

Resistance to Change or Transformation After Involuntary Unemployment and Underemployment: A Theoretical Model

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Significant changes in workplace strategy or economic instability can lead individuals into emotional and spiritual crises, triggering identity transformations. This paper explores the effects of involuntary unemployment, underemployment, compromised employment, and mandatory retirement, referred to as involuntary second-order employment disruptions, on personal identity. Drawing from theories of quantum personal change and positive psychology, the paper discusses how these changes can lead to emotional and spiritual distress, akin to a “dark night of the soul,” potentially resulting in posttraumatic transformation. The transition through this crisis involves stages of resistance and adaptation, ultimately leading to a profound shift in identity and purpose. The process includes disengagement, disidentification, disenchantment, and disorientation, which can create significant psychological challenges, and involuntary opportunities for spiritual growth and self-actualization. The paper proposes that these employment disruptions are catalysts for deep personal transformation, highlighting the importance of managing such transitions effectively to foster resilience and positive outcomes.

Keywords: involuntary unemployment, underemployment, compromised employment, mandatory retirement, posttraumatic change, alpha state, beta state, new alpha state, resistance, adaptation, transformation

INTRODUCTION

While seldom investigated, significant changes in workplace strategy or economic instability create conditions that push those affected into an emotional and spiritual crisis. This paper theoretically explores the profound impact of substantial changes in work environments on individuals, ultimately leading to identity transformation. Drawing from theories of quantum personal change (James, 1999:1902) and positive psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), the content of the paper examines the disruptive effects of involuntary unemployment, underemployment, compromised employment including burn-out, and discriminatory unemployment (Atay & Bayraktaroglu, 2023; Dooley, Prause, Ham-Rowbotton, 2000), or mandatory retirement, collectively referred to as an involuntary second-order employment disruption. Similar to life-crisis episodes, these imposed changes may create periods of emotional and spiritual distress, with the possibility of leading toward posttraumatic transformation (Taylor, 2020). Taylor (2020) defined this process as “transformation through suffering” with a resultant self-reported, sudden “spiritual awakening”. This transformation is characterized as a “sudden shift into a new higher-functioning identity, with a new perspective on life, a new awareness of reality, different cognitive and perceptual functioning, and new values and goals” (Taylor, 2020: 2). It coincides with acceptance of a new life experience and self-

concept (Taylor, 2020: 381-382). Nietzsche's (1882;2006: 117) work contends that suffering while not improving on us, deepens us, and Frankl's work discusses the issue of finding meaning in suffering and through the suffering personal transformation (1946;1984).

A spiritual crisis is evident by sudden and profound movement into a phase referred to as the "dark night of the soul" (Moore, 2004). The "dark night of the soul" is a metaphorical concept often associated with profound spiritual or existential crisis. It refers to a stage of life of intense inner turmoil, doubt, and despair, during which an individual will experience a deep sense of emptiness, disconnection, or loss of meaning in life. The term originates from the writings of the Spanish mystic and poet, St. John of the Cross, in his work *The Dark Night of the Soul* (St. John of the Cross, 2010). This phrase describes a phase of personal development experienced by individuals undergoing significant unexpected changes in work identity. The passage represents an emotional state of existential mental crisis triggered by these changes, where the individual grapples with questions about their identity, purpose, and place in the world. This phase is characterized by profound emotional and psychological turmoil as an individual navigates through uncertainty and life crisis upheaval. Those affected with intense reactions toward job loss-related complicated grief, depression, or anxiety have a greater experience of maladaptive coping strategies, which present as resistance to the change (Eersel, Taris, & Boelen, 2021; Shear, K, 2012). Eersel, Taris, and Boelen (2020) asserted through their research that job-loss-related complicated grief affects depressive and anxiety symptoms more strongly than vice versa. Papa and Maitoza (2013) found statistically significant differences in complicated grief, anxiety, and depression with complicated grief symptoms being differentially related to involuntary job loss and stronger for the role of the primary wage earner. A lingering preoccupation with job loss blocks engagement with moving forward fueling depression, fears, and worries about the future, stimulating greater anxiety, and being stuck in the void state or neutral zone (Eersel, Taris, & Boelen, 2020).

This phase represents an opportunity for a life review of values and purpose, suggesting that a notable change in identity is needed. The phrase "dark night of the soul" symbolizes a period of profound inner transformation and growth, often preceding a deeper understanding of oneself and one's place in the world. The author intends to explain in detail the transition period of the state of the "dark night of the soul" and present a general model of spiritual transformation for work-generated spiritual crisis. This model is an acknowledgment of the author's personal experiences working with individuals in organizations who have undergone turbulent socio-economic environmental changes resulting in lay-offs, downsizing unemployment, under-employment, and compromised employment including burn-out.

Hypothetically, individuals are espoused to undergo significant change during triggered events such as involuntary unemployment, under-employment, compromised employment, retaliatory unemployment, and mandatory retirement. This paper serves as a theoretical dialogue toward the proposition that second-order employment changes, shown as reinforcing forces for change, are related to quantum identity changes and individual resistance to change (Senge, 2006). A behavioral manifestation of resistance to change or Gamma state is inherent in change dissonance (Graves, 1973). The Gamma state exists as a stabilizing or balancing force that serves as a limits-to-change (Senge, 2006; Graves, 1973). From a psychological perspective, limits-to-change in transitions can refer to internal barriers an individual faces when undergoing significant life changes. These limits may include psychological resistance to change, fear of the unknown, or deeply ingrained habits and beliefs that make transformation challenging. Psychological theories, such as those related to identity or cognitive dissonance, often explore how these barriers affect a person's ability to adapt to new circumstances by slowing or stopping the change effects. Related to the Gamma state are psychological states of grief, depression, or anxiety exhibited as defensive mechanisms, overwhelm, confusion, alienation, isolation, and prolonged euphoria that delay the response to change demands (Beazley, 2006).

Therefore, the propositions of this research paper include several hypotheses: a) involuntary second-order change in employment triggers quantum shifts in identity, b) involuntary second-order change in employment stimulates a resistance or dissonance to change, and c) resistance to change manifests as a Gamma state with affective behaviors of opposition to change such as defensiveness, overwhelm and confusion, alienation or isolation, or prolonged euphoria or d) in the final stage, individuation

transformation is possible with acceptance of one's new place in life. Individuals who are laid-off or are survivors of being fired, laid-off, or enduring retaliatory involuntary unemployment may exhibit these stages of change in varying degrees depending on the impact on identity and the relative ease or disease of change. Individuals confronted with underemployment or compensated employment including profound burn-out may delay or resist changes due to obstacles of self-concept, identity, or confidence; because the stimulus for change in the workplace is involuntary and sudden and the change process expedites unexpected personal changes.

Involuntary Unemployment

Unemployment which is sudden and unexpected may be due to being fired, down-sized, laid off, or terminated due to retaliation or mandatory retirement. Unlike voluntary unemployment, where individuals choose not to work for various reasons such as pursuing education, taking care of family members, or opting for early retirement, involuntary unemployment results from factors beyond the individual's control, such as economic downturns, layoffs, or business closures or societal upheaval. It is characterized by an individual who experiences an unimaginable situation where their identity and self-concept are stimulated toward a significant change. Sudden involuntary unemployment leads to substantial economic and social consequences, including financial strain, loss of income, loss of identity, and psychological stress for the affected individual and their families (Eersal et al., 2021).

Underemployment, Compromised, Discriminatory, and Mandatory Job Loss

Under-employment refers to a situation in which individuals are employed but their employment status does not fully utilize their skills, qualifications, or availability for work. This condition can manifest in several forms including part-time work, overqualification, skill mismatch, or low wages. Underemployment can have negative consequences for individuals, including lower income, job dissatisfaction, decreased morale, and reduced opportunities for career advancement. Like underemployment, compromised employment refers to a situation where an individual's job situation is compromised due to various factors such as an unrealistic productivity expectation, loss of benefits, or a decline in job security. This situation involves a mismatch between the individual's qualifications, expectations, and employment conditions. Compromised employment can result from organizational downsizing, economic downturns, changes in industry needs, or changes in industry trends. This condition may leave the individual feeling dissatisfied, financially strained, and uncertain about future career prospects. While not as severe of a shift as involuntary unemployment, the distress of underemployment may also preclude a "dark night of the soul" if these changes occur unexpectedly and are irreversible (Dooley, Prause, Ham-Rowbottom, 2000).

The literature on discriminatory job loss (Atay & Bayraktaroglu, 2023) focuses on individual termination or mass termination due to sanctioned oppression of a group or individual within a culture or society. Discrimination is the unequal treatment of individuals or groups because of perceived undesirable characteristics. The research of Atay and Bayraktaroglu (2023) focuses on the psychological aftermath of a discriminatory job loss which includes emotional conditions such as depression, nightmares, forgetfulness, claustrophobia, poor concentration, and pessimism. Uncertainty and anxiety for the future complement grief and increased pessimism. Specifically, the reasons for dismissal are ideological and difficult to reconcile when a life crisis is the result. This level of trauma may stimulate changes in fundamental beliefs regarding career, job, and justice (Slobodin & de Jong, 2015).

Second-Order Change

Current concepts of quantum personal change (James, 1999:1902) postulate a transformational process that is sudden and dramatic accompanied by radical, revolutionary (Jones, 2007: 277) shifts in the biological, psychological, and sociological systems of the individual (Beck & Cowan, 1996; Miller, 2004). This is the process of second-order change whereby the system proceeds with an abrupt, disorderly, discontinuous, and chaotic process involving irreversible changes (Gemmill & Wynkoop, 1991; Miller, 2004; Quinn, 1996; Wheatley, 1994: 43). The quantum change is a sharp contrast to first-order change which is volitional (James, 1999:1902), linear, orderly, and gradually evolutionary (Jones, 2007) leaving the

core of the individual unchanged. Of the possibly two types of quantum change, insightful versus mystical type, (Miller, 2004) insightful change exposes the individual to an experience of cathartic realization or knowing that challenges a reorganization of the perception of their self in reality (Graves, 1973; Miller, 2004); core values, priorities, beliefs, and behaviors of the individual are magnified, highlighted, and brought to the surface for review, analysis, and adaptation or resistance (Miller, 2004; Gemmill & Wynkoop, 1991). Some theorists refer to this process as being epigenetic, and innate to the bio-psychological growth in humans (Erickson, 1981). The transition is sometimes clumsy, as the human is the most likely of open systems to choose the path of most resistance (Bridges, 1991).

Second-order change refers to a significant transformation that occurs at a systemic or fundamental level, and results in a profound shift in personal beliefs, behaviors, or structures within an individual. This shift may include identity, self-concept, and purpose in life. Unlike first-order change, which involves incremental improvements or adjustments within the existing framework, second-order change is characterized by radical, transformative shifts that often challenge deeply ingrained assumptions, norms, values, or paradigms (Taylor, 2021). Parallels are noted in Maslow's (1970) descriptions of the self-actualized individual and the state of optimum human development. In the state of optimum development, the individual has a stronger tendency toward altruism, and peace, and seeks solitude; this individual is noted to have a greater capacity for appreciativeness. This individual will also display a sense of mission and desire to contribute positively to the world.

At the individual level, second-order change can manifest as a profound personal transformation that affects one's identity, worldview, or life trajectory. It may involve undergoing a "dark night of the soul", where an individual confronts existential questions, reassesses their priorities, and embarks on growth and self-discovery. Second-order change represents a disruptive but necessary process of adaptation and evolution, assisting an individual in distress to thrive in a dynamic, complex, uncertain environment.

As Bridges (1991) asserts the change is external, but the transition is internal; the transition is the psychological process an individual comes to terms with a shifting reality. Second-order change produces the possibility of a profound alteration that may facilitate a transition from one level of being to a more integral level of being (Young, 2004). Moving through this transition, an individual is likely to experience a period known as the neutral zone where types and stages of resistance to the change are realized as an emotional buffer to the change demand to slow the effects of the change (Bridges, 1991).

Change is potentially thwarted at this level due to a fear of loss of control (Quinn, 1996), self-protection against undesirable consequences (Egan, 1994), suppression as an automatic, skilled reaction for self-preservation (Argyris, 1997), or inability to recognize awareness due to bio-psychological closure (Beck & Cowan, 1996). For the individual in arrested or closed acceptance of quantum change, dissonance manifests as a sense of personal crisis and regression (Graves, 1973). Moving through this transition an individual is likely to experience a period known as the "dark night of the soul" (Fowler, 1996; Kavanaugh, 2004; Quinn, 1996) or the void (Bridges, 1991), due to the eminent dissonance that proceeds adaptive change (Fowler, 1981; Moore, 2004). This author contends that dissonance is a natural component of the change transition process and in varying degrees the "dark night of the soul" manifests as either a healthy/aligned or unhealthy/defective response to the second-order change demands. Alluding to a potentially spiritual transmutation, the move into and through the "dark night of the soul" is an emergent, adaptive process leading to a higher level of bio-psychological complexity as the conditions of the individual's existence change (Graves, 1974).

Dark Night of the Soul: A Transition Point

The phrase "dark night of the soul" portends a state where the soul lies in darkness and night (Kavanaugh, 2004). This period forces the individual to go beyond their current self-boundaries and identity and to consider the dismantling of values, beliefs, ego structure, faith, and worldview (Fowler, 1981; Moore, 2004). Moving through the "dark night of the soul", there is an end to the current ego, the self, and personal meaning (Moore, 2004). The completion of the cycle serves as a rebirthing of the individual into a more purposeful, integral individual with a new sense of identity (Wilber, 2000). This level of development in its ultimate form is transpersonal (Wilber, 2000) and has faith development and transcendence as a

foundational element. The “dark night of the soul” is considered spiritual beyond rationalistic intervention. With posttraumatic transformation, change occurs suddenly, following an instantaneous transformative event, rather than gradually over a long period. Taylor’s (2021) work demonstrates that this sudden transformation coincides with the individual’s “attitude of acceptance of their predicament” (p. 383). The experience is further noted to include a new identity, likened to a rebirth, with a new perspective interpretation of life and world view.

Involuntary Unemployment as a Catalyst for Second-Order Spiritual Transformation

As corporations focus on increased competition and shrinking bottom-line profits, workers are often confronted with the loss of jobs to overseas markets and corporate downsizings (Koeber, 2002) which in turn can precipitate a “dark night of the soul”. Jahoda (1982) proposed that a core identity qualifier for many individuals is the purpose and meaning of their work. Based on the assertion that work is a strong tie to reality, Jahoda (1982) proposes that work serves an individual with both manifest benefits of income and latent benefits of time structure, social context, external goals, status and identity, and enforced activity. Prause and Dooley (2001) have speculated that inadequate employment or underemployment is as psychologically damaging as unemployment because of resource losses in life and career.

Stimulating / Reinforcing Forces and Diminishing / Balancing Forces

Prior research on trauma and adversity points to substantial life triggers including the death of a loved one, personal illness, illness of important others, relationship problems, family problems, divorce, and job-related problems (Joseph, Linley, & Harris, 2005). Fowler (1996) asserts that lesser changes such as job changes are also psychologically threatening. The consensus of theorists demonstrates that prolonged trauma manifests psychological symptoms such as mistrust of others, difficulty moving forward with life, emotional numbness, feelings of emptiness, feeling one’s future is meaningless, agitation, and grief (Schnider, Elhai, & Gray, 2007). Events that stimulate the individual toward second-order quantum change are seen as more than a single event; there are successive stimuli that perturb the individual as reinforcing or progressive escalating stimuli toward an uncertain future course and demand a major change in bio-psychological complexity (Walsh, 2003). Illustrated in Figure 1, Senge (2006) asserts that these forces are reinforcing forces of occurrence in the environment that stimulate the individual toward change. Reinforcing forces are denoted as a clockwise cyclic loop that pushes the individual toward change. In this illustration, the change phenomenon is that of involuntary unemployment, under-employment, compromised employment, discretionary unemployment, or mandatory retirement forcing the individual toward a life choice that will respond to the new life conditions. The individual assuming a position of mild to extreme resistance manifests behaviors and mechanisms that either reduce the felt change or diminish the change adaptation. In this example, the behaviors used for change resistance are defensive mechanisms, a feeling of overwhelm or confusion, an emotional sense of isolation, alienation, euphoria, or grief. These limiting feelings or senses are used to slow the change effect and are asserted by this author to occur as a staging in resistive development where the change is diminished or thwarted. In most individuals, these feelings or behaviors may be unconscious and emotionally hidden as a response to the bio-psychological system under challenge.

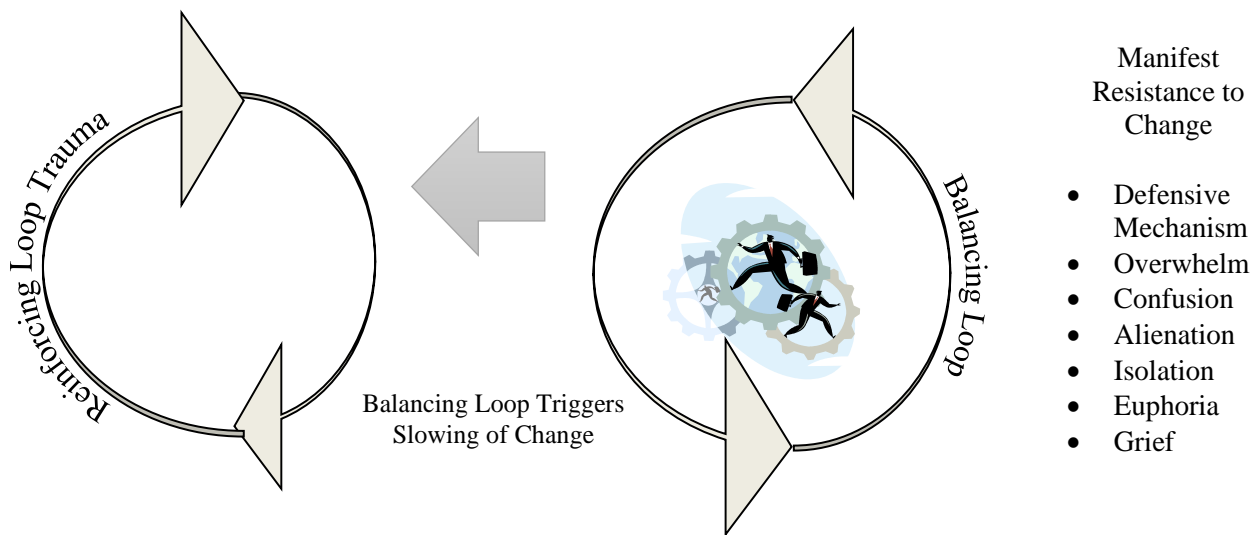
Unemployment – Dissonance and Change

An example of a complex adaptive entity is demonstrated as balancing and reinforcing loops in Figure 1. The individual can emerge internally to changing environments. Moving between chaos and order, the individual shows a sensitive dependence toward nonrecurring, nonlinear patterns where small triggers produce large effects (Bloch, 2005, p. 197). For an individual in an organization, the transition between stability and change is affected in career paths by unexpected triggers that serve as a stimulus for change between the current reality and the new reality. In this model, being downsized or terminated as well as the phenomena of a compromised career path is a nonlinear dynamic that perturbs the individual toward quantum change.

As noted in Figure 2, the current reality is in effect the known identity, worldview, and pre-change bio-psychological system. The act of unemployed or compromised employment is a catalyst for the experience of personal loss. This transition represents an emergent journey that begins with letting go of current identity (Bridges, 1991). What is lost to the individual is the structure holding the known identity. The downsized employee's loss is associated with a break in the current worldview regarding one's stability and identity in their current career and their belief that they can develop coherence and predictability in their lives. The loss involves reality and identity changes associated with issues of control, fate, and power, due to the loss of prestige, professional value, income, lifestyle, and stability. The time of greatest fear and resistance is during the time between the ending of the current reality and identity and the change into the new reality and identity. The stimulus to change is the existential questioning of how to adapt to the changes caused by the reframed reality, which now includes the loss of innocence.

With involuntary unemployment or compromised employment, an individual over time becomes aware of the impact on their professional and personal life, but the construction of a renewed identity that accepts and is comfortable with substituted lifestyles, power bases, and world views requires personal growth. The solution to the existential questioning lies in the emergent adaption to a new life order that includes the reduction in life and career resources. The gap is the period between the triggering event and the renewed identity and is called the neutral zone, or dead zone. Dissonance is a common occurrence in the gap as the individual's bio-psychological and physiological system evolves. The dissonance appears as resistance to change which may involve a return to past behaviors, realities, and worldviews as the individual searches for answers (Graves, 1974).

**FIGURE 1
BALANCING AND REINFORCING LOOPS¹**



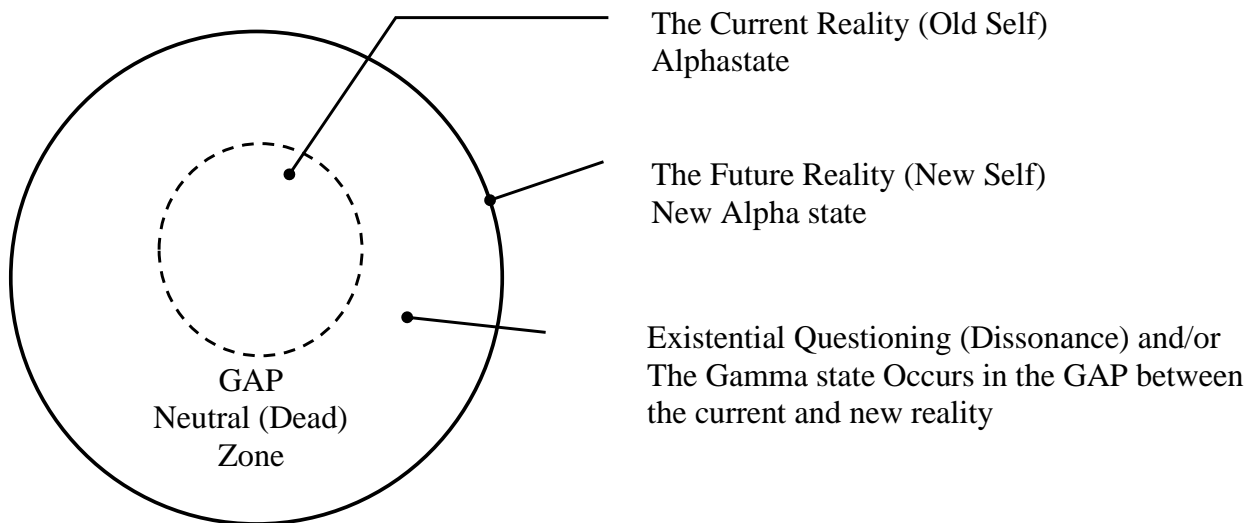
Alpha state, the present reality, is stable and at peace with the current identity and worldview. The involuntary unemployment or compromised job state creates a Beta state that must acknowledge that a new, paradoxical problem exists – how to adapt to a life condition with reduced or eliminated career resources. As the individual resists the life trigger that has been forced upon them, they may develop in varying degrees a Gamma state which ranges from being arrested to a closed bio-psychological state. Emerging into a new reality, the individual adapts to a New Alpha state that resumes stability (Graves, 1973). The New Alpha condition is adaptive and capable of innovating solutions to the substantive and existential questions raised by the employment catharsis.

The external change triggers the ending of the current state of being. Reality is disrupted as the individual knows it to be. As the individual is aware of the Beta state, there is an acknowledgment that the

beliefs and accepted ways the individual has been living are no longer coherent or sense-making (Heine, Proulx, & Vohs, 2006). Fowler (1996) asserts that there are four phases to the transition of ending and the movement into the void state: a) disengagement, b) disidentification, c) disenchantment, and d) disorientation. Disengagement occurs at the moment of cathartic realization or knowing that the current reality is challenged and there is a struggle for some sense of identity in the current reality.

For the involuntarily unemployed, the moment of reckoning occurs when the idealism of career stability and predictability is shattered; there is a break with the innocence of loyalty and trust long held as a given in the employee-employer psychological contracts. There is a dislocation with previously held beliefs concerning work performance and employability and the ability of one to foster stability and coherence in one's life (Heine, Proulx, & Vohs, 2006). For the individual suffering this loss, a customary form of control is to regress to a defensive routine, such as regressing toward past behaviors to avoid the threat to the identity (Egan, 1994). If the individual was previously successful in college, returning to complete a degree or work toward an advanced degree may be an attempt to rekindle earlier more secure behaviors. This author asserts that this affective behavior is the first stage of Gamma resistance and is the least destructive of the dissonance periods.

FIGURE 2
PROGRESSION OF THE TRANSITION OF CHANGE²



Disidentification is internal to the identity and occurs when some important manner of self-definition is discarded. Entering this stage, the individual may experience being overwhelmed and confused as they have disengaged from some element of their identity that no longer provides satisfaction. There is an irreversible stage as the identity is severed, and prior realities are lost. An example of this stage is the individual who appears to be confused about career choices or overwhelmed with current career losses and unable to make substantive choices with present options. Disenchantment is facilitated when the individual accepts the rejection of previous constructions of reality. This individual may suffer from a sense of isolation or alienation as they are divorced from their previous identity but are not yet formed as to their new identity. Career choices are stymied due to a sense of not belonging to any preferred choice. The individual may make career decisions out of necessity but find that they are alienated from the work purpose and unmotivated. Disorientation and disillusion are the cumulative impacts of the previous three stages. A great deal of psychic energy for this individual is in attempting to make sense of the outcome of the traumatic event and its impact on one's life (Fowler, 1996: 71-74). There is the possibility that these affective behaviors are a response to points of attraction that pull the individual toward predictable decisions. In that instance, the hesitation toward change is manifest as a response to open system dynamics

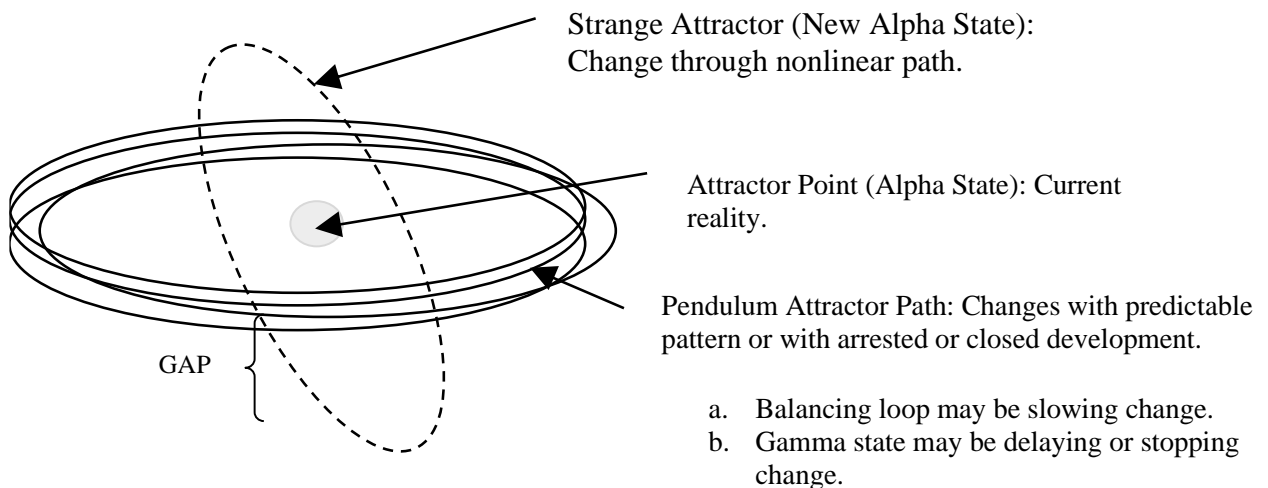
which are designed to create system stability. Figure 3 demonstrates the Alpha, Gamma, and New Alpha states.

Attraction to Change – Gamma Resistance to Change

Individuals are complex and adaptive, influenced by their environment, according to Senge (2006). For instance, a downsizing event leading to unemployment or compromised employment can trigger identity and career changes. As noted in Figure 3, Beck and Cowan (1996) describe adaptive intelligence as existing between order and chaos, with a compromised pattern of structure-to-surprise-to-structure. Each individual operates within an attractor point, which acts as a limit-to-growth (Block, 2005). This point stimulates stabilizing forces that resist change and serve as a fulcrum for design, leading to predictable change (Merry, 1995).

Figure 3 demonstrates three types of attractor points: point attractor, pendulum (torus) attractor, and strange attractor. The point attractor limits an individual’s belief in their capabilities and career options, leading to predictable behaviors, especially during crises like involuntary unemployment (Merry, 1995). The pendulum attractor results in repetitive behaviors within a familiar setting, restricting the individual’s ability to perceive alternatives, while the torus attractor allows for some change within a predictable structure, such as changing companies or locations while maintaining the same career (Merry, 1995).

**FIGURE 3
ATTRACTOR POINT TRANSITION AND RESISTANCE³**



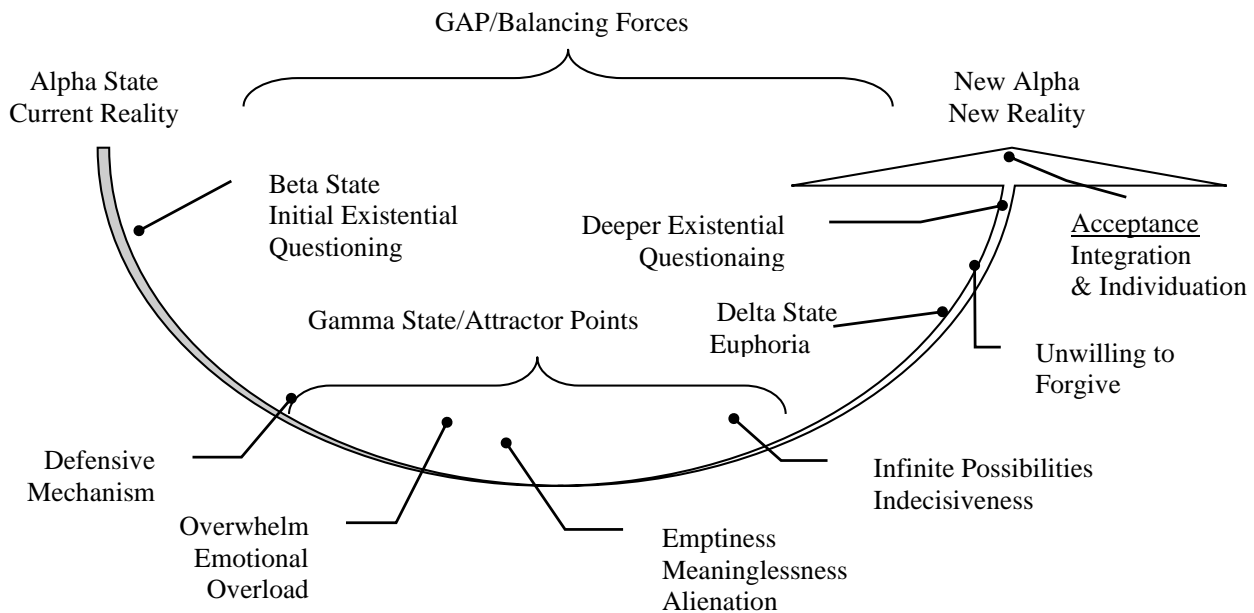
Individuals adjusting toward the strange attractor experience emergent behavior, leading to unique and surprising outcomes (Senge, 2006). This can result in quantum changes altering the individual in measurable ways (Graves, 1973; 1974). Conversely, as noted in Figure 4, resistance to change may lead an individual to the Gamma state, characterized by defensive mechanisms and resistance to significant shifts (Graves, 1973). Resistance serves to reduce the intensity and speed of change, allowing individuals to adapt gradually (Bridge, 1992; Senge, 2006).

Involuntary unemployment can evoke negative emotions like anger and depression, serving as a defensive maneuver to slow the pace of change (Schneider, Elhai, & Matt, 2007). Efforts to resist change are designed to decrease disorientation and grief, facilitating the development of a new integrated self that is less dependent on old ways (Senge, 2006). As individuals develop mechanisms for success and resilience, they become more tolerant of uncertainty and flexible in navigating future challenges (Walsh, 2003).

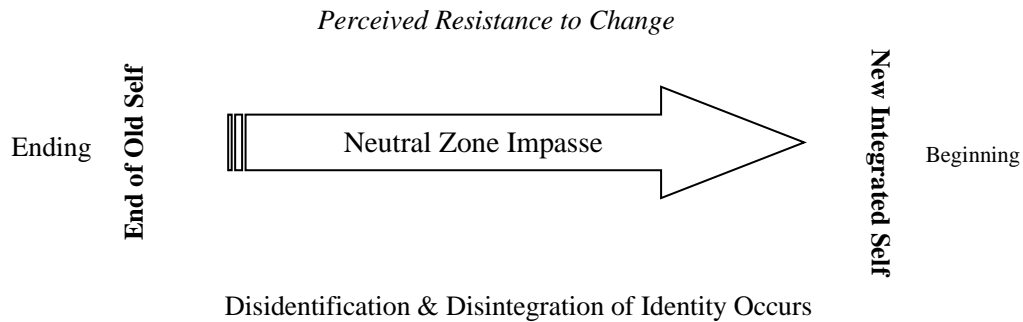
The Spiritual Transformation Process

As illustrated in Figures 5 and 6, spiritual transformation is a profound journey that unfolds primarily within the neutral zone, a transitional space between the ending of one identity and the emergence of a new one. This process, often likened to the “dark night of the soul” encompasses several stages: disidentification, differentiation, and integration with individualization (Fowler, 1981). As shown in Figure 5, spiritual transformation transpires primarily in the neutral (dead) zone, during individualization. Individuation to the new identity reflects the process’s completion and the end of the conflict. The transition is naturally intended to be smooth but is interrupted as the person settles into a stuck state at one phase in the transformation process. Being psychologically stuck is a natural phenomenon of the change process that allows an individual to slow down or stop the change process. The desire to stop or slow the change process is driven by the feeling of being emotionally overwhelmed or anxious due to the attack on the established identity (Merry, 1995). The findings of Moran, Burker, and Schmidt (2013) have determined that an individual in a stuck state defines themselves as feeling sadness, disappointment, helplessness, or depression; these are emotional expressions used to slow or limit change. Existing in a stuck state may become permanent producing a neurosis that stops the change process at one of five fulcrums (Wilber, 1998). As noted in Figure 4, the five fulcrums are: a) acting out defense mechanisms, b) being in emotional overload, c) being lost in emptiness, d) being lost in infinite possibilities (Gemmill & Wynkoop, 1991), or e) being unwilling to transcend into forgiveness. The last phase of integration is consummated by the ability to let go of psychological wounds and conversely, the ability to live fully in the new identity. Forgiveness of the other, self, and the ones’ higher power allows the simultaneous awakening to the soul’s life purpose. Moran et al. (2013) found in contrast to the individual in a stuck state, the individual letting go and moving forward defined the change event or trauma as a lived experience and an opportunity for a new beginning in life.

**FIGURE 4
REVOLUTIONARY CHANGE STATE FLOW / TRANSFORMATION & RESISTANCE⁴**

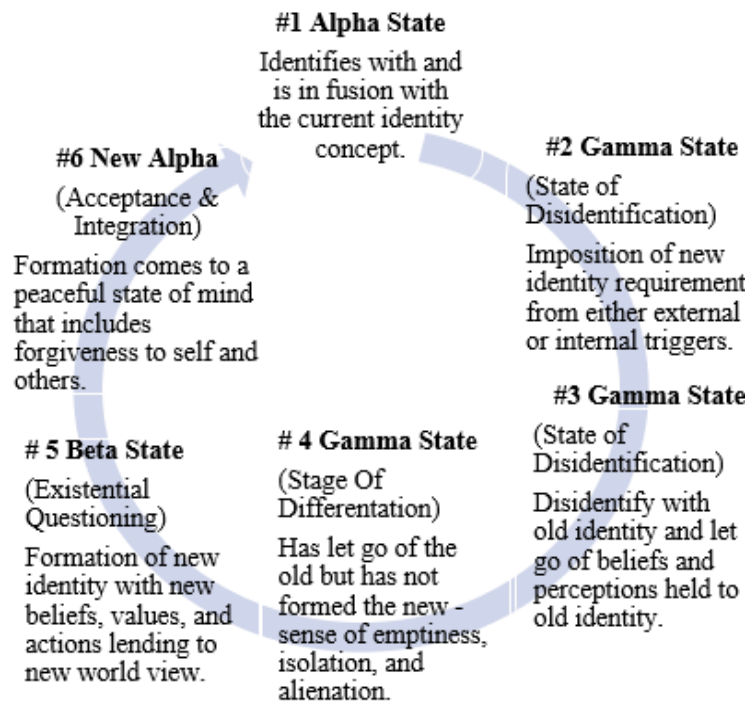


**FIGURE 5
PROGRESSION OF THE TRANSITION OF CHANGE**



As shown in Figure 6, for spiritual transformation to occur, an individual has to let go of the current stage or disidentify with it to make room for the new and higher stage. The individual must become unstuck and move into a re-creation of the identity of a new and evolved spiritual level. The individual must differentiate from the lower stage, identify with the higher stage, and then integrate the higher with the lower. The task of differentiation and then integration is asserted by Wilber (1998) to be a fulcrum and is considered to be a major turning point or a major step in development through the change process. In the last phase of the change process, the inchoate integrated self becomes differentiated giving form to the new identity or individuation. The outcome of the process is a more evolved and more conscious human being. As the process of evolution involves the development of the true self, the transformational process provides a fertile ground for the individual to ask life-affirming questions regarding their life purpose and life journey (Pearce, 2002).

**FIGURE 6
REINFORCING LOOP: THE PROGRESSION OF IDENTITY TRANSFORMATION
FOLLOWING A LIFE CRISIS⁶**



The spiritual transition occurs as a product of moving through each resistance fulcrum. An individual may become stuck at any of the five fulcrums. The earliest resistance fulcrums noted at the beginning of the disidentification stage is the enactment of defenses, such as denial or anger, which distort the need for an identity change. When the process of dismantling the established identity takes place it is associated with a flood of negative feelings and doubts that register as emotional upheaval and overload. With the movement into the differentiation stage, the initial feelings of emptiness, isolation, and alienation are further coupled with feelings of blame, shame, and guilt. Until there is a resolution of these feelings and a forgiving of self, others, and one's higher power the individual stays stuck in the resistance dynamics. With resolution and forgiveness, an individual does transition toward the stage of integration. Here the resistance dynamics consist of the possibility of being lost in infinite possibilities. It is a period marked by much exploration and searching for alternative identities. Ultimately, the way to a new identity requires an existential choice made in faith that it will provide a profound sense of purpose and meaning in one's life.

Efforts to eliminate or reduce the attack on the identity are often viewed externally as resistance to change; however, this resistance is a balancing loop designed to slow change to a tolerable speed to decrease disorientation, confusion, and grief (Senge, 1994). As the individual moves toward integration, a new self is produced that is less dependent on the old employment paradigm. As new mental maps and myths (Senge, 1994) are created around a world view of self-sufficiency and professional autonomy, the individual gives up the feelings of victimization and co-dependency. The first value change is to heighten self-interests and diminish corporate dependency. As self-esteem returns and confidence is enhanced with the new and more profoundly enriched life experiences, the new integrated self emerges with greater power and capacity to weather the crisis of layoff phenomena. The new integrated self may be unmoved in the future by such phenomena as the new identity has developed mechanisms for success in this environment. The new identity may have resilience to uncertainty and flexibility.

CONCLUSION

Transitional changes prompted by life crisis triggers such as involuntary unemployment create the environment for profound identity changes. Full exposure to the cycle of identity transformation leads to a more empowered and authentic individual who accepts an adult role in their orientation to career and work. These individuals are more likely to have greater accountability for their careers show expanded loyalty to their career needs, and possess a higher tolerance for risk and change. Consequently, those employees who become stuck or challenged in a fulcrum fail to evolve and may adopt the neurosis of the fulcrum. These are the employees who are customarily noted to have long-standing lay-off survivor syndrome and are asserted to have greater dependency, addiction, and intolerance for change. Future research of this model is to include individual self-surveys and focus group interviews allowing life experiences to be related to placement on the transition cycle.

ENDNOTES

1. The figure illustrates stimulating, reinforcing forces that push an individual toward change and the diminishing, balancing forces that limit and reduce personal change. In this example, unemployment serves as the stimulating trigger, and conditions of defensive mechanisms, overwhelm, confusion, isolation, alienation, and euphoria serve to diminish the change effect. The figure material was adapted from *The Fifth Discipline* by Peter Senge, in 2006.
2. The model demonstrates the change process from current reality (Alpha state) to new reality (New Alpha state) through the area of resistance (Gamma state). Adapted from *Let Us Bring Humanistic and General Psychology Together: A Research Project Needing to Become* by C. Graves, 1973.
3. The figure displays the mechanism of the attractor point, the torus (pendulum) attractor point, and the strange attractor. The individual presents in an Alpha, Gamma, and New Alpha interface. The area of the gap is the place between the current reality and the new reality. As adaptation occurs the gap closes and emergent, quantum change is achieved. Adapted from "Complexity, Chaos, and Nonlinear Dynamics: *Spiral Dynamics*,

- Beck & Cowan, 1996; A New Perspective on Career Development Theory”, *The Career Development Quarterly*, Bloch, (2005); *Coping with Uncertainty*, Merry, 1995; and *The Fifth Discipline*, Senge, 2006.
4. The figure shows the relationship of the revolutionary change state, representative of a balancing force favoring resistance to change. Stages that favor limit-to-change are defensive mechanisms, emotional overload, meaninglessness, and infinite possibilities. Based on text material from *Faithful Change: The Personal and Public Challenges of Postmodern Life*, by J. Fowler, 1996, New York: HarperCollins Publishers and “The Psychodynamics of Small Group Transformation”, *Small Group Research* 22 pp. 4-23, by G. Gemmill & C. Wynkoop, 1991 and *Let Us Bring Humanistic and General Psychology Together: A Research Project Needing to Become*, Lecture for the Psychology Department, Union College, Schenectady, New York, by Clare Graves, March 19, 1973.
 5. The model demonstrates the change process: ending, neutral zone (impasse), and a new identity. Adapted from *Stages of faith: The psychology of human development and the quest for meaning* by James Fowler, 1981.
 6. The transformational reinforcing loop encourages movement from one stage of conscious worldview to the next higher level with an accompanying identity change through identification, differentiation, and integration. At each level, there is the possibility of being stuck with the corresponding resistance to change psychological manifestation. Based on text material from *Faithful change: The personal and public challenges of postmodern life*, by J. Fowler, 1996, New York: HarperCollins Publishers and “The psychodynamics of small group transformation”, *Small Group Research* 22 pp. 4-23, by G. Gemmill & C. Wynkoop, 1991.

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