THE EFFECT OF WORK ROLE TRANSITION
ON SURVIVOR RESPONSES TO LAYOFFS

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This study explored the impact of a significant transition in work role, who as a result of corporate restructuring, and the effects it had on their responses. In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participants' experiences. The study found that their placement in the organization was negatively impacted by a lack of clear, consistent leadership. The research also revealed that employees have an employee perception of the local managers and supervisors. The approval these in their perception of the participants varied among the organization and their responsibilities. Support for the findings. The implications of the study, which included the role and responsibilities of leaders in times of change.
THE EFFECT OF WORK ROLE TRANSITION ON SURVIVOR RESPONSES TO LAYOFFS

An Abstract of a Dissertation by
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This study explored the layoff experience of ten survivors of downsizing who as a result of corporate restructuring transitioned into different jobs, examining how the participants responded to the role transition and the effect it had on their downsizing experience. In addition, the research attempted to determine if and where the participants fit within the model of survivor responses to layoffs as suggested by Mishra and Spreitzer (1998). Using qualitative inquiry, in-depth semi-structured interviews were employed for data collection to uncover the participants' experiences while a two-question survey was used to determine their placement in the Mishra-Spreitzer model. The results of this research suggests that the downsizing experiences of these ten individuals were negatively impacted by a lack of trust in the organization's leadership coupled with a lack of clear, consistent, and frequent communications from that leadership. The research also identified the positive impact local managers could have on employees' attitudes toward their job and the organization in general if the local managers shared information and demonstrated they valued and appreciated those in their charge. The role transition experienced by these participants initially had a negative effect on their thoughts and attitudes toward the organization and their reaction to downsizing, however these negative effects seemed to diminish over time. The model of survivor responses to downsizing as suggested by Mishra and Spreitzer found 8 of the 10 participants thought they fit the response type in which they were placed, the remaining 2 participants did not believe they fit the response type.

Recommendations for future study could include a look at communications at various levels within the organization, a comparison look at role transition through the use of a control group, and a quantitative reexamination of the Mishra and Spreitzer (1998) model.
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Between 1970 and 1996, more than 43 million people lost their jobs through downsizing (Kaiser, 1996). In the past decade, hundreds of organizations in business and industry have conducted layoffs. In 2001, employers laid off approximately 1.6 million workers in 4,292 mass layoff actions (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2002). These figures constitute the highest level of separation and layoff events since the Bureau of Labor Statistics tracking of layoff statistics was reinstated in 1995.

Since the 1980s, there have been a number of studies that have documented the impact of corporate layoffs. Research has focused on the victims, documenting the effects of job loss that manifests both physically and psychologically (Handschuh, 1999; Kele et al., 1997; Vinokur, Price, & Caplan, 1996). The effects of layoffs on survivors are replete with studies exploring areas such as work behaviors, attitudes, commitment, and productivity (Brodner, 1998; Campbell-Jamison, Worrall, & Cooper, 2001; Mishra & Spreitzer, 1998; O'Reil-Dambra, Bishop, & Soothers, 1991; Tombs & White, 1990; Wright & Barting, 1997). Even the organization that initiated the layoffs has been the focus of research, examining reasons for downsizing, how layoffs affected the organization, and what outcomes...
Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

It's a recession when your neighbor loses his job;
It's a depression when you lose yours.
Harry Truman

Between 1979 and 1996, more than 43 million people lost their jobs through downsizing (Kleinfield, 1996). In the past decade, hundreds of organizations in business and industry have conducted layoffs. In 2001, employers laid off approximately 1.8 million workers in 8,352 mass layoff actions (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2002). These figures constitute the highest level of separation and layoff events since the Bureau of Labor Statistics tracking of layoff statistics was reinstated in 1995.

Since the 1980s there have been dozens of studies that have documented the impact of corporate layoffs. Research has focused on the victims, documenting the effects of job loss that manifests both physically and psychologically (Hanisch, 1999; Kets de Vries & Balazs, 1997; Vinokur, Price, & Caplan, 1996). The effects of layoffs on survivors are replete with studies exploring areas such as work behaviors, attitudes, commitment, and productivity (Brockner, 1988; Campbell-Jamison, Worrall, & Cooper, 2001; Mishra & Spreitzer, 1998; Offri-Dankwa, Bishop, & Schrems, 1991; Tombaugh & White, 1990; Wright & Barling, 1997). Even the organization that initiated the layoffs has been the focus of research, examining reasons for downsizing, how layoffs affected the organization, and what outcomes
resulted from the downsizing both positive and negative (Lewin & Johnston, 2000; Slocum, Morris, Cascio, & Young, 1999).

Research has even examined the effect of downsizing on the relationship between employee and employer, primarily surrounding expectations, and particularly job security. McNeil (1985) identified this employee expectation as the relational contract between employer and employee, a sustained relationship that is typified in the notion that for hard work and commitment an employee can expect security. Organizational downsizing and restructuring has moved the employer-employee relationship away from a long-term, stable relationship to a short-term, contingent one (Hickok, 1998) where employees are often treated in an abstract fashion as if they are liabilities (Storey, 1995).

Statement of the Problem

Layoffs have become a common occurrence in today's workplace. Victims of layoffs, individuals who have lost their jobs, must struggle with a multitude of issues. Those still employed, the survivors, cope with issues as well. The impact of layoffs on both victims and survivors has been the focus of a great deal of study (Allen, Freeman, Russell, Reizenstein, & Rentz, 2001; Brockner, 1988; Brockner, Grover, Reed, DeWitt, & O'Malley, 1987). However, there appears to be little research that has focused on survivors who were assigned a completely different job as a result of downsizing. These individuals who have undergone such a role transition, are dealing not only with the layoff phenomenon, but an event within that phenomenon, a new job. How has this situational factor shaped survivors' responses to
 downsizing? Are the effects of downsizing different for survivors who as a result of corporate restructuring accept new jobs than survivors who remain in the same position? What might be learned about the downsizing process from the experience of layoff survivors who have dealt with a role transition?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of 10 survivors of job layoffs who transitioned into different jobs as a direct result of downsizing, examining how they responded to their role transition, and determine if and where these participants fit within the Mishra-Spreitzer typology. Mishra and Spreitzer (1998), through a synthesis of 30 years of prior research findings, have developed a typology of survivor responses to downsizing and work redesign. Their model suggests that how individuals respond to downsizing is shaped by how they appraise the downsizing. To date, there has been no research that tested the model (Spreitzer, 2002). This research used a qualitative research methodology to explore the experiences of the 10 participants, their experience with layoff and role transition as they encountered them in their everyday lives, their direct and immediate experience—indeed independent of and prior to explanation (Kvale, 1996).

Research Questions

This study explored the lived experience (Van Maanen, 1990) of 10 employees who transitioned into different jobs as the result of company downsizing and how they responded to the layoffs and role transition. Lived experience is the
philosophical belief that human knowledge and understanding can be gained from analyzing the pre-reflective descriptions from people who have lived the experience in question (Van Maanen, 1990). The following grand tour question (Spradley, 1979) guided this inquiry: What were the experiences of 10 employees who transitioned into new jobs when their positions were eliminated as a result of corporate restructuring?

Subquestions included the following:

1. How has these survivors' role transition experience affected their appraisal of the downsizing and their response to it?

2. To what extent did these participants fit within the Mishra-Spreitzer model of survivor responses to downsizing and work redesign?

Need for the Study

This study adds to the literature on layoffs in three ways: First, through the use of a qualitative approach to study survivor reactions to layoffs and role transition. As the majority of the early US [sic] studies were of a quantitative nature, it is suggested that this may have restricted an in-depth understanding of survivors' complex and emotional reactions to redundancy thus, supporting the need for further qualitative research. (Campbell-Jamison, Worrall, & Cooper, 2001, p. 41)

Second, by focusing on work role transition resulting from downsizing. "Using work role transition as a theoretical framework appears to be a fruitful vehicle for studying survivor reactions to organizational change" (Allen et al., 2001, p. 12). Third, by exploring whether their downsizing experience and subsequent responses fit within
the model suggested by Mishra and Spreitzer (1998) that, until now, had not been examined.

This research explored the central ideas about survivors and work redesign outlined by Mishra and Spreitzer (1998) in their model of survivor responses to downsizing. Included in their theory is the construct of work redesign. "[Because] work redesign may have important effects on survivor responses beyond the well documented effects of justice, a theoretical framework that includes these additional constructs should contribute to the literature" (Mishra & Spreitzer, 1998, p. 568). Mishra and Spreitzer posit that if work is not redesigned to minimize overload or reductions in job autonomy that typically accompany downsizing, then survivors will see themselves as having less ability to cope with the downsizing and will be more likely to respond passively. However, when survivors' experience greater job variety and autonomy, they will be more likely to take an active role in the downsizing (Mishra & Spreitzer, 1998).

Limitations

The participants of this study were all employed at the same corporation and therefore the findings of this study are unique to these individuals at this organization. The lack of age and gender diversity among the participants was also a limitation to this project. Nine of the participants had been employed by the organization for a great deal of time and their ages ranged from 35 to 55. This resulted in a situation where there was no representation of what would be considered the younger work segment as well as employees with less than five
years with the organization. Therefore, this project cannot be considered representative of those groups in this or any other organization. Finally, gender was a limitation with only 2 of the 10 participants being male. An even mix between men and women may or may not have influenced the results.

Definitions

Craft employee: employee governed by a union contract.

Downsizing: the planned elimination of positions or jobs (Kets de Vries & Balazs, 1997).

Employee cynicism: feelings of inequity often manifested in the disparity in wages between top management and the rest of the organization (Abraham, 2000).

Layoff: involuntary job loss (Thomson, 1997).

Occupational employee: Employee governed by a union contract.

Organizational commitment: a desire to maintain membership in an organization to which one feels loyalty or the strength of involvement one has with the organization (Brown, 1993; Hall & Schneider, 1972; Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979).

Organizational cynicism: a negative attitude toward one’s employing organization, composed from the belief that the organization lacks integrity (Dean, Brandes, & Dhwardkar, 1998).

Victim: individual who was laid off (Wanberg, Bunce, & Gavin, 1999).

Survivor: a person who remains employed after the organization has completed layoffs. "People who remain after a downsizing tend to see themselves as survivors"
(Van der Merwe, 1999, p. 483). The survivors who participated in this study were subject to a job change as a result of the layoffs in their organization.

**Values:** evaluative standards relating to work or the work environment by which individuals discern what is right or assess the importance of preferences (Dose, 1997).

**Work role transitions:** significant changes in role requirements or work context. Changes may include alterations in job responsibilities and environmental differences such as new policies, processes, and procedures (Tombaugh & White, 1990).
Chapter 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

If researchers did not conduct reviews of past research, they would be likely to test hypotheses that had been shown to be unproductive, to reinvent methodology, to discover what is already known, and to continue making the same methodology errors as their predecessors. 
Gall, Gall, & Borg (1999)

Downsizing Rationale

Downsizing is a decision most often based on economics. The transition into a global economy, where stakeholders demand that this quarter’s earnings improve over last, often force companies to reduce costs. Central to this attitude is the emergence of institutional investors, that is, pension funds who become large stockholders and push for increased shareholder value [increased stock prices and dividends] (Davis & Stout, 1992; Useem, 1993). Included in the economic justification for downsizing is the accumulation of considerable debt by organizations (Davis, Diekmann, & Tinsley, 1994). Downsizing has often been implemented in efforts to generate the necessary cash flow to service those debts (Colvin, 1982; Ehrbar, 1982).

The following question and answer appeared in the electronic newsletter of the company that employs the participants of this study. It was distributed on March 7, 2002 to all employees:

Will there be [additional] layoffs? [Answer]: We don’t know. Decisions about headcount reduction are largely dependent on economic conditions and [name-omitted] ability to meet its financial performance targets in light of those conditions. [name-omitted] strives to make workforce adjustments only when circumstances make cuts unavoidable. If [name-omitted] meets revenue and cost targets, that
may reduce the need for further layoffs. Decisions regarding the need for layoffs are purely economic decisions.

Since 1980, there have been a great number of mergers, acquisitions, and hostile takeovers that have created personnel redundancies that organizations have remedied through downsizing (Sikora, 1990). Firms often must react to shifts in market share, productivity levels, and employee compensation levels as quickly as possible and downsizing has been one of the preferred methods of addressing such shifts. Advances in technology have also been at the root of downsizing efforts, with advances in technology displacing employees in certain sectors of the organization (Budros, 1997).

Finally, it has become socially rewarding to downsize. The business media, consultants, financial analysts, and shareholders associate downsizing with economic efficiencies whether or not greater shareholder value is actually realized after the downsizing has been implemented (McKinley, Sanchez, & Schick, 1995; Thomas, 1996). While socially rewarding outcomes might be positive, Slocum, Morris, Cascio, and Young (1999) found that the companies that initiated the largest layoffs also exhibited the largest decrease in return on assets. These downsizers reduced their workforce by an average of 11% and yet experienced a decline in their return on assets. “The benefits of downsizing seem small when compared to the human cost” (Slocum et al., 1999, p. 82).

Whether the decision to downsize is based on economics, redundancies, technological advances or simply to please financial analysts or the business media, once that decision has been made, how downsizing is implemented can impact the success of such a program.
The Layoff Process

The methods used to implement layoffs are often considered unfair by those directly effected (Burke & Nelson, 1998). How layoffs are handled can impact how the organization is viewed, its reputation, and the productivity of its remaining employees. Fortune magazine (Boyle, 2001) identified three parts that should be included in the layoff process. The first is planning, in order to communicate a clear rationale for the job cuts and which positions to cut. Employees are stakeholders, and the organization’s leadership must make the same justification to them that they do to investor. Second, the leadership must prepare the people who will be breaking the news. The third step is to deal with the aftermath. The leadership must communicate with the survivors. Communication is likely the most important aspect of the downsizing process (Greenhalgh & McKersie, 1980; Sutton, 1987), yet executives often reduce communications during downsizing (Cameron, 1994). Even though the decision to downsize is usually an economic one, it is important for those involved in downsizing implementation to approach it as a social issue as well as an economic one, something that should be included in preparing downsizers for the work. Productivity of survivors depends to a great extent on what may appear as trivial details in the implementation of the downsizing process.

Even executives who have a detailed strategic plan generally stumble when they set out to realize that plan; they fail to take into account one of the most significant determinants of the success or failure of their efforts: the behavior of the people involved. However, by acknowledging from the beginning that downsizing is an emotionally fraught process for all concerned, by actively preparing themselves and their subordinates for the various psychological reactions that are likely to emerge during the process, executives have the possibility to significantly limit the likelihood of disaster. (Kets de Vries & Balazs, 1997, p. 42)
David Noer (1995) identifies four rules important to keep in mind during the layoff process. First, fairness; management must be fair in the layoff process and the selection of those who leave. Second, equity; the layoffs should include all levels and the severance and exit pay should be comparable, the burden of the layoff should be shared. Third, participation; were alternatives to layoffs considered? Fourth, caretaking of those that leave is important to survivors. Great harm can be done that will be felt long into the future if the victims are robbed of their dignity.

An important part of implementing a downsizing program is to deal honestly and fairly with the victims and caretaking of the survivors. To accomplish such a task, it is important to have an understanding of the effect of downsizing on these two groups.

Victims of Job Layoffs

While the focus of this study is survivors of layoffs, victims can have an impact on how survivors react to their downsizing experience. The treatment of victims by the company can influence the attitudes and behaviors of those who remain on the job. How victims cope with their situation is largely an individual experience. Those laid-off often feel betrayed by the organization to which they were loyal. Feelings of hurt, anger, and in some cases, aggression toward the organization or those who were directly responsible for the job loss is common among victims (Kets de Vries & Balazs, 1997).

Effects on those individuals who have lost their jobs can manifest both physically and psychologically. Psychologically, it can cause an increase in hostility,
depression, worry, stress, alcohol abuse, and anger. Job loss can result in a decrease in self-esteem, concentration, social identity, and life satisfaction (Vinokur et al., 1996). Physically there are often incidences of headaches, sleep problems, lack of energy, and even death by stroke or heart disease (Hanisch, 1999). The economics of job loss can have a severe negative impact on the family. Vinokur et al. (1996) indicate that the economic hardship can contribute to frustration that leads to child abuse, decrease in the mental health of the spouse, decrease in marital quality, and an increase in marital and family dissolution. Wanberg et al., (1999) looked at the attitudes of layoff victims towards their perception of layoff fairness, the opportunity to modify or reverse managerial decisions, the extent to which they received explanations of how and why termination decisions were made and severance benefits. Their study identified the importance of an explanation of the layoff process. Individuals who received explanations of why and how layoff determination decisions were made were more apt to perceive their layoff as fair, be willing to endorse the terminating organization, and indicated they did not wish to take the employer to court (Wanberg et al., 1999). Armstrong-Stassen (1993) found that depending on an employee’s position with the company, they received different levels of information and communications. Managers responded more positively to downsizing, primarily because they were afforded access to more information and had more control over their own work environments.
Survivors of Job layoffs

Once an organization implements a downsizing, the survivors are expected to make the organization function and ultimately succeed with fewer personnel. The behavior and attitudes of those who remain in the post-layoff environment can impact the success of the organization.

How layoffs are handled can affect how the organization is viewed by the public, its reputation, and the productivity of its remaining employees. Decreases in morale, organizational commitment, and productivity following layoffs have been documented (Brockner et al., 1987; Brockner, Wiesenfeld, & Martin, 1995; Konovsky & Brockner, 1993; Offri-Dankwa et al., 1991). Feelings of remorse, negative attitudes toward coworkers, and lower productivity among employees who perceived injustice in the layoff process has been reported (Brockner, Davy, & Carter, 1985). O’Neill and Lenn (1995) found distrust, disloyalty, frustration, anger, anxiety, cynicism, resentment, and a desire for retribution as layoffs’ impact on survivors. The survivors perceived they no longer had control over their destinies and were uncertain regarding their relationship with management. Workers have emotional attachments to their jobs and these emotions are manifest in three themes: self-preservation, guilt, and anger. Self-preservation—because good performers often are at as much risk as poor performers. Guilt—because justification for layoffs is relayed as necessary for productivity gains, therefore, employees consider that if they had been more productive, jobs would not have been lost. Finally, anger—which appears as a need to place blame on those responsible for the job losses, usually top management (Noer, 1993; O’Neill & Lenn, 1995).
Downsizing is a stress-inducing situation that has a very real influence on the work behaviors and attitudes of the remaining workforce (Brockner, 1988). Stress on the workforce brought on by downsizing can be influenced by not just the size of cuts but by the frequency as well (Jick, 1985). As job cuts increase, survivors become more loyal to their own careers rather than the organization, suggesting that organizational commitment might suffer (Reilly, Brett, & Stroh, 1993). As stress and the fear of additional threat combine, survivors become frozen by the stress and uncertainty (Sutton & D'Aunno, 1989).

Survivor envy, a concept identified by Cameron, Freeman, and Mishra (1991), suggests that there is a jealousy among survivors of those who have left the organization. Survivors are generally led to believe they are the lucky ones because they still have a job, but the reality is they are frequently faced with greater workloads, more responsibility, and higher levels of stress (Noer, 1993).

Organizational cynicism is common among survivors and includes negative affect toward the organization and a tendency to be disparaging and critical toward the organization consistent with that affect (Dean, et al., 1998). Organizational cynicism originates from the belief that the principles of honesty, fairness, and sincerity are forsaken to further the self-interest of the leadership who base their actions on hidden motives and deception. Such cynicism has certainly been strengthened by the recent failures of Enron™, WorldCom™, and others, attributed to the misdealing of upper management. Cynicism toward big business and executives is often the product of the violation of the implied contract between employers and employees: that for hard work and loyalty to the organization, one
can expect to be treated fairly, dealt with honestly, and paid a fair wage (Andersson, 1996). Employee cynicism is often associated with downsizing. During times of economic difficulty, or poor organizational performance, downsizing is implemented resulting in bitterness from its victims, guilt from those left behind, and blame directed to highly compensated management for the poor performance. Cynicism can and probably does affect job satisfaction, organizational commitment, feelings of alienation, and organizational citizenship (Abraham, 2000).

Organizational commitment and job satisfaction are recurring themes in the literature on survivors of downsizing. Organizational commitment is a desire to maintain membership in an organization or the loyalty one feels toward the organization (Brown, 1969; Hall & Schneider, 1972; Mowday et al., 1979). This effect has recently been addressed from a multidimensional perspective. Meyer and Allen (1991) suggest that commitment is comprised of three distinct components: (a) affective commitment describes the emotional attachment a person has for the organization, (b) normative commitment describes the feelings of obligation one has to remain with the organization, and (c) continuance commitment which develops as people realize that they have accumulating investment with the organization and that the availability of comparable alternatives is limited.

Research on organizational commitment has generally been interested in the psychological attachment one has for an organization. Organizational commitment has been found to be negatively associated with turnover (Lee, Ashford, Walsh, & Mowdy, 1992) and absenteeism (Ivancevich, 1985), and positively associated with job satisfaction (Ruth, 1997).
Grunberg, Anderson-Connolly, and Greenberg (2000) looked at the effect layoffs have on absenteeism and work effort as it relates to an employee’s position in the organizational hierarchy and the perceived fairness of the layoffs. Organizationally lower-ranking employees have fewer market options in the event of layoff and tend to be more closely supervised. Therefore, they are less likely to take part in behaviors such as absenteeism and lower work effort regardless of their feelings toward the organization. Conversely, managerial and professional employees tend to be less monitored and can incur absences and less work effort without drawing attention to themselves. The perceived fairness of layoffs equated to greater levels of organizational commitment (Grunberg, et al., 2000).

A variety of demographic variables have been associated with organizational commitment. Age has been a predictor of greater organizational commitment. As workers age, alternative employment options generally decrease, making current jobs more attractive (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). Older individuals may have more commitment because they have a greater investment and longer history with the organization than younger workers (Dunham, Grube, & Castaneda, 1994). Women seem to be more committed, attributed to the extra effort often required of women to gain membership in the organization (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). Perceptions may have a significant association with commitment. If an individual perceives they will have difficulty finding another job they may be more committed to their current one (Roy & Ghose, 1997).

Organizational commitment and job satisfaction are associated variables that affect such things as turnover intention (Shore & Martin, 1989), turnover (Brown,
1993; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990), absenteeism (Sagie, 1998), and work performance (Shore & Martin, 1989). Job satisfaction appears to be an antecedent to organizational commitment suggesting an increase in satisfaction will equate to increased effort (Testa, 2001). Both organizational commitment and job satisfaction have been linked to constructs important to service environments such as citizenship behaviors (Schappe, 1998; Williams & Anderson, 1991) and pro-social behaviors (Bettencourt & Brown, 1997). Fred Reichheld (1996) in his book *The Loyalty Effect*, addresses downsizing and its effect on organizational commitment by saying that most businesses fail to see that they cannot have loyal customers without loyal employees. However, if employees think that layoffs were done to bolster quarterly earnings or stock prices, they will not believe the company stands for anything worthy of their commitment. This shift in loyalty and morale is perhaps the most damaging consequence of round after round of job cuts (Reichheld, 1996).

If employees sense the organization is concerned for their welfare, as opposed to mere obedience of authority and bottom line issues, commitment is heightened. In the case of layoffs, if the survivors believe the reason for the job cuts were bottom-line issues, organizational commitment could be negatively impacted for those survivors (Finegan, 2000).

As a means of summary, Table 1 (page 18) identifies at a glance some of the effects downsizing has on survivors and contributing factors toward those effects.
The Mishra – Spreitzer Model

Mishra and Spreitzer (1998), through an examination of 30 years of prior research, developed a model of survivor responses to downsizing and work redesign. It is their contention that people respond to downsizing in two dimensions: constructive or destructive, and active or passive. Constructive survivors do not see threat or harm from downsizing and are therefore willing to cooperate with top management in the implementation of the downsizing. Destructive survivors, on the other hand, feel threatened and see potential for harm. They in turn are less willing to cooperate in the implementation process.
An active survivor’s response reveals a belief that they can cope with the downsizing and this belief is exhibited as an assertive response. Passive survivors feel less ability to cope with the downsizing and display little initiative to respond to it; they wait to be told what to do. How individuals respond to the downsizing depends on how they appraise the situation. This appraisal process takes into account the situation and the individual’s ability to cope with it. The two dimensions; constructive or destructive and active or passive result in four prototypes: fearful, cynical, obliging, and hopeful (Mishra & Spreitzer, 1998). Figures 1 and 2 (pages 20 & 21) show a graphic representation of the combination of dimensions and their resulting prototypes.

Mishra and Spreitzer (1998) have based their survivor response model on Farrell’s (1983) exit, voice, loyalty, and neglect [EVLN] job dissatisfaction study and the Lazarus theory of stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Farrell’s EVLN model, drawing on the work of Hirschman (1970), speculates that individuals respond to job dissatisfaction in four ways. The first response is to exit the job; the second is to change the situation by voicing or appealing to higher authorities; the third is to be loyal or do nothing, confident that things will improve; and finally, to neglect the job, manifested in such things as tardiness and absenteeism. Hirschman (1970) suggested that a constructive/destructive distinction could be made among the responses to dissatisfaction while Angle and Perry (1981) characterized dissatisfaction as active or passive.

The Lazarus theory of stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) focuses on cognitive appraisal, which is seen as a process of categorizing an encounter with
consideration for its significance for well-being. Cognitive appraisal consists of a primary appraisal, where individuals determine the potential threat of the stressor; and a secondary appraisal, where individuals evaluate their own resources and capabilities for coping with that stressor. How individuals respond to stressful situations such as work role transition is dependent on how they interpret or appraise the situation and how they appraise their own abilities to cope with it (Folkman, Lazarus, Gruen, & DeLongis, 1986; Lazarus, 1993; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

**Constructive**
Do not see threat or harm from downsizing. Cooperate with the implementation.

**Active**
Believe that they can cope with the downsizing and therefore respond assertively. Their active response can be positive, helpful to the implementation, or negative, hindering the implementation.

**Passive**
Display little initiative to respond to downsizing, feeling little ability to cope.

**Hopeful**
Constructive and Active: Feel they can cope with downsizing and do not fear it. Feel excited about the future and hope things will improve. Cognitive response: they tend to be optimistic, take ownership in an attempt to help enhance the performance of the organization.

**Obliging**
Constructive and Passive: Do not believe they have the resources to cope with downsizing yet feel less threatened with less potential for harm. Feel benign, go along because they have no fear of harm. Cognitive response: likely to be committed and loyal.

Figure 1. Mishra-Spreitzer constructive dimensions of survivor responses (1998).
The constructive and active/passive dimensions result in two prototype responses: hopeful and obliging.

---

**Destructive**
Feel threatened by downsizing and see potential harm. Less likely to cooperate in the implementation.

---

**Active**
Believe that they can cope with the downsizing and therefore respond assertively. Their active response can be positive; helpful to the implementation, or negative; hindering the implementation.

---

**Passive**
Display little initiative to respond to downsizing, feeling little ability to cope.

---

**Cynical**
Destructive and Active: Believe they can cope with downsizing. Feel threatened and can be harmed. Feel anger, disgust, and resentment. Cognitive responses: moral outrage and cynicism.

---

**Fearful**

---

Figure 2. Mishra-Spreitzer destructive dimensions of survivor responses (1998).

The destructive and active/passive dimensions result in two prototype responses: cynical and fearful.
Mishra and Spreitzer (1998), using the Lazarus theory as a framework, theorize that work redesign, trust in management, and justice are important factors in determining how survivors react to downsizing, suggesting that how survivors appraise the downsizing shapes their response to it. If layoff survivors distrust management, consider management to be incompetent, or believe that the work redesign has created work overload, they are likely to respond negatively. Mishra and Spreitzer (1998) identify the following propositions:

1. Survivors who trust top management before downsizing will likely exhibit constructive responses (hopeful or obliging).

2. This trust level may change during the downsizing process depending on the attitude of survivors towards top management's behavior during the process.

3. Survivors who trust top management during the downsizing process will likely exhibit constructive responses (hopeful or obliging).

4. Survivors who consider the downsizing as distributively just will likely exhibit constructive responses (hopeful or obliging).

5. Survivors who consider the downsizing as procedurally just will likely exhibit constructive responses (hopeful and obliging).

Procedural justice centers on the process of downsizing, in particular on the sharing of information with employees. Communicating what is going on during layoffs has been shown to
be very important to the success of the process (Brockner, 1992; Cameron, 1994; Greenhalgh & McKersie, 1980; Sutton, 1987).

6. Survivors who consider the downsizing as interactionally just will likely exhibit constructive responses (hopeful and obliging). Interactional justice encompasses three types of social accounts. Causal accounts, which focus on circumstances for the downsizing, ideological accounts which communicate how the downsizing will benefit stakeholders, and penitential accounts that focus on treating survivors with dignity and showing them that they are valued and appreciated.

7. Survivors who believe they are empowered prior to downsizing will likely exhibit active responses (hopeful or cynical).

8. Survivors who believe they are empowered during the implementation of the downsizing will likely exhibit active responses (hopeful or cynical).

9. Changes in the design of work during downsizing that increases task variety and job autonomy will increase the likelihood of hopeful survivor responses.

10. Changes in the design of work during downsizing that creates role overload while reducing job autonomy will increase the likelihood of fearful survivor responses.

(Mishra & Spreitzer, 1998)
Work Role Transition

Work role transitions, significant changes in role requirements or work context, are generally associated with the downsizing phenomenon. Change of job design, change of boss, and/or change of co-workers is often a part of the work role transition (Latack, 1984; Nicholson & West, 1988). Changes may also include alterations in job responsibilities and environmental differences such as new policies, processes, and procedures (Tombaugh & White, 1990).

Louis (1980) identified surprise reaction as a key feature of a person’s adjustment to a new work setting. The surprise reaction is the difference between what a person anticipates and what is actually experienced. People generally find fewer confirmations of what they anticipate and therefore experience more surprise reactions. Because of this, it is likely that negative emotional effects will arise and cause individuals to work through a process of sense making where they interpret the surprises and develop necessary responses (Louis, 1980).

Nicholson and West (1988) identify four stages associated with work role transition: preparation, encounter, adjustment, and stabilization. The preparation stage deals with psychological readiness. The encounter phase occurs in the first few days and weeks following the transition. Typical of the early encounter stage are denial and withdrawal; however the initial shock subsides as one enters the adjustment phase where new priorities emerge and individuals adjust to their new roles, people, and culture of the recently downsized organization. Finally, in the stabilization phase, the individual seeks to fine tune adjustments to their new role, enjoying success or dealing with failure.
The negative feelings of job change are often followed by positive experiences (Keller & Holland, 1981; Kirjonen & Hanninen, 1986; Latack, 1984; Werbel, 1983). While the experience of job change during Nicholson’s and West’s (1988) encounter period are described as stressful, managers later report the changes are often positively correlated with new challenges and new freedoms. While the initial reactions of work role transitions are usually negative, after settling in, these negative emotions are often replaced with positive mindsets. Healthy adult development relies on periods of change and discontinuity as well as times of stability and continuity (Levinson, 1986). The underlying dynamics of social process, in this case layoffs, are most tellingly revealed at points of discontinuity and change (Nicholson, 1984).

Work role transitions can have profound significance for the individual and the organization. In his theory on work role transition Nicholson (1984) suggests that a change in work role often accompanying a layoff involves two independent adjustment processes: personal development and role development. Personal development involves change in the individual. These changes range from minor shifts in daily routines to major change in relationships and self-image. Role development involves molding the new role to fit the person, ranging from minor changes such as work schedule variations to major turns such as changing the goals of the organizational work. Simply put, work role transition includes changing oneself to fit the work, and changing the work to fit oneself.

These two processes combine to form four modes of work adjustment: replication, where one operates in much the same manner as the previous occupant
of the position. Absorption: where adjustment to the new role and its requirements are borne almost exclusively by the role’s new occupant. Determination: where the burden of adjustment is shouldered by the role. And finally, exploration: where the burden of change is shouldered simultaneously by the person and the role. The mode of work adjustment that one utilizes is a function of the role’s requirements, the occupant’s motivational orientation, occupational socialization, and the socialization process.

Role requirements as identified in the theory are discretion and novelty. Discretion is the opportunity one has to modify their role; and novelty, the degree to which the role permits the use of prior knowledge or skills. There are two motivational orientations that affect work adjustment: desire for control and desire for feedback. Those with a strong desire for control, or the need to master their new task environment, will likely attempt to change the role to suit themselves. Those that desire feedback are indicative of one responsive to the influences and communications of others, take their cues from the role behavior of others, and are likely to conform themselves to the role.

Work role transition maintains that role transitions prompt changes in the individual [personal development] and changes in the way one fulfills the role [role development]. Personal development is argued to be a function of role novelty and the newcomer’s desire for feedback. Role development is argued to be a function of role discretion and desire for control (Nicholson, 1984; Nicholson & West, 1988).

West and Rushton (1989) tested the Nicholson theory in their examination of the work role transition of student nurses in a mismatch situation: those with high
desire for control entering a low discretion environment. They found that when these nurses entered a work environment where they did not have the opportunity to achieve the control they desired, two possibilities were open to them in this state of equilibrium. They could change the work role, or change their own reactions and orientations. Since changing this very restricted work role would be difficult, a personal change strategy was favored. Their research led to a more general hypothesis that in a mismatch situation following a work role transition, individuals would make greater efforts to adjust along both dimensions, changing themselves and the roles, than those adjusting in a match situation. In their longitudinal examination of the Nicholson work role transition theory Ashforth and Saks (1995) looked at business school graduates after 4 months and then 10 months on the job. They concluded that the “theory provides a promising base for a more complex perspective on the dynamics of work-role transitions” (p. 71). They suggest that future research might consider the theory in collective work-role transition settings such as layoffs.

According to Steele’s (1988) self-affirmation theory, self-integrity is the view that one is “competent, good, coherent, unitary, stable, capable of free choice, capable of controlling important outcomes, and so on” (p. 262). Therefore, it is when stressful events threaten individual’s self-perceptions that they react negatively. In the case of layoffs, it is not the aspects of layoffs that cause survivors to react negatively, but the threat to their self-esteem, self-identity, and personal control (Wiesenfeld, Brockner, Petzall, Wolf, & Bailey, 2001). Job insecurity, insensitive communications, and so on may be experienced as a threat to an individual’s self-
esteem, self-identity, and personal control and therefore it can be hypothesized that if one engages in a process of self-reaffirmation, such a process could have a positive impact on these stressors.

The worker and the work environment and how well they fit can be a source of occupational stress (Blau, 1981). A work role transition brought on by downsizing can alter that fit. A good fit occurs when the worker's needs and the demands of the task match (Harrison, 1978). A poor fit can contribute to occupational stress, the inability to cope effectively with various work demands, physical illnesses (Kasl, 1978), and behavioral issues (Lyons, 1971).

Guided by work role transition theory, Allen, et al., (2001) considered how organizational downsizing affects several survivor attitudes over three distinct periods of time. They considered areas such as role overload, role clarity, satisfaction with management, and job security [environmental variables] and their impact on commitment and turnover intentions [outcome variables]. "Based on our findings, we can conclude that downsizing seems to have an effect on work attitudes, that this effect varies over time, and that the initial impact is generally negative" (p. 155).

Summary

The reasons organizations downsize are generally economic in nature. Often it is the demand that earnings improve from one quarter to the next, or to generate the necessary cash flow to service debt. While economics frequently necessitates layoffs it is not the only reason to initiate such action. Mergers and acquisitions often
create redundancies in the workforce and technological advances can cut into the need for workers.

Regardless of the reasons for downsizing, its impact is felt by both victims and survivors and is well documented in the literature. Victims often feel betrayed by the organization, they are hurt, angry, and those feelings can sometimes result in aggression toward the former employer.

Survivors, who are expected to make the organization function with fewer personnel, experience those same emotions and are often influenced by the treatment of victims by the organization—especially when they perceive injustices in the layoff process. As suggested by Mishra and Spreitzer in their synthesis of prior research, how individuals respond to downsizing is dependent on how they appraise the situation and their individual ability to cope with that situation. The combination of these two dimensions, which they categorize as constructive or destructive, and active or passive, result in four prototypical survivor response types; hopeful, cynical, obliging or fearful.

Survivors frequently have emotional attachments to the organization and the size of cutbacks coupled with their frequency leads to feelings of guilt, anger, and the need for self-preservation. The loyalty they once felt toward the organization can shift from the organization to themselves as a result of those feelings for self-preservation.

Survivors who undergo a role change as a result of downsizing have the added burden of the job change which itself is a stressful event that is a threat to their self-esteem, self-identity, and personal control. They often go through periods
of sense making interpreting surprises and developing necessary responses.

However, the negative feelings of job changes are often followed by positive experiences correlated with new challenges and new freedoms.
Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative data are based on the premise that gaining knowledge about humans is impossible without describing human experience as it is lived and is defined by the actors themselves. Polit and Hungler (1991)

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of 10 survivors of job layoffs who were transitioned into different jobs as a direct result of downsizing, examining how they responded to their role transition, and determine if and where these participants fit within the Mishra-Spreitzer typology. A qualitative method of inquiry was used because the focus of the research was to explore the human experiences of these 10 individuals. Qualitative research is based on the idea that there is a range of different ways of making sense of the world, and the purpose of qualitative research is to better understand individual's views of their world and their perception of reality (Jones, 1995). To understand another's experience and the context that surrounds this experience, is to understand how a person makes meaning of a phenomenon. Qualitative inquiry is a method that allows us to understand the ways the experiential world is produced and experienced by its members (Holstein & Gubrium, 1994). The qualitative approach is a sensitive and powerful method for capturing the experiences and meanings of the subjects' everyday world (Kvale, 1996). It is a method that yields descriptive data, which enables the researcher to see the world as the subjects see it. It gives an understanding of the social phenomena from the actors' own perspectives describing the world as they experience it with the assumption that the important
reality is what people perceive or imagine it to be (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975). Qualitative researchers attempt to describe and interpret some human phenomenon, often in the words of the study’s participants (Heath, 1997). To understand the layoff and role transition experiences of these participants, a qualitative multi-case study strategy of inquiry was employed.

Data Collection Method

The data collection method used for this research was in-depth semi-structured interviews. Kvale (1996) identifies the semi-structured interview’s purpose is to obtain descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena. For this study, 10 participants were selected who, because of downsizing, accepted new jobs rather than severance packages and leaving the company. The participants were formerly service managers, project managers, facility specialists, and testing technicians for a large telecommunications company whose positions were eliminated [in their location] and in turn accepted other positions, representing distinctly different job duties and responsibilities.

The researcher was also employed at the company but did not work within the same internal group as any of the study’s participants. However, the researcher, in the past, did have minimal contact professionally with four of the participants. The remaining six were unknown to the researcher until conducting the study.

The participants were chosen using purposeful sampling that involves selecting individuals because they are informed about the topic of interest (Gall,
Gall, & Borg, 1999; Schumacher & McMillan, 1993), in this case, 10 individuals who were transitioned into new jobs as a result of downsizing. No other criteria were used in the selection process. Hence, no consideration was given to the diversity of the group in terms of age, gender, and in particular, length of employment with the organization. As a result, 8 participants were female, 2 were male, 6 were management, 4 were occupational [governed by a union contract] and 9 of the 10 participants had been employed by the organization for a long time. Seven participants had been with the company 30 years or more, 2 had over 20 years and 1 had less than five. Table 2 (page 34) gives a graphic breakdown of the participants, their time with the organization, their position status, and the jobs they transitioned from and to.

Approval was obtained to interview these individuals from the organization’s Executive Vice President and Chief Human Resource Officer (see Appendix A) as well as approval from the Human Subjects Research Review Board (see Appendix B).

The participants of this study were located in Des Moines, Omaha, Cedar Rapids, and Minneapolis. While the intent was to conduct all interviews face to face, it was necessary to conduct five of the interviews via telephone due to the geographic separation between the researcher and participant coupled with scheduling conflicts on the part of the participants. The telephone interviews were conducted with one Omaha participant, one Cedar Rapids participant, the Minneapolis participant, and two Des Moines participants.
Table 2. Study Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant [Psuedo Name]</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Years with Organization</th>
<th>Management/Occupational</th>
<th>Previous Job Role</th>
<th>New Job Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>20+</td>
<td>Occupational</td>
<td>Facility Specialist</td>
<td>Service Representative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reba</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>30+</td>
<td>Occupational</td>
<td>Facility Specialist</td>
<td>Service Representative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adam</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>30+</td>
<td>Management</td>
<td>Project Manager</td>
<td>Account Consultant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linzi</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>20+</td>
<td>Management</td>
<td>Project Manager</td>
<td>Account Consultant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carey</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>30+</td>
<td>Management</td>
<td>Network Operations</td>
<td>Network Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeni</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>30+</td>
<td>Occupational</td>
<td>Circuit Design</td>
<td>Circuit Tester</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelli</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>30+</td>
<td>Occupational</td>
<td>Circuit Design</td>
<td>Circuit Tester</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gilda</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>30+</td>
<td>Management</td>
<td>Project Manager</td>
<td>Account Consultant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ron</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>30+</td>
<td>Management</td>
<td>Project Manager</td>
<td>Account Consultant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>&lt;5</td>
<td>Management</td>
<td>Service Manager</td>
<td>Account Consultant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The remaining five interviews were face to face. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with three Omaha participants, one Des Moines participant, and one Cedar Rapids participant. The effect, if any, of using two interview types on the data that were collected is impossible to determine. Obviously, facial expressions and other visual observations could not be discerned with the telephone interviews. In addition, it is possible that the participants who were interviewed via telephone may have been more candid with the researcher as a result of the additional anonymity they were afforded.

To understand and describe the overall downsizing experience of these 10 individuals, a framework had to be established that would help contain the experiences to a manageable level. To focus on this objective, propositions suggested by Mishra and Spreitzer (1998) and identified on pages 21 and 22 of this
document were used as a basis for interview questions intended to address that area of this project. The propositions purport that there are factors that influence how a survivor will respond to downsizing in the organization. These influencing factors are based on trust and justice. Specifically, trust in management, coupled with distributive, procedural, and interactional justice. The analysis of these data, discussed in chapter 4, is organized using subheadings that relate to the interview questions, which were based on these propositions. For example, under the main heading of The Experience are the subheadings Trust in Leadership, Distribution of Pain, Communications: Interactional and Procedural Justice which includes the reasons for downsizing, were they legitimate, how were layoff decisions made, what were the benefits of downsizing, and were you valued and appreciated.

Questions intended to understand the participants' role transition experience and the effects it had on their downsizing experience were of the researcher's design. The interview questions were tested on two separate occasions in an effort to determine if they would result in obtaining information that addressed the research questions. The interview questions asked of the participants appear in Appendix C of this report.

The interviews were audiotaped and transcribed. Journal notes were kept of observations by the interviewer capturing information that would not have been revealed by the transcriptions, such as discernable mood changes, body language [face to face interviews], and interviewer or interviewee reactions.
A Surprising Development

While the participants were selected with the criteria that they had undergone a role transition as a result of downsizing, a surprising and notable development occurred in the search for participants. It was the belief of the researcher that finding 10 individuals who had experienced a role transition and were also willing to participate in the project might prove difficult. The surprise was that people readily volunteered to participate. In fact, more people than the required 10 offered to take part. The researcher knew of four individuals who fit the criteria and these prospective subjects were e-mailed a brief description of the project and a request to interview them regarding their experience as a survivor of layoffs and their associated job change (see Appendix D). They were contacted via e-mail so they could have time to consider participating and could decline if they so chose without having to feel uncomfortable as might have occurred if they were asked directly either face to face or over the phone. The first two people who were e-mailed responded the same day, both indicating they had colleagues who had suffered the same fate that would be willing to participate if additional subjects were needed (see Appendix E). Several of the individuals who participated wanted to tell their story and were eager to do so. One person stated, “I want somebody to hear this.” None of the participants had any concerns about their anonymity, if the company was mentioned, if the interview was taped, or if anyone with any authority within the company might not approve of their participation. In fact, it is the belief of this researcher that the participants would have liked very much for people in authority within the company to hear exactly what they had to say in their respective interview.
Procedure for Data Analysis

The data analysis method for this study employed a form of the constant comparative method advanced by Moustakas (1994) and suggested by Creswell (1998). The analysis procedure included the following:

1. The research participant gave a full description of his or her experience in the areas of trust in leadership, justice with respect to the downsizing initiative, and their role transition.

2. The researcher developed a list of statements from the interviews about the individuals' experiences in those areas. (see coding next page)

3. The researcher grouped the statements into meaning units writing descriptions of the experiences.

4. The researcher reflected on the experience of the participants seeking all possible meaning, constructing a description of how the phenomenon was experienced.

5. The researcher constructed an overall description of the meaning and essence of the experience.

The analysis, as outlined above, used an open coding method identifying initial categories of information about the topics. From this initial coding a story line emerged that integrated those categories. Coding was performed in separate and distinct operations for each of the interview topic areas; trust in leadership, procedural, distributive, interactional justice, along with role transition. For example, each participant was asked to discuss his or her opinion of the leaders of the organization. From their response to that question themes were identified (Appendix
F) and a determination was made as to whether or not each participant trusted that group. Then through a synthesis of the data collected from each participant the storyline emerged on their downsizing experiences.

The Mishra-Spreitzer model was approached differently because the analysis was not as interpretive in nature. The participants were asked two simple questions requiring specific answers. Each individual was asked if they were threatened by downsizing. If they answered yes, they were considered a destructive respondent, if they answered no, they were considered a constructive respondent. To determine their active or passive inclination, each participant was given a description of an active and passive response type and asked to identify which of the two they thought best described them. The following is the description they were given of an active and passive response type: People react or respond to downsizing in either an active or passive way. For example, some are active, willing to take on more work, identify areas where savings could be made, even sabotage in some way the layoff implementation, but in so doing they are active in their response. While others are passive, they wait to be told what to do, told how to cut expenses, told how they might improve productivity and so on.

The combination of their answers determined their archetype response category. The term archetype is used to denote representations within the model. The archetype or response type was then revealed to each participant with a description of that type. After the description was shared, each participant was asked his or her thoughts, did it fit, did it not, would they add anything, would they remove anything.
The descriptions of the archetypes as read to the participants were as follows:

**Destructive-Passive: Fearful response:** The fearful survivor considers downsizing as potentially harmful and believes they have few resources to cope with it. They commonly experience fright, depression, and worry. They often suffer anxiety, reduced concentration, a sense of being out of control, and feelings of helplessness. They may reduce their level of commitment to the organization because they identify with the loss of coworkers and friends. They tend to withdraw from work and procrastinate about making decisions. Because they believe they have few resources to cope with the downsizing they may attempt to escape through absenteeism, tardiness, or focus on non-work interests and activities.

**Constructive-Passive: Obliging response:** The obliging survivor does not believe they have the personal resources to adequately cope with the downsizing. However, they do not see downsizing as threatening or see potential for harm to them. They view downsizing as basically benign and they are willing to go along with what is expected of them because they do not believe it will lead to harm. Emotionally, the obliging survivors are likely to be calm, they feel relief and sometimes even gratitude because they do not feel personally threatened by the downsizing. They are committed and loyal to the organization in spite of problems the organization might have. Generally speaking, they follow orders obediently. They are likely to wait willingly for conditions to improve and to stick with the job through good times and bad.
Destructive-Active: Cynical response: The cynical survivors believe they have the personal resources to cope with downsizing and yet they feel personally threatened by downsizing and feel they could be harmed. Emotionally they are highly aroused and are likely to feel anger, disgust, and resentment. They have a sense of moral outrage because they believe that the company blatantly violated a psychological contract that for hard work and loyalty an employee could expect the same in return. They have a voice and often use it in a militant way against the downsizing process rather than supporting it. The cynical survivor will often question or interfere with the downsizing process rather than cooperate with management to implement the downsizing.

Constructive-Active: Hopeful responses: The hopeful survivors believe they have the personal resources to cope with downsizing. They do not feel threatened or fear they could be harmed by the downsizing. Because they are not threatened, and feel that they can cope with downsizing, they generally feel excited about the future with the hope that things will get better over time. They are optimistic about the outcome of downsizing and feel a sense of ownership in helping to enhance the performance of the organization. The hopeful survivors make an effort to improve conditions by discussing problems and taking action to solve them. They become involved in their work and are not afraid to take risks or to develop novel ways to improve things.
Validity

Once the data had been coded and themes identified, validity of the findings were considered. Hammersley (1987) considers research as valid if it represents accurately those features of the phenomena that it is intended to describe, explain, or theorize. Member checks were used as a process of verification. Lincoln and Guba (1985) consider member checks as “the most critical technique for establishing credibility” (p. 314). It involves taking data, analysis, and interpretation information back to the participants so they can judge its accuracy and credibility (Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner, & Steinmertz, 1991; Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1988; Miles & Huberman, 1994). After transcribing the interviews and analyzing the data, participants were contacted by telephone and the results of the interview and data analysis for their individual session was discussed. This contact was made via the telephone as a matter of convenience. The purpose of those discussions was to verify with each participant that their intent and meaning as determined by the researcher was a true representation of their thoughts, feelings, and intentions.

Summary

The methodology for this project involved the use of in-depth semi-structured interviews that were intended to address three areas. Those three areas were the participants overall downsizing experience, if and how their role transition played into that experience, and if they fit and where within the Mishra-Spreitzer model. In an effort to touch these areas, interview questions were designed around trust and
justice to address the overall experience. To understand the participants’ role
transition experience and how it may or may not have influenced their reaction to
downsizing, questions were centered on the specific jobs, autonomy, workload, and
their attitudes and opinions. And finally, the Mishra-Spreitzer model was approached
as what might be considered, depending on the participant, a face to face or
telephone survey with follow-up questions asking for the participants’ thoughts and
opinions.

This design yielded an interesting picture of what it was like for these people
during trying times within the organization.
Chapter 4

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

Introduction

The analysis of the data reported in this chapter is arranged in three sections and addresses individually each of the research questions that guided this project. The first section deals with the participants' overall downsizing experience and includes sub-headings that cover the individual aspects of trust and justice that served as a framework to uncover that experience. The sub-headings within this section relate directly to the interview questions that generated the data. For example, the Trust in Leadership sub-heading is the analysis surrounding the participants' thoughts about the organizational leaders directing the company at the time of the downsizing initiative. The second section of the chapter deals with the participants' Role Transition, and the third identifies where they fit within the Mishra-Spreitzer Model and considers their thoughts and opinions with respect to the response type.

The Experience

What were the experiences of 10 employees who transitioned into new jobs when their positions were eliminated as a result of corporate restructuring?

Trust in Leadership

For the purposes of this study, the leadership, refers to the company chief executive officer and the senior vice presidents who report directly to him. In the
case of these 10 participants, every individual expressed displeasure with the this

group although that displeasure took different forms.

Table 3. Trust in Leadership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Trusted Leaders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adam</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linzi</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reba</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gilda</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeni</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelli</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ron</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carey</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Their opinions, as evidenced by their interview responses chronicled below,centered around three areas: trust and honesty, bad management, and being out of
touch or misdirected with respect to the company’s goals or mission. Distrust in top
management was how five individuals actually described their thoughts about the
leadership even though it was obvious none of the participants had any trust in that
group. “I didn’t trust them to be honest with you,” Carey. When asked about her trust
in the leadership Jeni responded “no, no, no.” Adam simply said, “zero.” Gilda was
direct, “they were kinda sleazy, we didn’t trust’em. It’s easy to hind-sight now, so it’s
easy to look back and say, yea, our gut feeling was right although everybody was
afraid at the time to say anything.” “I don’t get too upset with the promises, or
e-mails, or anything they say because I just don’t trust’em,” Jane.

Honesty of the leadership was another theme that was prominent among the
participants. Reba suggested, “I thought it [the company] was run underhandedly, I
don’t think we were advised of things honestly, I think it was all stuff that was done that we weren’t aware of."

Greed by top management was a concern of several. Some participants were convinced that the company was being run for the financial benefits that could be reaped by a few on the top rungs of the leadership ladder. For example, Kelli considered that the leaders were in it for themselves,

My opinion of [name omitted] and his crew was basically, I think they were out to strip the company, I think they were out to take everything they could get and they wanted their way and if they didn’t get it they got rid of people and they did whatever they could to get the money to get the stock up as high as it would go. I really believe that, I think it was very much an Enron® that didn’t get caught.

Gilda commented, “they were self-centered looking out only for their own personal interest, not looking out for the best interests of the company and/or the employees. That’s been proved by what’s happened afterwards.” What happened afterward that Gilda is referring to was the near financial collapse of the company and the requested resignation of nearly the entire leadership team by either the board of directors or the newly appointed Chief Executive Officer.

Other participants simply believed that the company was managed poorly. Adam for example commented,

I didn’t see anything I liked, I felt that their management style, that they had lived with, was based on management by fear and threats. I really felt like the kind of changes we were seeing and the explanations we were being given were bad, and a result of not very good management. I feel he had a view, he, they, whoever, of where they thought the company should go and I think it was wrong.

The other area of concern was the notion that the leadership was out of touch with what was really going on at the customer interface level of the company. Jane
expressed her concerns this way, "I saw decisions being made that contradicted our mission" and "I saw a lot of these types of decisions being made and I thought they're not real, they're not here, they're not dealing with real customers, playing games with numbers. Consequently, they're in a world I can't relate to." Linzi suggested that "they were trying to make rules that were not applicable to the way that we do business and they weren't feasible for providing good customer service."

As the interviews progressed, it seemed as though the most important outcome of discussions surrounding leadership was not centered on the opinion these participants had for top management, but for the direct leaders of the groups or departments these people worked within. When the participants talked about leadership, they often spoke about the managers who had control of their departments, managers they referred to as their first levels [direct supervisor], second levels [managers of several groups], and third levels or directors [managers of the department]. Jeni, Kelli, and Carey worked in Des Moines and all reported to the same local management group. All three spoke very highly of their managers, as did Adam and Linzi, two of the Omaha participants, as well as Mary in Minneapolis. For example,

Yea, they do [local managers], I really believe in our center they make every effort to save every job they can and to recognize the value of the people who are still there. I really believe that....I really have a lot of respect for her [Director], Kelli.

She [Director] made it very clear that we were doing an excellent job and that was not the reason this was happening [layoffs] and that there would be jobs for everyone, it's just a different job. She tried to make people feel as comfortable as possible under the circumstances. I trusted her because I had the feeling she was looking out for my best interest, Carey.
In contrast to these six, Ron and Gilda from Cedar Rapids and Jane and Reba from Omaha spoke negatively about their direct managers. For example Jane said, "I work for this really difficult person and I ought not to go into how awful these people treat the employees up here." Reba commented, "they don’t care, I mean, I personally had to tell this 25-year-old 26-year-old coach, you are not gonna treat me like a piece of crap." Gilda and Ron while not so vocal still showed signs of a lack of confidence and respect for their managers as well. Both had indicated their displeasure for their direct managers’ poor decision making and not going to bat for them when critical decisions were made regarding positions. "Sometimes it [decisions] were made on geography or what’s easiest," Ron. Gilda for example, illustrated her frustration with local decision-making that she considered unfair, "even though I was third in seniority, I was the youngest person in the group so therefore I was going to be the first one to be laid off."

What seemed to surface from comments was that if the direct managers were considered fair, trustworthy, honest, communicated up front with those under their charge, and were considered competent or skilled in playing the political games often attributed to saving jobs, these managers were held in high esteem. Jane commented,

It seems to me if you had a very strong second or third level, you were spared. I mean, it must be a very cut-throat environment up there because under the better, I don’t know if its better, but under the tougher leadership, leaderships not the word. If you had a good second or third level who played the game right your department got spared.

This type of manager appeared to have an affect on the attitudes of those people who either reported to them or were part of their department. This difference in
attitude was evidenced not entirely by what was specifically said in the interviews, but also by the differences in the demeanor, facial expressions, and tone of voice of participants as interpreted by the researcher. For example, Jane and Reba, who have no regard for their current managers, seemed angry and bitter and blamed their current unhappy state on their local managers, the organizational leaders, and the organization itself. They spoke with much more disdain in their voices when discussing the leadership and spoke more specifically and at greater length about their distrust. For example, when asked her opinion of the leadership Reba, who had no regard for her local managers, responded,

"My opinion of the leadership, I thought it was very poor, I thought it was run underhandedly, I don't think we were advised of things honestly, I think it was all stuff that was done that we weren't aware of. I've been 31 years with the company and I've seen it through all different phases and this was the worst that I've seen it in my life. I've lost many many dollars in my 401K and somebody profited from that."

On the other hand, Carey, who held her local managers in high regard, responded to the same question very matter-of-factly with no discernable anger in her voice, "I did not trust them to be honest with you. I did not feel comfortable or confident, I was a little worried about the direction the company was going."

This seeming positive affect on attitudes was not just with respect to an individual's job, but their attitude toward the company in general, an attitude not seen in those who did not have that same respect for their direct management. Those participants who thought well of their direct managers even seemed to be indifferent toward the company leadership although when asked their opinion of that group their comments were very negative. What was going on at the top seemed of
little concern to this group as opposed to the others who seemed to focus much more on how the company was being run, and the negative feelings they had toward the leadership. They considered their local managers incompetent and simply marched to the beat being set by those above and so they held the organizational leaders responsible. They blamed upper management not only for the state of the company but for the personal dissatisfaction they were experiencing on their jobs. On the other hand, those who spoke well of their direct managers believed that they were being looked after by someone who had their personal well-being in mind and as a result supposed they would be okay. Their managers seemed to be able to dispel the fear of the unknown that the poor local managers were unable to accomplish. While these managers were also marching to a beat set from above, they somehow made that work to their advantage, convincing the rank and file that they were all in the same boat, and together they could accomplish their directives and together see their way through the difficult times.

**Distribution of the Pain of Downsizing**

None of these individuals thought that those at the higher levels of the company shared the pain that those at the lower levels experienced as a result of downsizing. Two themes surfaced when the distribution of pain was discussed. The first concerned actual job loss at the different levels of the organization, including the loss of friends and colleagues as a result of job cuts. The participants believed that job loss was localized at the lower levels. “There had to be a lot of wheelin’ and dealin’ going on with no concerns for the lives it was affecting, as far as shared pain,
no, I think the pain was for the group that had the unpopular manager," Jane. "Very localized at lower levels" "[shared pain] absolutely not, and I'm not so sure that the craft [union] people shared in the pain. Lower to middle management took the brunt," Gilda. Ron stated his feelings on the distribution of pain in this way,

The people that are directly associated with those it involved [victims] probably experienced a lot more pain in two ways. [The] First way was just the pain of losing a friend and a close associate you probably have spent a lot of time with. And the second thing is the pain of fear, am I next.

The second area participants identified was that at the time people at the lower levels of the organization were losing their jobs, taking on more work, and watching friends being laid off, many in upper management were reaping financial rewards. Comments such as "I think they made a tremendous amount of money at the senior level, the executive level," Adam.

The people with the big monies seemed to know where the company was heading and were able to get rid of their stocks on time even though nothing illegal happened. Got their bonuses to stay or signing bonuses whatever. Whereas the craft people did not get any bonuses, lost as far as insurance goes, lost on vacation, lost on sick pay, lost on rewards as far as staying with the company, Gilda.

Linzi had a different slant on the distribution of pain. She considered that to a degree upper management did experience pain because many were required to do things that they did not feel right or good about doing but nonetheless did.

I think it indirectly did affect the people at the upper levels because they could not be honest about their opinions about headcount that was required to get work done. They, in my opinion, were taught to be nazi-ized, you will march to these orders or your jobs will be out the door as well.

Table 4 identifies each participant and if they believed the pain of downsizing was shared throughout the organization.
Table 4. Distribution of Pain

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Distribution of Pain: Was the pain of downsizing shared throughout the organization.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>Adam</td>
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<tr>
<td>Linzi</td>
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<td>Reba</td>
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<td>Gilda</td>
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<td>Jeni</td>
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<td>Kelli</td>
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<td>Ron</td>
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<td>Carey</td>
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<td>Mary</td>
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Communications: Interactional and Procedural Justice

Tables 5 and 6 indicate the participants' response to interview questions regarding procedural and interactional justice. An in-depth examination of interview responses in these areas begins following the tables.

Table 5. Procedural Justice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>How Decisions Were Made</th>
<th>Decision Process Fair</th>
<th>Advance Notice</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Jeni</td>
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<td>Kelli</td>
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<td>Ron</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carey</td>
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<tr>
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</table>
Table 6. Interactional Justice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Benefit to Stakeholder</th>
<th>Valued &amp; Appreciated</th>
<th>Given Reason</th>
<th>Reason legitimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>Adam</td>
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<td>Gilda</td>
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<td>Mary</td>
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Within tables 5 and 6 several participants were listed as having responded with both yes and no for the following reasons. Under the Valued and Appreciated column, the yes response indicated they felt appreciated by the local managers, however they did not feel appreciated by the organization’s leadership, which is indicated by the no response. Under the How Decisions were Made column the yes reflects their understanding that seniority was the deciding factor if an individual was to be downsized, while the no indicated they did not know how decisions were made when an entire workgroup was eliminated. In the Decision Process Fair and Advance Notice columns, where yes and no both appeared it indicated that the participants knew of situations where it was fair and there was advance notice, and they also experienced situations where they considered the process unfair and there was no advance notice given.
The Reasons for Downsizing

"Decisions about headcount reduction are largely dependent on economic conditions and [company name omitted] ability to meet its financial performance targets in light of those conditions... Decisions regarding the need for layoffs are purely economic decisions" (Company Newsletter, 2002) is a quote that appeared in the organizational newsletter of the company that employs the participants of this study. Although the statement refers to future layoffs, it identifies the decisive factor regarding layoff decisions as economic. However, when these individuals were asked what reasons they were given for the need to downsize their answers proved to be an interesting mix. Some participants did not recall ever being offered a reason and yet believed they knew what necessitated such action. Others heard reasons but didn't believe them. And finally, some were given reasons, didn't believe them, and offered their own thoughts as to the true justification for the downsizing.

Four participants, Linzi, Jeni, Mary, and Jane indicated they were never given, or do not recall being given, any reasons why layoffs were necessary. Of those four, Jane never relayed any assumptions she may have had as to what she thought necessitated layoffs, she simply said "none, none except for the general cutbacks." The remaining three even though they did not recall being given any official explanation believed they knew. Linzi thought that because the company was suffering from the general downturn in the economy, they had more people to do the work than they had work. Jeni shared the same opinion commenting that "the headcount has to equate to the business." Mary, also saying she was never told,
believed “it was more or less because our stock was going down and we needed to save money.”

Adam, Ron, and Carey all indicated they were informed that financial issues necessitated the layoffs. Adam recognized that a general downturn in the economy contributed to an even greater downturn in this particular industry. Ron considered economics as the official reason for downsizing and acknowledged that in this particular industry there were little alternatives to making a quick boost in the books other than headcount reductions. He went on to identify other reasons such as a change in business direction, a change in customer needs, and streamlining, but he believed ultimately it gets down to the profitability of the company. Carey recognized economic issues, specifically the need to cut costs.

Three participants, Kelli, Reba, and Gilda identified centralization as the reason given for downsizing, centralization in the sense of eliminating workgroups or departments and relocating the work within another group in another geographic location. Gilda thought that the relocation of job responsibilities was given as a reason for layoffs but considered economic issues as the critical factor. Kelli and Reba believed centralization was the reason for layoffs but unlike Gilda never mentioned cost cutting as an outcome or goal of centralization. Kelli considered the centralization was done as a means to gain more control over the work and the employees. Reba talked about consolidating as a means to give more work to fewer people “overwork their staff in those other towns” never mentioning the cost savings that might accompany such a move.
Were the Reasons Legitimate?

Several respondents indicated they were not authoritatively given a reason for the downsizing so the legitimacy question was irrelevant. Adam believed that with better management some of the need for downsizing could have been avoided and therefore he was inclined to believe the economic cause for layoffs was not a legitimate explanation for the need for such actions. Linzi and Jeni considered downsizing a decision that was shortsighted and directed toward the wrong groups respectively. Only two participants, Carey and Kelli, made any suggestion that the downsizing may have been legitimate yet it seemed they had considerable doubt. Carey, who identified cost cutting, decided that considering the financial state of the company, the need for downsizing could be supported, yet she was conflicted given the bonuses and stock options awarded upper management. Kelli had a unique take on the legitimacy of the downsizing. She believed that the reasons given were just cause in the eyes of the leadership but from a practical point of view considered those reasons flawed. "I think they really felt it was justifiable and they could see it in the numbers. I think if you’re doing the statistics games you can see it, it works. But if you take all of the other considerations into account, it doesn’t." Kelli went on to explain what those other considerations are,

If I had five centers with the same skill level in each one of those centers and I decided to pool it all together I'd be in great shape. But if you have what we have today, and those five centers had completely different skill levels and you take the most experienced and you throw them out and you move it [the work] into the inexperienced you've lost it. Statistics will show you that the amount of money it costs the company to train employees and to build up that training is so high that you lose a heck of a lot of money, not to mention customer satisfaction.
How Were Layoff Decisions Made

How decisions were made as to who would be laid off is important to understanding the downsizing experience. Knowing why specific people and groups were eliminated and the belief that the selection process was fair or not can impact a survivor’s attitude and behavior. In the case of these individuals, it happens that the participants who were union and the participants who were management experienced layoffs in distinctly different ways. From a union perspective, seniority dictated who would be cut. However, that only held true if cutbacks were made at an individual job level. Unfortunately, that is not how the union participants experienced layoffs. Layoffs struck in the form of the entire workgroup being eliminated. All of the union participants; Jane, Reba, Kelli, and Jeni had their entire workgroups cut and the work moved to other locations. Jane understood that seniority dictated who would be laid off when reductions were necessary within the group. But she had no idea when they closed her entire workgroup how that decision was arrived at. Reba and Jeni made the same claim. Reba commenting, “It’s really hard to tell. I really don’t know all that.” And Jeni, “Why, I don’t know.” Kelli, as the others, indicated that seniority was the defining factor individually, but when the entire group was eliminated they were told it was to centralize the work, but she didn’t buy it. “They’re telling us they want to take it [the work] to Salt Lake [City] to make it a one-stop shop center. They’re taking it to a group of people who don’t know what they’re doing, to a job that’s never existed there, and starting it up with new people.” Kelli’s comment, “I didn’t buy it,” reflected the sentiments of others. Jeni said,

I know of departments that were doing wonderful, their quotas were right up there and they were moved to other areas. Why? I don’t know.
I'll tell ya, we're pretty bitter. With my personal situation with hicap [high capacity circuit] design, we followed the process, our numbers were good, we had excellent quality of work, our designs were efficient and the work went to Salt Lake.

The truth is, I wouldn't know the decision making process and it never made sense to me. Very rarely did it make sense to me when we were very, very busy in my last job, extremely busy, the need was here, extremely busy. It's not like the work was slowing down and yet they closed our shop. So how could I possibly understand their decisions. Were they fair or not? I don't get it, I don't know, Jane.

Reba had a different thought,

My opinion on that was, it's because that's where the bigwigs were. They wanted all that work moved under their wing to secure their own position. They didn't care about people here, or anywhere else. They have those two main places [Phoenix & Minneapolis], or there was one in Denver too, so, once again it was the big corporate places. They cared more about getting everything moved there to secure their positions and no I don't think it was fair.

On the management side, individuals being laid off as opposed to entire groups, was the more common occurrence. Performance was identified as a factor in layoff decisions by some of the managers but like their union counterparts, they did not necessarily believe it. Adam thought that performance was a factor, "I didn't really know what went into it [decisions] but what it looked like was a real close look at what their skill sets were and their level of expertise." Linzi and Ron were given performance as a decision point but questioned it in most cases. "I heard the lowest performers were let go. But I saw cases where that was not the case, and I saw cases where that absolutely was the case," Linzi. Ron responded, "We were told it was based upon a ranking system, but I do not in all cases, in fact I'm sure in some cases that is not the fact." Linzi shared an example of a person being laid off
because he openly disagreed with a decision of top management in his department, reinforcing Adam's claim that the leadership's style was one of fear and intimidation.

Two other areas were suggested regarding how layoff decisions were made. One was that it was political. Reba, as mentioned previously, considered the centralization of work was done as a means to secure the jobs of some at the upper end of the organization's hierarchy. Jeni made comments to that effect as well, "So, when departments are doing well, like the LRAC [Load and Resource Center], we think that was political because the director was in another town, so that work moved to where the director was." Jane thought there was a lot of politics involved when centralization decisions were made, "as groups being surplus, back to my original statement, there had to be some wheeling and dealing and politicking, absolutely, because none of it made sense." Jeni alluded to the politics as well, "so I guess, now, our work, which we took such great pride in, the company didn't look at that, they went, and for some political reason, they moved, they centralized all of that work out in Salt Lake." Carey suggested that economic considerations were the decisive factor. Recall that several participants mentioned financial reasons for why layoffs were necessary, hers was the only mention of it as a justification for why a specific group was targeted for downsize. As she put it, "but I think that's what happened, they were looking for ways to cut the budget and this was one of the proposals I think."

The general consensus among these participants is that they did not know how downsizing decisions were made regarding who would be cut. While the union members knew the contract terms that governed such decisions, when it came to
eliminating entire groups they were clueless. The managers had some inkling that performance came into play but Adam was the only person who seemed confident that was the case.

Benefits of Downsizing

Discussions centered on what these participants were told about the benefit of layoffs did not yield a great deal of conversation. In retrospect, this ties in very closely with the reasons for downsizing just covered. If the company announced layoffs it is logical to assume some explanation for such action would be provided and one would expect that included in the explanation would be a justification of some kind. One might also expect that the justification would include the associated benefits. Since seven of the respondents indicated that they were never told the reasons for layoffs, then it seems reasonable to assume that they would not have been informed about how layoffs would benefit the stakeholders, which is what happened. Seven of the respondents said the benefits of downsizing were never conveyed to them and they were very brief with their answers. Among the comments; Jane simply said, “no, no, that was never in the conversation.” “Not that I recall,” Linzi. “No” was all Gilda said, and Ron commented “I don’t think so.”

Three individuals did indicate that they were informed of the benefits of downsizing. Reba, Carey, and Adam all said that it was a cost-saving measure, an economic decision that would improve the organization’s financial position in the future. The only organizational reference to the need for downsizing uncovered
during this study and provided earlier in this report made no mention of the benefits of such actions.

_Valued and Appreciated_

When asked if they felt valued or appreciated as employees the answer from all of the participants was a resounding no. "Oh sure, blah, blah, blah" is how Jane responded. Adam's comment, "it was the lip service that maybe hurt the most, because you heard a lot of it, hey our employees are everything, but you saw nothing to make you believe that." Reba irritated said, "no, no, no, I mean no!" These comments were typical of how all the participants perceived their value to the leadership and in effect, to the organization. Local management was a different story. Just as was encountered during discussions about trust in leadership, those individuals who felt valued and appreciated by their direct management team were quick and direct to acknowledge it. Kelli reacted with enthusiasm when speaking of her local managers "yea, they do, they really do [value her]. I really believe in our center that they make every effort to save every job they can and to recognize the value of the people who are still there. I really believe that." "I knew that my immediate supervisors appreciated me. I've had some great bosses", Jane. In addition, Jeni, Ron, Carey, and Mary all acknowledged they felt valued and appreciated by their local managers.
Role Transition

How has these survivors' role transition experience affected their appraisal of the downsizing and their response to it?

All of the participants endured a job change as a result of downsizing. They were all given the choice of taking a severance package and leaving the organization or accepting another position. The decision was not a difficult one as they all preferred to remain employed with this organization. The role transition process varied between these individuals depending on whether they were management or occupational employees. For occupational employees the contract outlined specifically that if jobs were eliminated those displaced employees would have 90 days to bid for another position. If they were unable to secure a new job, they would receive all applicable severance benefits and be terminated. At the time they were notified of the elimination of their current positions their status changed to what is termed *surplus* employee giving them preferential treatment over regular employees for job placement. In the case of managers, circumstances can vary. Some managers were given a time frame to find, bid, and be placed in another position while others were simply dismissed. In the case of the management participants of this study, at the time they were notified of the elimination of their jobs they were offered a new position within the same department or they could opt for the severance package. They were given a very short time to make that decision: Mary was only allowed four hours, it varied for Adam, Linzi, Ron, Gilda, and Carey from a day to two days.
Discussion with all the participants revealed that remaining with the organization was important for several reasons. All but Mary had over 20 years with the company. The pay was good, they had considerable vacation time, the benefits were excellent, and they knew and understood the company very well. While some had already earned a full pension, others were close and believed that not to remain was akin to throwing away all they had worked for. Finally, the fear of the unknown, it seemed that these individuals preferred remaining with the organization even if they hated their new jobs as opposed to taking their chances in a job market they had been absent from for a very long time. In effect, with the exception of Adam and Gilda, who had expressed confidence in a positive outcome if they were forced into a job search in the outside world, and Mary who with only four years didn’t have as much time invested, the rest felt trapped. As Reba put it, “It’s all I’ve known my whole life.”

Their feelings of being cornered may well have played into the attitude many of the participants carried into their new positions. At the beginning, 8 of the 10 were extremely unhappy with their new jobs. Jane and Reba were facility specialists in Omaha, and as mentioned earlier, their entire group was eliminated and the work moved to Minneapolis. The job of the facility specialist was to keep cable records current and act as a liaison between the construction crews and the engineers. Jane and Reba were both extremely happy as facility specialists. Jane commented, “I loved my job” and “It was a great job.” Reba noted “We worked in an environment where we were appreciated by the engineers, by our managers, we were still treated as individuals.” Both moved into a job titled service representative where they
arranged customer moves between different service providers. For example, if a 
customer decided to purchase their telecommunications services from a provider 
other than their company, Jane and Reba made sure that the transition was smooth 
for the customer. They went from a job that was very autonomous, “We were very, 
very, independent” as Jane points out, to a job that was very regimented as Reba 
indicated “you’re gigged, audited” and Jane concurred “they wanted to monitor 
absolutely every move I’ve made.”

The workload on the new job was much heavier. Jane said “They have given 
me more work than is physically possible, physically, and I’m talking about working 
through breaks, pushing my lunches out, I even have bladder infection because I 
don’t go to the bathroom.” Reba also considered the workload overwhelming,

You’re given such a load. When we first came there, one week out of 
training, we were given 50 cuts to handle. Which is a lot, a very lot. 
You didn’t have to just work the cut, you had to do all the preparation 
work and you know, why don’t you have it done?

Both Reba and Jane seemed to have little good to say about their new 
managers as well. “I work for this really difficult person and I ought not to go into how 
awful these people treat the employees up here,” Jane. Reba as well,

We [used] to work in an environment where we were appreciated by 
The engineers that we reported [to], by our managers, we were still 
treated as individuals. When we go down to this place, now you are 
nothing. They don’t care, I mean, I personally had to tell this 25-year-
old 26-year-old coach, you are not gonna treat me like a piece of crap. 
You respect me I said, ya know, you’re talked down to.

As evidenced by those comments, Jane and Reba moved into a job that they 
hated, where the workload increased, their independence decreased, and they saw 
their managers as incompetent and disrespectful.
Linzi, Gilda, Ron, Adam, and Mary were all previously project or service managers. The project manager and service manager jobs were eliminated as the company determined those responsibilities could be incorporated into the account consultant position where all of these individuals transitioned. As project managers these individuals were responsible for the implementation of communication services of various kinds. Working as an arm of the marketing department, they were responsible for an installation project that began when the orders were placed, through the construction phase, all the way to getting the equipment installed, turning up the service, and making sure the customer was billed. The service manager was responsible for all service-related issues of an assigned group of customers. Service-related issues could involve repair problems, installation delays, or even public relations fence-mending with dissatisfied customers.

The account consultant position that these individuals transitioned to marked a drastic change from their previous positions. Gilda described the duties of an account consultant this way,

My new job is an everything job, and it’s from pots lines [plain old telephone service], writing orders to get pots lines installed, disconnects, dealing with customers as far as billing problems, dealing with the customer as far as service problems. Also project management, implementing services sold to customers. Interfacing more with the marketing people as far as what they sold and cleaning up the messes as far as what they have created.

All five of these participants, Gilda, Adam, Linzi, Ron, and Mary were in agreement that they had a great deal of autonomy on the job in their former positions or so they believed. However, the nature of the project-managing job was such that they had due dates and deadlines to meet. Since all of the former project managers had been
doing that job for a great deal of time they all had excellent organizational and time management skills which may have led them to believe the autonomy on the job was greater than it may have been. Mary, from a service manager perspective, was dealing with issues that would arise at any time and that generally needed resolution immediately. She addressed those issues from a manner of her own design and although from an outsider’s perspective her job might be one with a great deal of rigidity, she believed the work to be very autonomous because she was continually improvising solutions to customer problems. So from the perspective of these individuals, the autonomy on their respective previous jobs was great.

Jeni and Kelli were circuit designers, who reported to Carey, who managed the group. Their workgroup was eliminated and the work moved to Salt Lake City. The responsibilities of the job as described by Jeni, “When a customer comes in, we place the equipment at point A, design the routes between the cities, between the DCS [digital cross-connect system] in the CO [Central Office] out to the end user.” When the work moved, Jeni took a job as a testing technician and Kelli accepted a position in a group called the CIA [Company Initiated Activity] group. Kelli described her new duties in this way “Engineers issue out jobs to wreck out equipment, put in new equipment, and that means moving all the circuits by way of internal service orders from this facility over to that facility.” She compared the workload in the design job to the CIA job in this way, “[in the CIA job] you still had to be very productive and move fast, but it did not have nearly the stress level the circuit design did because of the fact it [circuit design] was customer demanding.”
Carey moved from the design group to take a staff position. Her new duties consisted of “pulling reports.” In comparing her two jobs, Carey had this to say,

It was a major change, I’m a people person, so I really did not care to be working on reports the whole time. I didn’t feel like I was busy enough. I loved the excitement of dealing with problems all day long and I wasn’t having to do that. I was not happy at all. I didn’t enjoy coming to work.

It seems apparent that all of these individuals moved from a job where they were content in terms of job satisfaction, and confident that they were competent, valued, and contributing to the good of the organization to a position where they initially felt incompetent, undervalued, and in a sense as if they had been demoted. While only 2 of the 10 participants accepted a position that saw a decrease in pay, they all nonetheless believed they had taken a step backwards. This was an initial response as some of the participants seemed to settle into their new positions and that attitude changed as indicated by Reba, “I’m somewhat adjusted to this job.” Jeni states, “At the time I hated it, but in retrospect it’s been a good thing.” Individuals who transitioned from project managers and service managers to account consultants were all told at the time of the transition that they would see little change in their job duties. They were told they would still be doing project and service management work for all of the account consultants, and the existing account consultants would pick up their responsibilities regarding order placement and addressing billing issues. However, over time this responsibility division faded away and they were doing essentially all of the duties of the account consultant. Initially this seemed to bring ill feelings among several of the participants but time had healed those wounds. What became evident amongst these individuals is once
again the importance that local management played in their attitudes toward the role transition. Individuals who were most affected in a negative way by changing jobs were Reba, Jane, Gilda, and Ron. These four were the only participants who as a result of role transition suffered a change in their local managers, primarily at the director level. They were individuals who did not sing the praises of their local managers. The other six participants had nothing but good things to say about their management team and kept the same reporting hierarchy after their role transition. Therefore, it was apparent that local managers can and did have an affect on how these people accepted their job change and the attitudes they had after moving to those new positions. Of those six, only Carey admitted hating her new job but yet still seemed to carry a more positive attitude about the organization than the four whom as a result of their job change also saw a change in direct managers. Once again, the importance of how direct management conducts themselves during the difficult times of downsizing and its associated outcomes such as role transition can have a significant affect on the attitudes of those in their charge.

Finally, each participant was asked if the role transition had an affect on his or her attitude toward the organization or response to the downsizing. Five individuals said that it did. The reasons, however, varied. Jane and Reba, who worked together in a group that was eliminated, both felt that the experience has made them much more cynical, more distrustful of the motivation behind layoffs, and for that matter, any decisions coming from the leadership. Linzi and Ron both suggested that they had been setup for failure by the job change.

Here I was, thrown into a job with no training, yet providing customer service, where you have the potential of customers complaining
because you're not giving them the service they need or deserve in a downsizing mode. It's like, this is a good recipe for getting let out the door, Linzi.

Ron considered the job change as tantamount to a conspiracy, "I felt useless, and I felt like because of my age, I felt like I was deliberately being put in that position so I would quit." Jeni thought that forced job change erodes the trust that employees have in the organization and robs them of the motivation and effort they once had. "Why should I keep doing better, why should I keep doing my best when the company doesn't care anyway." The other participants said that the job change did not affect their attitudes toward the organization or the downsizing and their reasons fell into just two categories. First, it had no effect because they were pension eligible, which is how Gilda and Kelli addressed the question. "I think one's attitude changes completely when you hear the word downsizing once you become pension eligible," Gilda. Kelli almost jubilant, "now that I've got 30 years where I'm not touchable I also don't have any fear. Cause the bottom line, if I don't like it I can leave the company."

Adam, who is also pension eligible, simply approaches it as a learning experience, something different. Carey, pension eligible, has been forced into a job before as a result of downsizing and feels that the most difficult part for her has always been leaving the people she had formed a relationship with, they were like family. And Mary sees downsizing as a fact of life, she only has less than 5 years with the company, and so she considers downsizing and its aftermath such as her role transition as simply business. She's being paid to do a job and she really doesn't care what that job is.
The Mishra-Spreitzer Model

To what extent did these participants fit within this model of survivor responses to downsizing and work redesign?

One of the objectives of this research was to determine if these 10 individuals fit within the archetypes suggested by Mishra and Spreitzer (1998) as determined by their reaction to downsizing. The following is an analysis of each person’s placement as a result of their answers to the questions as described in the methodology section and their corresponding archetype.

Table 7. Participants’ Response Type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Destructive</th>
<th>Constructive</th>
<th>Active</th>
<th>Passive</th>
<th>Response Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Cynical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reba</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Cynical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adam</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Hopeful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linzi</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cynical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carey</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cynical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeni</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cynical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelli</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Obliging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gilda</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Obliging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ron</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fearful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Hopeful</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While this exercise appears straightforward, coming to a decision as to whether a person was constructive/destructive and active/passive posed a dilemma in several instances. Adam, it was determined, was constructive in his response, but he replied to the interview question that he felt threatened. However, he felt threatened because he had been with the company for a great deal of time and really didn’t want to see it end. He made the point that he had earned a pension, was confident he could find a job elsewhere, and he wasn’t worried. So although he
stated he felt threatened it was not in the sense that he would be harmed. Linzi
stated that she was passive in her reaction to downsizing, yet as she expanded on
her answer she indicated that doing the things that would be considered an active
response was something that was simply in her nature and she operated in that
manner day to day. Therefore it was decided that she should be considered active.
Gilda said whether she was active or passive depended on the specific
circumstances of each of the several rounds of downsizing she had gone through. It
was decided she should be placed in the passive category because in a true layoff
situation when people lost their jobs [as opposed to people volunteering to leave for
the severance] she was considered passive. Ron commented that he was vocal in
his opposition to certain aspects of the downsizing, which could be considered an
active response, and yet he was very specific in declaring he would do nothing to
contribute to the successful implementation of a downsizing effort, which would be a
passive response. The decision was made to consider his response as passive
because he gave no indication that his verbal opposition to downsizing was
constructive criticism.

Eight of the 10 participants said they did fit the response type in which they
were placed. Four of those 8 were impressed with just how accurately it described
their feelings and behaviors. Jane, a cynical survivor, said "Oh my gosh, that's
pretty close." "Yea, I think so. I don't know what other categories there are but yea, I
can't really deny it, I can't deny anything about that one." Adam, a hopeful survivor,
commented "Yea that works for me. That's pretty good." Reba, a cynical survivor,
remarked "That is so true, that's me all over. Yea, that is definitely me." Mary, a
hopeful survivor, said “Exactly, yea.” Gilda, Jeni, Ron, and Carey also believed their
archetypes fit but that fit was not as precise as it was for Jane, Adam, Reba, and
Mary. Gilda for example simply commented “pretty close, yep, pretty close.” It took
Jeni, a cynical survivor, a little time to come to the decision that she agreed, during
her comments she said, “yes, I do feel angered and betrayed” as if having an
epiphany. Finally, several of these participants although they agreed with the
archetype, they did not like some of the language used within the descriptions of
those archetypes. For example, two words in particular were disagreeable, militant
and disgust, which were used in the description of a cynical survivor.

Of the 10 survivors, Linzi and Kelli did not believe they fit the archetype
associated with their interview responses. Linzi was categorized as a cynical
survivor. As previously mentioned, she seemed to take issue with the wording used
in the cynical survivor description that admittedly is strong at best and disparaging at
worst. To hear, “you are likely to feel anger, disgust, and resentment; you have a
voice and often use it in a militant way; you often question or interfere with the
downsizing process rather than cooperate with management to implement the
downsizing,” might be a description one would not be comfortable in admitting.

Advice to Leaders

To end the interview each participant was asked what advice would they give
to organizational leaders considering downsizing. Their responses were simple,
straightforward, and reinforce much of what has been previously discussed. Adam
shared that it was important those higher up in the organization should not be
financially rewarded with stock options and pay increases because it sends the wrong message that they do not share in the pain. He and Linzi both believe that much more attention needs to be paid to who is let go because they believe that cuts are made in areas that hurt the company more than the financial gains that are accomplished by making the cuts. Advice from Carey, Gilda, and Jane centered on communications. They suggest that communicating with the rank and file might give the leadership a better understanding of the day-to-day operations and how downsizing will impact those operations. Communications also in the sense of doing a better job of educating the employees as to what is happening within the organization and why, better information sharing as put by Gilda. And finally, Ron and Reba would advise the leadership to be considerate of employees as individuals, to be honest with employees and show more concern for their feelings and how downsizing can impact their lives and futures.

1. What were the experiences of 10 employees who transitioned into new jobs when their positions were eliminated as a result of corporate restructuring?

2. How has these survivors' role transition experience affected their appraisal of the downsizing and their response to it?

3. To what extent did these participants fit within the Mishra-Spradley model of survivor responses to downsizing and work redesign?

A qualitative method of inquiry was used because the focus of the research was to explore the human experiences of the 10 participants. Qualitative research is based on the idea that there is a range of different ways of making sense of the
Chapter 5

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The high-powered engineers at one large computer company never dreamed that downsizing could touch them. Most had worked for the company since graduating from college, and like many other workers in their 50s, believed that their employer would stand by them until they retired. They were wrong.
Rebecca A. Clay (1998)

Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore the experience of 10 survivors of layoffs who were transitioned into new positions as a direct result of downsizing. The study examined how they responded to their role transition, and attempted to determine if and where they fit within the Mishra-Spreitzer typology of survivor responses to downsizing. The research questions that guided this study were:

1. What were the experiences of 10 employees who transitioned into new jobs when their positions were eliminated as a result of corporate restructuring?
2. How has these survivors’ role transition experience affected their appraisal of the downsizing and their response to it?
3. To what extent did these participants fit within the Mishra-Spreitzer model of survivor responses to downsizing and work redesign?

A qualitative method of inquiry was used because the focus of the research was to explore the human experiences of the 10 participants. Qualitative research is based on the idea that there is a range of different ways of making sense of the
world, and the purpose of qualitative research is to better understand individuals' views of their world and their perception of reality (Jones, 1995).

The participants of this study were 10 individuals employed by a large telecommunications company who, as a result of downsizing, transitioned into new jobs. The group consisted of 8 women, 2 men, 6 were managers, 4 were occupational, 9 had over 20 years with the company, 7 of those 9 had over 30 years, and one had less than 5 years.

The first research question; what were the experiences of 10 employees who transitioned into new jobs when their positions were eliminated as a result of corporate restructuring, used in-depth semi-structured interviews as the data collection method. The interview questions were based on propositions suggested by Mishra and Spreitzer that purport that there are factors that influence how a survivor will respond to downsizing in an organization. Those influencing factors are based on trust and justice. Specifically, trust in management coupled with distributive, procedural, and interactional justice. Interactional justice addressed why layoffs were necessary, what were the benefits, and were survivors valued and appreciated. Procedural justice centered on the processes used to implement the downsizing, specifically, how and why decisions were made. Distributive justice dealt with fairness, were victims' benefits good, were they treated with respect, and was the burden of downsizing shared.

There were three findings associated with this research question. First, the participants all expressed displeasure with top management and that displeasure manifested in three areas; the leaders were dishonest, managed poorly, and were
out of touch or misdirected with respect to the company's goals or mission. Second, there was a lack of clear, consistent, and frequent communications from the top down. Third, the positive impact that local managers could have on employees' attitudes toward their job and the company in general if the local manager was honest, trustworthy, shared information, and displayed they valued and appreciated those in their charge.

As information centered on trust and justice was gathered and analyzed it became evident that trust in leadership was a thread that was woven through the entire fabric of the downsizing experience of these participants. Organizational members must be confident in the ability of top management to guide the company through good times and bad. They can and should expect these individuals will keep them informed as to the health of the organization, communicating candidly and often about its direction and future while at the same time showing concern for its members. This was not the case for these 10 people. These individuals distrusted the organization's leaders and as a result of those feelings the attitudes they had toward the decisions to downsize, whom to downsize, and the processes employed to downsize were immediately viewed as among other things, unnecessary, unfair, and self-rewarding for those leaders. David Noer (1995) identifies four rules important to keep in mind during a layoff process, two of which are; management must be fair in the selection of those who leave and the cuts should include all levels, the burden should be shared noting that an important part of the implementation is to deal honestly and fairly with the victims and the survivors.
An enlightening outcome of this inquiry was just how influential strong local management could be in overcoming the negative effects of distrusted leadership. Those participants who perceived they had encouraging, supportive, honest, open, and trustworthy local managers seemed to keep a positive outlook during, through, and after significant layoffs. Competent, appreciative, and informative local managers even seemed to have a neutralizing affect on attitudes toward top management. While the participants who spoke well of their immediate managers still did not trust the organizational leaders, they were indifferent toward them, in direct contrast to those participants who held their local managers in the same low regard as they did those heading the organization. The positive effect strong local management had on some of the participants may be attributable in part to communications that were shared with these individuals by those local managers. Armstrong-Stassen (1993) found that, depending on an employee's position with the company, they receive different levels of information and communications and therefore managers respond more positively to downsizing primarily because they were afforded more access to that information. It is entirely possible that the sharing of information by local managers with the rank and file accounted for a portion of the positive impact that some of the local managers had on those in their charge. These local managers also gave employees the sense that they were valued and appreciated. This social support leads the employee to believe they are cared for, valued, esteemed, and belong (Cobb, 1976) which aids in their ability to cope with the job insecurity brought about by a downsizing initiative (Lim, 1997).
Clear and consistent communications from the top prior to, during, and after downsizing is an important part in getting an organization through such difficult times. Communications is likely the most important aspect of the downsizing process (Greenhalgh & McKersie, 1980; Sutton, 1987). Given the participants' interview responses the communications from the top down in this organization was for the most part lacking and what communications were identified did not appear to be consistent. For example, in the case of this organization, as is likely the case with most downsizing, the root cause was economics. Surprisingly, many of the participants never acknowledged that fact. Had the leadership continually focused their communications on the economic issues that necessitated the downsizing, relayed that constantly and consistently, then when downsizing directly affected these individuals they might have better understood the necessity and benefits of such drastic action. One of the most important steps in the layoff process is that the leadership must communicate with the survivors (Boyle, 2001).

In the case of these participants, their experiences also seem to illustrate the interrelationship of trust in leadership and its effect on communication. Even if the communications from the top had been consistent and clear, the lack of trust in this organization’s leadership may have undermined the credibility of that communication and likely would have had little influence on the attitudes of these 10 participants.

The second research question: how has these survivors’ role transition experience affected their appraisal of the downsizing and their response to it, also used semi-structured in-depth interviews as the data collection method. However, the interview questions were of the researcher’s design and centered on the job the
participants left and the job they transitioned to, comparing such things as autonomy and workload. In addition, each participant was directly asked if they thought the role transition had influenced their attitude, motivation, and performance with respect to their jobs and the company in general.

Results for this second research question found that the role transition initially had negative effects on the participants' thoughts and attitudes toward their jobs, the organization, and their reaction to downsizing. However, those negative effects seemed to diminish over time.

All of the participants wanted to remain employed with the organization and their attitudes toward the job change seemed influenced by their eligibility or proximity to a pension and their feelings toward local management. Because all but one of these participants had considerable time with the organization and were in the mid to latter stages of their work-lives may have influenced to some degree their attitudes toward their role transition. As workers age, alternative employment options generally decrease, making staying in their current jobs or with their current employer more attractive (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). The initial negative feelings these participants had toward their new jobs seemed to subside over time, at least partially supporting the Nicholson and West (1988) theory that there are four stages associated with work role transition; preparation, encounter, adjustment, and stabilization. Typical of the early encounter stage are denial and withdrawal, however the initial shock subsides as one enters the adjustment phase where new priorities emerge and individuals adjust to their new roles, people, and culture of the recently downsized organization.
The third research question: to what extent did these participants fit within the Mishra-Spreitzer model of survivor responses to downsizing and work redesign, used a data collection method that might be better described as a survey than an interview. The participants were asked two simple questions requiring specific answers. Their answers to these questions determined their constructive or destructive, active or passive inclinations. The combination of their answers determined the archetype response category in which they fit. The response type was then revealed to each participant with a description of that type. After the description was shared, each participant was asked his or her thoughts as to whether they thought it did or did not describe their reaction to downsizing and any comments they might have with respect to the response type.

The results showed that 8 of the participants thought that the response category fit, and fit very well. However, 2 of the participants thought the response category did not fit them at all.

At first examination it would appear that the model did not work considering 2 of the 10 respondents did not fit. However, when these individuals indicated that the response type did not fit at all, the descriptions of the other response types were not shared with them, making it impossible to determine if they fit the model. The same holds true with the 8 participants that felt they did fit, the possibility exists they may have considered themselves even a better fit in one of the other categories.
Discussion

The Experience

One of the limitations to this study was that 9 of the 10 participants had over 20 years with the company and 7 of those 9 had over 30 years. As a result of that, it is important to address the cultural changes within the organization that these 9 have experienced over the last 20 plus years. This information is important in situating the data so the reader understands from where it came and can then evaluate its meaning from within its context. Without the setting the data can have no context, without context there cannot be any significant meaning in the analysis (Chenail, 1995).

When 9 of these 10 individuals went to work for the organization they believed they had a job for life. At the time of their hire, they assumed that with hard work and loyalty they could finish their work lives and retire from the organization having earned an adequate pension. Job security to these individuals was more than a hope, it was an expectation. It was the organization’s history that instilled in them just such an expectation. As McNeil (1985) suggests, psychological contracts are formed between employee and employer and it appeared they had formed a contract, expecting that for hard work and commitment they could expect job security. Over time, expectations of loyalty from employees resulting in security from the employer began to change, even though employees still harbored traditional ideas that fair treatment involved security in exchange for loyalty and performance (Charness & Levine, 2000). In contrast to the old contract a new employment contract was emerging and with it a new corporate culture. A contract and culture
that supplanted loyalty and security with such things as interesting work and learning new skills leading to enhanced employability (Hall, 1996; Hickok, 1998). Evidence of the changing employee-employer relationship began to surface in this organization in the early 1980s when, for the first time, the organization made significant headcount reductions. In the beginning this was accomplished by offering retirement incentives to managers working in specific departments. These packages as they had come to be known, were intended to reduce employees through attrition. The success of these offers was immediate. After a short period of time, employees were volunteering to leave if the company would extend them an incentive, and in many cases the company did. Over the next decade, the use of these incentives had become so customary that people who were considering retirement remained on the job in the hope, even expectation, that they would be compensated in some way to leave, as if considering it part of their pension benefit. In fact, the company had to deal with employees who were angry because they wanted the retirement incentive but for a variety of reasons were not offered one by the organization. Ron, a participant, commented,

They don’t want to pay me any money to encourage me to leave, so what they’re doing to me is putting me in a spot that is so ridiculous and so convoluted that I’ll get so frustrated that I’ll quit and the goal will be satisfied at that point.

The company no longer refers to any type of retirement incentive plans, rather they offer voluntary separation packages. These packages are actually severance benefits, which can be attractive enough to those in the right position to accept and leave the company. The difference is that if no one volunteers to accept the package, it will be forced upon someone, at which time it truly becomes a severance
benefit. The evolution from incentive to severance is the result of several factors. First, the company had, for the most part, exhausted the supply of employees who would voluntarily leave. Second, the company had stepped up its cutback of employees as it trimmed fat in an effort to become a more attractive suitor for a merger with another company. The organization's leadership at the time did not make secret the fact that future success in the long term depended on becoming a bigger player in the industry and did eventually merge with another organization in the same industry. Third, with a merger complete, the combination of the two companies had created redundancies in the workforce. Fourth, a downturn in the economy coupled with an even greater downturn in the industry resulted in a financial crisis for the company. Finally, the merger and subsequent change in leadership accelerated an already in motion cultural change within the organization. The new leadership had a different philosophy in dealing with employees, the financial situation of the company, and the effect one had on the other.

It was this new leadership team that the participants refer to in this study. The following background information regarding this group is important to understanding the situational circumstances that may have helped shape the participants' opinions of these leaders. The leadership team referred to in this study have all since left the company as a result in part to the following circumstances. The company has been and is still working through some serious financial difficulties. During the reign of this leadership team, the company's stock price plummeted to its lowest level in history, with catastrophic consequences for many employees' retirement accounts. In
addition, there have been allegations of misrepresented financial statements that reflected inflated earnings over the last few years.

Finally, information that was readily available on Internet financial resources may have also shaped the opinions of the participants. Any employee could link from the inter-company homepage to a financial source that quoted the company's latest stock price as well as links to additional information. Included in this additional information was a link identified as insider trading. This link listed officials of the company and all their recent activity with company stock. During difficult times for the organization the company CEO, as well as others, were exercising huge numbers of stock options making literally millions of dollars. Coupled with this information was the company prospectus that identified generous executive pay as well as bonuses and unsecured loans. In 2001 the total compensation package for the CEO was $102 million, $75 million of which came from exercising stock options with an additional $24 million in long-term incentives. All coming in a year when the company's stock price had declined 65% (Jubak, 2002). The leadership team in power during the period of significant downsizing, and discussed in this study, has all since resigned. So one could, and probably should, expect that opinions of that leadership team would take on the negative vein that it did. Nevertheless, what these participants think and believe, is in fact, their reality, and their behaviors and experiences are based on that reality.

Communications, or lack of it, seemed to be a prevailing issue to some degree with all the participants. Four of them either had not or could not recall ever being told why the company needed to downsize. Yet, in at least one instance, the
company indicated that the reasons were economic. Of these four, two indicated that the workload needed to support the number of workers, one argued that it was to improve the numbers, and one contended that it was a cost-cutting measure, all four were in essence identifying a financial root-cause. Of the six participants who indicated they were informed of the reason, four actually said it was for financial, economic, or cost-saving reasons, with the remaining two identifying centralization, once again cost-savings or economic issues at the core. So it would seem that all the participants acknowledged that the company was financially askew and probably understood at some level that such was the reason behind the downsizing. The question is, why the diversity of opinions and answers that for the most part led to a common cause? Two scenarios might be considered. First, it appears for the most part that they never received a continuous, honest, and straightforward message from the top down about the need for such drastic action as layoffs. When job cuts became a reality, these people were directly impacted and they responded to the interview questions in terms of their direct experience, not from the organizational level, even though the questions may have been directed at that level. These participants seemed to view everything in terms of its direct impact on them. Without clear, consistent, and frequent information from the top the employees were left to make their own assumptions which were assumptions that often left them feeling cheated, betrayed, or both. A clear and consistent message seems to have been lacking here. When layoffs are affecting people at the personal level they need to know and believe that the sacrifices that they are making will somehow have a positive effect on the future. If downsizing has been initiated to cut expenses to
better position the organization financially, then that message should be shared, consistent, frequent, and survivors should be informed when conditions have improved. While there was some indication from the top that financial issues necessitated the drastic measure of cutting employees, that message was not consistently and frequently channeled throughout the organization.

The second scenario is the possibility that the participants went beyond current conditions and considered what led to those conditions. Considering their lack of trust in the organization's leadership, some of these participants may well have believed that layoffs were ultimately a result of mismanagement. These people did not trust the leadership. Because of their lack of trust, they had serious doubts about everything that they were told and viewed every decision with critical cynicism. In addition, they did not feel that the pain of downsizing was shared, least of all by those at the top, some even believed that the leadership made enormous personal gains as a result of the job cuts. The participants may have felt that because of mismanagement the leadership created the economic crisis within the organization that resulted in headcount reductions. Financial woes necessitated layoffs, the leadership created the financial woes, so the legitimate reason for layoffs was incompetent or misdirected leaders.

Communications also must go beyond simply keeping people informed of what is happening within the organization and why, to also include personal communications to employees that will give them the sense that they are valued and appreciated. It would seem, at least for some of the participants of this study, that their direct managers were able to accomplish that and it had a very real impact on
not just their happiness and satisfaction on the job, but their attitude and outlook toward the company in general. While most of the respondents claim they were never told of their importance to the organization by its leadership, many could not sing high enough praise for their immediate supervisors. Clearly, the key reason that some of these people held their local managers in such high regard is the fact that they felt that they were valued and appreciated for their contributions to the organization. Feeling valued and appreciated at the local level somehow motivated them to perform admirably, keep a positive attitude, and accept what was happening in a global sense within the organization. Those individuals who were receiving such communication from their local managers seemed to be almost indifferent to events happening at the organizational level, even though they were clear in voicing their displeasure when queried about the overall organization, its direction, and its leadership. These managers seemed to have an impact on the attitudes, motivations, and optimism for the future that differentiated those that held their local managers in high regard and those who did not.

Finally, it appears that during the stressful times of a downsizing initiative that trust and justice are interrelated. The importance of the effect one has the other cannot be overstated. Trust in management is a requirement before people will believe what they are being told. When they can believe what they are being told then they will have a far greater capacity to pull together and strive to accomplish a common goal, such as seeing the organization through tough economic times. However, having trust in the leadership and the belief that they are honest and forthright is not enough in and of itself. Survivors must also believe they, as well as
victims, are being treated justly. It takes trust to accomplish this justice and it must be coupled with communication that is consistent and constant. These three areas, one dependent on the other, all need to be present for a downsizing initiative to be implemented in as smooth and effective fashion as is possible considering the gravity of the measure and the impact it will have on the survivors.

**Role Transition**

Three additional observations might be considered above and beyond the insights these individuals shared about their role transition and its effect on their responses to downsizing and their attitudes toward the company. First, these people had all been through several rounds of layoffs. Change had become so much a part of their work lives that to change jobs was just another day in the life of working in this organization. While to a certain degree they all feared losing their jobs, most believed that no matter how hard they worked or how competent they were in no way insured their positions. So the idea of moving to a job where they have no experience and risk being poor performers puts them at no disadvantage when and if another round of cuts occurs. Consequently, in their minds they had nothing to lose. Even if they believed they were being set up to fail, they were no worse off. Second, even though some were very dissatisfied with their new positions they all knew that after a certain period of time they could move to something else giving them hope for the future. The organization has processes in place that allow both management and occupational employees who have been in their current positions for a determined length of time to make application for job openings that are posted
by the human resource department. Third, everything might be different tomorrow. They all knew that there was so much churn throughout the entire organization that their jobs might look very different with respect to their supervisors and their responsibilities a short time in the future.

**Mishra-Spreitzer Model**

Eight of the participants believed the response type they fit within described their reaction to downsizing very well. In fact, several seemed amazed at how closely it described them. However, two participants said it did not describe them at all. One question that comes to mind is would these two have fit one of the other three types? When these individuals indicated that the response type did not fit them at all, the descriptions of the other response types were not shared with them, making it impossible to determine if they fit the model. This could also be expanded to include the eight that thought they did fit, maybe they would have considered themselves a better fit in one of the other categories.

**Researcher Observations**

The layoff experience of these individuals as described in this report gives some insight into thoughts and feelings about many aspects of that experience. Included in that experience are emotions that were observed by the researcher but likely not discernable by the reader of this report. For these individuals, participation in this study gave them an opportunity to tell their story, which they managed to do through the interview and by straying at times to relay an experience that they
believed illustrated a point as if to say, "listen, this is what it was like." Judging emotions is a daunting task but to give the full flavor of these individuals' experiences it is important to highlight a few of the emotions that were observed by the researcher. Not unexpected, at times these individuals seemed very bitter and angry about their treatment and the treatment of the other members of their workgroups. They felt mistreated by the organization they gave a good portion, and in some cases all, of their work lives. For example, Jane and Reba's comments on being assigned more work than any one person could accomplish. The participants often spoke of the company as if it were a person that had made bad judgments, that had turned its back on a friend. While they gave the impression of being mistreated by the organization, the mistreatment seemed to bring camaraderie among the members of each of the participants' respective groups. They often spoke in terms of we when they recalled their own experiences. Even though they were all survivors, they were not grateful, far from it. When reorganization claimed their jobs, they were given different positions and while the suggestion was made they should feel good that the company found something for them they didn't feel grateful. good, or relieved, they felt distressed. Perhaps it was emotions that prevented them from seeing and relaying accounts of the downsizing that to the researcher seemed obvious. For example many of the participants never mentioned economics as a reason for downsizing or cost cutting as a benefit even though it seems obvious that economics at some level had to play a part.

There was also humor and lightheartedness as they described some of the things that had happened to them and others. Examples expressed by several
participants could only be described as the \textit{laughable stupidity}, that they had encountered during these turbulent times. For instance, closing a department in Des Moines and moving it to Minneapolis, only to close it there and move it to Salt Lake City. One individual laughingly described being told their department would close only to be told a short time later that plans had changed and they were not going to close. Genuine sympathy and sadness was expressed when nearly all of these people had a story of a friend who had been laid off and their outrage with the insensitive manner in which it had been done. Fear came through at times, fear of losing their job, fear that this work was all they knew thinking they couldn’t do anything else, and the fear of having to start over in a new job. As several had considered this prospect they thought about all of the things that go with starting over, learning the work and the culture of the organization, meeting new people, having to prove themselves, no seniority, little vacation, and possibly less pay. It had only occurred to two of the participants that they had acquired skills that would place them in good stead in the marketplace. They all had excellent computer skills, technical backgrounds, and years of experience in dealing with customers. But most of the participants believed that their jobs had pigeon-holed them, that nothing they had done or learned would be of any value elsewhere and one had the feeling they pictured themselves working as clerks for minimum wage after being fired from the company to which they had given so much of their work lives. It was also obvious that this was a crippling fear, as it is the opinion of this researcher that 8 of these 10 individuals would have taken any position, working any hours, even for less pay, than to leave. And finally, 9 of these individuals had been with this organization for
many years, and every one of them at sometime during the conversation, had made a reference to earlier times, *the good old days*. The times when they took pride in the organization and were proud to tell others where they worked. All 9 commented that those days were gone, there is no joy in Mudville, and hasn’t been for a long time.

**Conclusions**

As a result of this research the following conclusions were reached:

- The layoff experience of these participants was heavily influenced by a lack of trust in the leadership of the organization and the absence of clear, consistent, and frequent communications from the top down. However, local managers that were trusted, communicated up front and honestly, and displayed they valued and appreciated the employees had a positive impact on the employee’s attitudes, not just toward their job but the company in general.

- The role transition experienced by these participants initially had negative effects on their thoughts and attitudes toward the organization and their reaction to downsizing, however, these negative effects seemed to diminish over time.

- Eight of 10 participants fit within the model of response types suggested by Mishra and Spreitzer yet 2 participants said they did not fit all, indicating that in every case the model does not work.
Recommendations

The area of communications within organizations has been the topic of a great deal of research. However, it seems that the communications at different levels of the organization might be fruitful ground for future consideration. In the area of role transition, specifically its effect on reactions to downsizing and the organization, might be better examined through the use of two groups from the same organization, one that experienced role transition and one that did not. A comparison of the two might give a clearer picture of whether there is a transition effect and if it does influence survivors in ways that are not seen in survivors who have not been subjected to a role transition.

Finally, the Mishra-Spreitzer model, in the opinion of this author, merits a closer examination. The typology might be better served by employing a quantitative approach, perhaps through survey research of layoff survivors. Having a reasonable understanding of how people do react under such conditions opens the door to creating an environment that would encourage hopeful survivor responses increasing the chances for success, and decreasing the levels of pain and stress inherent in such an undertaking. Future inquiry might be directed toward what is inherent in the organization, the individual, or both, that would or does nurture hopeful survivor responses.
References


Slocum, J., Jr., Morris, J., Cascio, W., & Young, C. (1999). Downsizing after all these years: Questions and answers about who did it, how many did it, and who benefited from it. *Organizational Dynamics, 27*(3), 78-88.


Spreitzer, G. (2002). Email from Spreitzer to Pfaff, November 22.


--- Original Message ---
From: Kenneth Pleff
Sent: Friday, December 30, 2005 9:48 am
To: XXXXXX
Subject: approval

X XXXX,

My name is Ken Pleff and I am a senior research scholar at Markets in Des Moines, IA. I am currently working on a new research endeavor that involves a doctorate degree at Drake University. Here's what I need to let you know about.

I am doing research for my dissertation, a requirement to complete it. A requirement to complete my dissertation is an understanding of the nature of the research. In that respect, I need to get approval.

The organization in which I am working has asked that I interview 10 individuals who are currently experiencing downsizing. This research is centered on how remaining employees react to the experience of a downsized company. My research has nothing to do with how or why the company downsizes.

My report is not about any company that has downsized and will not use any data from any company. This is approved by my report. If there is a process I should follow through in acquiring and evaluating such approval from XXXXX? If not, an email from you indicating that it's clear to conduct the interviews would be sufficient. If you have any questions or concerns, I would be glad to discuss them.

Thank you,
Ken Pleff 515 241-3806
Appendix A: E-mail approval from company Executive Vice President to conduct the research.

The following is from: Executive Vice President and Chief Human Resource Officer for the company that employs the participants of this study.

Subject:

RE: approval
Date: Sun, 22 Dec 2002 13:13:29 -0700
From: "XXXXXXXXXXXX"
To: "Pfaff, Kenneth"
CC:
"XXXXXXXX"

I don't see any issue as you are doing this on your own time and certainly have/know 10 fellow workers who would probably give you their perspective. Have a good holiday.

barry

-----Original Message-----
From: Kenneth Pfaff
Sent: Friday, December 20, 2002 2:46 PM
To: XXXXXXX
Subject: approval

XXXXX,
My name is Ken Pfaff and I am a Service Manager for National Business Markets in Des Moines, IA. I am currently working on the final stage toward a doctorate degree at Drake University here in Des Moines and preparing to do research for my dissertation. A requirement of the University, depending on the nature of the research, is that approval be granted by not just the participants, but the organization as well. My research proposal involves interviewing 10 individuals who are current ***** employees. The research is centered on how remaining employees react to downsizing within their company. My research has nothing to do with ***** specifically (it could be any company that has downsized) and ***** will not be identified in any way within my report. Is there a process I should be going through to request and hopefully gain such approval from *****? If not, an email from you indicating that it's okay to conduct the interviews would be sufficient. If you should have any questions or concerns I would be glad to discuss them.

Thank you,
Ken Pfaff 515 241-3966
Appendix B: Human subject review
approval form

Return to: Ken Pfaff

Name

113 N. Maplewood

Street Address of Campus Office

Grimes, IA 50111

City, State, Zip (if off campus)

To be completed by the Human Subjects Research Review Committee Chair:

Date received: 5/28/03

Decision:

- [ ] Approval, no risk
- [x] Approval, minimal risk
- [ ] Approval, subjects at risk, but benefits outweigh risks
- [ ] No approval. Subjects at risk or proposal does not adequately address risks, benefits or procedures.

Reasons for Disapproval:

Suggested Changes: You must use pseudonyms only, not actual first names.

HSRRC Chair: [Signature]

Date: 6/2/03
Appendix C: Interview questions

Interview Questions
Trust in management:
Describe your feelings and opinions about top management prior to and during the heavy layoff periods.

Distributive justice:
1. How were victims treated with regards to severance benefits? (For example, severance pay, placement services, training benefits.)
What is your opinion regarding the fairness of these benefits?
2. How would you describe the "distribution of pain"? In other words, was it shared across all levels of the organization? (For example, were upper managers being laid off, did top managers benefit with bonuses etc while people at lower levels of the organization were being laid off or burdened with more work etc.)

Procedural Justice:
1. Tell me how decisions were made as to who would be laid off. (poor performers)
2. Do you feel that the process was fair?
3. How much advance notice were victims given?

Interactional Justice:
1. What reasons were you given by upper management as to the need for layoffs?
2. Did you accept those reasons as legitimate?
3. What did upper management say about how the layoffs would benefit all stakeholders in the company?
4. What did upper management say or do to make survivors, or those that remain on the job, feel valued and appreciated?

Model & Archetypes:
1. Did you feel threatened or feel you could be harmed by the layoffs, in other words, were you worried? (Explain that I want to know if they truly felt worried about the future, for example, some might be feel a threat of job loss but might not care or even welcome it.)
Yes – How? (Destructive)
No – Why? (Constructive)
2. People react or respond to downsizing in either an active or passive way. For example, some are active, willingly take on more work, identify areas where savings could be made, or even sabotage layoff implementation but in doing so are active in their response. While others are passive, they wait to be told what to do, how to cut expenses, etc. Would you describe yourself as active or passive?
Constructive – active = Hopeful
Constructive – passive = Obliging
Destructive – active = Cynical
Destructive – passive = Fearful
3. Using previous studies, two researchers have proposed that survivors of layoffs respond to those layoffs in certain ways. They separate these responses into 4 categories. From what you have just described, your response to the layoffs places you in the category of (x). (describe for the participant that response type) do you feel that is a fair assessment of your response?
4. Yes - Why?
5. No – Why not? How would you categorize your response?

Role Transition:
1. Now I would like you to tell me about your role transition or job change. You were transitioned into a new job as a direct result of downsizing, correct?
2. Before you transitioned into the new job, what was your previous job?
3. Tell me about that job?
4. As a result of the company’s decision to downsize, you transitioned from the job you just told me about into a different job, how long ago did that happen?
5. What was (is) your new job?
6. Share with me the circumstances surrounding that change? (Probe for: why the company eliminated the job. How were you informed. What options did you have. Were you consulted about in advance about changing jobs. How did the decision make you feel. How did the company prepare you for the new work?)
7. Tell me about the position, in particular, things like autonomy, workload, and variety of tasks.
8. I had previously asked you about how you responded to the layoffs and we discussed how your reaction in terms of: constructive/destructive, active/passive, and the model of 4 response types, what effect did your role transition play in how you personally reacted to the company’s downsizing implementation?
9. Do you think that if you were once again forced into a different job you would feel the same? Explain.
10. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your role transition experience?

What advice would you give a leadership team considering layoffs in their company?
Subject: participant
Date: Tue, 21 Jan 2003 13:19:35 -0600
From: Kenneth Pfaff <kpfaff@qwestcom>
Organization: XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

To:
I am currently in the final stage of earning a doctorate degree at Drake University working on my dissertation which is nothing more than a research project. My topic is how employees respond to layoffs in their company. I am looking for individuals who would be willing to participate in my study. Participation consists of an interview that I will conduct and will likely take less than an hour. However, I need participants that fit a specific criteria. That criteria is that as a result of downsizing they experienced a role transition. In other words, I am looking for participants whose jobs changed, not necessarily their job title, but the actual work that they do. I believe that your experiences would make you an excellent candidate. Would you be willing to be one of the participants for the study? All participants will be anonymous, with only myself knowing your identity. Your name will not appear in the written report nor will you be identified. I have permission from xxxxxxx Chief Human Resource Officer, to conduct the study, and from xxxxx to solicit participants within her organization. Let me know if you would be willing to participate and do not hesitate to call me if you have any questions.
Thanks,
Ken Pfaff
Appendix E: E-mail regarding participant volunteers

Subject: Re: participant
Date: Tue, 21 Jan 2003 14:06:16 -0600
From: Kenneth Pfaff <kpaff@qwestcom>
Organization: XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Jackpot!! Thanks
Ken
I'll be getting in touch with everyone some time in the near future, I am
waiting on final approval from my doctoral committee to proceed (really a
formality at this point).

. wrote:
> Ken,
>
> With the Hicap Design work going to Salt Lake my whole team was
> transitioned to different jobs, XXXXXX, XXXXXXX and
> XXXXXXX are all three willing to participate in your study. So feel free
> to contact them.

Reasons for layoffs

Participants were told that layoffs were necessary because:
> Some were never informed of the reason
> Some were given a reason but did not believe it
> Some were told it was a result of economic issues
> Some felt it was to centralize work
> Diversity of opinion indicates a lack of communications

Benefits of downsizing

> Most indicate that benefits of downsizing never relayed to them
> Some indicate that benefits were cost savings
> Diversity of opinion indicates a lack of communications

Threat in downsizing

A threat of unemployment

One form of threat and intimidation

A threat of layoffs

Appendix F: Coding themes

Trust in leadership

Participants believed the company leaders were:
- Dishonest, they considered the leaders untruthful
- Employed poor management style, one of threat and intimidation
- Were out of touch with the company's mission, goals, and the true picture of what goes on at the customer interface level of the company
- Greedy, out to reap all the financial rewards possible regardless of the consequences
- Some participants spoke highly of local managers as a result of the local managers' willingness to share information, their compassion with respect to the turmoil downsizing was creating and displaying that they valued and appreciated those in their charge.

Distribution of the pain of downsizing

- Actual job loss, participants did not believe those at the higher levels of the organization suffered any job loss as a result of downsizing
- Financial gain, participants were convinced that those at the higher levels of the organization made tremendous financial gains in the form of stock options, bonuses, wages and loans while many at the lower levels were losing their jobs.

Reasons for layoffs

Participants were told that layoffs were necessary because:
- Some were never informed of the reason
- Some were given a reason but did not believe it
- Some were told it was a result of economic issues
- Some felt it was to centralize work
- Diversity of opinion indicates a lack of communications

Benefits of downsizing

- Most indicate that benefits of downsizing never relayed to them.
- Some indicate that benefits were cost savings
- Diversity of opinion indicates a lack of communications
Valued and appreciated

- No participant felt valued or appreciated by the company leadership
- Some participants felt they were valued and appreciated by their local managers

Role transition

- Very important for participants to remain employed at this company.
- Participants moved from a job where they were satisfied and felt they were contributing to a position where they felt incompetent and undervalued.
- As participants settled in, they all seemed to accept their new positions and negative attitudes began to change.
- Factor that seemed to influence attitudes: proximity to pension eligibility. Those already eligible for pension and those a long way from pension eligibility had different attitudes with respect to their jobs and the company in general than those in the middle.

Description of any benefits to the subjects
The participant will receive no benefits from participation in this study.

Privacy and confidentiality
The identity of the participants and their employer will be kept confidential and will not appear in the report. However, participant responses may be quoted within the report and the use of first names or if the participant prefers a pseudonym may be required to differentiate between respondents.

Voluntary participation
Participation in this study is completely voluntary. Participants have the right to withdraw from participation at anytime.

I have read the consent form and understand its contents and my rights relating to my participation in this project. I agree, by signing below, to participate.

Participant signature

Date
Appendix G: Consent form

Study Participation Consent Form

Brief explanation of the study
You have been invited to participate in a qualitative study focused on layoff survivors who were assigned a different job as a result of downsizing in their company. The purpose of the study is to explore how layoff survivors responded to the layoffs and their role transition. In general, their response in terms of attitude, commitment, behavior, and general thoughts toward the company and its leadership. Participant involvement will consist of a face to face interview with the researcher focused on the participant’s experience with layoffs and role transition.

Description of any foreseeable risks or discomforts
There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts predicted for the participants of this study.

Description of any benefits to the subjects
The participant will receive no benefits from participation in this study.

Privacy and confidentiality
The identity of the participants and their employer will be kept confidential and will not appear in the report. However, participant responses may be quoted within the report and the use of first names or if the participant prefers a pseudo-name may be required to differentiate between respondents.

Voluntary participation
Participation in this study is completely voluntary. Participants have the right to withdraw from participation at anytime.

I have read this consent form and understand its contents and my rights relating to my participation in this project. I agree, by signing below, to participate.

Participant signature

Date
Appendix H: E-mail correspondence from Gretchen Spreitzer

E-mail correspondence from Gretchen Spreitzer, November 11, 2002:

Hi Kenneth, Your dissertation ideas sound very interesting and promising. WE have published a piece recently which looks at some parts of the model (see below), but I am not aware of other potential tests of the model. Please let us know how your work progresses. Best of luck to you!

Spreitzer, Gretchen, and Mishra, Aneil. (2002). To stay or go: Voluntary survivor turnover following an organizational downsizing. Journal of Organizational Behavior, 23: 707-729.<xml:namespace prefix = o ns = "urn:schemas-

Gretchen M. Spreitzer
Department of Organizational Behavior and HRM
University of Michigan Business School Room A2144
701 Tappan St.
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1234
734.936.2835 (office)
734.936.0282 (fax)
spreitze@umich.edu

-----Original Message-----
From: Kenneth Pfaff [mailto:kpfaff@qwest.com]
Sent: Friday, November 22, 2002 12:37 PM
To: Spreitzer, Gretchen
Subject: Research

Dr. Spreitzer,
In your article Explaining how survivors respond to downsizing: The roles of trust, empowerment, justice, and work redesign, if I understand correctly, you and Dr. Mishra 's theoretical framework suggests that a survivor's appraisal of the situation dictates their response to the downsizing. How work is redesign has an impact on that appraisal. The varying responses to the downsizing make up a typology of survivor responses in which you identify four archetypes (forgive me if I have over simplified). Are you aware of any research since the publication of your article that has been based on your framework or typology? I have not been able to uncover any. I am proposing for my dissertation to conduct a qualitative study that looks at 10 survivors of downsizing, all of whom as a result of downsizing undergone a complete role transition. They have been assigned a completely different job. I would like to determine if and where they fit into your archetypes and how the role transition affected their responses. Any thoughts or suggestions you would care to give would be greatly appreciated.

Thank you,
Ken Pfaff
Appendix I: CEO Response to why layoffs are necessary

Subject: RE: layoffs
Date: Sun, 6 Oct 2002 14:32:45 -0600
From:
To:
Ken
The load has not stayed the same. Remember we are losing a large number of lines to the competition. That makes a big difference. It also equals a need for less jobs.

XXXX

Original Message--
From: Kenneth Pfaff [1]
Sent: Friday, October 04,
To:

Subject: layoffs
2002 12:59 PM

Dear I am taking advantage of your "open email policy" for a purely personal reason so if you do not have the time or the inclination to respond to this I understand. I am working on my doctoral dissertation looking at the effect of role transition on layoff survivors (those who remain on the job). I am interested in your perspective on the reasons for continuing layoffs. I think part if not all of the answer is obvious, trying to become as cost effective expense wise as possible, labor of course being a huge expense. Having been with this company since the ~' -T ~5 days (25yrs) I understand there has historically been "fat" that could and should be trimmed. But with 27000 jobs eliminated since the merger it would seem (to the rank & file) that the cutting should be reaching the bone soon. If you were to ask someone at my level what they think are the reasons for the continued cuts I believe the dominant answer would be "it's a numbers game aimed at pleasing Wall St.". How would you respond to that? Please understand I am not and have no interest in questioning any decisions that are and have been made regarding layoffs. My interest is in expanding my understanding for the sake of my research.
Thank you,
Ken Pfaff