


Transmogrification in the Fourth Industrial Revolution and beyond. Let that sink in

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Orientation: This article provides an overview of what transformation looks like in a system from a systems psychodynamic perspective – presenting the concept of transmogrification through empirical research from a group of participants who attended South African Group Relations Conferences (GRC). Extrapolating to the larger system, Elon Musk is singled out as a practical example of a transmogrifier, transmogrifying a system.

Research purpose: Describe transformation from a systems psychodynamic perspective and what this may mean for leaders and organisations in the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR).

Motivation for the study: The literature is clear that individuals transform in groups, and a collective form of transformation is possible; however, what this transformation looks like needs to be clarified.

Research approach/design and method: The meta-theoretical paradigm of critical realism allowed for qualitative research within the hermeneutic phenomenological school of thought. A non-probability sampling strategy of eight individuals enabled a multimethod research strategy of face-to-face interviews and a focus group. Braun and Clarke's six-step thematic data analysis method, applying a systems psychodynamic lens, was used.

Main findings: The findings show that unconscious dynamics intrinsic to all humans manifest as a non-linear transformation process, presenting as preservation, transformation and transmogrification.

Practical/managerial implications: To survive and thrive in the 4IR and beyond, leaders and organisations must move beyond transformation towards transmogrification to create sustainable organisations that are yet to be thought about.

Contribution/value-add: The concept of transmogrification adds to the literature of group relations conferences, psychology, industrial and organisational psychology and systems psychodynamics.

Keywords: systems psychodynamics; transformation; preservation; transmogrification; Fourth Industrial Revolution/4IR; group relations conference; interactive qualitative analysis; free association narrative interview.

Introduction

Orientation

The Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), a rapid advancement in the 21st century (Singaram et al., 2023), extends beyond technology-driven change. It represents an opportunity for leaders, policymakers and people across income groups and nations to utilise converging technologies to create an inclusive, human-centred future (World Economic Forum, 2023). The focus goes beyond technology to empower many individuals to positively impact their families, organisations and communities (World Economic Forum, 2023). However, this era is marked by rapid change, uncertainty, scepticism and fear of the future, requiring organisations and employees to stay informed about new trends and understand the underlying unconscious processes within organisations (Mayer & Oosthuizen, 2021; Voices for Equity, 2023).

Elon Musk, a South African-born United States (US) citizen and billionaire entrepreneur, is a prominent figure driving technological change. Described as mercurial (Cabral, 2023) and having a unique style that sets him apart from other chief executive officers (CEOs) (Olinga, 2023), he made headlines by walking into the headquarters of Twitter holding a kitchen sink and announcing its purchase on 26 October 2022 (Zahn, 2022). The words he used, 'Let that sink in,' metaphorically speaking, suggest Musk's willingness to take significant risks to transform Twitter into the

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envisioned 'town square' he wanted. His penchant for daring risks (Archwell, 2021) is seen as exemplary leadership, involving challenging processes and learning from experience (Archwell, 2021; Miklaszewicz, 2023).

According to some sources, Elon Musk is depicted as a leader who inspires followers with a higher purpose (Miklaszewicz, 2023). However, Tesla is criticised for poor working conditions and a culture of fear (HRKatha, 2023). Despite this, SpaceX has become a major player in the space industry, capturing a significant market share (Ansar & Flyvbjerg, 2022). Opinions on Musk's leadership vary, with some praising him as an extraordinary leader (Miklaszewicz, 2023), while others criticise him for being detrimental to business and mental health (Robinson, 2022). Regardless, he is acknowledged for transforming the systems he operates within. He is, therefore, singled out as an example of a transmogrifier transmogrifying a system based on the insights garnered from the research.

Research purpose and objectives

This article aims to provide an overview of what transformation looks like in a system from a systems psychodynamic perspective.

Literature review

A systems psychodynamic perspective

Conceived as a systems theory, systems psychodynamics (Lawlor & Sher, 2022) understands the universe as a hierarchy of systems (Cilliers & Henning, 2014). It deals with complexity and relationships on a systemic, dynamic and psychological level (Struwig & Cilliers, 2012). The focus is on the underlying dynamics below the surface. In the interaction between individuals and groups, overt behaviour of what people say or do is considered (Lawlor & Sher, 2022). Applying the three epistemologies of systems theory, psychoanalysis and group relations theory (Struwig & Cilliers, 2012), information about unconscious motivations and defences (Van Eeden, 2010) reveals the function of dysfunction (Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2015).

Systems in the Fourth Industrial Revolution

In the 4IR, boundaryless networked societies have emerged with apparent liberating consequences such as eliminating hierarchical structure where everyone is equal and connected, even to powerful, influential world leaders (Visholm & Sandager, 2020). Influential leaders themselves are connected (Cabral, 2023) outside of the traditional formal boundaries on platforms such as 'X', which shape what, on the surface, appears to be free democratic interaction. Changes such as these in the post-modern work environment facilitate heightened anxiety levels because of the changes in psychological boundaries within and between systems (Van Eeden & Cilliers, 2019).

Organisations as systems face multiple tasks, all vying to serve the primary task, the organisation's mission (Green & Molenkamp, 2005). Acting as containers (Bion, 1962) and

transitional spaces (Winnicott, [1971] 2005), organisations provide their members with a sense of psychological and emotional containment (Obholzer & Roberts, 2019). Containment can be human (Bion, 1962) and non-human aspects of the organisation, such as structures, technologies, policies and work (Nagel, 2021). When the primary occupation of a system becomes the survival task and the preservation of the system (Green & Molenkamp, 2005), managing change in this state, executives and consultants may remain stuck in accountability and control in collusion with the system towards its survival. Wedded to a top-down approach to management (Allen, 2019), then, in effect, becomes more about transforming so that everything can stay the same, preserving the group towards the survival of the group and the preservation of leadership (Petriglieri, 2020). Leadership challenges are discouraged, and change could be minuscule and unsustainable (Petriglieri, 2020).

Leadership was challenged when Elon Musk purchased Twitter. The change was massive. Conger et al. (2022) reported immediate layoffs, fired executives, and changes to product deadlines, transforming the company. The 'fallout was excruciating,' according to Conger et al. (2022). Those who remained, executives and employees, scrambled to put Elon Musk's plans into place, beset by the financial implications of those plans. Elon Musk told employees to 'go hardcore and play to win' or leave the organisation (Conger et al., 2022). Executives who did not carry out his plans were fired. Curiously, seemingly in defence of Elon Musk's behaviour at Twitter, an employee said the billionaire was willing to take risks: 'he puts rockets into space' (Conger et al., 2022).

At their core, organizations can be seen as a manifestation of the mother-and-baby dynamic (Davar, 2020). Transitional spaces (Winnicott, 1971/2005) where members of organisations process their transformation, and fear of the unknown provokes anxiety (Steyn & Cilliers, 2016) resulting in emotional responses to the anxiety. It seems that the dependency dynamic, as described by Allcorn (2015), was evident at X. This was apparent from the employee's need for an omnipotent leader to contain their anxiety (Allcorn, 2015).

Psychoanalytic principles, model of the mind

Emotions that operate in later life evolve from individuals' newborn experiences where anxiety is experienced as persecutory, according to Klein (1959). The infant without an intellectual ability to understand feels every discomfort unconsciously as though outside hostile forces inflict these. The infant associates the breast as good or bad, depending on whether milk is withheld (Klein, 1959). Emotions are experienced towards an object, not the mother; the infant has an 'innate unconscious awareness of the mother's existence' (Klein, 1959). Splitting evolves when the developing ego splits good and bad objects (Bartle, 2015). The first 'part-object' is the breast, with which the infant has an emotional tie, known as identification. The breast is linked to primitive and instinctual urges, often regressive (Freud, [1925] 1955). In

later life, emotions are projected towards anybody who elicits these primitive responses in adulthood.

By splitting the bad from the good, the belief in the good remains for the individual, a primal ego activity (Klein, 1959). Klein termed these destructive impulses as the paranoid-schizoid position. A fundamentalist state of mind, according to Stokoe (2021), where the mind is ruled by the ideal, pleasure and own survival, the language is blame, certainty is the choice, all are omnipotent, difference is a threat, and relationships are either mergers or sadomasochistic. When real and emotional loss is experienced (introjection) by the loved object, the 'lost object' characteristic is a cruel self-depreciation of the ego, combined with relentless self-criticism and bitter self-reproaches that represent the ego's revenge upon it (Freud, [1925] 1955). As introjection is experienced, so is projection (Klein, 1959).

Identification is with the other while projecting oneself or part of self, impulses, and feelings into another person, attributing some of one's own qualities to the other person (Klein, 1959). The character of the projection and the interplay between the projection and introjection are essential so as not to be dominated by hostility or over-dependence. An individual's judgement of reality is then never entirely free from this internal world of unconscious phantasies, according to Klein (1959). Stokoe (2021) states that separation and/or loss is indistinguishable from death, meaning if the object is split off and projected into it contains too much of the self, the individual risks losing the self in the process (Stokoe, 2021). A depressive position is obtained when aggression is managed by the superego, which controls dangerous impulses (Klein, 1959).

Annihilation

According to Hopper (2009), trauma provokes and activates fear of annihilation. Annihilation involves a threat to psychic survival, experienced as a present danger and anticipation of an imminent catastrophe (Hurvich, 2005). The phenomenon of fear of annihilation involves psychic paralysis and the death of psychic vitality (De Felice et al., 2018) in the psychotic part of the personality (Bion, [1965] 2018). Anxiety changes into psychotic panic, anxiety and panic in the face of transformation. The precondition of a psychotic personality is a preponderance of destructive impulses, a hatred of internal and external reality, and the dread of imminent annihilation. Psychotic fragmentation (Bion, 1962, [1965] 2018) threatens to suffuse and annihilate the personality (Bollas, [1987] 2018). In defence, development takes on a divergent course to avoid the experience of panic (O'Shaughnessy, 2005). In the neurotic part of the personality (Schmid-Kitsikis, 2005), which is not only pathological but also normal-neurotic psychic activity, neurotic defence enables avoidance of anxiety and guilt caused by inhibitions connected with sexual desires and aggressive tendencies (Schmid-Kitsikis, 2005). Regression becomes one of the defences to resist the progress of thought into consciousness through a typical path.

In the context of a balanced mind, the psychotic states of mind function in parallel with the neurotic functioning mind along a continuum (Sapochnik, 2017). Working along this continuum in groups can be frightening as it unleashes emotions beyond (rational) control (Sapochnik, 2017). The hatred of emotions unleashed by primitive states of the mind leads to the intensification of emotions and a need for more robust defences. The process is not a pathology of the individual but a struggle to accept and engage with irrational (neurotic and psychotic) dynamics in groups. It is active in all aspects of human endeavour (Sapochnik, 2017).

Organisations become the transitional spaces where these dynamics are enacted (Sapochnik, 2017). Groups can hold spaces to enable separateness of the self while connecting with the object (Winnicott, [1971] 2005). The transitional space allows group members to get in touch with complicated feelings and emotions (Hinshelwood et al., 2010), in which individuals are constantly related to one another for a whole host of reasons (Stapley, 2006). Relatedness is vital to systems thinking (Shongwe, 2014). The essential part of relatedness (Sher, 2015) is when others are experienced as a whole, bringing together the good and bad objects (Klein, 1959).

Group relations conferences

The findings of this research report the dynamics that manifested at South African Group Relations Conferences (GRC). These are designed to explore and study the dynamics of groups and organisations. These events draw on group relations theory to understand the complexity of a system (Wallach, 2010). In dynamic temporary experiential learning institutions, members examine group processes, explore unconscious dynamics in the group, and explore thoughts, feelings and reactions in response to group dynamics (Wallach, 2010) while paying particular attention to the dynamics of leadership and authority. The participant-observer effect allows for data generation as members find themselves in a relationship with and in relatedness to themselves and other group members. In a meta-learning experience, members work and learn during confusion and fear in an unfamiliar setting (Sapochnik, 2015). The potential for transformational learning (Willerman, 2014) is created through critical inquiry into personal assumptions and mental models.

Learning by experience means individual autonomy (Carlyle, 2010) is confronted in a group (Bion, [1961] 2004). Individual narcissism (Garland, 2010) is affronted, and feelings of helplessness are experienced (Hopper, 2009). In the effort to be masters of their own fate, individuals tend to concentrate on those aspects of mental life they truly own in their observations (Bion, 1962). Tension is created between knowing, learning, experimenting and repeating (Bion, 1962). Should an individual clash with the group mentality (Bion, [1961] 2004), it would often lead to feelings of discomfort for the individual as each member is pressed to conform, leading to a loss of individuality (Hume, 2010). Any

attempt to investigate the dynamics is troubled by fear. To defend against fear, the fundamentalist state of mind (Klein, 1948, Stokoe, 2021) is employed.

Research design

Research approach and strategy

The research was grounded in the meta-theoretical post-positivistic paradigm of critical realism (Grix, 2010) within the interpretive framework, lending itself to qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A multimethod research strategy was employed, including multiple data collection and analysis methods (Reis et al., 2017).

Research method

Research setting

The sample was taken from a residential GRC presented annually on Robben Island over 15 years. The members were professionals and managers at different levels in the private and public sectors, entrepreneurs, employed and unemployed citizens and non-citizens residing in and outside South African borders.

Entrée and establishing researcher roles

The researcher is experienced in the GRC method, having attended numerous GRCs as both a member and a staff member. The researcher obtained permission to conduct the study from the organisation that presented the GRC, the participants and the university ethics review committee (Ref: 2015_CEMS_IOP_052), thereby adhering to ethical research principles.

Research participants and sampling methods

A heterogeneous group of GRC members was sampled through a purposeful sampling strategy, which allowed for a criterion sampling method (Creswell, 2013). The descriptive profile of the participants is presented in Table 1.

Data collection method

A multimethod approach for working with psychodynamic material, as depicted in Figure 1, was employed. The strategy involved aligning data collection methods with systems psychodynamics principles (Cilliers et al., 2004). Individual face-to-face interviews were conducted using the Free

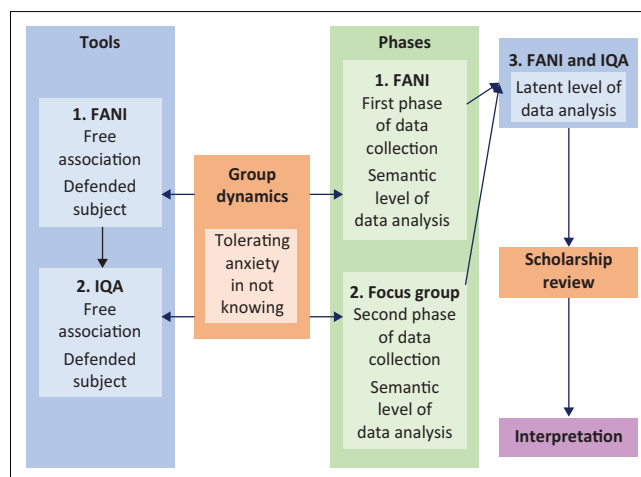
Association Narrative Interview (FANI) methodology developed by Hollway and Jefferson (2008). Subsequently, the Interactive Qualitative Analysis (IQA) of Northcutt and McCoy (2004) was applied during the focus group. This multimethod approach facilitated a dual-level data analysis involving semantic-manifest and latent implicit meanings (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

Data recording

Following the multimethod approach (Figure 1), 1-h face-to-face interviews were conducted using Hollway and Jefferson's FANI (2008). One question was posed: 'Tell me about your experience of the GRC'. A few weeks later, the focus group was convened. The 'Data Analysis' section describes the IQA applied during the focus group. The FANI and IQA were audio-recorded and later transcribed. Photographs of the data generated during the IQA were taken.

Strategies employed to ensure data quality and integrity

Credibility was affirmed through a multimethod approach to collecting data (Knappertsbusch et al., 2021). Giving voice to the participants reflects the researcher's concern with subjectivity towards understanding and explaining societal reality (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Above the surface, transferability may come into question. Nevertheless, from a systems psychodynamic perspective, all groups in all contexts would manifest similar unconscious dynamics



FANI, free association narrative interview; IQA, interactive qualitative analysis.

FIGURE 1: A multimethod approach to working with psychodynamic material.

TABLE 1: Descriptive profile of participants.

Year attended	The code name of the participant	Race	Age at the time of the interview	Gender	The number of GRC attended	Home language	Highest qualification	Employment industry
2001	Mr Een	C	44	M	2	Afrikaans	Honours	Public
2002	Mr Seven	W	72	M	2	English	Degree	Retired/Public
2002	Ms Vier	W	57	F	5	Afrikaans	Masters	OD Consultant Coach
2002	Mr Drie	W	65	M	1	Afrikaans	Degree	Retired/Banking
2012	Ms Tlhano	B	51	F	2	Tswana	Masters	Managing Director
2015	Ms Mbini	B	34	F	1	Xhosa	Degree	Human Resources
2015	Ms Ses	W	44	F	1	Afrikaans	Doctorate	Management Consulting
2015	Mr Seswai	B	28	M	1	Sotho	Degree	Engineering

Note: Racial demographics in South Africa are categorised as C – Coloured people; W – White people and B – Black people. GRC, group relations conferences; M, male; F, female; OD, organisational development.

intrinsic to all humans (Bion, 1962). The reader may identify with the participants’ stories in different group contexts. Dependability is ensured by providing a detailed description of the data collection and analysis process within this article’s scope.

Data analysis

The scope of this article only allows for in-depth reporting on some of the data analysis processes. This article emphasises the IQA data. Ultimately, the researcher analysed the FANI and IQA data at a latent level of data analysis by applying Braun and Clarke’s 6-step thematic data analysis method (2006), which led to the generated themes of the study.

During phase 1 of the IQA (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004), the participants engaged in 10 min of silent reflection on the issue statement, ‘Your experience of transmogrification: what does this mean for the individual and the organisation?’. A definition of transmogrification was provided, ‘To change or alter greatly and often with grotesque or humorous effect’ (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, n.d.). The participants were familiar with the statement as it was used in the participant information sheet and consent form they signed for ethics clearance.

After recording their responses to the issue statement with one or two words on each card, the participants generated 48 cards to paste onto the wall (phase 2). The cards were grouped into clusters (phases 3 and 4). The clusters were named through group consensus, resulting in five affinities (phase 5) from left to right: Apprehension and Trepidation, Dusk and Dawn, Movement, Shedding Light and Consequences or Outcome. Figure 2 shows the outcome of the IQA data at that stage.

During phase 6, the participants generated their Affinity Relationship Tables (ART). After the focus group, the

researcher analysed the ART employing an Interrelationship Diagram (IRD), which produced a Systems Influence Diagram (SID) (Figure 3).

Affinities were categorised into topological zones using different rules to organise elements with similar influence characteristics in a system (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004). Zone 1 (Apprehension and Trepidation) comprised of the primary driver, a fundamental cause of influence not affected by other elements but influencing all others in the system. Zone 2 included the pivot (Dusk and Dawn), influencing, and being influenced by all other affinities. Zone 3 had two secondary outcomes (Shedding light and Movement), influenced by the primary driver and pivot, representing a relative effect. Zone 4 involved a strong relative outcome (Consequences and Outcome), influenced by and influencing all elements in the system except the primary driver directly. Notably, the GRC system lacked a primary outcome, a phenomenon not uncommon in IQA (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004).

After generating the SID in Figure 3, both sets of data (FANI and IQA) underwent analysis following Braun and Clarke (2006) 6-step thematic data analysis process. This involved becoming familiar with the data, generating

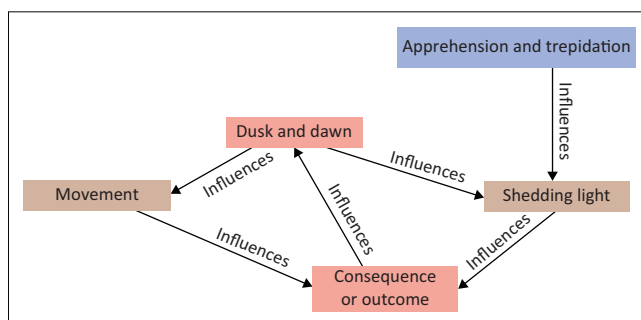


FIGURE 3: The Systems Influence Diagram of the Group Relations Conferences according to the participants.



FIGURE 2: The outcome of phases 1 to 5 of the Interactive Qualitative Analysis.

initial codes (descriptive codes of emotions, interpretive codes of safety, and pattern codes such as metaphors), and developing domain summaries. These covered distinct data properties and contained specific ideas differentiated from themes that explained the entire dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2016). For instance, the safety category included ideas like caution, home, expose, hiding and shields. These domain summaries incorporated affinities identified by focus group participants. Only one affinity (Apprehension and Trepidation) was maintained as a preliminary theme because it is a primary influencer in the system. The preliminary themes were refined by exploring their meaning, identifying subthemes, and understanding their interactions and relationships, following Braun and Clarke (2006) guidelines.

Reporting style

The research yielded seven themes at a semantic level of data analysis, capturing participants' voices verbatim (Braun & Clarke, 2009). The discussion will delve into the latent level of data analysis, exploring deeper meanings and insights from a systems psychodynamic perspective within the interpretivist paradigm (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Ethical considerations

Permission to conduct the research was granted by the University of South Africa, College of Economic and Management Sciences/Industrial and Organisational Psychology Research Ethics Review Committee (020_CEMS_IOP_006).

Results

Theme 1: Not knowing

The primary task of the opening plenary is to provide information about the tasks of the different events members were free to join. However, it became evident during the interviews that, initially, participants did not know what to do. Ms Ses said there was confusion about 'what is everybody's role, what are we trying to discuss or what are ... what, what, what nothing'. The finding was unexpected because the consultants shared information about what to expect from the event printed in a booklet for the participants. The participants were also confused about 'what is real? How shocking is it real? How can we express it? How do we find words for real?' Mr Drie said. The apparent anxiety manifested in several emotions.

Theme 2: A complex emotional experience

The GRC was experienced as a complex emotional experience throughout the 5 days it was presented. It was described as a 'five-day revolution ... jumping off a cliff with hardly any safety gear' by Mr Drie and as a 'game played on a knife's edge' by Ms Ses. Much of the emotions revolved around anger, hate and pain. Anger and hate came from 'both sides' and 'outside', Ms Vier said. She said, 'I am the hate object at

the moment'. Mr Seven said, 'I was very angry, very frustrated, and it put a bit of a damper on the start, but I think I managed to let go of it and forget it'.

Theme 3: Fear of risk or risk of fear

The participants found fear a difficult concept to speak about. It was mentioned only once during the FANI. Mr Een said, 'You hear people speaking in the sessions, and you hear the fears, the anxiety that people have,' speaking of others' fears and not his own. However, during the focus group, Mr Drie said, 'The whole thing is about fear and about risk'. Initially, the focus group named their experience as risk and/or fear, which influenced all other experiences during the GRC, according to the SID. However, consensus changed this to name the experience 'Apprehension and Trepidation'. During the FANI and the IQA, danger could be spoken about, not fear. Ms Ses described the GRC as a 'dangerous game during the FANI'. Ms Vier described danger from outside, and Mr Drie described members not wanting to learn because 'some cases are just too dangerous'.

Theme 4: Shedding light

Shedding light was identified as one of two outcomes of the GRC. It contained the words of undeniable, integration, understanding in the cluster (Figure 2). The focus group defined shedding light as 'the light can go on, but you do not need to move'. An interpretation of shedding light could mean illuminating something or removing light, resulting in darkness. Illumination was described as 'moving from ... dark to light. So, Shedding Light on something is where the concept of illumination is. Almost when you move into this clear, that's sort of linked to it', Mr Drie said. The metaphor of 'walking in the forest with closed eyes' was used by Mr Drie. Mr Een agreed and said, 'As the light comes ... it becomes clearer to you as the thing gets illuminated'. Mr Drie said it was as if he was walking in the:

'Black Forest and suddenly you reach a place where the sun suddenly shines through into the ground ... in your confusion you thrash about ... You thrash it ... thrash about and you clear a space ... once you reach the clearing [*then it is possible to*] let go of your own ... cherished ... philosophies. The things that you thought you couldn't live without.' (Mr Drie)

Ms Ses said, 'So what happens if you can't let go? How do you shed light if you can't let go?'

The question kept the focus group busy as not all participants shared the same experiences. There appeared to be some anxiety about becoming stuck in Shedding Light and being unable to let go. Ms Ses said the most significant difficulty at the GRC was 'people could not let go. People were left there still not having let go ... that was the big challenge, and we left with that challenge. It wasn't resolved'. To rationalise the experience, Mr Drie said people went to the GRC, 'just some fun time from the office ... that's exactly when you've got this OD light', referring to a word in the experience of Consequence and Outcome. OD light seemed to be about

participants not fully engaging with the experiences of the GRC. As Ms Ses said, the experience 'just runs off me like water off a duck's back'. During the FANI, Ms Tlhanu shared a similar experience when she said, 'You are in the middle of the thing, and you are not reflecting ... while I was in it, it was not a big deal that I was not connecting ... but after that I could say wow how could I spend almost a week ...' not completing her sentence.

Theme 5: Movement

According to the SID, movement, as the second outcome of the GRC, held words of loss, freshness, regression, anxiety, surprising, not funny, gain, paradigm-shifting, transformation, and deep(er) (Figure 2). According to the focus group, shock is transformation. Mr Een said:

'It's always a shock ... change and metamorphosis can be a shock ... it starts with a shock ... shocks others ... ends with a shock ... is shocking ... A new place. It's a paradigm shift. It's a transformation.' (Mr Een)

Movement was experienced differently by different participants. Movement was described as move, change, shift. Change was described as 'changes the core of what you are ... not the shopfront but the stuff inside' by Mr Een. Movement was also related to regression described as 'you're moving to a higher or to a lower ... You can always go back ... the happiness that you would regress instead of just enough' by Ms Ses, implying some safety in regression.

Ms Ses wondered if the experience was 'not fear of change'. Mr Drie said, 'Fear of change is just a small bit of that ... actually part of it, but the whole thing is about fear and about risk'. Ms Vier said 'It brings loss ... the loss could be positive, letting go so that there can be movement ... [or] detrimental of ... depriving of, taking away of, stealing of, minimising'. Mr Drie further stated that ... 'Change always brings loss ... even the stuff you don't like, you don't want to let go'. Ms Vier said, 'It can be like a loss of a limb, but it also can be loss of baggage', implying a cost to the loss according to Ms Vier. Ms Tlhanu said, 'Once you discover what is inside your bag ... you must be committed to working on it ... because it will trip you up'.

The findings indicate that movement was not one-directional. It could be both a forward and backwards motion. Whether to move or not could be about avoiding what was illuminated and the transformation that movement held for some participants. Paradoxically, then not letting go while moving. Regression allowed for movement, which avoided the risks and fears that both shedding light and movement held for some participants. Nothing could be stolen, and nothing was given up.

Theme 6: Consequence or outcome

The participants identified consequence or outcome as an experience of the GRC, which contained words of long-lasting purpose, destiny and OD light (Figure 2). The

participants distinguished between the two by saying consequence was 'I am partly or wholly responsible for ... consequence happening ...' and outcome, 'is just a mechanism ... an outcome of the process ... a physical thing that doesn't necessarily touch me'.

The long-lasting effects of the GRC were contemplated, as well as the purpose of the GRC itself. Purpose was mainly related to OD light, which held elements of not fully engaging with the GRC. OD light was clarified as 'the kinds of interventions where people write glowing reports when you're finished, and the food was wonderful, and then two weeks later they've forgotten all about it,' Mr Drie said. OD light was seen as 'when this process ... didn't really work' – in effect, keeping the experience 'light' so it may not have too many consequences for the self. There was some surprise from the participants that OD light could be experienced in the context of the GRC. Mr Een said:

'Your OD light ... is sort of an outcome which is not the desired outcome. So, it's an undesired destiny or undesired purpose; although they're opposites, sort of a destiny which you don't want, then sometimes it is what you get out of these groups. So, OD light sometimes is your destiny, but it's ideally not what you want.' (Mr Een)

Ms Vier said, 'It's not what you want ... But it plans it plans out like that'. Using the word plan instead of the grammatically correct 'pan' in this context.

Destiny as a consequence or outcome of the GRC was a contentious issue for the group. The participants could not agree whether the outcome of the GRC was destiny or calling. These two words held meaning for the participants outside of the English language definition of the words. For the participants, destiny could be moving from one place or another, 'getting to destiny,' Ms Vier said. It could be OD light and an individual's purpose: 'because you have destiny in mind ... You are on your way to something you are foreseeing or that you have planned and need to reach. In other words, it can be a preconceived idea; ultimate purpose could also be your, the unconscious, where you are going to land up'.

Ms Vier's apparent Freudian slip of the tongue when speaking about OD light 'planning' out and not panning out seems to indicate some form of planning taking place to reach a desired outcome. Destiny was not fate for Ms Vier. Implications of fate would be being powerless agents at the mercy of energies outside of themselves.

Destiny for others such as Mr Drie was, 'when you discover something fresh and useful ... destiny is a word where you make something your own. Where you get a calling. A new ... an irresistible calling'. Ms Vier was adamant that destiny had nothing to do with her calling. Implications of calling would mean being at the mercy of an inner struggle within the self, feeling powerful at being 'chosen'. Powerlessness would also be evident for having no choice, evident in Mr Drie's comment about being tired of being dominated by his

'own little worlds, thoughts, and conditions'. Implications of destiny linked to calling would mean no personal planned choice but something that could happen abruptly and out of control of the individual. Nevertheless, an individual could choose to resist a calling; should this happen, there is a risk of losing purpose in life, which could be detrimental to the self. Destiny was not fate for Mr Drie either. The findings indicate that the participants did not feel powerless and at the mercy of any powerful forces outside themselves. The participants seemed to take ownership of their choices, whether they planned them or not.

Discussion

Outline of the results

The results show that learning at the edge of knowing and not knowing has implications for transformation; in turn, transformation has direct implications for the self as individuals risk losing parts of the self in the process. In defence of losing that which may be unbearable, individuals defend against transformation. The transformational process in a group then consists of individuals who preserve, transform and transmogrify.

Learning at the edge of knowing and not knowing

Hopper's (2009) theory that trauma provokes and activates fear of annihilation seemed evident when interpreting the complex emotional experiences of the participants. An

interpretation of the complex emotional experience and not knowing themes may be explained by the concept that the fear of the unknown provokes anxiety (Steyn & Cilliers, 2016). Anxiety is a conscious, natural result of risk-taking and a potential stimulus to individual and social development (Rustin, 2015). If the anxiety is espoused in the paranoid-schizoid position (Klein, 1959), anxiety arises in reaction to perceived danger (Rustin, 2015). Experiencing the GRC as if on a knife edge with danger coming from all sides and the 'stuff inside' is compelling evidence of neurotic anxiety of an unconscious origin and internal to the individual (Rustin, 2015) manifesting in the group. Finding that fear was difficult to speak about strongly implies that a threat to psychic survival was present. Naming 'Apprehension and Trepidation' as the primary driver in the system highlights anticipation of an imminent catastrophe (Hurvich, 2005) seemingly present as participants spoke about danger.

This pattern of results is consistent with the literature that working at the edge of knowing and not knowing (Figure 4) can be terrifying and confusing and not something all would risk, as the pressures to know are almost irresistible (Bion, 1962; French & Simpson, 2003). It is an uncomfortable place to be in. It is filled with well-worn defences against the panic of transformation and thought (French & Simpson, 2003). In addition to being a place of not working with the unknown, in a 'safe' space of knowing, and a defence against learning (Bion, 1965/2018) (Figure 4).

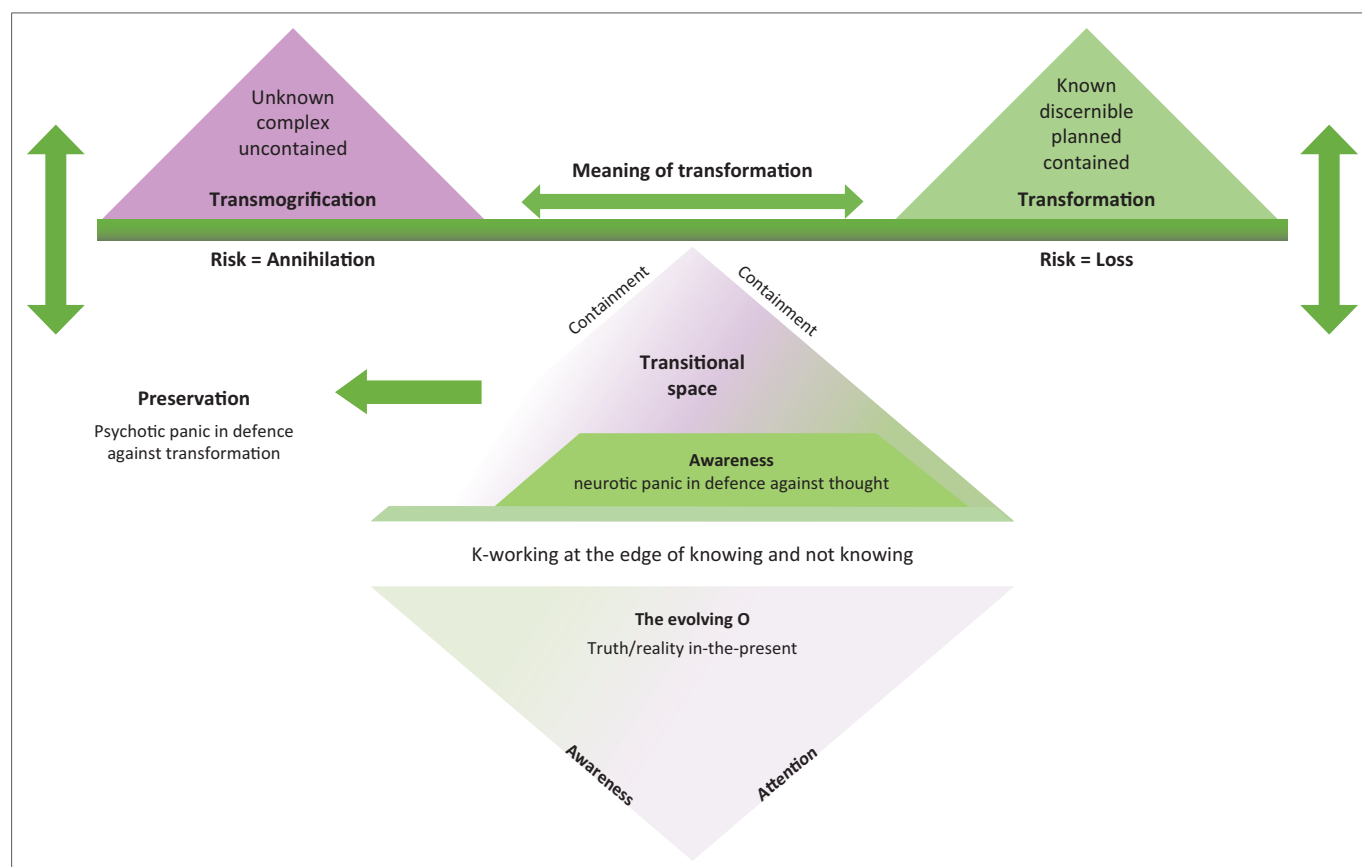


FIGURE 4: Transmogrification: A conceptual model of what transformation looks like in a system.

What transformation is experienced or defended against would depend on the below-the-surface dynamics of how an individual works at the edge of knowing and not knowing and how much awareness and attention is paid to truth in the moment (Abrahams, 2019). Truth in the moment is developed through one evolving 'O' with another evolving 'O' (French & Simpson, 2003). 'O' is defined by Bion ([1965] 2018) as both the unknown and unknowable; 'O' is truth and/or reality in the present and can lead to the growth of the mind above the surface of knowing and not knowing dependent on how contained or uncontained the individuals feel in the transitional space (Winnicott, [1975] 2005).

Implications for transformation: losing parts of the self

Past research has found that the need not to know is constantly under attack by the need to know in groups (French & Simpson, 2010; Sapochnik, 2017). The participants' experience of not knowing may have been preferable to experiencing their pain and envy in development and perhaps too intolerable to bear (Brady et al., 2012). Working with the unknown implies risk. To work with the risk of the unknown means to risk what is beyond the makeup of the self (Obholzer, 2001) by facing the shock of transformation and changing to the core of the self, as the participants described. Psychic elements must be mustered to risk working with these experiences; not knowing may be preferable to working with that which may cause discomfort and emotional turbulence to master the task at hand (Obholzer, 2001).

The shedding light and movement themes findings highlight that transformation has direct implications for the self, what could be seen, what could not, what could be let go of, and what could not, consistent with the literature that if the object is split off and projected (Klein, 1959) into it contains too much of the self, and an individual may risk losing the self in the process. Should an individual risk losing the self in the process, they would need to work with loss and fear of loss in addition to experiencing loss (Ogden, 1986; Stokoe, 2021). An individual would then either defend against losing the self in the transformation process or risk losing the self. How much of the self the individual is willing to lose manifests above the surface in how an individual consciously and unconsciously plans for transformation.

In the researcher's view, the OD light concept in the consequences or outcomes themes provides compelling evidence of planning a transformation that did not necessarily touch the individual with no long-lasting effects outside of the GRC context. The apparent surprise that such an outcome could be gained provides some evidence that it may have been unconsciously planned for in defence of transformation and loss of the self. Alternatively, to purposefully experience OD light, which did not touch the individual and had no long-lasting effects, holds an element that OD light could also be consciously planned for. The idea is further supported by the finding that should the transformation be viewed

negatively, the individual would be destined to experience OD light. It is a complex process that holds dynamics of both being powerful and powerless over personal transformation while being at the mercy and not of 'energies', both internal and external to the self. It is then almost an understatement to say that psychic elements such as these cause discomfort and turbulence (Obholzer, 2001). Defences such as psychotic panic in defence of transformation and neurotic panic in defence against thought arise.

Psychotic panic in defence of transformation: Preservation

If no safety can be found, primitive disaster is felt, and the destructive impulses of the psychotic personality may manifest as the nameless dread (Bollas, [1987] 2018; Ettin, 2003) that threatens to suffuse and annihilate the personality. Defences are adopted to avoid the experience of panic (O'Shaughnessy, 2005). Trauma activates and provokes the fear of annihilation (Hopper, 2009). The findings from themes highlight that the GRC was experienced as a traumatic event for some. The pattern of results about being unable to let go, see what was illuminated, and shift or move provides compelling evidence for becoming stuck in the paranoid-schizoid position (Klein, 1959) in defence of transformation. Experiencing psychotic anxiety in defence against transformation means that the container or transitional space needs to be broken free of, if not destroyed.

Neurotic panic in defence against thought: Stuck in safety

In addition to breaking free of the container or transitional space, the findings suggest some participants became trapped in the 'safety' of the transitional space where narcissistic tendencies became about the need to know rather than not to know, evidenced by the participants' preoccupation with understanding others fears yet not being able to speak about own fear. A preoccupation with awareness at the expense of thought emphasises narcissistic tendencies and a preoccupation with self in the safety of the container defending against unthinkable anxieties (De Goldstein, 2015). Vulnerabilities in learning by experience are defended against as truth at the moment cannot be developed through one evolving 'O' with another evolving 'O' (Bion, [1965] 2018).

Transformation

The findings suggest that some participants were able to transform during the GRC. These participants planned for transformation based on the amount of risk they were willing to take. A planned-for transformation with clear outcomes, such as getting to a destiny. An outcome that would not necessarily have consequences or 'touch' the person. Instead, a plan was made to reach a desired outcome. For transformation to occur, participants worked with what was known rather than what was not known. A move was made from a paranoid-schizoid position towards a depressive position (Klein, 1959). Participants calculated how much they

were willing to lose. If the loss meant losing an 'offending limb', it could be a loss that was tolerated, and not much of the self would be lost. Also, the loss would be a bad object. There would be no risk of losing the good object. Adequate splitting for the participants was then possible (Stokoe, 2021). Taking some risks in working with the known and losing a part of the self (Stokoe, 2021) could be tolerated, fragmentation of the mind (Sapochnik, 2020) could be defended against, and some transformation would be possible. Not working with the unknown and unthought-known means that when transforming, individuals may not yet be entirely unable to work with, absorb, or extrude some of the self, others, and group experiences (Ettin, 2003). However, the nameless dread connected to the unknown and unthought-known (Bollas, [1987] 2018; Ettin, 2003) would still be defended against.

Transmogrification

Transmogrification was a difficult and painful experience of being able to work with, absorb, or extrude some of the self, others, and group experiences (Ettin, 2003). Transmogrification is a non-static and/or non-linear process of continually meeting and working at the edge of knowing and unknowing while risking annihilation (French & Simpson, 2003). An experience of constant movement, both positive or negative or nothing, could end up happening as the participants described, with complex outcomes dependent on the capacity to meet at the edge of knowing and not knowing, remain there, or defend against the edge (French & Simpson, 2003).

Transmogrification was not safe. As the findings suggest, it was about jumping into the unknown, off the cliff with hardly any safety gear. In that action, the outcome was uncertain. Not only was there a risk of loss but also a risk of annihilation (De Felice et al., 2018; Hopper, 2009). Transmogrification was a calling, which meant participants needed to work with experiences of power around receiving the calling and powerlessness over being chosen. Choices would be complex as the choice could entail risking the integrity of the self versus disintegration of the self, which could have long-lasting effects on the participants, such as being 'lesser now', as Mr Drie described after attending the GRC. However, paradoxically, in being lesser, he described he was 'more' with his grandchildren.

Transmogrification is differentiated from transformation in that transmogrification occurs when the very principles of the context are challenged and transformed (Finn, 1999). How safe or unsafe participants felt would influence whether participants could transform or whether preservation would manifest. If participants felt unsafe, they could break free of the transitional space (Winnicott, [1971] 2005) for survival. If the transitional space is experienced as safe, transformation is possible; outcomes can be planned as the participants work with the known, risking only the tolerable parts of the self. For transmogrification to occur, participants work with complexity and the unknown, even if it means annihilation (Hopper, 2009). Safety and trust are experienced in a

transitional space to contain the self while resisting the group's desire to maintain the status quo (Petriglieri, 2020).

Practical implications

Transmogrification is a potential new trend (Mayer & Oosthuizen, 2021) in organisations, emphasising the need for awareness among organisations and employees. Understanding what transformation looks like in a system can help identify individuals capable of transformation, who can then be integrated into change initiatives aligning with the organisation's strategy. The focus on dysfunction (Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2015) could shift by considering that transformation in groups and systems has far-reaching implications for individuals. The theoretical model of transmogrification contributes to systems psychodynamics, providing insight into how transformation occurs beneath the surface and why change may face resistance (Petriglieri, 2020).

The theoretical model highlights that more is going on below the surface than above the surface, where organisations tend to focus their change initiatives in defence against working with the unknown, which may be preferable to knowing. The risks associated with venturing into the unknown are acknowledged, with potential consequences such as perceived incompetence, loss of self-esteem, and income (Ettin, 2003), of which Elon Musk is charged in the public eye (Peterson, 2023; Tully, 2023).

In the 4IR context, taking risks is essential for creating new industries and the corresponding skills required to operate them. Organisations that transform solely for the sake of transformation may face the risk of not surviving. Organisations that transform by somewhat working at the edge of knowing and not knowing may survive but may not become the forerunners in an environment that requires harnessing converging technologies to create an inclusive, human-centred future (World Economic Forum, 2023). Organisations need to transmogrify by working at the edge of knowing and not knowing. The goal is to create a culture that embraces risk, not fear (HRKatha, 2023), in which fear of risk and risk of fear can be worked with by leaders and members of the organisation, leading to transmogrification.

Limitations and recommendations

The article provides an overview of what transformation looks like in a system; it cannot describe the full complexity of the system. In addition, the methodology used to work with psychodynamic material is new. Further research is recommended to operationalise the conceptual model of transmogrification and new approaches to work with psychodynamic material.

Conclusion

The research emphasises the intricate nature of organisations as interactive systems, highlighting the influence of unconscious dynamics inherent in human behaviour

(Bion, 1962). The transmogrified Twitter has maintained its original form; however, it has transmogrified into something new (X). In the Fifth Industrial Revolution (5IR) context, organisations are urged to transmogrify and cultivate a resilient, human-centric focus for sustainability and success. The conceptual model of transmogrification offers insights into the potential process of achieving this transformation.

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