

Relation of Self-Knowledge and Improvisation to Thriving Transitional Experiences

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Abstract

Globalization and rapid product cycles combined with turbulent economic and political factors introduce uncertainty and ambiguity to both individuals and organizations. Using a mixed methods approach, this exploratory study examines the factors that influence people's transitional experiences as a function of their organizing principle as it relates to the phenomenon of change along with the degree of change at a time of transition. An abstract four-quadrant model of the ontological experience of change was developed. Our moderated regression analysis reveals statistically significant affects ($p < .05$) between Transformation Quotient (TQ), a future-oriented receptivity to change, and thriving transitional experiences (TT) for individuals who embrace change as the norm, with both high and low degrees of change ($\beta = .359^{**}$, $\beta = .374^{**}$). TQ has a strong, negative and significant effect on subjects with a high degree of change but have the viewpoint that stability is the norm ($\beta = -.538^{**}$). Emotional response to uncertainty is found to have negative significant effects for individuals who embrace stability as the norm for both high and low degrees of change ($\beta = -.198^{**}$, $\beta = -.301^{**}$). Self-knowledge has positive and significant relationships with TT for all groups except individuals who reported a high degree of change and embrace change as the norm ($\beta = .320^{**}$, $\beta = .359^{***}$, $\beta = .332^{**}$). Improvisation has a strong and significant effect to TT ($\beta = .535^{***}$) only for individuals who embrace change as a constant and experience high degree of change. Our qualitative analysis informs us that self-knowledge is transformed when urgent rapid deployment of problem resolution is demanded; self-knowledge is activated through agency into a behavioral and cognitive resource, which was captured by the relationship between Improvisation and TT in the SEM model. This occurs when the degree of uncertainty is high and the situation calls for urgency, creativity and action based on applied intuition. Applied intuition taps into accommodated schemas from past experiences of change alongside future projection of self.

Key words: Thriving; transitions; improvisation; narrative analysis; mixed methods; transformation quotient; applied intuition; self-knowledge; narrative identity.