationships. The survey data showed that respondents had slightly low self-awareness (mean = 3.92, SD = 0.78, range: 1.80–5.73) and slightly high ratings for the quality of their relationships (mean = 5.10, SD = 0.95, range: 2.25–7.00). Analysis of the interview data showed participants' self-awareness varied regarding the nature (positive or negative) of their self-attitudes and how accurately they believed others perceived them. Quality relationships varied based on the focus of their activities in their relationships (e.g., looking for belonging, deepening their relationships, or enjoying synergy). Most participants noted that their lowest quality relationships were at work.

Correlational analysis of the quantitative data showed a significant positive relationship between self-awareness and quality relationships (r = .28, p = .05). Correlational analysis of the interview data showed that 44% of the interviewees

exhibited a positive relationship, while 50% were inconclusive and 6% were negative.

Based on these findings, there is some evidence that a positive relationship exists between self-awareness and quality of relationships. This means that these two phenomena tend to increase and decrease together, although it is unclear whether self-awareness leads to higher quality relationships or vice versa. For example, Applegate et al. (2009) argued that self-awareness is key to EI (including social awareness and social skills), which in turn is associated with higher quality relationships. Conversely, Rogers' (1961) work on client-centered therapy is founded on the idea that the nature of the relationship has substantial impact on the amount of self-awareness the people involved in the relationship achieve. Specifically, he argued that when unconditional positive regard and other conditions are present, people are safe to be fully themselves. The nature of their influence seems to be reciprocal and complex.

Conclusions

1. Self-awareness is positively correlated with self-acceptance and quality of interpersonal relationships. This means that self-acceptance and self-awareness tend to increase and decrease together and self-awareness and quality of relationships do the same. However, their directions of influence remain unclear. What is known is that the relationships between self-awareness and self-acceptance, and self-awareness and quality relationships are complex and may also be reciprocal.

2. Participants indicated that they experience the lowest quality relationships in the workplace. For example, one participant shared that quality

relationships were typically found with friends and family rather than in the workplace "because there is an emphasis on getting work done, which hinders building rapport. No time to socialize." This is significant because most people spend a significant amount of time in the workplace and a full-time employee spends the majority of his or her waking hours at work. Further, negative or low-quality relationships degrade both the employee experience and productivity. Therefore, there is much room here for increasing engagement at work by increasing quality of relationships. This can be done by providing tools, skills, and an environment conducive toward building and maintaining quality relationships.

3. Accuracy of participants' perception of their public persona could not be confirmed. Self-awareness was tested during the interview by asking participants about how other people viewed them. The idea was that they had self-awareness if they could report what other people thought about them. However, no study data were gathered to validate their perception. Therefore, it was unclear how accurate their perceptions of others' perceptions were. Further, the reliance on self-reported data limited data collection to the open window and did not address the hidden window of the self (Luft & Ingham, 1955), which was included in the definition of self-awareness for this study. The use of public persona further departs from definitions of self-awareness as the ability to observe and identify one's own thoughts, feelings, mental states, actions, reactions, and interactions in any present situation (Deikman, 1983; Hanson, 2000). It would be preferable to have designed the interview questions more closely with definitions of self-awareness from literature.

Limitations

1. Sampling. This study used a convenience sampling strategy. The researcher knew each participant directly or through one mutual acquaintance. This could have affected the data in two ways. First, the researcher might be attracted to a certain group of people who may be more self-aware and self-accepting. Second, the participants might have been inclined to answer in a way that "helped" the researcher or that presented themselves in the best possible light. If either of these occurred, the data would be skewed, thus, limiting the credibility and completeness. Future studies could avoid this by using a random sampling technique.

2. Variable definition and measurement. Limitations affected how self-awareness was measured on the survey and during the interview. A mindfulness survey was used to measure self-awareness and this might not have achieved a valid measure of self-awareness. Self-awareness was tested during the interview by inquiring about participants' public personas, possibly yielding an incomplete picture of participants' self-awareness. Further, these accounts were self-reported and no data were gathered to check the accuracy of participants' perceptions. Limitations also affected how quality of relationships was measured. This study did not use a standardized way of assessing what a high-quality relationship is and assessing what percent of participants' relationships satisfied the criteria. Everyone has different ideas about relationship quality, making cross-participant comparisons difficult. Further, participants' ideas might not be consistent with past authors' definitions of the high quality relationships that were associated with organizational performance. Further compounding this issue is

that most people noted that their lowest quality relationships were at work. Therefore, the methods this study used to measure the relationship variable might not have been valid for the work context.

3. Data collection and analysis procedures. The interview questions and analysis methods were not piloted to determine their ability to collect relevant, credible data. Piloting the study would have allowed the researcher to detect problems with the instruments and adjust them before gathering actual study data. Adjustments could have increased the reliability of the interview tool and analysis methods developed by the researcher. Given the current instruments, some data may be irrelevant or confounded, leading to misinterpretations of the data.

Directions for Additional Research

1. Conduct the present study again using enhanced data collection tools. For example, better quantitative and qualitative measurement tools are needed to measure self-awareness, self-acceptance, and the quality of interpersonal relationships.

2. Combine self-report and peer ratings to gain a better measure of participants' self-awareness. These procedures may yield a more credible assessment of the self-awareness variable.

3. Utilize a larger, more diverse sample. The current study utilized a small convenience sample, leading to results that could not be generalized. A follow-up study should utilize a random sample that is of suitable size to enable rigorous statistical testing. If a qualitative study is performed, the sample should consist of 20 to 25 participants (Kvale, 1996).

Implications for Organization Development Practitioners

Because high self-acceptance has been associated with higher productivity and higher engagement and dedication to one's work (Applegate et al., 2009), it seems beneficial for organizations to dedicate effort to increase the level of employees' self-acceptance. Further, once additional research discovers the direction of influence among the variables of self-acceptance, self-awareness, and quality relationships, organizations could invest in development initiatives that could have multiplying effects. For example, if self-awareness enhances self-acceptance, then an organizational intervention focused on self-awareness could serve to enhance both self-awareness and self-acceptance. Being aware of this relationship and more deeply understanding the direction of influence could lead to more efficient and effective interventions. Over the last decade, many organizations have already begun to approach this topic is through EI.

Past literature has emphasized that organizational benefits result from high-quality relationships (Baril et al., 2009; Buckingham, 2006). This study produced tentative findings that a positive relationship exists between self-awareness and the quality of relationships. This suggests that there may be some benefit in investing in self-awareness among employees, although the direction of influence between these variables needs to be confirmed. However, it remains to be investigated whether the quality of relationships might actually act on self-awareness (Rogers, 1961). With better quality relationships, it may be safer to know, be, and embody oneself. One is also more likely to receive feedback from those one trusts, thus increasing the likelihood that of decreasing

ones blind zone. Once the self-awareness is discovered, trainings and interventions could be designed to have the maximum effect.

In summary, there is sufficient evidence based on past research that bottom-line benefits can result from heightened self-awareness and self-acceptance (Applegate et al., 2009; Baril et al., 2009). What we know from this research is that the variables are linked and efforts spent increasing one may be beneficial for increasing the other.

Recommendations to Managers

1. Shift leaders' mindsets regarding relationships at work. Having high-quality versus low-quality relationships at work can have a tremendous impact on the human experience—simply due to the fact that most full-time employees spend most of their waking hours at work. If the quality of relationships is not carefully monitored, organizations can sustain great costs. However, if proper training and support structures are put in place to support employees in cultivating high-quality relationships, organizations stand to gain tremendous benefit.

2. Make self-awareness training available to a broad range of staff, even outside of the leadership ranks. Everyone's experience is impacted by self-acceptance and quality of interpersonal relationships, and both of these are positively associated to self-awareness.

3. Create work cultures that value people and the relationships between them. Norms and behaviors are best supported and sustained by culture. Creating a culture that encourages desired behaviors means that behaviors and norms are more likely to become integrated in the long term.

4. Employ the help of an organization development consultant, whether internal or external to the organization, to assess culture and help create a shift.

5. Invest more in the social aspect of work. For example, social gatherings designed and planned with a purpose toward fostering relationships (i.e., not just a free-for-all) can be beneficial. Activities and group arrangements should be intentionally designed for these events.

6. Offer cross-training. Many times, misunderstandings and conflicts are the source of tension and this negatively impacts the quality of relationship. One way to mitigate this is through cross-training, which can give employees a broader perspective over work-related issues and exposes them to interactions with people they are not likely to interact with. Furthermore, if the benefits of cross-training and conflict resolution are to be optimized, it should be done with a focus on building supportive relationships through increased communication.

7. Offer proper training on the use of multi-source, multi-rater systems. People (especially those low in self-awareness) naturally react to feedback as if it were a threat. However, feedback is required to increase self-awareness. Therefore, it is recommended that managers implement extensive training on the use of multi-source, multi-rater systems. This will help employees provide helpful feedback to others and accept feedback received from others in a healthy manner.

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Appendix A

Introductory Script

Hi [name], I am doing a study on self-awareness as it relates to self-acceptance and quality of interpersonal relationship. Inside this envelope is a questionnaire that should take about 10-15 minutes to complete.

At the end of the survey, you will find a description of the interview portion of the study. Your participation is strictly voluntary and you are under no obligation to participate. However, if you would like to participate, please provide your name and contact information on the space provided.

Place the completed survey in the self-addressed envelope and mail it back to me. Your responses will remain anonymous unless you would like to be contacted for an interview. Once I receive the completed surveys, I will contact you to set up a time for the interview.

Do you think you would like to participate? Or do you have any questions?

Appendix B

Interview Invitation

Hello, Thank you for your participation in the survey portion of the study titled Exploring Individual Self-Awareness as it Relates to Self Acceptance and Quality of Interpersonal Relationship.

You are being contacted because you have agreed to participate in the interview portion of the same study. You are under no obligation to continue participating and are free to withdraw at any point without penalty.

If you are still willing to participate, please respond by December 18, 2010 with your preference of date and time. I am available to conduct interviews December 20–26 from 7am to 9pm. I am also available to conduct interviews over the telephone if it is more convenient for you.

Thank you for your continued support. I look forward to hearing from you soon. Sincerely, Camille Fung"

Appendix C

Interview Script

Thank you for taking the time to complete the survey and now an interview. Today's interview should take 20 to 30 minutes, depending on your answers. For transcription purposes, I will be tape recording the interview and taking notes. There are no right or wrong answers. The intention is just to gain a better understanding of self-awareness and its relationship to self-acceptance and quality of interpersonal relationship. Please respond to the questions based on your experience. If you feel uncomfortable at any time, please let me know and we can skip a question, or stop the interview altogether. This is an interview consent form. Please have a read over it. When you have done that and understand the details of your participation, please send and date on the space provided.

Self-Awareness
1. If all the people in your life were gathered in a room without you, what would they say about you?

2. Would you agree with these statements? Please explain.

Self-Acceptance
3. How would you like others to describe you?

4. Overall, how closely do you feel you reflect this description? Please explain.

5. What are the areas of discrepancy? How do you feel about this?

Quality of Relationships
6. Please describe your idea a high quality interpersonal relationship. What type of person are you drawn to? How much time would you spend together? What impact would this person have in your life? What impact would you like to have on his or her life?

7. Looking at all the interpersonal relationships in your life, what percentage would you say reflect the type of relationship you just described.

8. In which area(s) of your life do you experience the highest quality of interpersonal relationship? In which area(s) of your life do you experience the lowest quality of interpersonal relationship?

9. If you could change something(s) about any of your interpersonal relationships, what would it/they be? Would you change anything at all?