

**THE PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCES OF DOWNSIZING
MANAGERS: A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATORY STUDY**

by

Tracy C. Shroyer

LAURA MARKOS, PhD, Faculty Mentor and Chair

FRANCO GANDOLFI, DBA, Committee Member

NAOMI STANFORD, PhD, Committee Member

Barbara Butts Williams, PhD, Dean

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

Capella University

January, 2013

© Tracy Shroyer, 2013

Abstract

This qualitative exploratory inquiry examined the personal and professional experiences of downsizing managers during decision making, implementation, and managing in the aftermath of downsizing. Existing literature related to managing organizational change, decision making, and downsizing did not yet address managerial experience of downsizing or the personal and professional experiences of downsizing managers. In-depth interviews were conducted with 14 purposefully selected participants drawn from a population of (a) downsizing managers as defined in the study; (b) living within the United States; (c) in their current or prior organization during the last 10 years, so that participants' memories will be fresh; the downsizing experience must have occurred at least 3 months prior to recruiting to ensure participants are not still in the midst of the process or related trauma; and (d) not known by or employed at the same organization as the researcher to prevent researcher bias, avoid existing relationships, and maintain participant privacy and confidentiality. The study findings indicate that downsizing managers face numerous personal and professional impacts because of the challenges and successes faced in their role as a downsizing manager during decision making, implementation, and managing in the aftermath of downsizing. In addition, downsizing managers had experiences that aligned with existing themes in the downsizing literature, and one newly identified theme, *treating downsized employees humanely*. Executive management teams should consider opportunities to provide insight, structure, support, and time to downsizing managers, as these elements may minimize the challenges that downsizing managers experience. Recommendations for future research include further study in organizations that utilize formal downsizing training programs for their

management teams, a similar design study focusing on outsourced consultants who implement downsizings for organizations, and further exploration of managers' humane treatment of employees during organizational change.

Dedication

I dedicate this study to the following people:

To *my husband, Tony*. Without your love, support, and the challenging times we have faced together, I am not sure where I might be. It would be a lonely world without you in my life—that is for sure. You not only instilled a love of rock music in me, but you have been my rock throughout this wild journey. You have made me a stronger person through your love and encouragement, and never tried to hold me back from my aspirations. Throughout this process, you reminded me on a daily basis that I had work to do and believed in me even when I had trouble believing in myself.

To *Paul*, as my journey into this program and this research developed from a conversation we had many years ago.

To *Bill, Danny, Fred, Henri, Joaquin, Kate, Larry, Mindy, Nicholas, Rose, Sam, Teresa, Wanda, and Victor*, the participants in this study (by pseudonym). It took such a long time to find all of you, and I am deeply grateful for your time and dedication to this research. Thank you for exhibiting such strength in reliving your experiences as downsizing managers for this study.

To *downsizing managers* everywhere. What a difficult and trying task you have or had on your hands! I hope you find something in this study that provides comfort in what you have experienced in the past, in the present, and into the future.

To *those who did not believe in me*. For those people who were surprised that I completed each stage of my educational journey to date, and who did not think that a person could overcome the difficulties that life threw at me, this one's for you!

Acknowledgments

I am unsure if I would have ventured down this road less traveled if it was not for several people. Fortunately, they are in my life and my journey has led me to a wonderful place. I would like to acknowledge these individuals here.

- *To my parents*, who sent words of encouragement when I needed them the most. I laughed when my mom told me I experienced the same fear of failure days before I started kindergarten as I had days before submitting my application for this program.
- *To my friends, Becky, Kerry, Nikki and Angie*, for providing opportunities to laugh, scream, cry, and de-stress over the years.
- *To my friend and former manager, Cindy Bertsch*, for looking at me as if I was crazy for thinking about NOT doing this.
- *To my management cheerleaders, especially Rajinder Grewal, Patti Martin, and Suzanne Smits*, for supporting me and continually developing my “rock star” abilities.
- *To my dogs (furry people), Harley and Maverick*, as they provided unconditional love especially during the roughest of days.
- *To my colleagues along this journey, Sandy, Terry, Rich, Jim, Alan, Frances, Karen, Edwina, June, Carolyn, Kara, and numerous others*, as they provided a deeper inspiration and realization that this is possible.
- *To my high school English teacher, Ms. Sidner*, for introducing me to Robert Frost’s *The Road Not Taken*. She read this great work aloud in class my sophomore year of high school and I never forgot realizing at that moment that I wanted to find a career that invigorated the same passion that Frost’s poem ignited in me that day.
- *To my mentor, Dr. Laura Markos*, a woman I would not have known if not for the references of her colleagues. She provided wonderful feedback and a special confidence in me, and was always open to converse on my topic.
- *To my past and current committee members, Dr. Richard Flor, Dr. Franco Gandolfi, and Dr. Naomi Stanford*, for providing valuable feedback and support throughout this process.

Table of Contents

List of Tables	iv
List of Figures	v
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION	1
Introduction to the Study	1
Background of the Study	4
Statement of the Problem	13
Purpose of the Study	15
Rationale	15
Research Questions	16
Nature of the Study	16
Significance of the Study	18
Definition of Terms	19
Assumptions and Limitations	21
Organization of the Remainder of the Study	21
CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW	23
Overview	23
Managing Organizational Change	24
Decision Making	30
Downsizing	36
Downsizing Decision Making	41
Personal and Professional Experiences of Downsizing Managers	51

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY	59
Theoretical Framework	59
Researcher’s Philosophy and Choice of Inquiry Methods	59
Research Design Strategy	61
Field Testing	72
Data Analysis	75
Credibility and Verification	76
Ethical Considerations	78
Methodological Limitations	80
Summary	81
CHAPTER 4. RESULTS	83
The Study and the Researcher	83
Description of the Population and Sample	84
Methodological Approach to Data Analysis	96
Presentation of Data and Results of Analysis	98
Summary of Results	145
CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS	151
Summary of the Results	151
Relationship of the Findings to Existing Literature	159
Implications of the Study Results	167
Limitations	170
Recommendations for Future Research	173

Conclusion	175
REFERENCES	177
APPENDIX A. Researcher Bracketing	198
APPENDIX B. Call for Research Participants	204
APPENDIX C. Interview #1: Participant Screening	206
APPENDIX D. Interview #2: In-depth Interview	209
APPENDIX E. Match of Interview Questions to Research Question	212
APPENDIX F. Interview #3: Member Checking	213

List of Tables

Table 1. Decision-Making Categories in the Literature	32
Table 2. Studies Closest to Yet Distinct From This Study's Research Question	54
Table 3. Research Design Strategy	62
Table 4. Interview Stages of the Study	66
Table 5. Changes to In-Depth Interview Questions	74
Table 6. Study Participant Demographics	85
Table 7. Postdownsizing Impacts on Productivity	108
Table 8. Downsizing Managers' Self-Reports on Emotional Well-Being	117

List of Figures

Figure 1. Mass layoffs and gross domestic product (GDP)	2
Figure 2. Conceptual framework	7
Figure 3. Seminal decision-making models	34
Figure 4. Analysis: Plotting each participants' coded responses across three phases of downsizing: Decision making, implementation, and managing in the aftermath	97
Figure 5. Analysis: Reviewing plotted participants' responses for each theme (existing and new) by each downsizing phase	97
Figure 6. Themes relevant in the experiences of downsizing managers (seven existing themes and one new theme)	98

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Introduction to the Study

Conducting business in the 21st century proves complex and challenging (Goodstein & Boeker, 1991, p. 74; Karp, 2005; Senge, Carstedt, & Porter, 2001; Yukl & Lepsinger, 2006), necessitating solid strategies and successful implementation to create and sustain an organization's livelihood (Kazem, Adcroft, & Willis, 2005; McLean, 2004; Vakola, Soderquist, & Prastacos, 2007; Victor & Franckeiss, 2002). Businesses face myriad options under the umbrella of organizational change, such as restructuring, mergers and acquisitions, or downsizing. This study's focus is downsizing (further detailed in the Definition of Terms and Literature Review sections herein): *the elimination of existing employees' positions*. This study is designed to explore the personal and professional experiences of *downsizing managers*, defined herein as those involved in the processes of decision making on, implementation of, and managing in the aftermath of downsizing.

Economic recessionary periods are the reason that organizations began downsizing (Perry, 1986). The Bureau of Economic Analysis (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2012) defined a recession as "a marked slippage in economic activity," typically indicated by two consecutive quarters of negative growth. Using this indicator, in addition to the recent economic crisis, two previous recessions occurred during the past 2 decades: in 1991 and 2003. In each, mass layoffs followed a pattern of growth and

decline similar to the changes in gross domestic product, or GDP (Figure 1; U.S. Department of Commerce, 2012).

In the US, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (U.S. Department of Labor, 2012) first recorded mass layoffs—layoffs involving 50 or more employees in an organization—in 1996. Since then, mass layoffs peaked in 2001, began a volatile journey thereafter, peaked in 2008, and then declined slightly in 2009 (Figure 1; U.S. Department of Commerce, 2012). There were instances during the period of 1999 through 2008 in which GDP increased as mass layoffs decreased (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2012). During these periods, organizations identified downsizing as a means to trim expenses and streamline processes (Appelbaum & Donia, 2000; Mirabal & DeYoung, 2005; Williams, 2004).

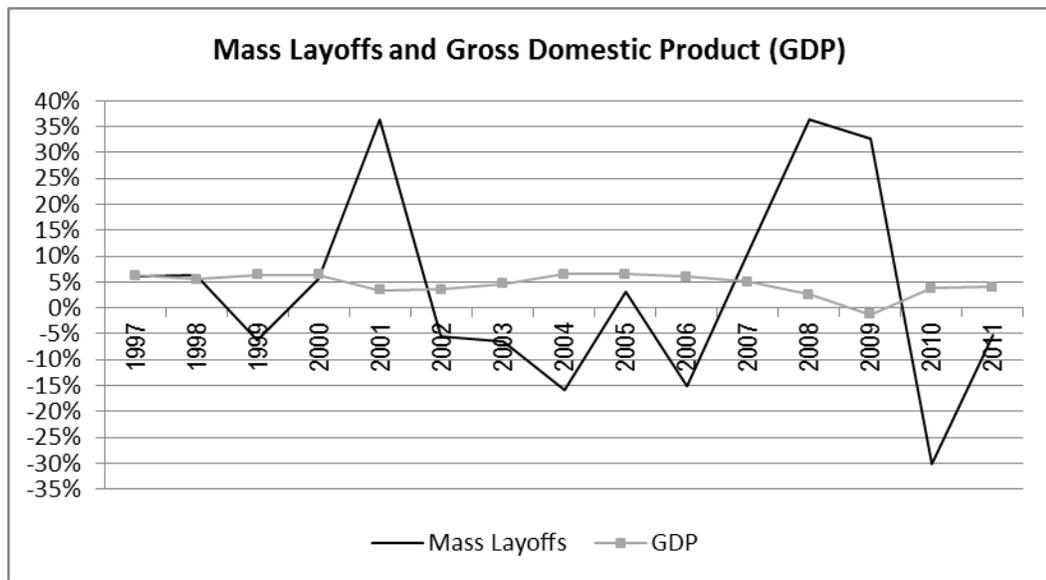


Figure 1. Mass layoffs and gross domestic product (GDP). Mass layoff data from U.S. Department of Labor, 2012. GDP data from U.S. Department of Commerce, 2012. Adapted with permission.

In addition to downsizing for economic reasons (U.S. Department of Labor, 2012), organizations utilize downsizing as a strategy to maintain a competitive edge in the market (Band & Tustin, 1995; Bhattacharyya & Chatterjee, 2005; Birati & Tziner, 2000; Cascio, 1993; Clair & Dufresne, 2004; Palmer, Kabanoff, & Dunford, 1997). Organizations must continually reinvent themselves in order to maintain a competitive foothold in the marketplace (Datta, Guthrie, Basuil, & Pandey, 2010; Peus, Frey, Gerhardt, Fischer, & Traut-Mattausch, 2009; Yukl & Lepsinger, 2006). Surviving through recessionary periods and maintaining a competitive advantage in the marketplace are two of the primary reasons that organizations may choose to downsize. Other reasons that organizations may decide to downsize include deregulation in previously regulated industries, mergers and acquisitions, cuts in military contracts, and automation (Allan, 1997; Cascio, 1993; Clair & Dufresne, 2004; Gandolfi, 2008c; Koeber, 2002; Sahdev, 2003).

Despite the popularity of downsizing as a tactical means for businesses to stay afloat and remain competitive over time, limited literature focuses on the downsizing manager's experience (Gandolfi, 2008b). "Managerial responsibility for change often involves such contradictory demands as balancing human and economic values, combining organizational and personal interests, motivating people and having responsibility of an employer-employee relationship" (Mirabal & DeYoung, 2005, p. 44). Downsizing managers face the personal and professional impacts that the process entails, such as identifying how to communicate changes and managing the emotional responses of victims and survivors (Clair & Dufresne, 2004; Gandolfi, 2008a; Palmer et al., 1997),

while also strengthening the business. Yet the downsizing literature remains focused on the employee, either as a victim (Keyes, 2005; Tamaren, 1995) or as a survivor (Keyes, 2005; Sahdev, 2003, 2004; Self, Schraeder, & Smola, 2005; Tamaren, 1995).

Downsizing managers, who are also downsizing survivors, may exhibit signs of *survivor syndrome*, “mainly characterized by feelings of guilt, for having survived the layoff, and anxiety, reduced motivation and risk taking due to the insecurity of further layoffs” (Appelbaum & Donia, 2000, ¶ 6). Yet despite their dual and central roles in this major trend of downsizing, the specific experiences of downsizing managers related to their responsibilities for downsizing decision making, implementation, and managing in the aftermath are often left untold (Clair & Dufresne, 2004; Gandolfi, 2008c). Perhaps this is due in part to the uncomfortable role that downsizing managers must take on, as well as an organization’s desire to maintain confidentiality surrounding the downsizing. Due to the gap in the literature, limited knowledge exists for and about downsizing managers to prepare to face downsizing decision making, implementation, and managing in the aftermath.

Background of the Study

Organizational downsizing resides within the larger contexts of scholarly and business literature on organizational behavior, organizational change, and organization development, and comprises specific examinations of the personal and professional approaches to and impacts (both positive and negative) of downsizing on employees, as well as the organization, its brand reputation, and its status within the industry and the economy (Band & Tustin, 1995; Bhattacharyya & Chatterjee, 2005; Birati & Tziner,

2000; Cascio, 1993; Clair & Dufresne, 2004; Palmer, Kabanoff, & Dunford, 1997).

Within these broad contexts, this study's examination of downsizing managers' personal and professional experiences during downsizing decision making, implementation, and aftermath focuses on the convergence of three distinct aspects of organizational studies literature:

- the *managing organizational change* literature review includes organizational change models, change management strategies, and the managerial experience of managing organizational change.
- the *decision-making* literature review includes seminal theories and strategies for decision making in general, as well as theories and strategies specific to organizational decision making. Simon (1947) developed the seminal decision-making model (*intelligence-design-choice*) related to behavioral theory. Drucker (1954) expanded upon Simon's model, by providing a detailed decision-making model, which is still in use today.
- the *downsizing* literature review includes the history of downsizing and common themes identified therein, as well as a discussion relative to the well-known and widely utilized organizational change models developed by Kotter (1996) and Ulrich (1998).

Figure 2 illustrates the study's conceptual framework, the key literatures informing the study. Critical examination of these literatures, detailed in Chapter 2, illustrates the need for and informs the design of this study, as summarized and synthesized below.

Managing Organizational Change

Managing organizational change is a difficult task, as a manager may experience a dual role in the process, such as downsizing manager and survivor (Clair & Dufresne, 2004; Dewitt, Trevino, & Mollica, 2003). Numerous change models stem from Lewin's (1951) *unfreezing, movement, freezing* change model. Change models introduced after

Lewin, such as Kotter (1996) and Ulrich (1998), built upon his model and its criticisms, reflecting the evolving complexities of organizations.

The management strategies that continually reappear in the organizational change literature are communication and motivation. Effective communication is critical to successful organizational change (Allen, Jimmieson, Bordia, & Irmer, 2007; Gilley, Gilley, & McMillan, 2009; Pfadenhauer, 2009; Kuchi, 2006). Without open and honest communication within the organization, attempting to initiate and manage change will be extremely challenging and more likely to fail (Thompson, 2005). In addition, motivating employees through communication, empowerment, and reward plays a significant role in combating resistance to change. Chapter 2 explores the organizational change models, management strategies for managing organizational change, as well as the literature focused on management experiences in managing organizational change in greater depth.

Decision Making

The decision-making literature falls into three categories: normative, behavioral, and naturalistic decision making (Holton & Naquin, 2005). The *normative decision-making* model “assumes that a decision maker is completely rational and maximizes his or her economic rewards when making a decision” (Holton & Naquin, 2005, p. 260). The *behavioral decision-making* literature focuses on bounded rationality, wherein the decision maker does not have access to all possible alternatives, and makes the best choice among the alternatives available. There are many approaches to bounded rational decision making (Agosto, 2002; Bazerman, 2006; Hammond, Keeney, & Raiffa, 1998; Harrison & Pelletier, 1995; Hoffrage & Reimer, 2004; Langlely, Mintzberg, Pitcher,

Posada, & Saint-Macary, 1995; Manson, 2006; Radner, 2000; Shubik, 1997; Tiwana, Wang, Keil, & Ahluwalia, 2007). The *naturalistic decision-making* literature focuses on understanding the experiences of decision makers in “real-world contexts” (Lipshitz, Klein, Orasanu, & Salas, 2001, p. 332; Whyte, 2001, p. 384).

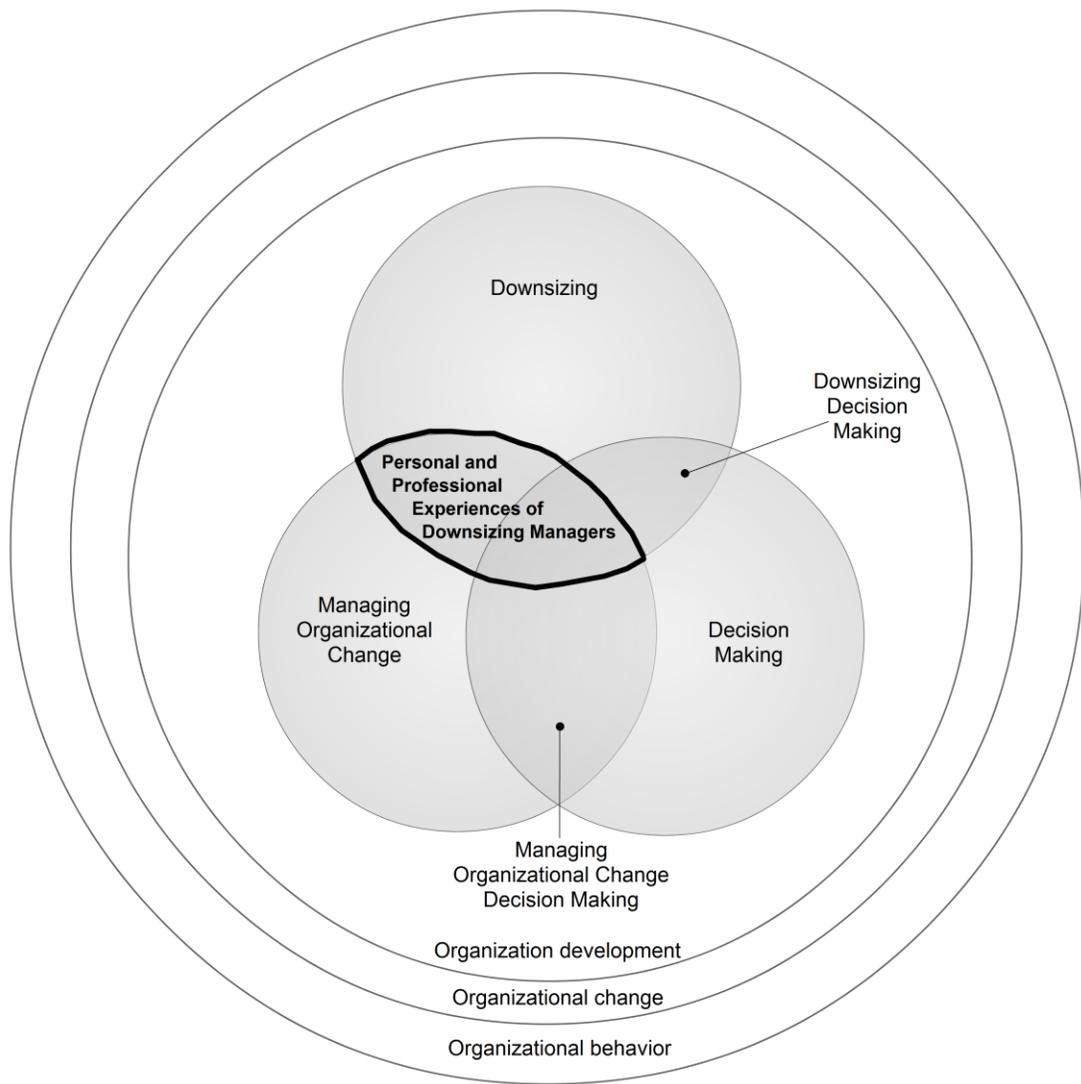


Figure 2. Conceptual framework.

In 1938, Barnard (as cited in Buchanan & O'Connells, 2006) evaluated decision making in the context of the organization; then Simon (1947) developed an initial decision-making model in 1945. Drucker (1954) expanded upon Simon's (1947) decision-making model, in order for organizational leaders to apply the decision-making process efficiently within their environments. Although researchers and consultants adjusted Drucker's (1954) model over time, primarily by adding to it, the basic concepts have held strong through the test of time. Chapter 2 provides information relative to the decision-making theories, models, and the history of organizational decision making.

Change in an organization requires many decisions, some of which may be extremely difficult to make and implement. The primary focus of the literature relative to downsizing decision making is on an executive's use of a decision-making approach to identify the problem, assess the alternatives, weigh the criteria, and then make and later evaluate the decisions made. Few doctoral or scholarly research studies within the last decade highlight the next level of decision making involved, after the decision to downsize: that of the actual downsizing manager's decisions specific to who goes and who stays (Armstrong-Stassen, 2005; Clair & Dufresne, 2004; Dewitt, 1991; Gandolfi, 2008b). Yet these decisions may cause emotional, mental, physical, or social implications to downsized employees, downsizing managers, and survivors (Ahn, Adamson, & Dornbusch, 2004; Barrett, 2002; DiFonzo & Bordia, 1998; Marshak, 2002).

Downsizing

Organizations may choose several human-resources-related paths to reduce costs: maintaining headcount but instituting pay cuts, dark days, and/or furloughs; downsizing;

or a combination of these options (Birati & Tziner, 2000b; Coucke, Pennings, & Sleuwaegen, 2007). Each has pros and cons as respects the best fit for the organization's survival, its employees, and customers ("What drives downsizing decisions?," 2005).

Downsizing is a method by which the organization can cut costs, mainly costly human resources (Band & Tustin, 1995; Bhattacharyya & Chatterjee, 2005; Birati & Tziner, 2000a; Cascio, 1993; Clair & Dufresne, 2004; Palmer et al., 1997). Downsizing involves a 4-phase strategic approach: deciding, planning, implementing, and evaluating the downsizing event (Band & Tustin, 1995). "Downsizing may not be an incidental, but a recurring and perpetual activity" (Gandolfi, 2006, p. 6). Within the *deciding* phase, after executive management decides to downsize, another layer of decision making, which is part of the downsizing manager's job, occurs: deciding which positions, roles, and individuals to eliminate—who to downsize—and how to adjust workloads accordingly among the survivors.

The next two phases, *planning* and *implementation*, involve the careful development of an implementation plan, effective communication of the changes, and handling the challenges involved in implementing the plan (Klein, 1994; Richardson & Denton, 1996). Finally, in the aftermath of the downsized environment, the *evaluating* phase is critical in observing the good and bad of each phase in the process, and enabling management time for reflection, and making any needed corrections, all of which assist in proceeding with business most effectively.

Throughout the literature on downsizing, common themes appear and often align with the phases within Kotter's (1995) large-scale change processes. These themes, further detailed in Chapter 2, include

- *communicating a shared vision* (Farmer, Slater, & Wright, 1998; Farrell & Mavondo, 2004; Herzig & Jimmieson, 2006; Hitt, Keats, Harback, & Nixon, 1994; Newcomb, 1993; Scott-Ladd & Chan, 2004; Sugarman, 2001);
- *managing resistance to change* (Bovey & Hede, 2001; Bryant, 2006; Cameron, 1994; Ford, Ford, & D'Amelio, 2008; Klein, 1994; Macri, Tagliaventi, & Bertolotti, 2002);
- *securing commitment and loyalty* (Asuman & Ayse, 2009; Meyer, Allen, & Topolnytsky, 1998; Richey, 1992; Self, et al., 2005; Thornhill, Saunders, & Stead, 1997);
- *maintaining or restoring morale and motivation* (Mishra & Spreitzer, 1998; O'Brien, 2008; Saksvik et al., 2007; Spreitzer & Mishra, 2002);
- *maintaining productivity and job performance* (Asuman & Ayse, 2009; Cascio, 1993; Lewin & Johnston, 2000; Lewis, 1994; Travaglione & Cross, 2006);
- *coping with survivor syndrome* (Appelbaum, Delage, Labib, & Gault, 1997; Appelbaum & Donia, 2000; Sahdev, 2004; Travaglione & Cross, 2006); and
- *coping with the emotional experience* (Allen et al., 2007; Bordia, Hobman, Jones, Gallois, & Callan, 2004; Gandolfi, 2008d; Paulsen, Callan, Grice, Rooney, & et al., 2005;).

Literature on downsizing has been more prevalent in the last few decades, when organizations chose downsizing among many other alternatives to decrease costs and streamline processes in an attempt to maintain a stable position within a volatile economy (Appelbaum & Donia, 2000; Cascio & Wynn, 2004; Williams, 2004). Since that time, downsizing has become a well-known term in business. Due to the popularity of downsizing among organizations, researchers began seeking out the impacts to employees (professional and personal), and to the organization itself (such as brand

reputation, productivity, position within the industry) to better understand what occurs because of downsizing. A majority of the literature discussing impacts to employees focuses on downsized (Keyes, 2005; Tamaren, 1995) and surviving employees (Keyes, 2005; Sahdev, 2003, 2004; Self, et al., 2005; Tamaren, 1995), reflecting many generalizations and commonalities in the reactions of employees that have experienced and either survived or been victims of downsizing. This information provides individuals with the ability to connect with others that experienced the downsizing phenomenon. Yet limited research focuses on the downsizing manager's role or experience in the downsizing: decision making, implementation, and managing in the aftermath (Band & Tustin, 1995; Clair & Dufresne, 2004; Gandolfi, 2008c).

Despite this resonance of themes of the larger organizational change literature with the more specific subset of downsizing literature, the organizational change literature lacks focus on the experience of the manager faced with the most grueling tasks of downsizing. Instead, the focus is on the reasons for change (as described earlier), and the higher role of executives faced with deciding that a change is necessary (Appelbaum, Close, & Klasa, 1999; Bonanzino, 2002; Cameron, 1994; Lakshman, 2005; Lovvorn, 2008; Mohrman, 2008). The literature does not give similar exposure to the roles and experiences of downsizing managers specifically, which leaves future downsizing managers without information as to what they can expect and will experience during downsizing.

To fill this void, research on this specific topic would connect downsizing managers to the personal and professional experiences of other such managers before

them, just as employees who have experienced downsizing currently have access to experiences of their peers and predecessors. Such research would also inform downsizing organizations' leadership about the impacts of downsizing on some of their most crucial postdownsizing assets, their surviving managers, and potential leaders.

As detailed in Chapter 2, three literatures inform, yet do not fully address, the experience of the downsizing manager:

- The literature relative to *managing organizational change* focuses on managing organizational change models and strategies, including motivating employees and effective communication practices. The existing literature provides useful information on effective communication in such circumstances (Daly, Teague, & Kitchen, 2003; Herzig & Jimmieson, 2006; Kitchen & Daly, 2002), but remains sparse regarding additional skills or methods used by or actual experiences of such managers.
- The *decision-making literature* provides a systematic approach to guide decision-makers in the process. The primary focus of the literature relative to downsizing decision making is on the executive management's use of this approach, as they identify the problem, assess the alternatives, weigh the criteria, and then make and evaluate the decision. Few doctoral and scholarly research studies within the last decade highlight the next level of decision making involved in downsizing, that of the middle manager, specific to deciding who goes and who stays (Armstrong-Stassen, 2005; Clair & Dufresne, 2004; Dewitt, 1991; Gandolfi, 2008a).
- The *downsizing literature*, more prevalent with the frequency of downsizing over the last 2 decades, focuses on managing survivors and helping them to cope with downsizing and move forward. Yet, even in this context, the existing research provides only limited information on the downsizing manager's role and experience. Suggested procedures are scattered throughout, with only one formal process for carrying out a downsizing identified (Band & Tustin, 1995). Seven common themes appear throughout the downsizing literature: communicating a shared vision, managing with resistance to change, securing commitment and loyalty, maintaining or restore morale and motivation, maintaining productivity and job performance, coping with survivor syndrome, and coping with the emotional experience. These themes focus on downsizing victims and survivors, with minimal references specific to downsizing managers' experiences. Chapter 2 further illustrates and examines these themes.

Thus, none of these sources provides a specific qualitative perspective on the personal and professional experience of the downsizing manager.

Statement of the Problem

Downsizing managers have a demanding role when faced with downsizing (Cameron, 1994; Gandolfi, 2008b). The necessary decisions and actions that downsizing managers must make throughout downsizing are difficult, due to the resulting impacts on the organization, its clients, and its people (Keyes, 2005; Sahdev, 2003, 2004; Self et al., 2005; Tamaren, 1995). Although literature is abundant on why companies choose to downsize, and the effectiveness of downsizing, a gap exists in relation to the personal and professional experiences of downsizing managers involved in downsizing decision making, implementation, and managing in the aftermath (Band & Tustin, 1995; Clair & Dufresne, 2004; Gandolfi, 2008c).

As a result of this gap in the literature, downsizing organizations do not know what the U.S. downsizing manager's experience entails. The few existing scholarly research studies documenting other groups of downsizing managers' experiences reveal

- a significant emotional toll (Armstrong-Stassen, 2005; Clair & Dufresne, 2004; Erickson, 2007),
- the likelihood of detachment or distancing as coping mechanisms (Armstrong-Stassen, 2005; Clair & Dufresne, 2004; Gandolfi, 2008a; Paulsen et al., 2005),
- that the role becomes somewhat easier with each downsizing experience (Armstrong-Stassen, 2005; Gandolfi, 2008a), and/or
- a strong emotional response when close relationships with victims and survivors are involved (Clair & Dufresne, 2004; Gandolfi, 2008b).

Also revealed in these scholarly research studies are calls for greater organizational support of downsizing managers:

- a lack of planning, policies, and programs (Appelbaum, Delage, Labib, & Gault, 1997; Cascio, 1993; Gandolfi, 2008d);
- inadequate emotional support (Clair & Dufresne, 2004; Gandolfi, 2008b); and/or
- a need for training materials (Cameron, 1994; Clair & Dufresne, 2004; Gandolfi, 2008b).

The few doctoral or scholarly research studies available were quantitative (Armstrong-Stassen, 2005; Bonanzino, 2002; Erickson, 2007), related only to the executive management level (Bonanzino, 2002; Carritte, 2000), were outside of the United States (Gandolfi, 2008b), and/or focused on various types of organizational change (Bonanzino, 2002; Carritte, 2002), rather than downsizing specifically.

Thus, downsizing managers face a challenging set of tasks (Clair & Dufresne, 2004). The duties involved may begin to take a toll on an individual's ongoing levels of commitment, loyalty, productivity, anxiety, frustration, and anger (Appelbaum et al., 1997; Mishra, Spreitzer, & Mishra, 1998; Richey, 1992; Sahdev, 2003; Self et al., 2005; Thornhill & Gibbons, 1995; Thornhill, Saunders, & Stead, 1997). Downsizing managers are also survivors, at the time of carrying out their downsizing responsibilities.

Downsizing managers' experiences of downsizing "will have a major impact on the attitudes of the employees in general and will affect the job performance, morale, and loyalty of the survivors" (Richey, 1992, p. 11). Without knowledge and understanding of the personal and professional experiences of downsizing managers, or training or support systems that prepare downsizing managers for downsizing, U.S. organizations and their

future downsizing managers will continue to lack the perspective of critical components to and assets for downsizing: the decision-maker, the implementer, and the surviving downsizing manager living within the aftermath.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative, exploratory study was to understand and examine the personal and professional experiences of individual downsizing managers related to their role throughout downsizing decision making, implementation, and aftermath, to inform organizational practice and future related decision making. The personal and professional experiences of downsizing managers documented in this study begin to fill a gap that existed in the literature, which related to what downsizing managers experience during downsizing, both from personal and professional perspectives. The results of this study also uncovered an additional theme not previously noted in the literature.

Rationale

“Research on corporate downsizing shows a need for management to be proactive rather than reactive in implementation of an organizational downsizing program” (Mirabal & DeYoung, 2005, p. 41). The purpose of this study was to illuminate the personal and professional experiences of downsizing managers, as organizations and downsizing managers must be well equipped with knowledge of how to handle the difficult responsibilities that downsizing presents (Band & Tustin, 1995; Cameron, 1994). This study addressed the management dilemma of how organizations prepare for and their managers cope with their own experiences in downsizing decision making, implementation, and its aftermath (Cooper & Schindler, 2006). Existing doctoral and

scholarly research studies and articles related to downsizing tend to focus on the impact to the overall organization, the downsized individual, or surviving employees. Limited literature exists relative to the personal and professional experiences of downsizing managers (Band & Tustin, 1995; Clair & Dufresne, 2004; Gandolfi, 2008c).

Research Questions

This study addresses the management dilemma of how organizations prepare for and their managers cope with their own experiences in downsizing decision making, implementation, and its aftermath (Bonanzino, 2002; Cooper & Schindler, 2006). The central research question (Creswell, 2007, p. 108) of this study is *What is the downsizing manager's experience of downsizing?* Subpoints implicit in and clarifying this central question are the downsizing manager's personal and professional experiences of

- *downsizing decision making,*
- *downsizing implementation, and*
- *managing in the aftermath of the downsizing.*

Nature of the Study

Qualitative methodology allows the researcher to “delve more deeply into people's [downsizing managers'] hidden interpretations, understandings, and motivations” (Cooper & Schindler, 2006, p. 196). This study's research design strategy employed a qualitative, exploratory approach using semistructured, face-to-face, online, or telephone, in-depth interviews, following Seidman's (2006) 3-phase interview approach, with 14 participants, selected through purposive sampling to capture their experiences (Creswell, 2007).

Purposive sampling (Noy, 2008), within management association and workforce development networks, served as the method of identifying participants. The study participants met the following criteria:

- downsizing managers as defined herein, in their current or prior organization during the last 10 years, so that participants' memories will be fresh; the downsizing experience must have occurred at least 3 months prior to recruiting, to ensure participants are not still in the midst of the process or related trauma (DeLisi, Maurizio, Yost, & Papparozi, 2003);
- located within the United States;
- not previously known to nor employed in the same organization as the researcher, to prevent researcher bias, avoid existing relationships, and maintain participant privacy and confidentiality (Costley & Gibbs, 2006).

In-depth interviewing allowed study participants to describe their experiences and insights in detail (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Data analysis employed these techniques:

- *generating meaning* by pulling out significant statements and formulating the meaning for each statement (Creswell, 2007);
- *coding* to “break up and categorize the data into simpler, more general categories” (Ruona, 2005, p. 241);
- *thematic analysis* to identify similarities across the participants' experiences (Boyatzis, 1998); and
- *composite descriptions* to provide a summary description of the participants' experience, including what happened, how it happened, and the essence of the experience (Creswell, 2007).

Findings were reported through participant profiles (Seidman, 2006), descriptions reflecting significant statements and generated meanings, as well as through thematic analysis and a composite description illustrated by verbatim participant quotes (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

As noted in Chapter 3, my own experience with downsizing is as a surviving employee, not a downsizing manager. *Bracketing* works to identify and disclose researcher preconceptions, realize and relieve one's own thoughts and experiences, and remove researcher bias relative to the focus of the study (Creswell, 2007; Creswell & Miller, 2000; Gearing, 2004). Bracketing enabled me to write out my preconceived notions, personal experiences, and questions about the downsizing and the role of a downsizing manager, as illustrated in Appendix A. Although I was not a downsizing manager, many of my former colleagues and good friends took on this role within our organization. Referring to the bracketing exercise prior to the participant interviews and revisiting these notes helped to identify my learning and any connections with my preconceived notions, personal experiences, and questions concerning the personal and professional experiences of downsizing managers. Chapter 3 further details study methods, ethical considerations, and methodological limitations.

Significance of the Study

With the continuous use of downsizing in all industries, organizational leaders and downsizing managers must understand the managerial challenges involved in downsizing (Clair & Dufresne, 2004). The results of this study illuminate the perspectives of downsizing managers who have experienced downsizing decision making, implementation, and managing in the aftermath, providing them with a voice toward various facets of the organization and its various stakeholders:

- *to the organization's executive management team*, unveiling a detailed reflection of the challenges involved in the process and position of the downsizing manager, which informs executive leadership's high-level strategy

and decision making on downsizing and its ultimate impacts from the perspectives of surviving managers;

- *among and to other managers* who may someday take on a similar role, to illustrate the complexities of the situation and avail an opportunity to reflect on the personal and professional experiences of others to better prepare for and cope with their own experiences in downsizing decision making, implementation, and its aftermath (Bonanzino, 2002);
- *to employees, clients, and other organizational stakeholders* to provide understanding and appreciation of the challenges associated with the situation and role of a downsizing manager; and
- *to the scholar-practitioner community*, contributing to the academic and professional literature related to downsizing, from the downsizing manager's perspective. This study provides a glimpse into the experience of a downsizing manager and may assist this community in preparing for future downsizing and identifying tools and coping strategies within the process as it occurs.

Accordingly, each of these key stakeholder groups may better understand the downsizing manager's experiences in the face of downsizing decision making, implementation, and aftermath, which in turn may better inform overall business decision making affecting the lives and livelihoods of organizations' human assets.

Definition of Terms

Key terms as used throughout this study are defined as follows:

Downsizing. Although there is no one definition of downsizing within the literature (Gandolfi, 2008c), many researchers and consultants have defined it in order to conduct their research, as detailed in Chapter 2. In the 1990s, *a reduction in employees in the organization* defined downsizing (Appelbaum, Close, & Klasa, 1999; Cascio, 1993; Freeman, 1999; Mentzer, 1996). Cameron (1994) took the definition a bit further to not only include the elimination of positions, but also the redesign of work processes as representative of downsizing. Definitions used in the last 2 decades include the action of

reducing headcount as an organizational strategy, and provide reasoning: to create efficiencies within the organization for improved performance (Clair & Dufresne, 2004; Mirabal & DeYoung, 2005; Datta et al, 2010). Other terms for downsizing include *layoffs*, *reductions in force*, not replacing employees after *attrition* or extending retirement packages, and *workforce reductions*. For the purposes of this study, the definition of downsizing is *the elimination of existing employees' positions*. Downsizing begins when members of the organization consider downsizing as an option and ends with managing in the aftermath of the downsizing. Downsizing as described in this study includes downsizing decision making, implementation, and managing in the aftermath of the downsizing (Clair & Dufresne, 2004).

Downsizing manager. An individual “with responsibilities for planning, carrying out, and dealing with the aftermath of a downsizing” (Clair & Dufresne, 2004, p. 1598); employed by the downsizing organization, typically within middle- to upper-management positions, in both line (i.e., operations) and staff (e.g., human resources, as well as other staff roles). Chapter 3 details selection criteria for participants.

Personal and professional experience. The “human experience in all its complexity, as it is concretely lived” (Finlay, 2009, p. 474). The study of experiences “aims to capture subjective, ‘insider’ meanings and what the lived experience feels like for individuals” (Finlay, 2009, p. 475), herein encompassing both the personal and professional experience of the participants.

Assumptions and Limitations

The study design assumed that participants would provide open, honest, and candid feedback. I worked to establish rapport with and ensure privacy, security, and anonymity to the participants, to help build the level of trust they have in the project and me as the researcher, in turn providing an opportunity for further openness in telling their stories (Seidman, 2006).

This study is limited to the experience of downsizing managers within the organization versus outside individuals who may consult with the organization to assist with downsizing (Clair & Dufresne, 2004). This study assumed that the experience of the downsizing manager is unique, as both downsizing manager and a survivor (Clair & Dufresne, 2004).

Chapter 3 details the study's methodological limitations. Chapter 5 revisits the study's assumptions and limitations in light of the research, analysis of results, and evaluation of findings against the literature.

Organization of the Remainder of the Study

Chapter 2 presents a critical review of the literature informing this study. Specifically, the literature review examines downsizing, decision making, and the managing organizational change, and extends into each of these areas specific to their connection to downsizing: decision making, implementation, and managing in the aftermath. Chapter 3 details the study's choice of qualitative research paradigm, participant selection criteria, and specific methods for data collection and analysis. After the conduct of the research, Chapter 4 presents the findings and results of analysis. In

conclusion, Chapter 5 discusses the findings, draws conclusions, compares the results to existing literature, provides implications to the research, and makes recommendations for further study.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

This study addresses the management dilemma of how organizations prepare for and their managers cope with their personal and professional experiences in downsizing decision making, implementation, and managing in its aftermath, as introduced in Chapter 1 (Bonanzino, 2002; Cooper & Schindler, 2006). A gap exists in the literature specific to the personal and professional experiences of downsizing managers, with attention given instead to the experiences and impacts on downsizing victims and survivors (Band & Tustin, 1995; Clair & Dufresne, 2004; Dewitt et al., 2003; Gandolfi, 2008a).

To inform this study's design, this chapter presents a critical review of the existing literature currently informing the research question: at a high level in the larger contexts of organizational behavior, organizational change, and organization development; and in greater detail in the literature related to downsizing, decision making, and managing organizational change, and the intersections of the three main bodies of literature related to this study; all as were introduced in Chapter 1 and illustrated in Figure 2. This review of the literature illustrates that a clear gap exists specific to the personal and professional experiences of downsizing managers, with the literature focusing on the experiences and impacts on downsizing victims or survivors (Band & Tustin, 1995; Clair & Dufresne, 2004; Dewitt et al., 2003; Gandolfi, 2008a).

The three larger areas of literature surrounding this study, as mentioned in Chapter 1 and illustrated in Figure 2, are organizational behavior, organizational change, and organization development.

- “Organizational behavior is the study of individuals and groups within an organizational context, and the study of internal processes and practices as they influence the effectiveness of individuals, teams, and organizations” (Hellriegel & Slocum, 2007, p. 5).
- Organizational change is ”a process of planned change that results in a growth in capability, a seasoning, perhaps even an alignment of organization activity” (Walton & Russell, 2004, p. 133).
- “*Organization development [OD] is system-wide process of applying behavioral-science knowledge to the planned change and development of the strategies, design components, and processes that enable organizations to be effective. OD addresses an entire system, such as a team, department or total organization. It also deals with relationships between a system and its environment as well as among the different features that comprise a system’s design*” (Cummings, 2004, p. 5).

The three larger bodies of literature mentioned above create the foundation for this study, focused on the personal and professional experiences of managers (organizational behavior), involved in downsizing (organizational change), and more specifically their experiences with downsizing decision making, implementation, and managing in the aftermath (organization development).

Managing Organizational Change

“Recent decades have seen increasing emphasis on change as a critical driver of organizational success” (Gilley et al., 2009, p. 76). These organizational changes “pose daunting managerial challenges” (Luscher & Lewis, 2008, p. 221) including changing relationships, changing organization, and changing roles. This literature informed the

study design in terms of insight into organizational change models, change management strategies, and managerial experiences with organizational change.

Organizational Change Models

In 1930, Lewin (as cited in Burnes, 2007) initiated a series of organizational behavioral studies at a pajama plant in rural Virginia. The Harwood Studies, the name given to this research, focused on group decisions, self-management, leadership training, changing stereotypes, and overcoming resistance to change. These studies broke significant ground in the organizational change and organizational behavior research, because they

played a central role in the development of Lewin's work on change, played a key role in moving research on group behavior and group change from the laboratory into the real world, provided the test bed for and laid the foundations of the philosophy and approach to change adopted by the OD movement, and the studies ran for more than 30 years in one organization and are one of the rare examples of a genuinely longitudinal study. As such, they provide significant support for the efficacy of participative management. (Burnes, 2007, p. 214)

The Harwood Studies, like many other organizational studies, such as the Hawthorne experiments, Maslow's hierarchy of needs, Herzberg's work on motivation, and McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y approach to management (all as cited in Burnes, 2007), provided meaningful and continually useful contributions to organizational behavior and organizational change literature.

Organizational change models provide a structure and pathway for the change process to move from theory to practice.

Early models of change management followed a relatively simple three-step process that included evaluating and preparing a firm for change, engaging change, and solidifying the change into the fabric of employee's daily lives. Lewin's (1951) classic model, for example, consists of unfreezing, movement,

and refreezing. Unfreezing entails assessment of the current state and readying individuals and organizations for change. Movement occurs when individuals engage in the change process. Refreezing anchors new ways and behaviors into the daily routine and culture of the firm. (Gilley et al., 2009, p. 77)

Lewin's Harvard Studies operationalized and illuminated the three stages of his change model (Burnes, 2007).

Since the development of the early change models, "extensive, multi-step frameworks have evolved" (Gilley et al., 2009, p. 77), such as Ulrich's (1998) 7-step model or Kotter's (1996) 8-step model, both notably prevalent in more recent change literature. The criticisms of Lewin's (1951) change model included lack of focus on the complexity of the change environment, inability to fit large-scale organizational change, and lack of focus on the human factor: the organization's employees (Gilley et al., 2009; Mathews, 2009). Kotter's (1996) and Ulrich's (1998) change models addressed these criticisms of Lewin's change model. Although Ulrich's (1998) change model is more recent, Kotter's (1996) change model is the current and most widely accepted change model within organizations (Periyakoil, 2009; Varkey, 2010). Kotter's (1996) change model has eight steps: establishing a sense of urgency, forming a powerful guiding coalition, creating a vision, communicating the vision, empowering others to action on the vision, planning for and creating short-term wins, consolidating improvements and producing still more change, and institutionalizing new approaches. In order to implement the steps within an organizational change model, it is imperative that downsizing managers are aware of management strategies that are beneficial to organizational change, such as downsizing.

Organizational Change Management Strategies

“Leading employees to support the changes is critically important for the success of any organizational change initiative” (Peus et al., 2009, p. 159). Resistance to change is a natural reaction, which effective management strategies within the organization may reduce (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999; Gill, 2003; Peus et al., 2009). The management strategies that continually reappear in the organizational change literature include communicating effectively and motivating employees (Gilley et al., 2009).

Effective communication from management is critical to successful organizational change (Allen et al., 2007; Gilley et al., 2009; Pfadenhauer, 2009; Kuchi, 2006).

The general communication style of the manager will also determine the motivation level of staff members. Individuals are certainly not motivated by cold, disinterested or faceless managers who use e-mails as their preferred medium of communication or give terse instructions and orders. . . we have to realize that everything we do and say (or do not do and say), as well as the image we project, communicates a message to people. We often forget that, as managers, our every action, word and mood-shift is [*sic*] watched closely by those who report to us. It is even more scary to think that we are looked upon as the role model of acceptable behavior and communication in the organization. (Kavanagh, 2003, p. 3)

Good communication sets a solid foundation for organizational change (Thompson, 2005), while poor communication results in higher potential for mistakes, low morale, and turnover (Messmer, 2005). Timely and concise communication up, down, and across the organization, reduces negative effects, as it provides clarity and greater understanding (Thompson, 2005). Open and honest communication by managers within the organization increases the likelihood of employees’ openness and motivation to change (Peus et al., 2009).

There are diverse methods to motivate employees, and motivation is a significant tool used to pull employees together towards a shared vision (Baum & Locke, 2004; Palo & Panigrahi, 2004). In the 1950s, Herzberg's (as cited in Sachau, 2007), motivation-hygiene theory challenged the idea of pay serving as a primary motivator, instead stating that personal growth and relationships served as primary motivators to employees. Employee empowerment is a management strategy that increases employees' motivation and commitment to the organization (Sahoo, Behera, & Tripathy, 2010). Managers may identify opportunities to involve employees in the planning and implementation of strategic projects (Yukl & Lepsinger, 2006, p. 4). Employees involved in strategic planning and recipients of communication surrounding change are more likely to feel empowered (Banutu-Gomez & Banutu-Gomez, 2007; Herzig & Jimmieson, 2006; Karp, 2005; Yukl & Becker, 2006). Employee involvement "endorses employee's desired behavior by generating a psychological ownership of decision and action" (Palo & Panigrahi, 2004, p. 4).

Communicating effectively and motivating employees are management strategies that continually appear in the organizational change literature (Gilley et al., 2009). Ineffective communication provides a higher potential for mistakes, low morale, and turnover (Messmer, 2005), while unmotivated employees have a strained or nonexistent psychological contract with the organization (Kark & Van Dijk, 2007; Sahdev, 2004). Effective communication and employee motivation within the organization decrease resistance to change, and increase the likelihood for employee buy-in and commitment to change (Peus et al., 2009).

Managerial Experience of Managing Organizational Change

The human resources management and organizational change literatures pointed to the effectiveness of communication during difficult situations (Daly, Teague, & Kitchen, 2003; Herzig & Jimmieson, 2006; Kitchen & Daly, 2002), but sparsely addressed additional skills or methods used by or actual experiences of managers. The managerial experience of organizational change is largely ignored and rare (Doyle, Claydon, & Buchanan, 2000; Luscher & Lewis, 2008), as “such investigations require exceptionally intimate, real-time, and longitudinal research access” (Luscher & Lewis, 2008, p. 221).

Managing Organizational Change Synthesis

The literature relative to managing organizational change informed this study’s design with respect to the models (Lewin, as cited in Burnes, 2007; Kotter, 1996) and strategies available to managers involved in organizational change (Baum & Locke, 2004; Kavanaugh, 2003; Peus et al., 2009; Palo & Panigrahi, 2004). Kotter’s change model integrated and addressed the criticisms of Lewin’s seminal change model, providing a practical and useful model for organizations. Current themes in the downsizing literature align closely to the stages of Kotter’s model, further supporting the ongoing applicability and usefulness of Kotter’s change model in current organizations. The downsizing section later in Chapter 2 further explores the common themes in the downsizing literature including insight into the comparative stage of Kotter’s change model for each theme. Although the organizational change literature provides change models and management strategies for managers facing organizational change, the

literature does not address this study's research question, specific to the central issue of the manager's *experience* when facing organizational change such as downsizing.

Decision Making

One critical aspect of leading and managing organizational change is decision making (Clair & Dufresne, 2004). The primary focus of the organizational change literature is on an executive's use of a decision-making process to identify the problem, assess the alternatives, weigh the criteria, and then make and later evaluate the decisions made. This section provides an overview of decision-making theories, and the models that have evolved from them. In addition, this section explores the history of organizational decision making and seminal organizational decision-making processes that are still in use today.

Decision-Making Strategies

As noted in Chapter 1, there are three distinct theories in the decision-making literature: *normative* (prescriptive), *behavioral* (descriptive), and *naturalistic* (Beach, 1997). The “[*prescriptive*, or] *normative decision-making theory* noted that decision makers strive to do what is best while providing the optimal payoff for themselves or their organization” (Holton & Naquin, 2005, p. 260). Normative decision making involves maximizing rewards and minimizing costs simultaneously (Beach, 1997; Holton & Naquin, 2005).

The *descriptive, or behavioral decision-making theory* literature focused on bounded rationality, wherein the decision maker does not have access to all possible alternatives, and makes the best choice among the alternatives available. This particular

theory focused on the “psychological dimension of decision making and more closely describes how people actually make decisions” (Holton & Naquin, 2005, p. 262).

Naturalistic decision-making theory, the newest of the decision-making theories, focused on “what decision makers actually do (“naturally”) rather than with theories about what they should do” (Beach, 1997, p. 142). Naturalistic decision-making theory was born in the late 1980s, as a branching out of normative and behavioral decision making, by exploring the actual process used, rather than the process that should be used (as identified in the normative decision-making theory). Additionally, in naturalistic decision making, the decision maker is viewed as being “constrained by the position he or she holds in that organization” (Holton & Naquin, 2005, p. 266), causing the decision maker to consider less than all of the available alternatives (Beach, 1997). Due to the newness of this theory in the literature, additional research related to naturalistic decision making would benefit management within organizations, as it would provide insight into the natural progression of decision making (Whyte, 2001).

Within the decision-making theories lie a myriad of decision-making models (Dillon, 1998), which “provide the mechanisms by which events occur in a particular part of the theory’s realm,” (Beach, 1997, p. 12). Table 1 illustrates the models evident in the last 2 decades.

Organizational Decision Making

Barnard (as cited in Buchanan & O’Connell, 2006) was the first theorist to focus on decision making from an organizational perspective, as organizational decision making “explained why some employees act in the firm’s interest rather than their own”

(Buchanan & O'Connell, 2006, p. 28). Barnard's colleague, Simon (1947) elaborated on his work relative to organizational decision making in *Administrative Behavior: A Study of Decision Making Processes in Administrative Organizations*, last revised just years prior to his death (Simon, 1997).

Table 1. *Decision-Making Theories in the Literature*

Theories	Description	Models
Normative (prescriptive)	Maximize rewards and minimize costs (rational)	(Abbas & Matheson, 2005; Brown & Finstuen, 1993; Hofmann, Hoelzl, & Kirchler, 2008; Nutt, 2008; Terek, 2009; Tomer, 1992)
Behavioral (descriptive)	Compare/contrast actual to normative model (bounded rationality)	(Agosto, 2002; Bazerman, 2006; Hammond, Keeney, & Raiffa, 1998; Harrison & Pelletier, 1995; Hoffrage & Reimer, 2004; Langley, Mintzberg, Pitcher, Posada, & Saint-Macary, 1995; Manson, 2006; Radner, 2000; Shubik, 1997; Tiwana, Wang, Keil, & Ahluwalia, 2007)
Naturalistic	Observe limitations on decision maker due to structure/norms	(Bordley, 2001; Clemen, 2001; Lipshitz, Klein, Orasanu, & Salas, 2001; Whyte, 2001)

Simon's *Administrative Behavior* diverged from Barnard's work in some significant ways. His emphasis on decision making and decision processes was more central, creative, and extensive. He generalized many of the principles of private business to the public sector. Finally, he called for us to bring the tools of a logical positivist version of social science to the field of administrative theory. These changes, the authors believe, helped Simon's work to receive much of the subsequent attention and accolades that it did. It was easier to read than Barnard's; it was more focused on a central theme; it appealed to a wider audience; and it had a research flavor. (Mitchell & Scott, 1988, p. 357)

Simon's (1947) work earned him the Nobel Peace Prize (2011) in economic sciences in 1978 for establishing the dominant line of research in organizational theory with his model of the decision-making process as a three-phase *intelligence-design-choice* sequence.

- *Intelligence*: This stage includes “searching the environment for conditions calling for decision” (Simon, 1960, p. 2), in order to properly identify the problem and set objectives. Decision makers who fail to identify the problem may experience increased timelines and confusion throughout the remainder of the process, if they are able to make progress at all.
- *Design*: This stage includes “inventing, developing, and analyzing possible courses of action” (Simon, 1960, p. 2) through the generation and evaluation of alternatives to solve the problem. Generating alternative solutions arms the decision maker with multiple methods in which to solve the problem. Decision makers who fail to identify alternatives for consideration may overlook a solution that saves time, money, and resources.
- *Choice*: This stage involves “selecting a particular course of action from those available” (Simon, 1960, p. 2).

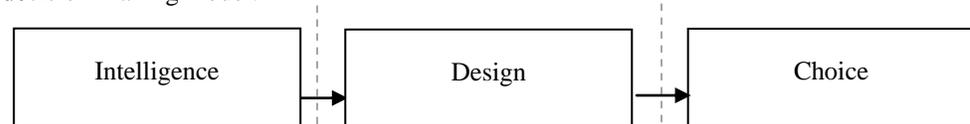
Drucker (1954), known as the *father of management* (Johnson, 1995), expanded upon Simon’s (1947) decision-making model. Drucker (1954) detailed his decision-making model in *The Practice of Management*, in a five-stage process:

1. *Define the problem*: It is important to identify and understand what the problem is, and that there may not be one solution to solve it. Managers must identify their objectives and what risks they are willing to accept.
2. *Analyze the problem*: This stage is important because it requires that the decision maker carefully analyze the exact problem, so that the decisions made are geared towards a long-term solution.
3. *Develop alternative solutions*: This stage involves the generation and evaluation of alternatives to solve the problem. Generating alternatives enables decision makers to brainstorm a variety of opportunities to explore in order to make a sound rationale decision.
4. *Decide upon the best solution*: During this stage, the decision maker should evaluate the potential alternatives in relation to their ability to solve the problem. Aspects to consider during the evaluation include costs, benefits, financial impacts, intangibles, time, feasibility, resources, risk, and ethics. Once the evaluation is complete, the decision occurs.
5. *Convert the decision into action*: This stage involves the implementation of the decision made in the prior stage. The final step in making a decision is important, because not only does it signal the end of the process for a particular problem, but also that it acts on a solution to the problem.

Drucker’s model transformed Simon’s decision-making model from its high-level conceptual design into a process that could be easily understood and integrated within organizations, as illustrated in Figure 3.

Seminal Decision-Making Models

Simon’s (1947) decision-making model:



Drucker’s (1954) decision-making model:

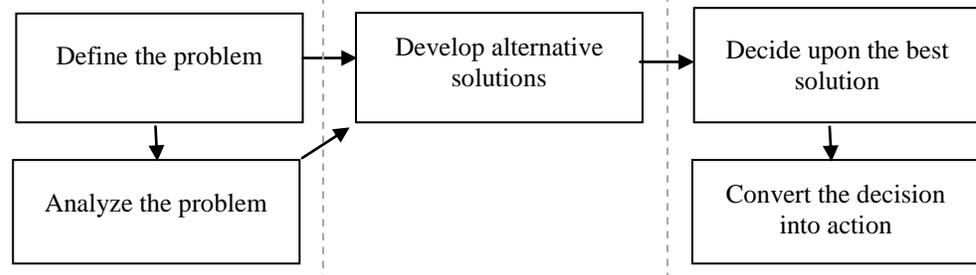


Figure 3. Seminal decision-making models. Original work illustrating and comparing Simon’s (1947) and Drucker’s (1954) process elements.

Managers continue to use Drucker’s (1954) decision-making model to make decisions within the organization today. A few scholars and management consultants have published similar decision-making models that expand upon Drucker’s model (Hammond, Keeney, & Raiffa, 1998; Harrison & Pelletier, 1995). Hammond et al. (1998) break Drucker’s element of *developing alternate solutions* into five specific elements: creating alternatives, understanding consequences, grappling with tradeoffs, clarifying uncertainties, and thinking about risk tolerance. Additionally, Hammond et al. (1998) included the concept of *linked decisions*, which involves thinking about the connections (and impacts) that may exist between the current decisions needed and future decisions.

Harrison and Pelletier took the decision-making model a step further to include an additional element focused on follow up and control over the decision.

All of these organizational decision-making models provide a solid foundation and process for managers to use within their organizations to structure more effective decision making. Nevertheless, times of organizational change may bring on added stress to downsizing managers as well as downsized employees and survivors.

Managerial Experience with Organizational Change Decision Making

Managers make decisions on a regular basis, spanning easy and difficult choices, all of which are a required part of the job (Stainer, 2004). The first stage in Lewin's (1951) change model is unfreezing, which "entails assessment of the current state and readying individuals and organizations for change" (Gilley et al., 2009, p. 77). Managers faced with decision making during organizational change must decide what needs to change (people, processes), and how to implement the change within the organization. In addition, although the organizational change decisions are important, the methods by which they are communicated matter just as much (Messmer, 2005).

Decision-Making Synthesis

The decision-making literature informed the research question as respects the decision-making models available to managers facing organizational change. Yet, the decision-making literature does not inform the research question as respects the managerial experience of organizational change decision making. The organizational change and decision-making literatures provided decision-making models for

organizational change, such as downsizing, but did not provide information specific to the personal and professional experiences of the individuals that use these models.

Downsizing

Organizations and individuals alike review their financial situations and reduce costs in order to maintain profitability or to break even. As introduced in Chapter 1 and illustrated in Figure 1, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (U.S. Department of Labor, 2012) reported significant spikes in mass layoffs most recently in 2001 and 2008, signifying times when organizations considered and implemented downsizing as a means to trim expenses and streamline processes (Appelbaum & Donia, 2000; Mirabal & DeYoung, 2005; Williams, 2004). This section will explore the history and strategy of downsizing, the importance of studying downsizing, and common themes identified in the downsizing literature.

Prior to the 1980s, downsizing occurred as a result of automated manufacturing technologies (Perry, 1986). In the 1980s, organizations all over the world began using downsizing as a response not only to technological advances (Gandolfi, 2008d), but also in response to difficult economic conditions (Perry, 1986). Companies such as Xerox, Polaroid Corporation, Honeywell, and numerous Bell telephone subsidiaries chose to downsize in order to stay afloat (Allan, 1997; Perry, 1986).

Over the last 2 decades, downsizing has expanded to include professional, managerial, and service workers, and organizations now use it as a proactive approach to efficiency and effectiveness with the organization and as a strategy to maintain a competitive advantage in the industry (Bhattacharyya & Chatterjee, 2005; Clair &

Dufresne, 2004; Koeber, 2002). Downsizing has moved to the forefront of survival strategies for organizations as “the quickest way to cut costs and bring about immediate, visible improvements to the bottom line” (Smith, Wright, & Huo, 2008, p. 74). The increase in globalization, technological advances, deregulation, and growing domestic and foreign competition, led to an increased use of downsizing to reduce expenses *and* achieve greater efficiency and effectiveness (Cameron, 2004; Clair & Dufresne, 2004; Mirabal & DeYoung, 2005; Datta et al., 2010).

Major Themes in Downsizing Literature

As noted above, downsizing research and literature have increased vastly over the last 2 decades, coinciding with the increased use of downsizing within organizations across the globe. Seven common themes emerged within the downsizing literature:

- *communicating a shared vision* (Farmer et al., 1998; Farrell & Mavondo, 2004; Herzig & Jimmieson, 2006; Hitt et al., 1994; Newcomb, 1993; Scott-Ladd & Chan, 2004; Sugarman, 2001);
- *managing resistance to change* (Bovey & Hede, 2001; Bryant, 2006; Cameron, 1994; Ford, Ford, & D'Amelio, 2008; Klein, 1994; Macri, Tagliaventi, & Bertolotti, 2002);
- *securing the commitment and loyalty* process (Asuman & Ayse, 2009; Meyer, Allen, & Topolnytsky, 1998; Richey, 1992; Self, et al., 2005; Thornhill, Saunders, & Stead, 1997);
- *maintaining or restoring morale and motivation* (Mishra & Spreitzer, 1998; O'Brien, 2008; Saksvik et al., 2007; Spreitzer & Mishra, 2002);
- *maintaining productivity and job performance* (Asuman & Ayse, 2009; Cascio, 1993; Lewin & Johnston, 2000; Lewis, 1994; Travaglione & Cross, 2006);
- *coping with survivor syndrome* (Appelbaum, Delage, Labib, & Gault, 1997; Appelbaum & Donia, 2000; Sahdev, 2004; Travaglione & Cross, 2006); and

- *coping with the emotional experience* (Allen et al., 2007; Bordia et al., 2004; Gandolfi, 2008d; Paulsen et al., 2005).

The remainder of this section explores these themes in detail. Although these themes encompass experiences with regards to downsizing, the organizational change and downsizing literatures do not provide details on how or if these themes differ for downsizing managers during downsizing decision making, downsizing implementation, and managing in the aftermath.

Communicate a shared vision. Once the organization identifies the urgency of and makes a decision to change (Kotter, 1995), it is critical to *communicate a shared vision* throughout the organization (Farrell & Mavondo, 2004; Herzig & Jimmieson, 2006; Scott-Ladd & Chan, 2004). A vision provides direction, motivates action, and aligns individuals (Kotter, 1996). “One of the toughest challenges facing organizations [amidst change] today is to generate employee commitment to vision and business strategy” (Shaffer, 1997, p. 16). Open and consistent communication of the vision by organizational leadership provides a solid foundation for moving toward employee commitment to change (Farrell & Mavondo, 2004; Herzig & Jimmieson, 2006; Kotter, 1996; Scott-Ladd & Chan, 2004; Sugarman, 2001).

Managing resistance to change. *Managing resistance to change* is a common theme in the downsizing literature, and one which highlights a common reaction of employees to change: resistance (Bovey & Hede, 2001; Bryant, 2006; Cameron, 1994; Ford, Ford, & D'Amelio, 2008; Klein, 1994; Macri, Tagliaventi, & Bertolotti, 2002). These resistive or restraining forces may involve “preventing or delaying adoption of new

methods or practices needed for the change, attempting to return to the previous practices or methods, or creating social pressure ostracizing organizational members who support the change effort” (Sherman & Garland, 2007, p. 53). Five methods that managers may use to increase empowerment and decrease resistance include “communicating a sensible vision to employees, make structures compatible with the vision, provide the training employees need, align information and personnel systems to the vision, and confront supervisors who undercut needed change” (Kotter, 1996, p. 115).

Securing commitment and loyalty. *Securing commitment and loyalty* is a common theme found in the downsizing literature (Asuman & Ayse, 2009; Meyer, Allen, & Topolnytsky, 1998; Richey, 1992; Self et al., 2005; Thornhill et al., 1997). Trust and perceptions of justice help secure the commitment and loyalty of members of the organization (Chawla & Kelloway, 2004; Clair & Dufresne, 2004; Holt, Self, Thal, & Lo, 2003; Self et al., 2005; Spreitzer & Mishra, 2002).

Maintaining or restoring morale and motivation. The role of short-term wins (Kotter, 1995) is to *maintaining or restoring morale and motivation* (O'brien, 2008; Saksvik et al., 2007; Spreitzer & Mishra, 2002), which is another theme evident in the downsizing literature. Intrinsic (e.g., one’s sense of doing a job well, peer recognition) and extrinsic (e.g., prizes, stock options, gift cards, pizza parties) motivators help employees to stay engaged throughout organizational change. A lack of morale and motivation can be detrimental to sustaining or improving business processes, while improved morale and motivation provide employees with a sense of worth and

empowerment within the organization (Mishra & Spreitzer, 1998; O'Brien, 2008; Saksvik et al., 2007; Spreitzer & Mishra, 2002).

Maintaining productivity and job performance. The downsizing theme of *maintaining productivity and job performance* (Asuman & Ayse, 2009; Cascio, 1993; Lewin & Johnston, 2000; Lewis, 1994; Travaglione & Cross, 2006), which may be at risk in the face of downsizing, requires that downsizing managers stay abreast of individual and team performance to ensure standards are met or are adjusted to fit appropriately with the changing times (Asuman & Ayse, 2009; Cascio, 1993; Lewin & Johnston, 2000; Lewis, 1994).

Coping with survivor syndrome. *Coping with survivor syndrome* is another common theme in the downsizing literature (Clair & Dufresne, 2004; Gandolfi, 2007; Sahdev, 2004; Travaglione & Cross, 2006). *Survivor syndrome* refers to the experiences of surviving employees, such as feelings of guilt and anxiety, or decreased motivation as a result of the downsizing (Appelbaum & Donia, 2000). These experiences leave surviving employees to deal with the increased workload, decreased staffing, and the emotional toll in the aftermath of the downsizing (Appelbaum et al., 1997; Appelbaum & Donia, 2000; Sahdev, 2004; Travaglione & Cross, 2006). Survivors' perceptions of the processes that downsizing managers used to decide upon, communicate about, and actually downsize employees play a role in their future contributions to the organization's culture and productivity (Richey, 1992)

Coping with the emotional experience. *Coping with the emotional experience*—guilt, anger, anxiety, uncertainty—of downsizing is yet another organizational challenge that impacts all members regardless of position: downsized employees, survivors, downsizing managers (Allen, Jimmieson, Bordia, & Irmer, 2007; Bordia, Hobman, Jones, Gallois, & Callan, 2004; Clair & Dufresne, 2004; Herzig & Jimmieson, 2006; Gandolfi, 2008c; Paulsen, Callan, Grice, Rooney, & et al., 2005; Sahdev, 2003, 2004). Employees exhibited emotional responses, such as guilt, anger, anxiety, and uncertainty, before, during, and after a downsizing (Clair & Dufresne, 2004; Herzig & Jimmieson, 2006; Paulsen et al., 2005; Sahdev, 2003, 2004). Many reasons exist for these feelings and reactions, such as “violation of the psychological contract, perceptions of unfairness on the part of the organization or management and the lack of future vision of the organization” (Sahdev, 2004, p. 166).

In sum, these seven themes appeared throughout the downsizing literature and included challenges that downsizing managers may have to deal with during downsizing decision making, implementation, and managing in the aftermath. Downsizing managers play a dual role (manager of the change and survivor), which makes the impact of these themes familiar from various perspectives (Clair & Dufresne, 2004; Dewitt et al., 2003). The first opportunity in which downsizing managers have the opportunity to play a vital role is during decision making.

Downsizing Decision Making

This section provides a review of the downsizing decision-making literature specific to the organization’s decision to downsize, alternatives to downsizing, and

deciding who goes and who stays. Two decision-making perspectives are at play in downsizing: the executive management's decision that downsizing is an appropriate method (including the exploration of potential alternatives), and the downsizing manager's identification of which employees to terminate and maintain (Mishra, Mishra, & Spreitzer, 2009). Initially, the executive management team decides there is a need for strategic change, reviews the alternatives, such as a change in business model and/or scope, downsizing, or closure, and decides that downsizing is an appropriate method. Once a decision is made to downsize, the challenge of deciding who goes and who stays begins for downsizing managers (Gandolfi, 2008e) This section explores alternatives to downsizing, as well as the common implementation methods for downsizing practiced by organizations.

Deciding to downsize. Organizations look for opportunities to decrease expenses and increase efficiencies as much as possible. As discussed before, doing so during turbulent economic times becomes more necessary in order to sustain (Kazem, Adcroft, & Willis, 2005; McLean, 2004; Vakola, Soderquist, & Prastacos, 2007; Victor & Franckeiss, 2002). There are numerous methods in which organizations can choose to act, such as by normal attrition, early retirements, pay cuts/dark days, or downsizing (Freeman, 1999). Some organizations choose to do only one of these cost-cutting methods, while others may desire to explore the benefits or more than one. That choice is dependent on the top management team and its willingness to deal with the planning, decision making, implementation, and evaluation that is involved in these processes (Mirabal & DeYoung, 2005). This section will explore the advantages and disadvantages

to the alternatives to downsizing that enable management to reduce, freeze, use or hire in order to avoid downsizing.

Alternatives to downsizing. Organizations have a myriad of methods that may allow them to avoid downsizing (Hornstein, 2009; Roth, 2009). Businesses use certain alternatives for slowdowns expected to last up to 6 months, while other alternatives are preferred for slowdowns estimated to last between 6-12 months (Gandolfi, 2008a). The more time an organization has to implement alternatives to downsizing, the more alternatives available (Tomasko, 1991). Downsizing occurs when the organization expects the business slowdown to last longer than 12 months (Gandolfi, 2008a).

Alternatives for an organization that expects a slowdown to last less than 6 months include temporarily reducing salaries or hours, or freezing hiring (Cascio & Wynn, 2004; Daniel, 1995; Gandolfi, 2008a; Kawaguchi & Ohtake, 2007; Lautsch & Scully, 2007; Roth, 2009). The negative side of these alternatives is the impact on the livelihood of employees' lives, and decreased morale. If the existing business environment is adequately handling current needs, a reduction in hours may prove detrimental to maintaining the same level of service. Additionally, reduced hours and hiring freezes (Lautsch & Scully, 2007; Levy, 2009) leave no time for members of the organization to develop or initiate new strategies. Despite the negative impacts, these alternatives provide cost savings to the organization, in turn allowing the organization's headcount to remain unscathed (Daniel, 1995; Kawaguchi & Ohtake, 2007).

Organizations must identify an appropriate balance to ensure that service does not suffer and cause significant damage.

Alternatives for an organization that expects a slowdown to last between 6 to 12 months include extended salary reductions, voluntary sabbaticals, and exit incentives (Cascio & Wynn, 2004; Gandolfi, 2008a; Hanks, 1990; Herrbach, Mignonac, Vandenberghe, & Negrini, 2009; Mirabal & DeYoung, 2005; Monippally, 2003). Although highly unpopular, salary reductions are one option for employers to decrease costs to avoid downsizing (Cascio & Wynn, 2004). Voluntary sabbaticals, whether paid or unpaid, help employers attract and retain employees, as they enable employees to focus on something else of interest and rejuvenate. Employers also use early retirement incentives as a means to decrease costs, while offering eligible employees an opportunity to exit the organization gracefully with retirement benefits. These alternatives are less intrusive options for organizations to consider in contrast to the organizational and personal impacts that downsizing involves.

One organization came to a point in which they faced the likelihood of downsizing. The entire executive management team met to explore alternative options and came up with a list of positive and negative effects of layoffs and five alternatives: “pay cut/shutdown, special one-year unpaid sabbatical, voluntary severance, early retirement, or regular unpaid sabbatical” (Cascio & Wynn, 2004, p. 431). In this particular case, management made the decision that downsizing was the best option, as the brainstorming session identified the effects of each alternative, and realized that any other alternative would only delay or signal later need for downsizing (Cascio & Wynn, 2004; Tomasko, 1991). This shows that, while it is important to evaluate the alternatives to downsizing, there may be no alternative appropriate for the given situation. Choosing

to downsize is difficult (Pfadenhauer, 2009). It does not get any easier once that decision had been made, as downsizing managers must then determine the fate of their employees' (Fryer, Stybel, Peabody, Dormann, & Sutton, 2009).

Who goes? Who stays? Now that the organization has chosen to downsize, downsizing managers must decide who will go and who will stay within the organization. It is critical for the downsizing manager to be as objective as possible in determining the criteria for downsized employees, in order to avoid questioning and discrimination accusations (Pfadenhauer, 2009). Limited business and academic literature exists specific to the selection criteria used to decide which employees to downsize within an organization, likely due to the sensitivity of the process and legal ramifications (Giachetti, 2009; Leonard, 2009; Schraeder, Self, & Lindsay, 2006). From the available literature, it was found that organizations use one or more methods to downsize, which include seniority, position, or performance (Pfadenhauer, 2009).

One method of downsizing is to use the selection criteria of *seniority*, meaning to cut employees with the least amount of service time with the company. This criterion is objective and easy to identify, especially for a business that finds it difficult to measure productivity (Engelstad, 1998; Pfadenhauer, 2009). Downsizing managers that use the seniority criterion assume that employees that have been with the company longer have more expertise (Engelstad, 1998). In opposition, considering seniority may enable poor performers to stay just because they have been with the company longer. Additionally, fresh, new hires – potentially employees with a vast amount of knowledge and industry experience, will be let go if this criterion is chosen (Fryer et al., 2009; Pfadenhauer,

2009). Over time, businesses realized the importance of performance, and seniority has become a less preferable criterion for downsizing (Engelstad, 1998; Feldheim, 2007; Longenecker & Ariss, 2004).

Secondly, using *position*, or an employee's role or level within the organization, may serve as another criterion for determining whom to downsize. Redesigning work processes, whether by integrating greater efficiencies (e.g. automation) or moving functions from one employee or area to another may help downsizing managers to identify which employees to downsize. Delaying, or removing an entire level of employees from the organizational hierarchy (e.g. area managers, procedures analysts), is another way to identify employees to downsize (Grimshaw, Beynon, Rubery, & Ward, 2002). It may be the case that there were too many managers for the number of employees or work processes, or functions are merged within or across areas, causing a decrease in the number of managers needed (Littler, Wiesner, & Dunford, 2003). Although delaying may cause increased workloads for remaining managers, it is a softer impact on productivity within the organization, as it is unlikely to have a direct impact on the work processes or front-line employees.

Lastly, *performance*, which is based on the productivity and service levels an employee provides to the organization, has become the most used criterion for downsizing today (Society for Human Resources Management, 2001; Longenecker & Ariss, 2004). It enables the downsizing manager to cut employees that are functioning at the lower levels of the performance scale. In addition, it allows the organization to maintain adequate performance levels through existing high performers (Longenecker &

Ariss, 2004). If performance is not easily quantifiable, there is an increased risk of lawsuits. For performance and skills that are more subjective, such as communication or adaptability, it is important that the organization maintain files detailing these behaviors to protect against calls of injustice (Longenecker & Ariss, 2004; Pfadenhauer, 2009).

Regardless of whether downsizing managers decide to use one or more of these methods to downsize, it will impact the lives of the organization's employees (Deery, Iverson, & Walsh, 2006; Dewitt et al., 2003; Kidder, 2005; Seo & Barrett, 2007).

Downsizing managers must

demonstrate that the method selected is consistent with previous decisions, does not reflect bias against any one person or group within the organization, is accurate in what it purports to measure, opportunities have been provided to make any needed corrections, the interest of those parties reflected have been taken into consideration, and, finally, that the method follows ethical and moral standards, the organization will have a greater likelihood of creating both a perception of procedural justice and a legally defensible plan. (Schraeder et al., 2006, p. 491)

By carefully thinking through, documenting, and implementing the agreed selection criteria, downsizing managers will decrease some of the stress experienced in downsizing by means that are fair to employees while also protecting the organization.

Downsizing Implementation

After the executive management team decides to downsize, they will work with the downsizing managers to determine the appropriate methods and respective employees to downsize. "Management needs to be proactive rather than reactive in implementation of an organizational downsizing program," (Mirabal & DeYoung, 2005, p. 41) in order to reduce uncertainty (Herzig & Jimmieson, 2006; Kitchen & Daly, 2002). Implementation

includes the communication and actions taken based upon the decided upon changes (Klein, 1994; Richardson & Denton, 1996). Other critical elements include

- communicating clearly, consistently, and as much information as possible (Appelbaum, Everard, & Hung, 1999; Bhattacharyya & Chatterjee, 2005), to all levels of the organization (Appelbaum et al., 1999);
- helping employees to deal with the trauma associated with the downsizing experience (Bhattacharyya & Chatterjee, 2005);
- choosing, motivating, and supporting downsizing managers (Bhattacharyya & Chatterjee, 2005); and/or
- acknowledging the potential need for outsourcing processes (Appelbaum, Everard et al., 1999).

Downsizing implementation requires downsizing managers to roll out the decisions of who goes and who stays within the organization. Delivering difficult news is not an easy task, and proves no different for downsizing managers that must communicate these decisions. The downsizing manager's approach to and management of downsizing implementation is linked to the level of support survivors provide to the downsizing manager and the organization, as well as their level of productivity, in the aftermath of the downsizing (Dewitt et al., 2003).

The literature reflects that downsizing managers must take a careful approach to downsizing implementation due to the trauma and uncertainty that employees within the organization experience associated with the downsizing. The use of communication, motivation, support, and additional decision making (e.g., outsourcing, process redesign) must be strategic in order to respect employees and ensure the organization's success.

Managing in the Aftermath

Downsizing managers are required to make and implement difficult decisions within their organizations—actions that significantly affect people’s lives. This section focuses specifically on the downsizing manager’s experience managing in the aftermath.

Many organizations do not implement management training and development (T&D) when downsizing occurs (Appelbaum et al., 1997; Gandolfi, 2009).

One of the most common reasons why companies that downsize perform so poorly is that they often are successful at anticipating and preparing for the employees who are to be released, but they may not be prepared for the low morale and lower productivity experienced by survivors of the downsizing. (Appelbaum et al., 1997, p. 278; Isabella, 1989)

Although scholarly studies have shown that a positive correlation exists between T&D and organizational performance (Gandolfi, 2009), executive management views T&D as a monetary and opportunity cost. T&D would take time away from an organization that now has a smaller workforce, and is managing increased workloads that may or may not be the same functions that the same employees performed prior to the downsizing.

The “low morale and lower productivity experienced by survivors of the downsizing” (Appelbaum et al., 1997, p. 278) is commonly referred to in the organizational change literature as *survivor syndrome* (Appelbaum, Delage, Labib, & Gault, 1997; Appelbaum & Donia, 2000; Clair & Dufresne, 2004; Gandolfi, 2007; Sahdev, 2004; Travaglione & Cross, 2006). Downsizing managers may also exhibit signs of survivor syndrome, as they play a dual role as an executioner and a survivor (Clair & Dufresne, 2004; Dewitt et al., 2003; Gandolfi, 2007). The greater an understanding a downsizing manager has of the signs, impacts, and methods to alleviate survivor

syndrome, the more likely they will be able to play a greater role in a more efficient and effective work environment.

In addition to managing survivor syndrome among employees in the downsizing aftermath, downsizing managers must identify methods by which to maintain adequate levels of productivity before, during, and after a downsizing (Cascio, 1993; Myers, 1993; Richey, 1992). Even during periods of change, organizations and their respective managers must maintain a focus on their internal and external customers in order to maintain steady operational flows and profitability. Downsizing managers must stay abreast of individual and team performance to ensure that standards are met or adjusted for an appropriate alignment with the changed environment (Asuman & Ayse, 2009; Cascio, 1993; Lewin & Johnston, 2000; Lewis, 1994).

The downsizing literature reflects that downsizing managers are unlikely to receive training and development, yet there is an expectation that they must (a) manage employees suffering from survivor syndrome (while also possibly experiencing it themselves), and (b) manage processes to stable or increasing levels of productivity.

Downsizing Synthesis

Downsizing decision making requires downsizing managers' awareness of the impacts on productivity within the organization (Probst & Brubaker, 2007). Downsizing implementation planning must include how to communicate changes, and timing of announcements and layoffs (Cameron, 1994; Herzig & Jimmieson, 2006). Lastly, the aftermath of the downsized environment presents challenges such as the emotional responses of survivors, or *survivor syndrome* (Appelbaum et al., 1997), and the

organization's needs to adjust to the changes, strengthen the business, and strategize for future success (Mirabal & DeYoung, 2005).

The organizational change and downsizing literatures provided information relative to why an organization might choose a downsizing, alternatives available, and processes to downsizing (including deciding which employees to downsize, implementing the change, and managing in the aftermath), as well as common themes identified in the downsizing literature. Literature pertaining to the human resources decision-making process is limited, likely due to the sensitive nature of the experience, as well as potential confidentiality agreements between the manager and the organization (Giachetti, 2009; Leonard, 2009; Schraeder et al., 2006).

Literature relative to the personal and professional experiences and impacts of downsizing on individuals has dealt with victims or survivors of downsizing (Band & Tustin, 1995; Clair & Dufresne, 2004; Gandolfi, 2008c). Although downsizing managers are survivors, they are a special class of survivors due to their dual role of a downsizing manager and a survivor (Clair & Dufresne, 2004; Dewitt et al., 2003;); yet research on downsizing managers' personal and professional experiences of downsizing decision making, implementation, and aftermath is limited.

Personal and Professional Experiences of Downsizing Managers

Downsizing managers "will not be aware from the start what they will have to face during the process: others' and their own unexpected emotional reactions" (Kets de Vries & Balazs, 1996, p. 118). Yet downsizing managers' reactions influence employees' attitudes and behaviors (Dewitt et al., 2003; Kets de Vries & Balazs, 1996). Existing

literature related to a downsizing managers' experience focuses on impacts to the downsizing manager's emotional, mental, physical, and social well-being (Armstrong-Stassen, 2005; Clair & Dufresne, 2004), as detailed below:

- *emotional well-being*: Downsizing managers will undergo emotional experiences similar to others, such as guilt, anger, anxiety, and uncertainty. Emotions affect all members, regardless of position: downsized employees, survivors, downsizing managers (Allen, Jimmieson, Bordia, & Irmer, 2007; Bordia, Hobman, Jones, Gallois, & Callan, 2004; Clair & Dufresne, 2004; Herzig & Jimmieson, 2006; Gandolfi, 2008c; Paulsen, Callan, Grice, Rooney, & et al., 2005; Sahdev, 2003, 2004). During times of downsizing, “managers can choose to lay low—or they can play a vital role in empowering people to deal with change” (Miller, 1992, p. 57).
- *mental well-being*: The role of the downsizing manager is comparable to a physician or death teller, in that each is responsible in the role for relaying negative news (Clair & Dufresne, 2004). Downsizing managers used the following descriptions related to their involvement: “deceiving others; making tough, uncertain decisions; dealing with others' emotional pain; empathy for victims; and being stigmatized” (Clair & Dufresne, 2004, p. 1608).
- *physical well-being*: Some managers report health-related symptoms, such as stomach aches, chest pains, or exhaustion, when faced with making human resource decisions (Brockner et al., 2004; Deery et al., 2006; Devine, Reay, Stainton, & Collins-Nakai, 2003; Dewitt et al., 2003; Kidder, 2005; Maitlis & Ozcelik, 2004; Seo & Barrett, 2007).
- *social wellbeing*: Occasionally, employees may have a close bond with their manager, whether in a professional manner due to close work on a project or professional development, or tenure with the organization; or personally through prior or concurrent friendships. Employees may view downsizing as a breach of the psychological contract between the employee and the employer, which often results in the employee having a poor attitude, decreased trust, and diminished performance (Turnley & Feldman, 2000). The results of the breached psychological contract may also prove detrimental to the professional or personal relationships between the employee and the downsizing manager.

Within this limited literature on the downsizing manager's experience, one article pointed to the popularity of *distancing* as a coping mechanism (Clair & Dufresne, 2004).

Distancing allows the downsizing manager to remove himself or herself from the

“emotionally taxing and difficult-to-deal-with experiences of carrying out a downsizing” (p. 1606). Distancing allows the downsizing manager to step back from the potential emotional, mental, physical, and social impacts.

Thus, the organizational change and downsizing literatures inform, but do not fully address the question of the personal and professional experiences of downsizing managers, as there are very few documented experiences. Of the downsizing managers’ experiences that are documented, it is known that downsizing managers experienced impacts to their emotional (Allen, Jimmieson, Bordia, & Irmer, 2007; Herzig & Jimmieson, 2006; Gandolfi, 2008c; Sahdev, 2003, 2004), mental (Clair & Dufresne, 2004), physical (Deery, Iverson, & Walsh, 2006; Seo & Barrett, 2007), and social (Turnley & Feldman, 2000) wellbeing in relation to their downsizing experience.

As illustrated in Table 2, several doctoral (Bonanzino, 2002; Carritte, 2002; Erickson, 2007; Korns, 2009; Mau, 2002; Munkeby, 2007) and scholarly (Armstrong-Stassen, 2005; Clair & Dufresne, 2004; Gandolfi, 2008b) research studies inform, but do not answer, this study’s research question. These studies explored numerous pieces of the topics explored in this study, but none of the studies found addresses the personal and professional experiences of downsizing managers throughout downsizing. Of those closest to this study’s research question, the Armstrong-Stassen (2005) research study employed a quantitative approach and compared the reactions of middle managers versus executives relative to job security and performance, use of coping skills, and health symptoms before, during, and after downsizing. Gandolfi (2008a) studied a single case of

Australian bank managers' experiences throughout downsizing. I was unable to locate any similar doctoral and scholarly research studies completed in the US.

Table 2. *Studies Closest to Yet Distinct From This Study's Research Question*

Citation	Nature of study	Distinctions from this study
(Armstrong-Stassen, 2005)	Comparison of executive- and middle-level managers' relative to job security and performance, use of coping skills, and health symptoms before, during, and after downsizing	Quantitative; includes executive-level management; focuses on specific issues within rather than overall experience
(Bonanzino, 2002)	CEO decision-making processes involved in organizational change	Quantitative; CEO-level management; wider lens of multiple organizational change processes
(Carritte, 2000)	Executives' experiences with transitioning organizations	Phenomenological; CEO-level management; wider lens on multiple organizational change processes
(Clair & Dufresne, 2004)	Experiences and reactions to responsibilities of downsizing managers	Single case study; frontline- to CEO-level management
(Erickson, 2007)	Correlation of survivor attrition to perceived organizational and supervisor support	Quantitative; survivor level
(Gandolfi, 2008b)	Bank downsizing managers' experiences of downsizing planning, implementation, and aftermath	Single case study; Australian; multilevel; includes executive management
(Korns, 2009)	Employee perceptions of organizational culture and employment relationship before and after downsizing	Single case study; multilevel
(Mau, 2002)	Experiences of older adult downsizing survivors; resilience and motivation to maintain productivity	Survivor level
(Munkeby, 2007)	Skills needed by successful middle managers	Literature review only; wider lens (overall success vs. specific situation)

One theme common throughout many of these doctoral and scholarly research studies was the impacts that organizational change may have on a manager. This includes the emotional toll, coping mechanisms used, changes to relationships between managers

and victims or survivors, and the notion that experience with downsizing may enable a downsizing manager to find it less difficult to deal with future downsizing experiences (Armstrong-Stassen, 2005; Clair & Dufresne, 2004; Erickson, 2007).

Other than the above similarities, these doctoral and scholarly research studies fell into one or more of three categories distinguishing them from this proposed study:

- research across multiple means of organizational change rather than focusing on one specific method of change (Bonanzino, 2002; Carritte, 2000);
- quantitative approaches to the research (Armstrong-Stassen, 2005; Bonanzino, 2002; Erickson, 2007); or
- research only at the executive management level (Bonanzino, 2002; Carritte, 2000).

This study is designed to document additional and potentially new personal and professional experiences of downsizing managers involved in downsizing decision making, implementation, and managing in the aftermath.

Conclusion

The research question for this study focuses on the personal and professional experiences of downsizing managers during downsizing decision making, implementation, and managing in the aftermath of the downsizing. This critical review of the literature provided detailed information on the organizational contexts, as well as the three main bodies of literature, and their intersections, informing this study's research questions, as noted in Chapter 1 and illustrated in Figure 1.

The literature on managing organizational change provides organizational change models, change management strategies, and the managerial experience of managing organizational change. Numerous organizational change consultants and researchers

further developed Lewin's (1951) seminal change model of unfreezing-movement-freezing, with Kotter's (1996) change model serving as the current and most widely accepted change model in organizations (Periyakoil, 2009; Varkey, 2010). The management strategies that continually reappear in the organizational change literature include effectively communicating with and motivating employees (Gilley et al., 2009). Yet additional skills and methods for managers engaged in organizational change are ignored (Doyle, Claydon, & Buchanan, 2000; Luscher & Lewis, 2008). Although the organizational change literature provides change models and management strategies for managers facing organizational change, the literature does not inform this study's research question, specific to the central issue of the manager's *experience* when facing organizational change such as downsizing.

The decision-making literature includes seminal theories and strategies for decision making in general, and specific to organizational decision making. Simon (1947) built the foundation of behavioral theory, including his intelligence-design-choice decision-making model. Drucker (1954) expanded upon Simon's (1947) model, providing a detailed decision-making model still in use today. Like the organizational change literature, the decision-making literature provides a vast amount of information on available models, but does not address the managerial experience of downsizing managers. The literature specific to downsizing decision making is recapped later in this section.

The downsizing literature and history of downsizing reflect seven common themes identified and compared herein to Kotter's (1996) large scale change process.

These themes appear throughout the downsizing literature and include challenges that downsizing managers may have to address during downsizing decision making, implementation, and managing in the aftermath. While these are potential challenges that downsizing managers may experience, no literature exists that focuses on the personal and professional experiences of downsizing managers. Downsizing managers have dual roles as survivors and downsizing managers, so they are likely to experience these seven process themes as survivors, but the literature does not focus on whether all of these themes or any other themes are present for downsizing managers.

Additionally, at the intersections of these three major bodies of literature, the literature on the managerial experience with organizational change decision making at the organizational change level does not exist. Managers must make human resource and process-related decisions when faced with organizational change, but the organizational change decision-making topics are discussed more in-depth in the body of literature focused on the type of change (e.g., downsizing decision making).

The downsizing decision-making literature includes the reasons why executive management teams may decide to downsize an organization (e.g., economic factors, competitive advantage, etc.), available alternatives to downsizing, and methods used to decide who goes and who stays within the organization (e.g., seniority, position, performance). Limited literature exists specific to the selection criteria used to decide which employees to downsize within an organization, likely due to the sensitivity of the process and legal ramifications (Giachetti, 2009; Leonard, 2009; Schraeder et al., 2006).

Finally, the limited literature on the personal and professional experiences of downsizing managers includes the emotional, mental, physical, and social impacts of downsizing on downsizing managers (Dewitt et al., 2003; Kets de Vries & Balazs, 1996). In summary, the literature is rich in organizational change and decision-making models, reasons and alternatives to downsizing, as well as downsizing methods (e.g., determining who goes and who stays), but there is a gap in the literature relative to the *personal and professional experiences* of downsizing managers. Accordingly, this study was designed to elicit downsizing managers' experiences specific to downsizing decision making, implementation, and managing in the aftermath, to augment the literature on the topic and document additional and potentially new experiences.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

Theoretical Framework

This study was designed to address the management dilemma of how organizations prepare for and their managers cope with their own experiences in downsizing decision making, implementation, and its aftermath (Bonanzino, 2002). A gap exists in the literature specific to the experience of downsizing managers, with significantly more attention given to the impacts on downsizing victims or its survivors (Band & Tustin, 1995; Clair & Dufresne, 2004; Dewitt et al., 2003; Gandolfi, 2008a). The central research question (Creswell, 2007, p. 108) of this study was *What is the downsizing manager's experience of downsizing?* Subpoints implicit in and clarifying this central question are *the downsizing manager's personal and professional experiences of*

- *downsizing decision making,*
- *downsizing implementation, and*
- *managing in the aftermath of downsizing.*

Researcher's Philosophy and Choice of Inquiry Methods

The topic of this qualitative, exploratory study aligned with the social constructivist research tradition, as participants “seek understanding of the world in which they live and work” and “develop subjective meanings of their experiences” (Creswell, 2007, p. 20). The ontological assumption is that multiple realities exist, and this study includes a 3-phase interview approach (Seidman, 2006) with numerous

participants to gather information about each participant's personal and professional experiences (Creswell, 2007). The epistemological assumption refers to the researcher's relationship to participants. For this study, the researcher did not expect to be able to interview all participants face-to-face due to geography or time, but the use of the 3-phase interview approach enabled the researcher to work towards building a trusting relationship with each participant (Creswell, 2007; Seidman, 2006). The axiological assumption deals with the open discussion of the researcher's values in relation to the topic. The reflexivity exercise (Appendix A) allowed the researcher to record her related experiences, thoughts, questions, preconceived notions, and perspectives, as a method to avoiding personal bias within the study (Creswell, 2007; Creswell & Miller, 2000; Ruona, 2005). Lastly, the rhetorical assumption refers to the researcher's writing style, and the qualitative researcher remained open to an informal style that uses the participants' voice and allowed the participants to define and evolve terms rather than the researcher defining them (Creswell, 2007, p. 19).

This study utilized qualitative, exploratory, in-depth, semistructured interviewing, via a 3-phase interview approach (Seidman, 2006), to gather the personal and professional experiences of participants to inform the research questions. Qualitative methodology is the best fit for this particular study due to the need to explore and elicit a descriptive understanding of the personal and professional experiences of downsizing managers (Creswell, 2007; Weiss, 1994). Quantitative studies only achieve a certain level of understanding of individual experiences in a complex environment, whereas qualitative studies enable for further exploration of the personal and professional

experiences outside of a completely predetermined structure (Creswell, 2007).

Qualitative, in-depth, semistructured interviewing allowed study participants to describe their personal and professional experiences to the researcher. “Words, especially organized into incidents or stories, have a concrete, vivid, meaningful flavor that often proves far more convincing to a reader – another researcher, a policymaker, a practitioner – than pages of summarized numbers” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 1).

Research Design Strategy

The purpose of this qualitative, exploratory, in-depth interview research was to understand and examine the personal and professional experiences of downsizing managers throughout downsizing decision making, implementation, and aftermath, to inform organizational practice and future related decision making. This study used purposive, criterion recruiting (Creswell, 2007) to identify participants, and a 3-phase interview approach (Seidman, 2006) to gather details of participants’ experiences. The purposive, or criterion-based, recruiting approach identified prospective participants based on their ability to “purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon to the study” (Creswell, 2007, p. 125). Purposive sampling is an efficient sampling method that ensures that the pool of potential participants is more likely to meet the study’s criteria.

In-depth interviewing allowed study participants to describe their personal and professional experiences and insights in detail (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The purpose of in-depth interviewing is not to get answers to questions, nor to test hypotheses, nor “evaluate” as the term is normally used. At the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest

in understanding the personal and professional experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience. (Seidman, 2006, p. 9)

Table 3 outlines the entire research process, including researcher bracketing, participant recruiting, selection, data collection, transcription, member checking, analysis of the data, and the timing of and supporting research methods literature for each element.

Table 3. *Research Process*

Action & related appendices	Phase & timing	References
Researcher bracketing (Appendix A)	Prior to proposal approval	Creswell, 2007; Creswell & Miller, 2000; Ruona, 2005
Participant selection criteria, recruiting, screening interview (#1), and selection (Appendices B and C)	Permission to Recruit Study Participants prior to submission of IRB Application	
	Call for Research Participants (Appendix B) and Interview #1: Participant Screening (Appendix C) immediately following all approvals of proposed research; ongoing until selection of 12-15 participants (and number of participants approved by mentor)	Creswell, 2007; Eland-Goossensen, Van De Goor, Vollemans, Hendriks, & Garretsen, 1997; Noy, 2008; Seidman, 2006; Weiss, 1994
	Informed consent form within 2-3 days after Participant Screening	Seidman, 2006; Weiss, 1994
In-depth interview (#2; Appendix D)	Interview #2: In-depth interview (Appendix D) within 1-8 weeks of participant selection	Seidman, 2006
Transcription	Within 2-3 weeks of data collection	Ruona, 2005; Weiss, 1994
Transcription Review Request	Following transcription; request feedback and approval from participant within 2 weeks	Bryman, 2001; Creswell; 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 1985
Member checking interview (#3; Appendix F)	Interview #3: Member checking (Appendix F), within 2-3 weeks of transcript review request	Rubin & Rubin, 2004; Seidman, 2006
Data analysis	Individual analysis within 1-2 weeks of follow-up session	Boyatzis, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Ruona, 2005
	Overall analysis within 1-2 weeks of last follow-up session, until text is approved	

The remainder of Chapter 3 provides additional details on each such element of the research process.

Researcher Bracketing

Researcher bracketing, also referred to as *reflexivity*, is an exercise the researcher may complete prior to engaging in research. Reflexivity allows the researcher to record his or her related experiences, thoughts, questions, preconceived notions, and perspectives, as a method to avoiding personal bias within the study (Creswell, 2007; Creswell & Miller, 2000; Ruona, 2005). Realization of these assists the researcher in coming to terms with what is known and freeing the mind to focus as objectively as possible on the subject, participants, and topic at hand. This work, done prior to seeking approvals of the research proposal, is recorded in Appendix A.

Participant Selection Criteria, Recruiting, Screening, and Selection

Clear identification of the criteria that study participants must meet enables the researcher to focus participant recruitment efforts toward the most appropriate organizations, groups, and locations. This study's selection criteria and recruiting processes are detailed below.

Participant Selection Criteria

As noted above, *purposive, criterion sampling* (Creswell, 2007; Eland-Goossensen, Van De Goor, Vollemans, Hendriks, & Garretsen, 1997; Noy, 2008; Seidman, 2006; Weiss, 1994) was used to recruit and select participants who met criteria specific to the personal and professional experiences described in the research question

(Creswell, 2007). Eligible participants for this study met the following qualifications, per the rationale noted for each:

- *downsizing managers* (as defined in Chapter 1) in their current or a prior organization during the last 10 years, so that participants' memories will be fresh; the downsizing experience must have occurred at least 3 months prior to recruiting, to ensure participants are not still in the midst of the process and/or related trauma (DeLisi et al., 2003);
- located within the United States; and
- not previously known to nor employed in the same organization as the researcher, to prevent researcher bias, avoid existing relationships, and maintain participant privacy and confidentiality (Costley & Gibbs, 2006).

The Call for Research Participants (Appendix B) included these criteria to ensure awareness of potential participants prior to the screening process.

Interested individuals contacted the researcher directly by e-mail or phone, and a participant screening occurred to determine the potential participant's eligibility. In the event that there were more interested and eligible participants than needed, the researcher ensured that a diverse group of individuals (e.g. gender, age, industry, experience) account for the participants chosen. The researcher confirmed the mix of participants with her mentor prior to turning away any remaining interested and eligible participants. In order to maintain confidentiality, the researcher will not disclose the selected study participants to anyone.

Participant Recruiting

Upon mentor approval of the research proposal, the researcher requested permission from organizations in which downsizing managers were likely to be members, as sampling these groups was expected to provide a diverse group of study participants

who met the participant criteria. The researcher requested permission from organizations to recruit study participants, and sent the Call for Research Participants (Appendix B) to approximately 252 employee/manager associations, online networking groups, and Chambers of Commerce over a 12-month period. The following organizations provided permission to distribute the Call for Participants once the researcher received final approval from Capella University:

- Human Resources Association of Central Ohio (HRACO)
- Change Consulting
- Macomb County Chamber of Commerce
- International Public Management Association
- Midatlantic Employers' Association
- AT&T Alumni, AT&T Employee Alumni , and AT&T Connections Group
- Chase Alumni Association
- Linked: HR (#1 HR Resources Group)
- Human Resources Professionals: THE “Unofficial” forum for SHRM
- Abbott Laboratories Employees and Alumni Group
- General Motors Alumni Group
- Lucent Technologies Alumni Group

The informed consent form included a reminder that the association may not post or distribute the Call for Participants until after receipt of researcher notification of IRB and final committee approval.

In the event that the researcher was unable to obtain enough participants, IRB granted approval for the use of snowball sampling (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This allowed the researcher to reach out to approximately 410 individuals within her network of personal and professional contacts to ask that they provide the Call for Research Participants (Appendix B) to their personal and professional contacts. Since snowball sampling was necessary, the researcher provided clear instruction to personal and professional contacts that any interested individuals were required to contact the

researcher directly, as noted in the Call for Research Participants, to maintain confidentiality and anonymity.

Interview 1: Participant Screening and Selection

The researcher utilized a 3-phase interview approach (Seidman, 2006) to gather details of participants’ experiences, as illustrated in Table 4. The researcher began by conducting a participant screening (Interview #1; Appendix C) with potential participants face-to-face, online, or by private phone to gather qualification and demographic information and to begin to “build a foundation for the interview relationship” (Seidman, 2006, p. 46).

Table 4. *Interview Stages of the Study*

Component	Interview #1: Participant Screening	Interview #2: In-Depth Interview	Interview #3: Member Checking
Agenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Began building rapport and relationship with potential participant • Discussed study and initial process-related questions participant may have • Conducted Participant Screening (Appendix C) • If selected, provided informed consent form • If not selected, sent e-mail and appreciation for their volunteerism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirmed/collected completed informed consent form • Conducted In-depth Interview (Appendix D) • Answered any questions and confirmed next steps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussed any changes to transcription provided to participant for review and confirmation (Appendix F) • Was prepared to gather and record new data if offered • Thanked participant for willingness to participate in the study
Method	Face-to-face, online, or private phone	Face-to-face, online, or private phone	Private phone or private e-mail
Estimated time	15-20 minutes	60-120 minutes	As needed

Participant screening and the follow-up session took 15-20 minutes and occurred by phone or private e-mail to allow for efficiency with regards to time and cost on behalf of all parties involved (Weiss, 1994). In addition to the criteria above, demographic information obtained during the participant screening allowed for balancing of the participant pool across a breadth of experience and perspectives (Seidman, 2006; e.g., a goal of equal representation of men and women; a range of ages, years of work experience, industries, etc.). The researcher selected participants based on their responses to the participant screening process, to provide a range of participants representing a diverse group of individuals (e.g., gender, age, industry, experience, etc.) and meeting the criteria.

The screening process enabled the researcher to identify whether a potential participant meets the necessary criteria described earlier. The screening process also served to build rapport and relationships with the participant and to confirm their credibility in order to identify any underlying or untrustworthy reasons anyone may have toward participation (Seidman, 2006). The researcher conducted 20 participant screenings, of which 17 were eligible and selected to participate. Once selected, each participant received an informed consent form via his or her private e-mail address. Upon receipt and review of each completed informed consent form, the researcher contacted each participant via private phone or private e-mail to schedule the interview within the following 1 to 2 weeks. The researcher was unable to contact three of the 17 eligible participants to conduct the In-Depth Interview; therefore 14 participants were deemed eligible and participated in the In-Depth Interview stage of the study.

In three instances, potential participants did not meet the participant screening criteria, and the researcher sent individual e-mails advising of this, and thanked them for their time and consideration. Any information collected for potential participants not selected for the study was shredded (physical) or erased (electronic) after being deemed ineligible for the study. The disposal of data collected from eligible study participants is detailed later in this chapter.

Data Collection

Interviews “combine structure with flexibility” (Richie & Lewis, 2003, p. 141). Data collection occurred using a 3-phase interview process (Seidman, 2006; Table 4). The participant screening (Interview #1; Appendix C) was described earlier in the Participant Selection Criteria, Recruiting, Screening, and Selection section. This section describes the interview recording and transcription methods, as well as the in-depth interview (Interview #2; Appendix D), and member checking (Interview #3; Appendix F), the second and third phases of Seidman’s (2006) 3-phase interview approach are described below.

Interviews for this study occurred online (1 participant) or by telephone (14 participants), and the researcher recorded each interview for later transcription. None of the interviews was conducted face-to-face, as no participants were close in geographic proximity to the researcher. Face-to-face interviewing was the preferred interviewing method, and the face-to-face interviews would have occurred in a public, mutually agreed location that was safe and quiet, allowed for participant privacy and overall comfort of the participant and the researcher, and facilitated clearer recording of the interview

(Creswell, 2007; Weiss, 1994). Online, synchronous interviews occurred via an online video conferencing program (as agreed upon and available to both the researcher and the participant). Where possible, the researcher attempted to see the participant (whether face-to-face or online), as being able to see the participant as he or she provided responses and in a comfortable environment ensured that the participant is less likely to be as cautious, reserved, and brief (Salmons, 2010; Weiss, 1994). Online interviewing has only been researched and written about over the last few years, with the increased use of technology in professional and personal space, and is a method which allows the researcher to interview participants real time (synchronously) or through a series of delayed responses (asynchronously) to obtain data (James & Busher, 2009; Salmons, 2010). Use of synchronous online communication such as online telephone or video conferencing was expected to yield similar functionality and results as face-to-face or telephone interviews (Salmons, 2010). Face-to-face or online interviews allowed the researcher to observe the nonverbal responses of the participant, and “respond to signs of puzzlement or unease on the faces of respondents when they are asked a question” (Bryman, 2001, p. 112).

If the participant and researcher were not able to arrange a face-to-face or online interview, a telephone interview occurred. “Telephone interviews can yield good quality data with maximized response rate and thus can be an effective means of data collection” (Sturges & Hanrahan, 2004, p. 115). If the researcher and participant are unable to meet face-to-face (whether due to timing, resources, or distance), the online and phone interview alternatives enabled the researcher to reach a sufficient number of participants

providing a more diverse population for the study (Weiss, 1994). On-line, synchronous interviews only took place with 1 participant, as there were challenges in scheduling interviews during an available day and time, and equipment was not readily available during the scheduled times.

The research methods literature reflected that relatively few qualitative studies utilized telephone interviewing (Sturges & Hanrahan, 2004), although comparisons between telephone to face-to-face interviewing results in data of similar quality (Novick, 2008). In addition, the results of data from face-to-face and synchronous online communication yielded similar quality (Salmons, 2010). Thus, regardless of whether face-to-face, online, or telephone interview methods were employed for this study, all results yielded similar quality responses and served as acceptable methods in which to conduct the interviews necessary for this study.

The researcher transcribed each interview, including the removal or replacement of identifiable information (e.g., “[coworker’s name]”) to maintain participant privacy and confidentiality. Each participant received a copy of his or her transcribed participant screening (Interview #1; Appendix C) and in-depth interview (Interview #2; Appendix D) for review in preparation for member checking (Interview #3; Appendix F).

Interview 2: In-Depth Interview

Interview #2 is an in-depth, semistructured interview conducted face-to-face, online, or by telephone with the selected participants (Appendix D; Seidman, 2006), which enabled the researcher to obtain rich, meaningful descriptions of the participants’ experiences. The in-depth interview questions (Appendix D) corresponded with the

study's research questions as illustrated in Appendix E. Open-ended questions provide participants with the opportunity to expand upon their experiences (Creswell, 2007).

Interview 3: Member Checking

Within 2 to 3 weeks of the interview, the researcher transcribed the interview (Ruona, 2005). Participants received a copy of their respective interview transcription via private e-mail as soon as it was available, along with a request to review the transcription and provide any changes within 2 weeks.

Interview #3, member checking, (Appendix F; Bryman, 2001; Creswell; 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) occurred approximately 2 weeks after e-mailing the transcription to the participant. The researcher attempted to contact the participant by phone once, and provided a follow-up via e-mail if the phone attempt was unsuccessful. The member-checking interview provided multiple opportunities for

- participants to provide additional information that was previously omitted, or expand upon prior discussion (Rubin & Rubin, 2004);
- the researcher to probe for further clarity on previous responses (Rubin & Rubin, 2004);
- the researcher to gather any changes to the transcription of the initial interview following participant review (Rubin & Rubin, 2004); and
- participants to reflect on the meaning of the information they provided (Seidman, 2006).

The researcher will provide a summary of the conclusions of the study to all participants via e-mail once the study is completed, approved, and published.

Field Testing

Field testing is an opportunity to test the clarity, readability, and deliverability to the interview questions prepared for this study (Seidman, 2006; Weiss, 1994). The field tests are not used to gather any data for the study, but rather as a method to validate the process and questions developed for the study. Prior to submitting the proposal for school review, the researcher conducted two types of field testing:

- an *expert review* of the in-depth interview (Interview #2; Appendix D) with three experts in the field of academic research, to review and revise the interview questions based on expert feedback (Weiss, 1994); and
- a *trial run* of the participant screening (Interview #1; Appendix C) and the in-depth interview (Interview #2; Appendix D) with two individuals who were tenured practitioners, qualified to participate in the study but for ineligibility due to being previously known to the researcher.

The expert review comprised the researcher's mentor and committee members, each of whom qualified for the expert review panel. Two were Capella faculty members, and the third was a faculty member at another academic institution; all expert panel members had strong academic research backgrounds. The experts did not recommend any changes.

The trial run field testing interviews were conducted with two practitioners who met all qualifications of participants for the study except that they were known to the researcher. The trial run interviews allowed the researcher to practice interviewing techniques, gain comfort with asking the interview questions, and test recording equipment, and the transcription process. The data collected during the trial run interviews was not used as part of the actual study. Information collected during the trial

run interviews was shredded (physical) or erased (electronic) within 1 week of collecting the data.

The trial run interviews yielded no changes to the participant screening (Interview #1, Appendix C). Both of the practitioners involved in the trial run interviews provided feedback on the questions used in the in-depth interview (Interview #2, Appendix D). The first practitioner recommended that the in-depth interview included a question or bullet about the downsizing manager's upward communication with his or her manager during implementation, as the challenges faced with one's own manager may play a role in the personal and professional experience of the downsizing manager. The second practitioner recommended clarification of the bullet points related to *management's reaction* in questions 3, 6, and 8, to clarify whether *management*, in this context, referred to other downsizing managers, or upward to the downsizing manager's manager, and/or executive management team.

As a result of the expert panel review and trial run field testing, questions 3, 6, and 8 in the in-depth interview (Appendix D) were modified as illustrated in Table 5.

Table 5. *Changes to In-Depth Interview Questions*

Drafted Question	Final Question
<p>3. Describe your experience with downsizing decision making, including, but not limited to, the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management’s reaction (overall perspective) • Your reaction (and how it compared to management’s reaction) • Your experience with the process itself (including communication) • Other downsizing managers’ experience with the process • Professional impact(s) on you • Personal impact(s) on you • Describe any specific experience or incident that captures for you the decision making part of your downsizing experience. 	<p>3. Describe your experience with downsizing decision making, including, but not limited to, the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your reaction • Reactions of others in your same role • Your manager’s reaction and any other reactions up your line of management • Your experience with the process itself (including communication with your manager, your peers, and employees) • Other downsizing managers’ experience with the process • Professional impact(s) on you • Personal impact(s) on you • Describe any specific experience or incident that captures for you the decision making part of your downsizing experience.
<p>6. Describe your experience with implementing the downsizing, including, but not limited to, the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Downsized employees’ reactions • Survivor or nondownsized employees’ reactions • Management’s reaction (overall perspective) • Your reactions (and compared to management’s reactions) • Your experience with the process itself (including communication) • Other downsizing managers’ experience with the process • Professional impact(s) on you • Personal impact(s) on you • Describe any specific experience or incident that captures for you the implementation part of your downsizing experience. 	<p>6. Describe your experience with implementing the downsizing, including, but not limited to, the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Downsized employees’ reactions • Survivor or nondownsized employees’ reactions • Your own reactions • Reactions of others in your same role • Your manager’s reaction and any other reactions up your line of management • Your experience with the process itself (including communication with your manager, your peers, and employees) • Other downsizing managers’ experience with the process • Professional impact(s) on you • Personal impact(s) on you • Describe any specific experience or incident that captures for you the implementation part of your downsizing experience

Table 5. *Changes to In-depth Interview Questions (continued)*

Drafted Question	Final Question
<p>8. Describe your experience with managing in the postdownsizing environment, including, but not limited to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationships with downsized employees • Relationships with nondownsized or survivor employees • Management’s reaction (overall perspective) • Your reaction (and as compared to management’s reaction) • Your experience with the process itself (including communication) • Other downsizing managers’ experience with the process • Your loyalty (to team, to organization) • Professional impact(s) on you • Personal impact(s) on you • Impact(s) on your productivity • Impacts on your morale/motivation • Describe any specific experience or incident that captures for you the aftermath of your downsizing experience. 	<p>8. Describe your experience with managing in the postdownsizing environment, including, but not limited to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationships with downsized employees • Relationships with nondownsized or survivor employees • Reactions of others in your same role • Your own reactions • Your manager’s reaction and any other reactions up your line of management • Your experience with the process itself (including communication with your manager, your peers, and employees) • Other downsizing managers’ experience with the process • Your loyalty (to team, to organization) • Professional impact(s) on you • Personal impact(s) on you • Impact(s) on your productivity • Impacts on your morale/motivation • Describe any specific experience or incident that captures for you the aftermath of your downsizing experience.

Data Analysis

After each interview transcription was complete and approved by the participant, the researcher listened to the interview tapes, read the transcriptions, and became intimately familiar with the data, providing for a closer connection in which to begin analysis. The researcher provided brief participant profiles, to provide insight into the demographics of the study’s participants (Seidman, 2006) while protecting confidentiality and anonymity. The analysis techniques the researcher will use include

- *generating meaning* of the data, by “selecting constitutive details of experience, reflecting on them, giving them order, and thereby making sense of them that makes telling stories a meaning-making experience” (Seidman, 2006, p. 7). The researcher generated meaning by pulling out significant statements from the

interviews, putting these statements into a table (which will be illustrated and discussed in Chapter 4), and formulating meaning; thereby allowing for the inclusion of generated meanings during thematic analysis (Creswell, 2007);

- *coding*, whereby the researcher “break[s] up and categorize[s] the data into simpler, more general categories” (Ruona, 2005, p. 241) The coding process enables greater efficiency in the analysis of the data. This study utilized a combination of prior-research-driven and data-driven codes. Prior-research-driven codes drew from existing themes in the literature and provided an initial list of codes to begin the coding process, while data-driven codes derived through themes that emerged during analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Ruona, 2005). Common themes identified in the literature review include shared vision, resistance to change, commitment/loyalty, morale/motivation, productivity/job performance, survivor syndrome, and emotional experience. Additional coding may occur as additional themes emerge from the data itself during data analysis. The researcher was open to an evolving code system as the analysis unfolded (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Ruona, 2005);
- *thematic analysis*, in an attempt to identify existing or emerging themes (Creswell, 2007; Ruona, 2005). “Themes can be conceptually organized through the identification and application of an underlying construct” (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 137). The researcher pulled patterns and themes from responses on each phase of the downsizing (decision making, implementation, and managing in the aftermath), as well as themes across downsizing in its entirety. During thematic analysis, the researcher also compared identified themes to the existing literature relative to this study, as reviewed in Chapter 2; and
- *composite descriptions*, to provide a summarization and verbatim examples of what happened, how it happened, and the essence of the participants’ experiences (Creswell, 2007).

Coding, thematic analysis, generating meaning, and composite descriptions of the data assisted in uncovering the deepest sense of the participants’ experiences (Boyatzis, 1998; Ruona, 2005) and illustrated those experiences for the reader.

Credibility and Verification

Credibility relates to “how research findings match reality” (Ruona, 2005, p. 247).

Qualitative research differs from quantitative research in this respect, as there is no strict

formatting guidelines in presenting data and results (Cassell, Symon, Buehring, & Johnson, 2006). The following processes will help to increase this study's credibility:

- The researcher completed *researcher bracketing*, or *reflexivity* (Appendix A), of personal experience related to the research, while drafting the dissertation proposal, including updates and revisions prior to submission of the proposal to mentor, committee, and to the school. Prior to interactions with participants, the researcher reviewed the researcher bracketing to recollect these experiences, perspectives, and/or biases, to help the researcher to come to terms with what is known and assist in freeing the mind to focus as objectively as possible on the subject, participants, and topic at hand.
- Following a consistent process encourages reliability and the potential for future transferability. The researcher used a consistent process (Creswell, 2007; Ritchie & Lewis, 2003) by referring frequently to and following the research process (Table 3) and the analysis techniques described in Chapter 3, and by keeping organized notes and files.
- *Member checking*, or *member validation*, is “the most crucial technique for establishing credibility” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 314). Participants reviewed, amended (if necessary), and confirmed a transcription of their interviews as confirmation of their experiences (Bryman, 2001; Creswell, 2007), which are included in discussions held during member checking (Interview #3; Appendix F).

The study engaged a small group of participants that met the criteria described in Chapter 3. It is normal for qualitative studies to use smaller samples, but to use more in-depth methods of retrieving data (Huberman & Miles, 1983). Triangulation also occurred through comparing and contrasting, researcher bracketing and reflexivity, multiple interviews with each participant, and member checking (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Scandura & Williams, 2000) to ensure that, although the sample size was small, the researcher took steps to ensure credibility and generalizability (Scandura & Williams, 2000). Specific to the generalizability of the study,

it is necessary in the written account of the study to provide detailed information regarding participants, selection methods, context, and data generation and

analysis methods in order for readers to decide how far and to whom the findings may be generalized. (Priest, 2002, p. 60)

Ethical Considerations

The researcher took into consideration and provided participants information specific to participant privacy and confidentiality, risks and benefits, any necessary consideration for vulnerable populations, and data security. Each of these key ethical considerations is addressed herein, in terms of the issues, literature on point, and study methods which serve to mitigate each such concern.

Informed consent and participant confidentiality are important ethical considerations to include in the development of a study. In this study, the researcher obtained informed consent with an informed consent form, which provided evidence of the consent of the participant to participate in the study while understanding the basis for the research and the right to confidentiality, privacy, and anonymity when called for in the study (Seidman, 2006; Weiss, 1994). Differing industries have associations or academies that provide rules and regulations surrounding research or work conducted by professionals in the field. Specific to the field of management, the Academy of Management (2008) details these guidelines. The Academy of Management's code of ethics details three general principles of its members in the preamble: "responsibility, integrity, and respect for people's rights and dignity" (§ 9). The code of ethics also discusses conflicts of interest and the need for informed consent in research.

Confidentiality is another ethical consideration integrated into this study. Privacy of the participants' responses within the study is of the utmost importance. Maintaining participants' privacy throughout this study is of the utmost importance to the researcher.

In order to maintain that privacy and create anonymity, the researcher assigned participants a pseudonym prior to the interview, and ensured that the findings from this study did not provide specific details that enable anyone to call out a participant in a way that may danger his or her career, organization, or social being. A master pseudonym list matching participants and their corresponding pseudonym remains under lock and key in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's house. No one had access to the master pseudonym list at any point prior to, during, or after the study was completed.

There are minimal risks associated with participation in this study. The researcher asked participants to recall unpleasant experiences, which may have caused distress. In this event, the researcher would have referred the participant to his or her primary care physician or employee assistance program (EAP). The researcher reminded participants at the beginning of the in-depth interview that they may stop being in the study at any time if they become uncomfortable.

Participants did not receive a direct or tangible benefit to participating in this study. The informed consent form noted that participation in this study may help researchers to help others in the future. As discussed in Chapter 1, the outcome of this study may assist organizational leaders, change agents, managers (including downsizing managers), employees, clients, and other organizational stakeholders, as well as the scholar-practitioner community, in finding new appreciation for the challenges that downsizing managers face, and informing the future decision making affecting the lives and livelihoods of the organizations' human assets. The likelihood of participants

experiencing distress is minimal, and the severity of this risk is low. Therefore, the benefits of this study outweigh the potential risk.

The safekeeping of documents, audio tapes, and notes are steps towards privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality. Participation in the study is voluntary and participants may withdraw their participation from the study at any time. In addition, if participants found discomfort in responding to any questions, whether in a verbal or written manner, during the study, the researcher asked that they refrain from responding. In addition, the researcher maintained the pseudonym chart (actual participant names versus pseudonyms), informed consent forms for all participants, tapes, notes, transcriptions, and any other paper or electronic files in a locked file cabinet in which they will remain for 7 years after the publication of this study. At that time, the researcher will shred, burn, and erase these files.

Methodological Limitations

This section reviews the methodological limitations within this study, and identifies methods used to diminish these limitations as much as possible. Two limitations exist in this study: sample size and researcher experience.

The sample size for this study was small, as it was a qualitative, exploratory study. Results of this study are not statistically significant or generalizable. Convenience of time, location, and use of face-to-face interviews did not allow the researcher to interview a larger sample size. The use of exploratory, semistructured, in-depth interviews provided for rich, thick descriptions of the participants' experiences, thereby ensuring that the researcher retrieve a deep understanding of the experience. In addition,

the participant screening process allowed for the selection of a diverse group of participants, spanning age, gender, state, and industry.

Although the researcher did not have direct experience as a downsizing manager, prior downsizing experiences and relationships with downsizing managers have created preconceived notions and perspectives on this topic. The researcher had undertaken a reflexivity exercise (Appendix A) to record her related experiences, thoughts, questions, preconceived notions, and perspectives, as a method to avoiding personal bias within the study (Creswell, 2007; Creswell & Miller, 2000; Ruona, 2005). Realization of these perspectives assisted the researcher in recognizing, disclosing, and putting aside such biases and freeing the mind to focus as objectively as possible on the participants and topic at hand. Chapter 5 revisits these limitations and provides recommendations for future research.

Summary

This chapter included details surrounding the methodology proposed for this study. In summary, this study used a qualitative approach following Seidman's (2006) 3-phase interview approach. Purposive recruiting assisted in identifying participants that met the criteria specified herein. The interview transcription served as the primary tool for coding and analysis. The researcher used the following qualitative techniques when analyzing the data: thematic analysis, constant comparative, and making metaphors. To maintain credibility, the researcher used bracketing; a logical, consistent process; rich, thick descriptions; and member checking. In addition, ethical considerations included obtaining participant consent and maintaining confidentiality using pseudonyms. All

written and electronic files related to this study will remain in a locked cabinet in the researcher's home for 7 years after the publication of the study, per the requirements of the Institutional Review Board.

CHAPTER 4. RESULTS

The Study and the Researcher

The purpose of this study was to examine the personal and professional experiences of downsizing managers during downsizing decision making, implementation, and managing in the aftermath. This chapter presents the key findings that have emerged from in-depth interviews with 14 downsizing managers. The chapter includes data regarding the demographics of study participants, the description and analysis of the collected data, interview summaries, the thematic analysis of the data, analysis of the data in relation to the research question, and summation of the major findings of the study.

The researcher became interested in the experience of downsizing managers almost 10 years ago after a discussion with a downsizing manager about his experience. Further exploration of academic and business literature revealed limited research on the topic, which led the researcher to initiate and design this study. Due to limited knowledge and experience in conducting a research study, the researcher worked closely with her mentor to design and implement this study. Data collection occurred using Seidman's 3-phased interview approach (2006), as detailed in Chapter 3. The use of bracketing, also discussed in Chapter 3, reduced the potential for researcher bias. The researcher conducted, transcribed, and analyzed all interviews with the 14 participants. The remainder of this chapter includes a detailed review of the researcher's data analysis.

Description of the Population and Sample

This section provides additional insight into the population, and a description of the sample of participants in this study. Additionally, participant profiles and interview summaries provide sufficient details for the reader to gain a deeper understanding of each participant's experience(s).

Population

As detailed in Chapter 3, the researcher interviewed study participants to explore their personal and professional experiences as downsizing managers during downsizing decision making, implementation, and managing in the aftermath. The study criteria required that each participant (a) was a downsizing manager (as defined in Chapter 1); (b) lives within the US; (c) had a downsizing experience at least 3 months, but no more than 10 years, prior to the study interview; and (d) was not known by nor employed at the same organization as the researcher. The sample used for this study included willing participants who read and responded to the Call for Research Participants (Appendix B) posted or distributed by an employee/manager association, online networking group, chamber of commerce, or one of the researcher's professional or personal contacts, as detailed in Chapter 3.

Description of the Sample

The sample for this study comprised 14 participants who met the criteria detailed in Chapter 3. Table 6 provides demographic data about participants, nine of whom were male and five female. Study participants included a diverse range of age ranges (31 to 40 range through 61 to 70 range), highest level of education attained (bachelor's through

doctorate), geographic region where participant resides (inclusive of Western, Midwestern, Northeastern, and Southern United States), and level within the downsizing organization (manager through executive).

Table 6. *Study Participant Demographics*

Participant characteristics	First experience <i>n</i> (<i>N</i> = 14)	Second experience <i>n</i> (<i>N</i> = 3)
Age group:		
30-40	3	0
41-50	6	1
51-60	3	0
61-70	2	2
Highest education attained:		
Doctorate	1	0
Master's	9	2
Bachelor's	4	1
U.S. geographic region of residence:		
West	4	0
Midwest	2	0
Northeast	6	1
South	2	2
Industry of employment at time of downsizing:		
Manufacturing	6	1
Communications	3	1
Financial services	2	0
Professional, scientific, and technical services	2	1
Public administration	1	0
Level/title at time of downsizing:		
Executive (CEO, COO, or CFO)	2	0
Vice president	3	1
Director	5	0
Manager	4	2
Status with downsizing organization at time of study:		
Later downsized	8	2
Left voluntarily for better opportunity/other reasons	4	1
Still employed by organization	2	0

Three participants (Henri, Mindy, Sam) had availability and sufficient recall to discuss two experiences they had as a downsizing manager, as noted within Table 6. In order to ensure anonymity, the researcher grouped participants into general rather than specific age and industry categories.

Pseudonyms were assigned to each participant by randomly selecting a name from the list of 2009 U.S. hurricane names (Louisiana Homeland Security, 2009), which represents the year the researcher enrolled in her first dissertation course, and the researcher's comparison of participants' experiences to that of surviving a hurricane. The researcher confirmed that none of the pseudonyms matched the names of participants.

Thirteen participants completed in-depth interviews by phone with the researcher and one participant completed his in-depth interview in an online, synchronous format. All 14 participants appeared very willing to be open and honest in their responses. Each participant shared his or her personal and professional experiences as downsizing managers, and expressed interest in learning more about the experiences of other downsizing managers so that they could compare, contrast, and learn from them. In many instances, participants responded similarly to interview questions; conversely, some participants provided unique responses, both of which are detailed later in Chapter 4. None of the participants withdrew from the study. One participant who would have been the 15th participant failed to provide the signed consent form and was thus excluded from the study.

Participant Profiles and Interview Summaries

Although many downsizing managers provided similar responses, each responded as a unique individual. The research reflects the individual opinions and experiences of each of the participants, and a short interview summary for each participant is provided below. These summaries provide a general sense of each participant's background, as well as how each individual viewed their experience as a downsizing manager.

“Bill”

After more than 20 years in an organization within the communications industry, Bill faced his most significant experience as a downsizing manager. This experience involved downsizing 70% of employees within his department, an experience that took a significant amount of time and commitment to both downsized and surviving employees. The downsizing communication occurred in individual conversations, and downsized employees had to leave the office by the end of the following day. Less than 3 years later, he faced another memorable experience as a downsizing manager with a private, much smaller organization. In this experience, there were three waves of downsizing, which included approximately 10 employees each. Downsized employees were required to leave the premises immediately. The perception and actions of the owner played a large part in the challenges faced with this experience, as

The owner was there, and he started crying and weeping, and trying to make it appear that he was caring, and so many people afterwards told me that they saw right through it.

“Danny”

After 3 years with an organization in the manufacturing industry, Danny realized the need for a shift in strategy, which required the company to downsize. The decision was clear due to the significant decline in revenues resulting from several of the company’s top customers deciding to discontinue use of the product for a cheaper and new alternative. In his experience, there were 30 employees downsized and asked to leave the organization that day. Danny expressed “deep regret and remorse” and having had a “heavy heart” throughout the downsizing process.

You first determine that you must do it [the downsizing]; then you go through the emotional baggage and there is a lot of it, that you’re going to affect people’s lives, and their families, and potentially impact their financial situations in the short or long term, and you know it hurts. Nobody wants to do this; I can tell you, as the CEO of this company, as much as I’ve had to do it, I’ve never wanted to do it. It’s an absolute drudgery to have to go through the process, but it’s absolutely necessary to keep the enterprise alive. So to be specific, it was clear that it was a necessary step, it certainly didn’t lessen the heavy heart that I had, and I think that most of the leadership team had.

“Fred”

After 3 years in an organization in public administration, Fred’s organization faced budget concerns and, from Fred’s perspective, legal entanglement, and his manager instructed him to lay off four employees. Fred noted that his manager disappeared shortly after directing Fred to identify and downsize employees:

I couldn’t find him [participant’s manager] for a long time, but he showed up again when it came time for the ax to fall. He became pretty scarce. There was some stuff going on, but I don’t know how much of that was avoiding it or what, you know. It became a sort of a tense environment work-wise.

Fred received his own layoff notice approximately 4 months later. Although he remembered the situation and the organization’s turmoil, he had difficulty recalling

specific details of his experience. As a result, Fred's interview was the shortest of the participant group.

“Henri”

After almost 25 years in an organization in the communications industry, Henri faced the two experiences as a downsizing manager that he described for this study. In each instance, he needed to downsize one employee, and each employee would remain with the organization for the next 60 days. Henri's two experiences were extremely different from each other in the method used and the reactions of the downsized employees. Henri noted that in both instances he advised the downsized employee that his or her primary job over the next 60 days with the organization was to find a new job.

When people feel they are in crisis, they typically take one of two reactions: they disengage within the organization . . . [or they] engage even harder, because they felt that, you know, whether they had control or didn't have control, they weren't sure, but they sure as hell weren't going to be let go because they weren't performing.

“Joaquin”

After 2 years with an organization in the professional, scientific, and technical services industry, Joaquin and his four peers realized that change was imminent due to drastic declines in workload. The format for communicating the news was to split employees into two groups by bringing them into separate meeting rooms at the same time to share the news. Approximately 50 downsized employees left the organization the same day.

In a situation like that [communicating the downsizing], you can't really draw out the explanation. So I pretty much said, “We've split you guys into two groups, and the reason that we're meeting today is to announce that we're going through a

downsizing and everyone in this room is impacted by it.” You just kind of have to get it out on the table, and there was a little bit of a shock value, or shock factor that occurred. Then, I think naturally everybody is sitting there saying, “Oh shit! What do I do now?” and we actually then took them through briefly, really briefly, what the other people were hearing and why we had to make this decision, but I think everyone knew it.

“Kate”

After 4 years in a manufacturing organization, Kate’s position in Human Resources required her to work with her business counterpart to downsize his department. This was just one of many downsizings occurring across the organization. Kate was pregnant during her experience, and found out prior to communicating a downsizing to approximately 150 employees that her own position would end in 7 months.

So [my manager] did not agree with [the] position [of the new company], and basically told us . . . , “Hey listen, I disagree that you should be told after you have completed your part in the process, so this is what’s happening with your job,” and he told me that my job was being eliminated at the end of the year. In some ways, it was a relief. Actually, it was a relief to know what my future was.

Employees were typically given 2 weeks’ to several months’ notice. Kate mentioned that many of the employees that she called in to downsize felt bad that she had to deliver the difficult news.

“Larry”

After 13 years with an organization in the technology industry, Larry faced his experience as a downsizing manager. In his experience, the plant he worked in was closing and approximately 500 employees were losing their positions over a 6-month period. Larry had to decide which members of his team of eight would leave during each

wave of the shutdown, in addition to his leaving in the final wave. Larry's team was unanimous in wanting to know who would go when, so he provided the plan for the team at a meeting with them.

It [the team's reaction to learning of when their respective last days were] was shock, because now it's real. We're not just talking about it, or hearing about it. "Now my date is." . . . I've prepped them enough that they knew it was going to happen they just didn't know the date. Now they could start planning. I tried to turn a negative into some[thing] optimistic, positive that they can plan to. I did the best I could.

For this study, it was typical for participants to spend approximately 1 hour discussing each downsizing experience. Larry was the only participant who opted to interview via the online, synchronous format, and Larry and the researcher spent almost 2 hours discussing his experience. The researcher believes this had to do with the comfort level of the researcher and participant. This particular interview was later in the evening, so it is unclear whether the comfort level and length of the interview were due to time of day or being able to see each other during the discussion.

"Mindy"

After 15 years with her organization in the professional, scientific, and technical services industry, Mindy encountered the downsizing experience she described for this study. During this experience, Mindy was responsible for realigning processes and people within her department, and downsized one manager and two employees in a remote office. Mindy also talked about the decision-making process in another experience, in which Mindy and her peers (at the vice president level) knew that they needed to do something, or there would be significant repercussions down the road. Rather than

moving forward with Mindy and her peers' recommendations, the company chose to outsource the technology-specific personnel and processes to another organization.

He [one of Mindy's peers] had gone to headquarters to present our plan. He came back and said . . . , "You're not going to believe what's happened. They want us to work with this company. They want to outsource all of this," and we were all just in shock. . . . It totally changed the whole picture. . . . And one by one, each of the VPs ended up leaving.

Approximately 4 months after the transition to the contracted outsource company; Mindy received her own layoff notice.

"Nicholas"

After almost 10 years in an organization in the financial services industry, Nicholas had to downsize four employees in the experience he discussed for this study. At the time, he supervised approximately 50 employees and compared his experience to that of a funeral:

You just kind of have your period of mourning, but come next Monday, after you let people go on a Friday or a Thursday, you've got to pick up the pieces and start doing your job again. So you can't be stuck in the mourning stage; I mean that isn't good for the team, and it's not good for the organization, and it's not good for you personally.

"Rose"

After more than 30 years with an organization in the communications industry, Rose's management team approached her to downsize almost all of her team and replace those individuals with multinational employees. Rose handled the hiring, transitioning of processes, personnel management, and ongoing maintenance of multinational work processes. Downsized employees remained with the organization for 60 days after

learning the news. Rose expressed the significant emotional toll that the downsizing experience had on her.

Well like I said, I ended up breaking down and crying as I was giving the news to someone that they were going to lose their job. You know, in some senses, I think that was an extremely selfish thing because it wasn't supposed to be about me and my feelings. It was supposed to be about them. It was like my tears, maybe it made me seem more human, but it also maybe took the focus away from them and it shouldn't have.

Rose appeared to be the most stressed during the study interview process out of all participants, as she expressed feelings of burnout and having to work harder because of the challenges encountered in working with offshore resources (such as culture and time zone).

“Sam”

After almost 10 years with a manufacturing organization, Sam faced his first experience as a downsizing manager. The experience included six rounds of cuts, month after month, each of which he was unaware of until announced. Sam discussed his experience during the first two rounds for this study; he had to downsize two employees in each instance, and those employees left the premises immediately. A few times during his interview, Sam stated that he felt as if he had failed his employees by having to implement the downsizing, especially due to the friendships he had formed there.

I think the biggest thing that came over me more than anything was the sense of failure on my part, that I had failed my employees. Part of my job was protecting their job by making the right decisions, you know, so, I felt like a failure.

Sam eventually decided to leave this company to pursue his education and identify a better opportunity.

“Teresa”

When asked how many experiences Teresa had as a downsizing manager, she responded “too many to count.” After 5 years with a manufacturing organization, Teresa’s skills at managing a downsizing were required once again. She recalled two experiences in the interview, one in which employees were notified and terminated on the same day, and another in which a 60-day (U.S. Department of Labor, 2009; WARN Act) notice was provided to employees. The WARN notice is a federal requirement for most organizations with more than 100 employees to provide at least 60-day notification to employees prior to their end date. There were 160 employees impacted overall, and downsizing conversations occurred individually. Based on her experiences, other departments began reaching out to her to provide a consultative role in the development and implementation of their downsizings. Teresa hoped that this research would result in being

able to describe how to get out of this death spiral more quickly for other people, because it’s never easy to do, and you never want to feel the fate of the organization.

“Victor”

After almost 5 years with a manufacturing organization, the downsizing experience Victor discussed in the interview involved laying off 15 employees, of which three individuals had memorable reactions to the news. Downsizing conversations occurred individually, and employees left the premises immediately. When asked about his initial thoughts on having to decide whom to downsize, Victor replied, “Like I was

just doing my job.” He was compassionate towards employees within the organization, but also realized the necessity of downsizing due to decreasing revenues.

One thing I learned is that you can never underestimate the human traces in people, like people pick up different tendencies, elements, interactions, their whole life. How do you know that this one person wasn't sitting at a barbeque with his best friend on Saturday and said, “You know, if I ever got laid off, I'd flip the freaking table over or I'd piss on their desk.” You know, how do you know that it doesn't happen? You can just never take anything for granted and I don't try to ever ask why they acted that way. You just accept it. Honestly, I don't know what I would do. People cry, get emotional, [and] walk out. I could be one of those people that just get up and leave.

Victor was involved in numerous downsizing experiences over the years with several organizations prior to the experience he recalled for this study.

“Wanda”

After almost 10 years with an organization in the financial services industry, Wanda faced her first experience as a downsizing manager. Her experience included two rounds of deep cuts, in which upper management ignored the recommendations Wanda had originally provided.

So, anyway, I think that the priorities weren't communicated up. What could have been done better is that those priorities that my boss' boss should have insisted on—hearing the priorities and not the schmoozing—because it ended up that we laid off so many people that all of the people that got laid off were providing the data to the people that weren't laid off. So the people that weren't laid off didn't have data. They couldn't do their models because my team was providing the data for them, for their models.

Wanda was responsible for downsizing three of her employees, two of whom were remote and one who was on-site, all of whom left the organization that day. Although the company that eventually took over the organization offered Wanda a position, including relocation, she declined the offer. Wanda talked the fastest of all the participants in this

study, and she admitted later in the interview how much anxiety she had leading up to the interview, as she knew she would have to relive her experience.

Methodological Approach to Data Analysis

Findings of this research are reported herein through participant profiles (Seidman, 2006), descriptions reflecting significant statements and generated meanings, as well as through thematic analysis and a composite description illustrated by verbatim participant quotes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The researcher identified key themes related to the personal and professional experiences, including existing themes from the literature of *communicating a shared vision, managing resistance to change, securing commitment and loyalty, maintaining or restoring morale/motivation, maintaining productivity and job performance, coping with survivor syndrome, and coping with the emotional experience*. These themes served as the initial coding for data analysis. In addition, the researcher looked for instances in which data did not fit into one of the existing themes, in search of potential new theme(s) emergent from the study data.

As noted in Chapter 3, coding, thematic analysis, generating meaning, and composite descriptions of the data were helpful in uncovering the deepest sense of the participants' experiences (Boyatzis, 1998; Ruona, 2005) and illustrating those experiences for the reader. The researcher completed a thorough analysis of participants' interview responses, which included the researcher

- listening to and transcribing each participant's in-depth interview;
- transcribing each participant's follow-up interview (where applicable);

- reading each participant's interview transcript and any feedback provided by participant;
- coding each interview transcription using existing themes;
- listening to participant interview recordings again as needed;
- identifying and coding any new theme(s);
- plotting each participant's coded responses across three phases of downsizing: decision making, implementation, and managing in the aftermath (as illustrated in Figure 4);
- reviewing participants' plotted responses for each theme (from the literature and emergent from the data) by each downsizing phase (as illustrated in Figure 5); and then
- reviewing participants' plotted responses for each theme (from the literature and emergent from the data) across all downsizing phases.



Figure 4. Analysis: Plotting each participant's coded responses across three phases of downsizing: Decision making, implementation, and managing in the aftermath.



Figure 5. Analysis: Reviewing participants' plotted responses for each theme (from the literature and emergent from the data) by each downsizing phase.

Presentation of Data and Results of Analysis

The researcher identified a deeper level of understanding for each of the seven themes in the literature in the analysis of the data (Figure 6). In addition, during the analysis of participants' responses, some data did not fit into one of the existing themes from the literature, which resulted in the identification of one new theme: *treating downsized employees humanely* (Figure 6). Participant data supporting each of the eight themes is detailed below.



Figure 6. Themes relevant in the experiences of downsizing managers (seven existing themes from the literature and one new theme emergent from the data).

Communicating a shared vision. Participants described their reactions to their respective organizations' decisions to downsize. Downsizing was a necessary decision for the company to survive (Bill, Danny, Henri, Mindy, Teresa, Victor); although some disagreed with the need to downsize, they understood that they had to do it (Fred, Larry, Nicholas, Sam). Of the 14 participants, six downsizing managers mentioned communicating with their teams, and its criticality to managing in the aftermath (Danny, Henri, Joaquin, Larry, Rose, Victor).

Bill: I look at it [being a downsizing manager] as an extremely valuable experience in that I was recognized for understanding the big picture of the company, and was charged with an awesome responsibility to help build the future while at the same time being recognized as having the compassion and the ability to be able to deliver the message in a way that would be received well and or in an optimal way to where the individual would not feel persecuted.

Mindy: Well, we all got on board . . . [and] we decided that we would just try to get a feel for how everybody would work with us. They did all agree that if we didn't do it [a downsizing] someone else would do it for us. So we were better off figuring this out on our own, that we would likely lose a lot of people on our teams and possibly our own jobs if we didn't do this.

Sam: In the views of the higher ups, my manager and his manager, I was looked at in a different light. I was looked at as if I was someone that understood business truly, because I understood why the decisions [to downsize] were being made.

Danny: So the communication was very clear: This is what we have to do. This is why we have to do it. Getting the CFO at that time and the VP of HR on board was not an issue because they sensed the same thing that I did.

Larry: I had told them we had a plan developed [of who will go when], where the plan was developed, all approved, management knows it, and I asked the group, I said, "I'm going to have one-on-one meeting[s] with each of you this [week], of what the date is. If you want to, if you want me to tell everyone right now in this open meeting with the whole staff, I just want to have unanimous decision and then I'll let everyone know at the same time. Otherwise, I'll talk about it [during the one-on-one meetings]." It was unanimous they all wanted to know at the same time—that was the team I had built. They still had the team mentality and the team approach, and they as a team said, "Yes, we want to know." So I just said, "Okay, let's rip the bandaid off and get it over with," and I said, "Here's the plan: December 31, this person [and] this person; January 31, these people; February, these people. That leaves me and two others until mid-March, and it's going to be this person and this person." I said, "Here's why I've put this plan together, and here's the reasoning behind it." And they were like, "I would have done the same thing." They were like, "Yeah, it's a good idea. That fits the whole need."

Downsizing managers' experience with communicating a shared vision shows that executives and upper management view downsizing managers who share the vision of the organization in a positive light (Bill, Danny, Sam). In addition, the downsizing

managers' acceptance and sharing the vision eases their ability to communicate the vision to others (Danny, Joaquin, Larry).

Managing resistance to change. Once the downsizing managers identified or learned of the organization's decision to downsize, they may have exhibited a personal resistance to change or experienced resistance in employees. One downsizing manager talked about his own initial resistance to the change (Victor), which provided brief delays in the inevitable need to downsize employees. Two participants mentioned resistance to implementing the downsizing by either their own manager, or one of their reporting managers (Danny, Teresa).

Victor: We should have made this decision [to downsize] . . . when we first came to the realization. And I, I tried everything that I could to at least delay it. I moved cash around, and we were basically selling our soul to keep everybody employed here, because we were a pretty close-knit family. So, you know, you do bring the work home with you and you're constantly thinking about it. And, you know, 3 o'clock in the morning one night I had an idea, and we were able to keep people for 2 more weeks.

Danny: I have heard that many other CEOs hide during the process, or other executives hide, and try to let HR handle it. I think that is the absolute worst thing you can do. . . . I found [one of my senior managers] kind of hiding most of the time and I didn't appreciate that, and he never really did step up to the plate very often, even though his organization was affected. He kind of cowered and let his first line managers handle it. I would notice he wasn't anywhere to be found when the employees were leaving. I was kind of disappointed in that, but it is what it is.

Teresa: My general manager didn't want any part of it. He stayed in his office the whole day, which I thought was very bad.

Three participants mentioned the resistance of employees based on their reactions to the communication of the news (Bill, Henri, Victor).

Bill: You always hear about the shell-shocked look and/or feel. You hear a member of them taking up the cause of the released, and sometimes a little too much, where they would be ranting, "This is ridiculous. I can't believe this is

going on!” in a way not selflessly looking at the situation, but also feeling guilty themselves for being retained and trying to feel for your peers that were leaving, that they understand and that they care. Sometimes it was a little more animated than it needed to be, but I think everybody did what they needed to do. . . . An Asian lady that I had worked with . . . she did a stellar job, but couldn’t understand why one of her close friends [working with a different] market was retained and she needed to go. . . . They had a lot of common experiences and it was probably the more painful one. I think she viewed it was more of a personal decision, that it was more a level of favoritism versus objectivity [when in fact it was a market-driven decision].

Henri: On the phone it was pretty calm relatively speaking and matter of fact. But I knew she was upset and I didn’t realize how much of a reaction I got until, not more than hours later, my boss got a call from the former director who was no longer working for the company and was like, “How dare you downsize my secretary.”

Victor: You try not to react [in response to a downsized employee throwing a chair] because then you incite their reaction. I’ve been through that type of reaction probably about 8-10 times, and you try and, you try and side with them and be their ally and be like “I know, I can’t believe we’re at this place. It does suck,” and you know, you try to diffuse the situation until they can take a breath, I guess.

In a separate downsizing experience, one participant noted that:

Bill: There were some difficult situations in getting keys from them [downsized employees] to the building, so there were a myriad of things. They were talking loud, trying to create a scene, you know at their desk, making it awkward for folks that were there.

The downsizing managers’ management of resistance to change indicates that downsizing managers

- will experience resistance from employees, whether downsized or remaining with the organization, due to the nature of the impact on the organization and the livelihoods of individuals (Bill, Henri, Victor);
- may only temporarily delay the inevitability of downsizing (Mindy, Victor); and
- should plan for potential resistance to change by downsized employees, as it is never a bad idea, such as ensuring extra security, additional management presence, or notifying police on the day of the event (Bill, Henri, Kate, Larry, Nicholas, Teresa).

Securing commitment and loyalty. The researcher asked participants about their commitment or loyalty to their team and to their organization while managing in the aftermath of the downsizing. One downsizing manager had an interesting response to loyalty and referred to his perspective that loyalty has disappeared since his father's days on the job (Victor).

Victor: *Loyalty* is a funny word. I don't think you can say you have loyalty, I mean, they pay me to do a job. You know, I don't know if you can. I don't know how you would define loyalty, honestly. Like loyalty that I would stick around through the next layoffs? Or loyalty to, I don't know. I don't know how people can be loyal to jobs now. Honestly. Well, how do you, how do you become loyal to a job that, say you are my father [who] worked for [organization] for 35 years and he retired from them. How do you become loyal when you see parents and family members not taking vacation and staying with the company for lower wage to keep with the company? You've been there 20, 30 years and the company just closes shop and lays people off. So I don't know that the word *loyal* today is essentially what it was. I think they [employees] are scared into what you call loyalty, but I don't think people, looking around my workforce, I wouldn't say there are people loyal to the company. I think people enjoy working here, and they make a decent pay working here, but I don't know if you can quantify what loyalty means. I don't think I'm loyal to this company. I think I'm very fortunate to work for a company that treats people like they do, but I know the rules of the game; that is, no sales come in and the doors shut. The door shuts, you know. I pick myself up and I pick whomever I want to room with me and find a new opportunity. I think everybody probably feels that, somewhere or another.

The remainder of this section provides insight into participant responses related to *loyalty to their organization* and *loyalty to their team*.

Loyalty to the organization. Three downsizing managers responded that their loyalty increased or stayed the same (Danny, Joaquin, Sam), whereas eight downsizing managers reported diminished loyalty (Bill, Fred, Henri, Larry, Nicholas, Rose, Sam, Teresa). Two participants referred to further diminished loyalty after subsequent rounds of downsizing within the organization (Nicholas, Sam).

Joaquin: It would be hard for me to feel anything but totally committed since I was the founder of the company and had made the decision to downsize, so equally committed to the success of the company. I felt and hoped that the decision that we had made to downsize was the right one and that it would, you know, position the company to succeed going forward.

Larry: That day [the day I learned of the need to downsize], I mean after we found out in the morning, I was in my office updating my résumé. At that point, the loyalty went out the door. I was more focused on loyalty to the team because I had actually developed a good relationship with them, but to the company itself, you know, you're going to turn your back on me—I'm not going to be begging, so I've got to find something else. ... It was an eye-opener. It was like everyone reacted like it was the Titanic going down.

Nicholas: I've since moved from working for a public companies to privately held companies for that very reason. I feel that public companies, that the extreme upper management doesn't have as much of a finger on the pulse of the working force for that particular organization. It's always bothered me to some degree, and for them it's more about making money and keeping stock up and shareholders happy than anything. I prefer working for maybe a little bit smaller organization where I have more of a touch with upper management and usually in those cases, you know they realize, or they take into more account how valuable the workforce really is. I found in most cases that they are more hesitant to let people go, you know especially if they are bringing a lot of value.

Loyalty to the team. In addition to Larry as quoted above, four other downsizing managers referred to an increased feeling of loyalty to the team (Bill, Henri, Nicholas, Sam). Of the 14 participants, seven downsizing managers discussed their commitment to helping downsized employees find new jobs by providing resources and references (Bill, Danny, Joaquin, Rose, Sam, Wanda, Victor).

Bill: I felt fiercely loyal to my team. In other words, it's sort of like going through a war together. People are thinking they are in the trenches with someone and whenever you're sharing things like that you are blessed that you've been able to survive, but at the same time you always know that something else, and we knew more was going to happen. So I felt very loyal to them and very supportive of them and in anything that they wanted to do, and didn't want to hold them back if they saw other opportunities.

Mindy: [My loyalty] was always dealing with the people, dealing with the employees, like, “Okay how are they reacting, how are they, how do I address the needs of the employees that work for me?”

Wanda: I think it [loyalty to team] increased, after the downsizing event, I felt more protect[ive] than I ever had about my employees that had been downsized. I think maybe I took them for granted before, but after that [the downsizing] they seemed even more precious to me and so smart—smarter than they were on my team, which is ironic. And I could see what good people that they were, whereas before I think I never thought of it.

There was no mention of a decrease in loyalty to the team, but two downsizing managers mentioned a difference in the loyalty they had with the original team members or organization versus new team members or the new organization due to merger or acquisition (Kate, Rose).

Kate: I think I was still loyal to [old company], but not equally loyal to [new company], what [the old company] had become, because of the new company.

Rose: I’m very loyal to my domestic team. My [international] team, because of the cultural differences, it’s really difficult to manage across the cultural difference. I do have personal relationships with them, but I’m not there [onsite]. I can’t see them. I can’t see the people that report to them, I can’t see what kind of manager they are to their people. Do I have the same loyalty to them? No, I don’t.

Securing commitment and loyalty synthesis. Participants’ responses reflected that a variety of factors might influence participants’ commitment and loyalty to their organization and to their team. Many participants recalled decreased levels of commitment and loyalty *to their organizations*, especially after subsequent downsizings (Bill, Fred, Henri, Larry, Nicholas, Rose, Sam, Teresa). Some participants thought that their company was committed to its employees, but felt otherwise after the company’s decision to and eventual downsizing of the organization (Larry, Nicholas, Rose).

Many participants recalled increased levels of commitment and loyalty *to their teams*, especially in helping downsized employees find new jobs (Bill, Danny, Joaquin, Rose, Sam, Wanda, Victor). Two of the three participants who mentioned they had an increased or the same level of loyalty to the organization were members of the executive management team (Danny, Joaquin), one of who was a company founder. Reference to members of the participants' team and/or organization being similar to a "family" appear again herein, in the analysis of participants' emotional experience, as well as in the analysis of the research subquestion related to the downsizing manager's experience during implementation.

Maintaining or restoring morale and motivation. Downsizing managers had to maintain or restore morale and motivation—their own, their management team's and/or other managers' within the organization, and their employees'—throughout the downsizing process.

Bill: [Being in the role of downsizing manager] gave me . . . kind of hard to describe it, where when you're in control of something like that, it's an awesome position with a lot of responsibility that comes with it. I think the reward was . . . that I maintained my job. It was simply recognition of my years of service, and I was extremely flattered that I was requested to stay and to do this, but it just became, the responsibility of it, not just the night before, but there were a lot of sleepless nights.

Joaquin: We had to do a lot more coaching of the supervisors, because a lot of the supervisors hadn't had a lot of supervisor[y] experience: helping them, encouraging discussion between them and their employees, a lot of discussions between the next level of management down, kind of getting everybody to open up communications.

Larry: So I'm going through [the year of the downsizing] like, "Woo hoo! I'm done, I'm cancer free!" and then in August we get the news that they are closing the plant. I'm like, "Holy crap," and for me, I'm still kind of optimistic because I beat it [laugh], so I figure this is just a job, and if I can beat that, I can beat this.

Management by walking around was a concept that three downsizing managers used in an attempt to maintain or restore morale and motivation in the organization (Danny, Larry, Victor). Downsizing managers recognized the importance of communication with remaining employees, not only in the concept of management by walking around, but by open communication with remaining employees related to the status and progress of the company.

Danny: Communicate, communicate, communicate, and make yourself available, talk to the team, love the team, pull them back together. It's hurtful to everybody when these things happen. Be the glue. If you're not the glue, then nobody else will be. At least for me, as the leader, and I think that's true of every level of management in the organization.

Henri: Our company at the time, for legal reasons, required 60 days' notice before anybody was off payroll. I was very candid with them. I made no demands on anyone that was downsized. I told them right upfront their primary job was to go find a job, and they didn't have to be in the office. They didn't have to come, they could use the office, they could use their computer. They didn't have to show up if they didn't want to. It was really up to them. I actually encouraged them to leave immediately that day. I encouraged them to go home, and then take a rest and get their thoughts together, not to stay in the office.

Larry: [Morale] definitely was affected. . . . it was gloomy. I had to become the chief motivator for my staff. Eventually I moved back in with them. . . . There were two walled offices in there, and those two guys, they said, "well I can move out to the cube and you can have the office." And I said, "Why? Stay there. You stay there, you've earned that. I'm over here now in this cube like every other person." I think in a way, of me making that show, and for me it was a show, because I could care less of where I worked. For me making a show of moving out of the office with a door, which is a status symbol, down to a cube, an open cube, was a big move for them saying, he's making sacrifices here. I just let them know, "No, they just wanted me to get out of my office." Oh, wow. And they were like, "You gotta do this, too?" Yeah, from that point on it was like we were all together, it wasn't a manager-subordinate relationship.

Joaquin: I think they were concerned about their own future and whether or not they would be around. These are some things that need to happen, otherwise we're all going to be out on the street. So we sort of had the initial people

[meetings] with everyone, and then subsequent meetings days later to say, “Here’s where we’re at. Here’s what we’re doing,” and we would have regular meetings with employees to say, “Here’s progress we’re making, and not making,” so that everyone would know what was going on with the company. So we had to, I guess, be more proactive in sharing some of the strategic discussions we were having and sales discussions we were having so that everyone would know what was going on.

Synthesizing the downsizing managers’ maintenance or restoration of morale and motivation, participants’ comments reflected that the postdownsizing environment was often lackluster. To restore morale and motivation to employees, participants used communication, whether through management by walking around or in meeting with individual employees or as a group in the postdownsizing environment. These efforts provided employees with an opportunity to either talk or learn more from the downsizing manager on topics such as how or why the downsizing happened and/or what employees needed to do so that they and the company could move forward.

Maintaining productivity and job performance. Participants reported a variety of responses regarding their ability to maintain productivity and job performance throughout the downsizing. Table 7 illustrates increased, decreased, and in one instance mixed levels of productivity in the postdownsizing environment.

Increased productivity levels. Participants provided several reasons that productivity increased within their respective organizations during the postdownsizing environment (Danny, Fred, Henri, Rose, Sam, Teresa, Victor, Wanda): (a) that the organization maintained the same goals and processes as before the downsizing, (b) the managers needed to assist with workloads, (c) employees’ fears of being on the next

downsizing list, and (d) a shift in workload among employees to more appropriate and efficient levels.

Table 7. *Postdownsizing Impacts on Productivity*

Productivity level	Reason	Participants
Increased	No change to goals and workload	Fred, Rose, Sam, Teresa
	Employees feared they could be downsized next	Sam, Victor
	Had to assist in responsibilities of team members that were downsized	Henri, Rose, Teresa, Wanda
	Shifted workload to an appropriate amount	Danny
Decreased	Less willing to work hard after subsequent rounds of downsizing	Henri, Sam
	Employees feared they could be downsized next and obsessed over that thought	Nicholas
	Natural level of disruption and/or mourning period	Bill, Joaquin, Nicholas
Mixed	Bad leadership	Teresa
	Legal battles and news media impacted productivity	Kate

Four participants noted that the organization maintained the same goals and processes in the postdownsizing environment as the goals and processes that were present before the downsizing (Fred, Rose, Sam, Teresa).

Fred: The workload increased dramatically, so you had much less time to worry about things and you had the same amount of deliverables because the mission stayed the same.

Sam: They [employees] were actually more productive because we still had the same goals to hit and we had fewer people to do it. And we still hit them [the goals].

In addition, in order to maintain the same goals and processes with a smaller workforce, four participants recalled that their own productivity increased, as they needed

to assist their teams with processes of employees who were no longer with the organization (Henri, Rose, Teresa, Wanda).

Rose: People were forced to increase their productivity. They didn't have any choice. Everybody picked up additional work.

Teresa: If anything, [productivity is] probably more so, because my department was also impacted and I had to let go my [job title]. So now, in addition to other responsibilities as the leader of HR, I do quite a bit of [specific function] for higher-level positions and the generalist that works for me does the [function] for the other positions that we have at the hourly level.

Wanda: I think I was more productive. Not being a manager to people, I had much more time to devote to being an individual contributor and my [downsized] analysts were junior. I had worked my way up in the ranks and I was a senior analyst [level], and I could do things. Things that took them a week, I could do in an afternoon.

Two participants attributed the increased productivity levels to employees' fear for their jobs and to a lessened likelihood that the employee might be downsized next (Sam, Victor). Victor recalled, "I think people realized, 'I better get my stuff together or I'm next.'" Lastly, one participant tied the increased productivity levels to the shift in workload at a more appropriate and efficient level for employees.

Danny: I would say for the most part, productivity would go up just because you do the right work and you do it with fewer people, but people would churn out more work per person, more meaningful work per person.

Seven participants identified increased productivity levels in the postdownsizing environment (Danny, Fred, Henri, Rose, Sam, Teresa, Victor) and noted specific reasons for those increased levels. Conversely, six participants described decreased productivity levels as follows.

Decreased productivity levels. Six participants indicated that productivity levels decreased in the postdownsizing environment (Bill, Henri, Joaquin, Nicholas, Sam,

Teresa). Reasons included (a) employees being less willing to work hard after subsequent rounds of downsizing, (b) employees' fear and obsession with possibility of future downsizings, (c) a natural level of disruption and/or mourning period, and (d) bad leadership.

Two participants recalled that employees' reactions to numerous downsizings was reflected in decreased productivity levels because there were employees who were less likely to put in the minimum work, or additional efforts, upon subsequent downsizings with the organization (Henri, Sam).

Henri: I think by the second time, it [the downsizing] was beginning to have an impact. You know, people were having to take up the slack more for individuals that were no longer there. It does, it takes a toll. There's no question it takes a toll.

Sam: The guys [employees] had decided they weren't going to break their necks any more. You know, because they were starting to realize that, "I'm just a number and you'll get rid of me whenever you want to." They had the belief that, no matter how hard they worked, or how good of employees they were, if this company wanted to get rid of them they would get rid of them.

Employees' fears resulting from the downsizing not only prompted them to increase productivity, but they could also negatively influence productivity if taken too far. One participant mentioned an instance in which an employee's fears became obsessions and the employee's productivity levels decreased as a result (Nicholas):

Nicholas: Some people, if they think they have a target on their back, and that always goes through everybody's mind, than it does hurt their productivity because they start to worry about it. I've found that the people that are obsessive about it, you know, their productivity goes down. . . . There was one individual who just couldn't seem to get their act together and it was a struggle for about 2½ weeks, because I had to keep calling this certain individual into my office and talking to them, and addressing concerns. It finally got to the point where I had to say, in not so many words, "Look, I understand, and I feel the pain too. This hasn't been an easy deal for all of us, but you need to get your act together. If you don't, there is going to be repercussions."

Three participants recalled a natural level of disruption, due to grieving the loss of employees that occurred within their organizations (Bill, Joaquin, Nicholas).

Joaquin: I think that there is a natural tendency for people to talk about what they are feeling, what they are experiencing, how the company is doing, and those kinds of things take away from productivity. On the flip side, in a [certain kind of business operation] you kind of work with what the work is. It's not like a factory where you're trying to produce so many widgets a day. You have these calls coming in and as they come [in] you kind of have to respond.

Nicholas: [The downsizing] has kind of been like a funeral. You go through it, you just kind of have your period of mourning, but come next Monday, you know, after you let people go on a Friday or a Thursday, you've got to pick up the pieces and start doing your job again. So you can't be stuck in the mourning stage. I mean that isn't good for the team, and it's not good for the organization, and it's not good for you personally.

Often, there was not a lot of time for a mourning period; one participant noted he "always tried to pick up the pieces as quickly as we can and keep morale up" (Nicholas).

Lastly, one participant noted that the productivity within her organization decreased due to bad leadership (Teresa). Once this participant and her peers escalated feedback regarding the bad leadership of their manager throughout the downsizing, senior management took swift action.

Teresa: The guy who was my manager had been very ineffective and did not provide the kind of leadership that all of us that worked for him felt was needed. Between that and some other behaviors that were unacceptable, he was let go . . . and we have someone in here on an interim basis, someone that is a higher level within the organization. . . . The decision to let him go is viewed positively by the organization overall, but still makes them [employees] even more skittish about what's going to happen next.

Thus, three participants identified reasons why there may have been both increased and decreased productivity levels (Henri, Sam, Teresa). Two of these participants recalled differences in productivity after subsequent (Sam) or separate (Henri) downsizing experiences. The third participant recalled her productivity level

increased, as she had to downsize a member of her team, but that employees within her company showed decreased levels of productivity due to bad leadership throughout the downsizing (Teresa). In addition to these participants' experiences with increased and decreased levels of productivity, some one participant noted an instance of mixed productivity levels.

Mixed productivity levels. One participant mentioned mixed levels of productivity within her organization due to an anticipated company merger that included legal battles and media attention (Kate). What the news media communicated caused a rollercoaster of emotions and productivity levels among the organization's employees dependent upon the anticipated positive or negative results.

Kate: The announcement that day . . . basically said this whole deal [the anticipated merger] fell apart and it was not a good thing. So at that point, they [the suitor or would-be acquiring company was] were trying to back out of the deal . . . That threw the organization back into complete turmoil. You know, the improvements that we had seen in productivity [during the premerger stage] just went back down the toilet to zero. Everybody was like, "What's going to happen?" and all anyone talked about is, "What's going to happen with this merger?"

Maintaining productivity and job performance synthesis. Synthesizing the downsizing managers' maintenance of productivity and job performance, the participants' comments indicate that downsizing managers may experience

- *increased productivity levels* due to (a) maintenance of the same organizational goals and processes as before the downsizing, (b) the managers' realization of the need to assist with workloads, (c) employees' fears of being on the next downsizing list, and/or (d) shifts in workload among employees to more appropriate and efficient levels.
- *decreased productivity levels* due to (a) employees being less willing to work hard after multiple rounds of downsizing, (b) employees' fear and obsession

with possibility of future downsizings, (c) a natural level of disruption and/or mourning period, and/or (d) bad leadership.

- *mixed productivity levels* as varying views of the future of the organization unfold.

The potential improvements noted by participants as discussed later in this chapter may alleviate some instances of decreased or mixed productivity levels in the postdownsizing environment (e.g., increased communication, altering goals or processes).

Coping with survivor syndrome. In-depth interview questions that related to the relationships with and reactions of remaining or surviving employees sought knowledge about how managers coped with survivor syndrome. Participants advised that surviving employees exhibited a gamut of emotions, including relief, gratefulness, guilt, shock, anger, fear, stress, distress, appreciation, and resilience.

Sam: They [surviving employees] definitely got more difficult, strained. They were getting pissed, you know because they had to work harder and complete more stuff, and then still riding them about overtime. Their response was, “Well, quit firing everybody.” And so, you know, that just really put a strain on it.

Victor: I think a lot of the reactions were relief and grateful, that “Hey, it wasn’t me,” and I think it was again an immediate lift of the company, because everyone knew it was going to happen. I mean, we slowly started hemorrhaging, and we cut off the 401K and we cut off the tuition reimbursement, and you know, we weren’t having the big company luncheons that we were having. So, everyone knew it was coming.

Two participants discussed feelings of great regret and remorse for having to downsize employees. One of these participants mentioned *remorse* six times and having a *heavy heart* twice during his in-depth interview (Danny).

Bill: In a work environment, I have more of a parental, or paternal approach to management. In the positive aspect, in terms of working and establishing relationships and getting results, although sometimes it takes a little longer rather than being dictatorial, but what it’s done has made it more painful in terms of the

remorse that I go through in having to release people. It feels like I'm releasing family, although it's a surrogate family.

Danny: Regret emotionally [in response to initial thoughts when having to decide who to downsize]. I dreaded the thought of having such a negative impact on affected employees, their families, their financial conditions, it was critical in the determination of who was to be downsized that the problem was addressed in a methodical way. . . . I knew the depth, I knew the heavy heart that I had. . .

Participants held a dual role of both downsizing manager and survivor, and experienced similar emotions as surviving employees within their organizations.

Danny: Yes, grief, remorse. It took me about 2 to 3 weeks to shake the feeling that you let these people down. Even though I know there are no guarantees in this world, and I did my best to keep the enterprise going strong. There were some things that were completely out of my control and the leadership team's control, and when we were affected, we had to respond or we would have paid the price in the longer term.

Introspection. Participants discussed employees' or their own introspection of their future and/or the future of the organization. Two participants remembered that surviving employees became more inquisitive after the downsizing, likely in fear of future downsizing events.

Sam: They [remaining employees] were starting to ask a lot more questions that I didn't have answers to. You know, "How are we going to handle this? How are we going to handle that? Are any more going to happen? Are they going to cut our hours back more now? Are we closing? Are we going out of business?"

Kate: Oh, it [reactions of remaining employees] ran the gamut [many] people also experienced survivor guilt like, "Why was it this person versus me? Why am I still here?" It was dealing with those issues. Not a good place people lived in fear that their job would be eliminated, and that's not a good place to be. It's a very stressful place for certain people.

Some of the surviving employees at participants' organizations became fearful of what their future, or the future of the organization held.

Joaquin: So I think on the one hand they felt bad for the people that were let go. I think they were concerned about their own future, and whether or not they would be around.

Teresa: They were happy to know that they were not identified, but a little nervous about what was going to happen, because we couldn't stand up there and say it's completely over. So, they [surviving employees] were still very concerned about their job security.

Throughout the interviews, six participants referred to periods of their own reflection and introspection.

Henri: The personal impact was more personal introspection, and then, I won't even call it fear for your own job, but it was, you know, it's time to face reality. You know the writing's on the wall, it's not today, but it might be next week or the week after that. I think we all, and myself, to a person, we all felt that way.

Teresa: [Being involved in a downsizing] is unsettling because I don't feel like I really understand how viable the business is going to be in the future. You know, it prompted me to update my résumé and start looking.

Coping with survivor syndrome synthesis. Downsizing managers' ability to cope with survivor syndrome reflects that downsizing managers bear a mixture of emotions in their dual roles as downsizing managers and survivors in the organization. Participants had to manage the emotions and introspection they may have experienced due to the downsizing, as well as the emotions and introspection experienced by their surviving employees.

Several participants began to reflect upon their roles, their future *with* the organization, and the future *of* the organization. Seven of the participants that became introspective because of the downsizing eventually learned of their own downsizing with the same organization. In total (as recapped above in Table 6), eight of the participants were downsized themselves (Bill, Fred, Henri, Joaquin, Kate, Larry, Mindy, Wanda), two

participants chose to leave for better opportunities (Nicholas, Sam), and four participants are still with the organizations at which they experienced their roles as downsizing managers (Danny, Teresa, Rose, Victor).

Coping with the emotional experience. Nine participants recalled the stressfulness of the downsizing situation, which is one component of the emotional experience (Bill, Danny, Kate, Larry, Mindy, Rose, Sam, Teresa, Victor):

Bill: My wife often talks to me about it, and what I would wrestle with. I've got health issues because of it. I ended up with several attacks of diverticulitis, stress related, and ended up in the hospital for a week. She said, "What could you do, could you try to control the owner?" And she said, "You can't do it. It's his company. You were brought in to do a job, you helped grow it, and now you need to help shrink it, and just follow his lead."

Danny: The personal impact for me was, it was a great deal of personal stress, many sleepless nights, and a lot of concern over affected employees and their employees.

Kate: A level of stress knowing that you carried around this news and weren't able to share it until the designated time, and then there was kind of an emotional reaction afterwards because you really, you felt the emotions that the person was going through. There were times where people sat in front of me and started crying, and I'm just one of those people that someone starts crying it kind of makes me cry. I would have to hold back tears sometimes. It was very emotional.

Rose: I think all of us are just really stressed out though because of all of the work and the constant change that we have extra work that we all had to absorb.

Sam: I stressed a lot more. I always felt like I was running right on the edge. I worried about my own job quite a bit. I didn't really get depressed, but I had a constant worry. My friends outside of work could see the strain on my face.

Teresa: While we were going through this issue where we had finally said something to corporate about my boss, it was very stressful. I feel better now, but I'm still not sleeping very well, and I feel pretty anxious.

In addition to stress, downsizing managers experienced myriad emotional responses throughout their downsizing experience, as illustrated in Table 8.

Table 8. *Downsizing Managers' Self-Reports on Emotional Well-Being*

Participant(s)	Emotion(s) as described by participants (all quotations)
Bill	Regret . . . depression of sorts . . . separation anxiety complex . . . hurt
Danny	Grief . . . deep regret and remorse . . . heavy heart
Fred	Frustrated [because it was out of participant's control] . . . annoyed
Henri	Sympathy . . . empathy . . . emotion . . . fear of lawsuit . . . anxious . . . introspective . . . frustrated
Joaquin	Anxious . . . relieved . . . proud . . . sad . . . disappointed . . . concerned for employees
Kate	Anxious . . . roller coaster of emotions . . . angst
Larry	Sad . . . scared . . . introspective . . . numb
Mindy	Sad . . . anxious
Nicholas	Thought it was ridiculous . . . felt horrendous
Rose	Angry . . . scared by power to decide someone's fate . . . introspective . . . contentious [up against other managers to keep positions]
Sam	Nervous . . . disbelief [computer deciding who to downsize] . . . introspective . . . anxious
Teresa	Nervous . . . felt like Dr. Jekyll [concerned for individuals] and Mr. Hyde [knew it was business] . . . introspective . . . unsettled
Wanda	Nervous [first time as downsizing manager] . . . numb . . . fear of lawsuit
Victor	Unsure [referring to one employee that responded by leaving] . . . concerned

The participants' emotional self-reports as noted in Table 8 may be grouped into seven common themes, which are not otherwise reflected:

- *anxiety, nervousness* (Bill, Henri, Joaquin, Kate, Larry, Mindy, Rose, Sam, Teresa, Wanda);
- *fear* (Henri, Larry, Teresa, Wanda);
- *sadness, depression* (Bill, Danny, Henri, Kate, Larry, Mindy);
- *anger, frustration* (Fred, Henri, Nicholas, Rose);
- *disbelief, numbness, hurt* (Bill, Danny, Henri, Larry, Nicholas, Sam, Wanda); and

- *sympathy, empathy, concern* (Henri, Joaquin, Larry, Victor).

Verbatim examples illustrating participants' deeper understanding of each of these emotional areas during the downsizing manager's experiences follow.

Anxiety, nervousness. Ten participants referred to feelings of anxiety or nervousness during downsizing decision making and implementation (Bill, Henri, Joaquin, Kate, Larry, Mindy, Rose, Sam, Teresa, Wanda). These feelings resulted from knowing there would be an impact on employees and the organization through the decisions they made, as well as in communicating their decisions to employees.

Joaquin: I was sort of anxious leading up to the day, the impacts.

Kate: I think every time that you hear those words [such as *downsizing, layoffs, reduction-in-force*], there's a lot of angst and anxiety because it equates to a person and their livelihood. So you don't take that information or that decision-making process lightly. You take it very seriously, but at the same time you have to put the needs of the business first and figure out where there is excess, what you can outsource to save money, where there might be performance issues that have not improved to the level that you expect. So, a lot of angst, a lot of anxiety, from the day you hear those words that you have to cut x number of positions to the day you do the notifications to the employee.

Sam: I don't know who was more nervous. I say that in all honesty. As we got there in that room and sat down, and I was reading that paper, you have a script and you pretty much read it, and it's not long, and my voice was cracking, and it was tough. You know, in the whole, you got so many emotions running through you and you have to keep them bottled up. You want to say, "Oh, it's going to be alright." You can't say, "I understand what you're going through," because you don't. You feel helpless, and we're not firing someone because they stole something, or because they are a poor performer, you're firing someone for no other reason than, nothing that he did personally.

Fear. Four participants remembered being afraid or scared during their downsizing experience (Henri, Larry, Teresa, Wanda). One participant experienced fear due to the significant power the participant held as a downsizing decision maker.

Teresa: As we were creating these individual justification sheets for these people we had identified, it was comparing one person to another and having just a couple of months in difference of service or skill sets that one person had that another person didn't have that determined survival versus being included in the reduction in force. I felt there's a power involved there that was actually kind of scary for me: to decide somebody's fate based on a couple of analyses. I didn't really feel comfortable with that power.

Two participants were fearful about whether they would handle the downsizing in the best possible way (Larry, Wanda). Both of these participants were first-time downsizing managers.

Larry: [In response to experience with downsizing decision making] Scary, in one word to sum it all. Mostly because I never did it before. In the HR world, you're trained as a manager on how to react to diversity questions, HR situations, motivation, discipline, and behavior modification. You're trained along those lines, but you're never trained on how you effectively terminate someone, how you downsize someone, and unfortunately downsizing is part of our culture now and it's one of those things that you have to do it right the first time because there is no second chance.

Two participants mentioned their fear of potential lawsuits after the downsizing (Henri, Wanda).

Henri: I didn't think we could get away quite honestly without a lawsuit on our hands with this issue of putting somebody out who was on disability.

Wanda: I remember being worried about being sued for laying off someone that was over 55 or even to be associated with people that were pregnant. They were normally people that you wanted to protect and we're doing a very unkind thing to them, and I wondered if [colleagues' name] and I were going to be sued. We weren't, obviously, but I wondered if there was some legal thing that we were supposed to know about.

Sadness, depression. Six participants referred to being sad or in a depression-like state throughout their downsizing experience (Bill, Danny, Henri, Kate, Larry, Mindy).

Bill: When anyone would leave I would go through this level of, I don't know, almost a depression, a separation anxiety complex, I don't know what I'd call it, the loss.

Anger, frustration. Four participants recalled being angry or frustrated, either due to decisions made by executive leaders to downsize (Fred, Nicholas, Rose), or due to conversations with other managers to decide who to downsize (Mindy).

Fred: It was just irritating [having to implement the downsizing], and it was one of those things that weren't in your control because it was budgetary. It just sucked.

Rose: It makes me angry that they chose to take jobs away from people in the US and give them to people offshore.

Mindy: I was really frustrated with it [downsizing decision making], and I just had gotten so beaten down by the rest of the group . . .

Disbelief, numbness, hurt. Seven participants discussed having a feeling of disbelief, or being numb or hurt by having to go through the downsizing experience (Bill, Danny, Henri, Larry, Nicholas, Sam, Wanda). Out of this group, one participant could not believe that information entered into a computer would help to decide who would go and who would stay (Sam).

Sam: When I'm sitting there typing in numbers on an Excel spreadsheet, there has to be more to it than me sitting here letting a computer tell me who to let go. It's almost like it had desensitized the situation. It's a personal decision, it's a very emotional situation, and I'm using a computer to give me the answer.

Three participants recalled a numbness that overcame them in going through the downsizing decision making and implementation (Henri, Larry, Sam, Wanda). For one

participant, it was her first and only experience to date as a downsizing manager (Wanda), whereas two participants recalled becoming numb after subsequent experiences (Henri, Sam).

Henri: The second instance [of downsizing] I have to say I was becoming numb with the process, not because I was insensitive to the people affected, but because it was happening so much around the organization that you couldn't get caught up any more into the emotion of it.

Wanda: It was hard [referring to working throughout the downsizing]. So yea, I white knuckled it. I was completely numb and focused.

Three participants referred to feeling hurt by the impact their decisions made on employees' lives (Bill, Danny, Nicholas).

Bill: It kind of hurt, you know, you develop professional relationships, you work with them and accomplish great things. They are in the trenches with you struggling with very complex issues and you pull together and had some successes and you had a lot of good years and a lot of bad years.

Danny: You first determine that you must do it, then you go through the emotional baggage and there is a lot of it, that you're going to affect people's lives, and their families, and potentially impact their financial situations in the short or long term, and you know it hurts.

Sympathy, empathy, concern. Four participants felt sympathy, empathy (Henri, Joaquin, Larry, Victor), as well as concern for whether sufficient cuts were being made (Joaquin).

Bill: There were very few issues of individuals that we were concerned about, in other words, that were not manageable, again there is the emotional, that's one thing, finding a job on the outside, fearing of dealing with the outside, as long as you have a job in a company, it feels like a protective home. So it was kind of hard for those individuals to accept that they had to find a job on the outside. Some didn't do well and those were the ones that are just, they are just hard. As much as you can try and prepare them . . . the support structure was there, but there were folks that, no matter what, they just didn't know how to move on. It's sort of a difficult one that you needed to somehow finesse. I think the company

did everything they could possibly do to provide resources, provide support, and provide the right amount of time.

Joaquin: I mean concern for people that would be impacted, concern for people that would be left behind, anxiousness as to whether the moves we were making would be sufficient to allow the company to move forward successfully. Concerns with how the employees were going to receive it, I was going to be the one standing in front of everyone giving them the news that they were the ones that were impacted and so anxiousness about that.

Additionally, four participants mentioned their own personal matters that happened simultaneous to the downsizing, and the impact of that on their experience as a downsizing manager (Fred, Larry, Kate, Rose). Two of these managers (Kate, Rose) mentioned the concern that downsized employees showed for them during implementation.

Kate: During the conversations with people that would come into the meetings to be notified, and know that it was basically what they were coming in for, they were so compassionate for me, “Congratulations, I heard you were pregnant!” . . . Then, they’d say, “Oh, and your job is being eliminated. Oh my God!” They were more compassionate about me when it was about them and their position being eliminated.

Rose: Yeah, there was one person that I ended up, like I said, I cried, and during that call I remember her asking me if I was okay, and she told me she felt really bad that I had to give her that message. And I think I mentioned to my boss afterwards that I was floored that these people who are hearing that they are getting downsized, they care about me and how I’m handling it.

Fred: It was great timing because I was having marital problems. [Laugh] Yeah, great timing. I’m being sarcastic. [Laugh]

Larry: I was numb, just numb to the whole thing, . . . [a year before that] I completed my last round of chemo.

Coping with the emotional experience synthesis. Downsizing managers’ coping with the emotional experience reflects that downsizing managers

- experience tremendous stress that impacts their personal and professional lives (Bill, Danny, Kate, Larry, Mindy, Rose, Sam, Teresa, Victor); and
- manage a variety of emotions, as illustrated in Table 8 and detailed among the common themes, due to the pressures of their role in the experience, which may be amplified if the downsizing manager is dealing with their own personal matters.

Treating downsized employees humanely. This is a new theme not previously identified in the literature related to downsizing or the managerial experiences of downsizing managers. As mentioned in Chapter 2, communication is essential to effective organizational change, but the literature does not describe the depth of communicating to ensure employees are treated humanely. Based on the participants' comments on point, the best way to define this theme is treating downsized employees with *respect* and *integrity* and *providing time and space* in leaving the organization with *dignity*. Ten participants made remarks related to this theme (Bill, Danny, Joaquin, Kate, Larry, Mindy, Nicholas, Rose, Teresa, Victor). Participants stressed that humane treatment of employees was important in announcing and implementing the downsizing, and in helping downsized employees prepare for future job opportunities.

One way in which participants treated downsized employees humanely was in the care, preparation, and delivery of the downsizing news to these employees.

Danny: When I knew we had to go through a downsizing, I got together with the VP of HR and the CFO and I insisted that we not treat the affected employees as if they were tainted in any way. I insisted that the employees be treated with the highest respect. Managers, executives, [and] nonaffected employees were hugging them, helping them pack up their stuff and to their cars. We all wished them well.

Larry: I knew exactly what my oncologist felt and I was like, "How do they prepare you for this in med school, when you have to tell someone, say, 'Sorry you have cancer'? What, how do you prepare someone for that?" But they do. And they do it in such a fashion that it's factual. It's quick. It's "Here it is, here's

the cancer, you have a survivability rate of this, here's what the studies have shown." It's a lot of information, but the only thing you hear is that you have cancer. That's the only thing you hear. The only take away out of that is, "Oh crap, what now?" . . . You have to treat each person, they want their respect. They want to feel like they are a contributing factor in the success of an organization. So you have to give them that respect.

Mindy: I think for the most part they really handled it very humanely. It was very organized. The letters were very well done, they explained things. I think a lot of it has to do with providing information and being kind and considerate to the person that you're conveying the information to, and treating them with respect. Now that I've been on the other side of that, which I hadn't at the time, I think a big part of it is being respectful of the person who is going through the experience and just showing some kindness to them that they weren't expecting it and you respect that they have feelings. And give them an opportunity to show their feelings and to know that they are a human being and that they are going to have feelings. . . . So it was very humane, and I know that everyone delivers it on their own way, but we were all coached on being humane about it.

Victor: I think that's the humanistic approach with it [in response to researcher asking what participant meant by "selling your soul to keep everyone employed"]. You know, you spend more time with these people than you do with your family whether you like it or not. The last thing you want to do is put someone out there, like it or not, might force them to make specific changes to their family or changes to the way they live, and you don't want to. You want to do right by everybody.

In addition, participants reflected on their efforts to provide downsized employees resources and references for new job opportunities.

Danny: We all helped them with their résumés, and with their networking. We did everything we could to help them hold their head[s] held high as they walked out the door. We wanted them to know that we didn't want to do it, but we had to do it, and basically helped them you know, land their next position, and almost to a person they all did.

Joaquin: I think the other thing is to show the respect that we had for people and not just to sit there and say, "Go to your locker. Get everything out. Don't say anything to anybody. Don't look up." We didn't do any of that. We just sort of like, "Please clean out your locker, if you want to do it today or any day. If you want to, come in any day to use the resources here." . . . There wasn't any attempt by the management team to control anything that happened after people walked out of that room. We let people do what they wanted to do.

Downsizing managers' humane treatment of downsized employees reflects the genuine care and concerns that most downsizing managers' have, by recognizing downsized employees as human beings. Instead of seeing employees as an expense line in the company's budget, these participants realized that employees had families, livelihoods, and feelings, and attempted to respect those despite having to downsize these employees. Eight of the participants left the organization in which they served as a downsizing manager by way of another downsizing, in which they experienced the same range of emotions and reactions as the employees they had to downsize (Bill, Fred, Henri, Joaquin, Kate, Larry, Mindy, Wanda). Sympathy eventually transitioned into empathy due to their experience as a downsized employee.

Summation and synthesis of themes. The following themes were evident in the data:

- *communicating a shared vision*, by first accepting the vision, making it easier to share it with employees; thereby causing executives and upper management to have increased credibility in the downsizing manager;
- *managing resistance to change*, by managing reactions to change effectively because managers or employees may exhibit resistance;
- *securing loyalty and commitment* of the manager's team and organization, by finding methods to confirm commitment to employees, as downsizing managers' loyalty to the organization typically decreases after subsequent downsizings; and attempting to assist employees (e.g., locating jobs, providing references or resources) as downsizing managers' loyalty to the team is typically increases;;
- *maintaining or restoring morale and motivation* by openly communicating where possible throughout the downsizing, due to the lackluster environment that typically exists within the organization;

- *maintaining productivity and job performance* by learning from others' experiences and planning for potential periods of increased, decreased, or mixed productivity in the postdownsizing environment;
- *coping with survivor syndrome*, by understanding that surviving employees experience a gamut of emotions, and may become introspective as to their future *with* the organization or the future *of* the organization;
- *coping with the emotional experience* by identifying stress relievers, and other methods that may minimize the variety of emotions that downsizing managers and employees may experience throughout downsizing; and
- *treating downsized employees humanely* by showing them respect and dignity in the implementation of the downsizing and by providing resources, references, or assistance in identifying other job opportunities.

Participants' comments provided a deeper level of understanding for the existing themes in the literature, added an additional theme to the literature, and reflected the challenges faced in the role of a downsizing manager. The remainder of this chapter and sections within Chapter 5 explore these themes at a deeper level through the analysis of participants' responses specific to the research question and subquestions.

Analysis of Findings Informing the Research Subquestions

As detailed in the beginning of this chapter, the researcher conducted an analysis of participant responses related to (a) seven existing themes in the downsizing literature as recapped above, and (b) themes emerging from the data, as identified above.

Additionally, participant interview responses were reviewed in relation to the central research question and subquestions to describe the personal and professional experiences of downsizing managers involved in decision making, implementation, and managing in the aftermath of downsizing, which are described in further detail throughout the remainder of this chapter.

What are the downsizing manager's personal and professional experiences of downsizing decision making? The researcher asked participants about their experiences with the decision-making process; reactions from the participants' direct manager; and potential improvements that the participant or the organization should consider during downsizing decision making.

Experience with the process. Participants described the downsizing decision-making process either as a formal process (Bill, Danny, Fred, Joaquin, Kate, Mindy, Nicholas, Sam, Teresa, Victor), or a loosely guided/informal process (Henri, Larry, Rose, Wanda). Formal decision-making processes included the ranking or rating of employees on various elements, such as their performance, work ethic, attendance, character, role modeling, tenure, skills, attitude, and/or function.

Bill: Part of the selection of individuals [was that] you looked at their strength of character and knew whether they would have the ability to bounce back or not, and that sort of parted [helped separate who should stay and who should go], it was a small portion, but if there was a person that was emotionally unstable was a good performer, but was emotionally unstable, that could be a negative depending on how they interacted with people which was part of their evaluation in rating employees. What I mentioned earlier was there was a 5-point scale with far exceeding objectives, exceeding, and etcetera. Those are dimensions on what they'd deliver. There were also dimensions on how they delivered, and top category on that is role model and it laddered down the 5 points and the descriptions. The role model status was the top category. It was very hard to get to that category. So you could look at it and the employee was evaluated on those two dimensions: what and how they work on an annual basis. You try to pick and select individuals that can handle the challenges that are ahead. So, again it is another, as I view as a nice objective tool to use and there is track record behind that even if you are inheriting an employee that you only had for a year, you could still count on that review process and look back at the previous 5 years to see what other managers rated that individual. So you try to select those individuals that stayed and tried to ensure you build a solid team.

Rose: The performance rating was one element. We had other areas that we would call like leadership, five areas of leadership, and then there were skills and

experience as two additional elements. The five areas of leadership were character, leading change, interpersonal skills, personal capability, and focus on results. So we average those areas together and came up with a score for average leadership. We also compared that to their performance ratings, their skills level, and their experience.

The loosely guided, informal decision-making processes included identification of who to downsize based on functional area or process (Henri, Larry, Rose, Wanda) or by level in the organization (Henri).

Henri: Yes, we were given wide latitude on that decision. We weren't told we had to take down a particular level of individual. Everybody was a manager that was involved, but it was first line through third line management that we had discretion over, and there was no appetite for downsizing second or third line management.

The participants' decision-making processes went smoothly, except for two participants' mentions of being up against other downsizing managers in their organization to decide which position and respective person should stay (Mindy, Rose).

Mindy: Well, it [downsizing decision making] was really interesting because it was very much working with your peers. So here you are at a VP level working with your peer group on negotiating why your team does what they do, who is important to the business, [and] what their skill sets are. It was definitely a growing and learning process. It was definitely something I had never done before. So you think that you work with, well, you're one department [lead] of six, and you think that you know the other VPs that you work with, [and] understand your side of the business. Then you realize that they don't. They said, "Why do you need these people? What do they contribute to the business?" and there you are justifying what your whole team does and what each person does, and what they contribute. You have your peers tearing apart your business and saying, "Well, I don't understand why you have so many people that do that same job," and "I don't understand why it's important that you do this," and you turn around and say the same thing to them.

Two participants were members of the executive management level with their organizations, and helped to decide that downsizing was the necessary approach to handle the downturn in business (Danny, Joaquin).

Joaquin: As a leadership team, I think we were all like-minded in terms of, we felt a great deal of responsibility, and were all people who had, we were essentially the people who launched the company it started with the five of us. It was the same five in a room deciding that we had to scale back if we were going to have any chance of surviving as a company. We all came into it together with the idea that we were going to build a different kind of company, a company that cared about people. So it was a really hard decision, to say if we're going to continue on and be successful, this is what we have to do. On the other hand, we're taking a step very counter to how we want to treat people, [what] we want to have happen is just the logical and correct business decision.

Danny: Actually, as CEO and President, I had to initiate it. Unfortunately, there are only one or two people in the organization that would have that power, and it's either the CEO or the CFO. Usually you look at the market conditions, you look at the future revenue streams, you look at the potential impact on those future revenues, etcetera and determine whether you know the size of the organization is sustainable given the circumstances, and you kind of embrace the brutal realities and make a decision about it. Unfortunately, I was not just the implementer of the decision; I was the originator of it.

The responses of each participant aligned with the initial reaction of realizing that they would have to do something that was inevitable [downsizing] even though it was an uncomfortable position. In addition, participants commented on the consequence of not accepting their downsizing manager responsibilities: They could be next on the chopping block.

Manager's reaction. Participants provided feedback on their experiences with their direct managers during the downsizing decision-making process. Nine participants mentioned having good experiences (Bill, Henri, Kate, Larry, Mindy, Nicholas, Rose, Wanda, Victor), while three participants discussed negative or nonexistent experiences with their direct managers during the process (Fred, Sam, Teresa).

Larry: I reviewed my decisions with him [direct manager], [and] who needs to leave when, because that was the process. He approved them, said, "Nope, that's exactly what I would have done. Great decision, go for it." He was sorry to see everyone go too, because he had to lay off his staff too.

Mindy: The person I reported to was always very objective about it. He was very experienced. He was sort of a wise, old soul, I guess I'd say, very calm about things . . . always just very calm about it and "This is what we're going to do," and, I mean he'd had executive positions at a lot of different companies and had probably seen everything.

Sam: My manager's reaction was, it was kind of happy to make those decisions. He was over all of our stores [and] he was looking at people. He had become separated enough from employees that he saw them as numbers, so he saw it as an impact to the bottom line in a positive way. He looked at it that way. The other managers, we looked at, we saw it as a negative reaction. I viewed it as giving up, as if the company was giving up.

As previously mentioned, two participants were executive level management within the organization, and either reported directly to the Board of Directors, or had no reporting structure above them (Danny, Joaquin).

Danny: I would say that the investors, the Board, who is my boss, not only agreed with the decision, but celebrated the swiftness with which we acted as a management team to preserve the resources for the company. So I wouldn't say that, nobody gets a gold cup for doing downsizings, but we were at least applauded for the fact that we acted swiftly and appropriately to the situation and in a timely manner.

Participants experienced positive interactions with their direct managers during downsizing decision making, except for occasions in which direct managers disappeared or focused solely on the benefits of the downsizing for the business.

Potential improvements. The researcher asked participants what improvements, if any, they or the organization could have made to the downsizing decision-making process. Responses included

- not doing the downsizing (Henri, Sam), or anticipating the downsizing sooner to avoid it (Teresa);

- providing managers additional time to make decisions as to who to downsize (Nicholas); and
- guidance, support, openness, or justification from the organization's headquarter (Henri, Larry, Sam).

Downsizing decision-making synthesis. Participants described the use of either formal or informal decision-making processes, and two participants (both members of their organization's executive management team) discussed the challenge in making the decision that the organization would need to downsize. Many of the participants had positive interactions with their direct managers during downsizing decision making. Potential improvements included having the organization consider alternatives to downsizing, providing additional time for managers to prepare for the downsizing, and providing additional support from the headquarters office to field locations throughout the downsizing. The next section provides insight into the participants' experience during downsizing implementation.

What are the downsizing manager's personal and professional experiences of downsizing implementation? The researcher asked participants about their experience with downsizing implementation; reactions from the participants' direct manager, the personal and professional impacts of the downsizing implementation process on them, and potential improvements for the process. Each participant had to downsize at least one employee who reported directly to him or her.

Experience with the process. The downsizing implementations described by participants included a combination of releasing employees on the same day as the

communication to employees (Bill, Danny, Fred, Joaquin, Mindy, Nicholas, Sam, Wanda, Victor), versus releasing employees at a future date (Henri, Kate, Larry, Rose, Teresa). One participant was involved in two experiences, one same-day and one giving 60 days' notice of the downsizing (Teresa). Eleven participants noted peaceful or calm interactions with downsized employees when communicating the news to them (Danny, Henri, Joaquin, Kate, Larry, Mindy, Nicholas, Rose, Sam, Teresa, Victor).

Victor: I would say that I should feel like I should take offense to it [downsized employee asking him to pray with him when receiving the news] because the guy didn't know my religion, but, you know, the same thing you have to feel compassion and if that's their way of getting over it. Your goal is to get them out of the room at the most opportune time and allow them to be a better person in society when they leave your door. So, however you can handle that. So if they want you to pray, pray. If I'm an atheist, if I'm Catholic, or Muslim, you know, you should respect that decision and just go with it, because right now it's not about you, it's about helping this person get over the next 20 minutes of their life.

Mindy: I heard we were having a layoff and I figured I'd be one of them. It was all over the board. A lot of times people had heard about it.

Wanda: My two offsite employees, of course it wasn't a surprise to them. And actually [employed name], who was my older employee, he kind of knew what was going on because all of the conference rooms were booked.

In contrast, two participants described negative reactions from downsized individuals, including throwing a chair, immediately leaving the room, and throwing keys at the downsizing manager (Bill, Victor).

Bill: Because the company was significantly more cruel, I think there was more animosity. There was more out-and-out hate, and I had to run out to the parking lot to get keys from somebody and they sort of lashed out and threw the keys at me. It's just not as professional as I wanted it to be. Since then I got an apology from the individual and they said they realized it wasn't me and that I handled it as professionally as I could.

Victor: I think that's probably the one that hit me the hardest [where the downsized employee got up and left], because you start feeling like, "Wow, did I let him down, did I not say something right? Did I not give him all the answers?"

These were examples of the calm and negative reactions participants experienced when downsizing employees. The next section explores the appreciation employees showed to participants for treating humanely throughout the process.

Appreciation for humane treatment. Ten participants commented on instances in which downsized employees showed appreciation to the downsizing manager, in delivering the news in such a humane and gentle way (Bill, Danny, Joaquin, Kate, Larry, Mindy, Nicholas, Rose, Teresa, Victor).

Danny: I got thank-you notes about how well people were treated, and surprisingly some even went to my LinkedIn profile and gave me recommendations. I couldn't believe it to be honest with you; none of this was solicited by me; they just went out and wrote positive comments.

Teresa: It's so important to be able to maintain the person's self-esteem, and to help them understand that yes, this is a death of sorts, an ending, but try to focus on it as what you can do with the next stage of your life. . . . Every single person that walked out of that conference room, when they were given their WARN [Act] notices, looked me in the eye and shook my hand, and it was really hard not to break down and cry.

Mindy: A lot of time the people you let go really needed a fresh start. So often, they end up going on to something better. It just wasn't the right place for them. Maybe they needed to be shaken up and told you they were just coasting and you needed to have someone shake you a little bit and say you need to get your act together and go be a better performer, do a better job at work, this is your wake up call. A lot of them come back and say that "being let go really made me realize that I wasn't in the right place or I wasn't doing as good of a job as I needed to do."

Participants were cognizant of the difficulty that employees faced throughout downsizing, and most of the participants showed their appreciation for employees by treating them with great dignity and respect throughout the downsizing process.

Potential improvements. The researcher asked participants what improvements, if any, they or the organization could have made to the downsizing implementation process.

Responses included

- having easy access to the Employee Assistance Program, or EAP (Teresa);
- considering extenuating circumstances to customize severance packages (Henri);
- considering logistics, such as availability of rooms and HR representatives (Wanda);
- role playing the downsizing discussions with managers several times prior to the actual conversations (Sam);
- offering résumé-writing classes earlier (Teresa);
- receiving guidelines as to what works and what does not in a downsizing situation (Larry);
- better documentation within packages provided to downsized employees (Fred); and
- ensuring that the new group of employees that will take over the workload are hired and trained (Rose).

If implemented, the potential improvements participants mentioned may provide greater efficiency in the process, and an added ability to treat employees humanely during downsizing implementation.

Downsizing implementation synthesis. Participants mentioned only a few instances in which downsized employees displayed negative responses, such as throwing items or causing disruptions. Implementing a downsizing is not an easy task, and several participants mentioned employees' reactions to their kind and gentle manner of handling the downsizing. Potential improvements suggested included easier access to conference

rooms for downsizing discussions, assistance programs, any available training (e.g., résumé writing), and clear materials (e.g., severance packets). Potential improvements that the organization could make included considering alternatives to downsizing, allowing additional time for managers to prepare for the downsizing, and providing additional support between the headquarters office and field locations throughout the downsizing. The next section provides insight into the participants' experience in managing in the aftermath of the downsizing.

What are the downsizing manager's personal and professional experiences of managing in the aftermath of the downsizing? The researcher asked participants about their experience with managing in the aftermath of the downsizing, including communication with their direct manager, other managers, and employees; the impacts on maintaining loyalty and commitment, maintaining productivity and job performance and restoring morale and motivation; and potential process improvements.

Experience with the process. Participants remembered that the postdownsizing environment was not a happy one, but after a brief period, the organization began to pick up the pieces, as there was plenty of work to do.

Victor: I think there is an underlying tone that, you know, things still are not lollipops and rainbows

Bill: I think morale was hurt. I think there's, people can operate and perform, but it doesn't mean that they are not sad. The stories that would go around the halls about a person landing a job, or a person floundering, and trying to figure out what to do next quickly went around the group. So it was good to hear what was going on and so we tried to celebrate the successes, but also I think people may have obsessed a little bit more or a little bit too much about the failures.

Wanda: It was grim, not going to lie to you, it was depressed. [COO's name] blog went off the roof with comments, and pretty soon it was branches posting, [things like] "I just had another customer withdraw all of their funds," "I think the bank is going down," "We're going to run out of money." . . . Then our hours just increased, we did everything that we could, but the world just started to unravel.

Nicholas: I try to pick up the pieces as quickly as I can, and assign them new tasks, and re-emphasize the value they bring to the organization and, you know, try to get them back on track.

Often there was too much work to do for employees to stay in mourning for long, so managers had to find ways to maintain or increase motivation and productivity despite the gloomy postdownsizing environment.

Communication. A useful tool for motivating employees was communication, which participants did in various ways, such as town-hall-style meetings with employees in the postdownsizing environment, or walking around and talking with employees.

Participants discussed the importance of bringing the surviving employees together after the downsizing (Danny, Henri, Joaquin, Larry, Mindy, Rose, Victor).

Danny: Well, on the day that it happens, I was pretty much useless as the process is being executed. Everybody else is too, and it's just, "God, we've got to get through this thing." Then that afternoon I go to give the presentation to the company to start to weave the team back together. I typically would (over the next couple of weeks) write a lot of letters to the team giving them updates and progress and so forth. Catch people doing things right postdownsizing, and mention their name, and how much we appreciate what they are doing. It takes a couple of weeks to shake the feeling that you let the affected employees down, but after you get past that, you just kind of have to pick up and move on with it.

As discussed earlier, the concept of *management by walking around* (Bell, 2000; Peters & Austin, 1985; Reese, 2009) was used by three participants in this study (Danny, Larry, Victor). There were also instances in which communication within the organization decreased, or even ceased, after the downsizing occurred (Fred, Rose).

Larry: In the [19]80s, there was a book by, it was one of those you know, seven steps to successful people books type of thing. It was Tom Peters, and the whole thing was manage by walking around, and the whole just of it was get to know the people that work for you. Understand the organization. And even though someone is in a different department, they still report to you. You still report to them. You all work for the same company. Greet them, say, "Hello, how are you doing today?" Know their names. And it was a real positive, stay positive, stay involved, stay involved with the organization, and I think that's the one thing that really helped the most.

Rose: I think that maybe, my manager had completely stopped doing town hall meetings, and maybe I think she should have done at least one last year where people could just vent. I think that might have been hopeful, a little bit. I don't know.

Many participants stressed the importance of communication in the postdownsizing environment and identified a few ways in which they were able to communicate effectively. There were also instances where a lull in communication existed, possibly leading to the organizations' challenges in turning around the gloomy postdownsizing environment.

Impacts on loyalty, productivity, morale. The researcher analyzed participants' experiences in relation to the impacts on the existing themes of securing loyalty and commitment; maintaining productivity and job performance; and restoring morale and motivation, all of which are covered earlier. Participants' responses reflected

- a significant decrease in loyalty and commitment to their respective organizations;
- an increase in loyalty and commitment to their respective teams;
- increased productivity levels in instances where goals remained the same, managers needed to assist with the workload, employees feared being considered for any future downsizing, or appropriate shifts in workloads occurred;

- decreased productivity levels in instances where employees were less willing to work after subsequent rounds of downsizing, employees' fears became obsessions, natural period of mourning, or bad leadership;
- mixed levels of productivity due to news media's portrayal of the positive or negative aspects of the situation; and
- increased morale and motivation when communication existed within the organization—among its management team, between manager and employee, or in group settings.

Earlier in this chapter, the researcher provided additional descriptions from participants' experiences that described managing in the aftermath of the downsizing, which further explored the impacts to loyalty and commitment, productivity and job performance, and morale and motivation.

Potential improvements. The researcher asked participants what improvements, if any, they or the organization could have made to the ability to manage in the aftermath of a downsizing. Responses included

- providing more leniency on goals (Sam);
- bringing in new leadership (Teresa);
- having more involvement from headquarter office, as they missed an opportunity to educate upcoming managers and learn from the work being done (Larry);
- continuing to communicate, or ensuring that there is more communication than before (Rose); and
- conducting stay interviews to learn why employees chose to stay with the organization (Teresa).

If implemented, the potential improvements participants mentioned may provide employees with a greater understanding of the process and/or an enhanced level of comfort in the experience. Additionally, ensuring good leadership is in place will provide

greater efficiency and effectiveness within the organization. These improvements may also enhance relationships among and between surviving managers and employees.

Managing in the aftermath synthesis. This section examined participants' experiences with managing in the aftermath of a downsizing. Although participants recalled gloomy postdownsizing work environments, a few participants mentioned a short period of mourning before productivity stabilized or increased. Communication was an important tool in the postdownsizing environment whether through communicating individually or with groups of employees and/or utilizing management by walking around. Many participants' loyalty and commitment to their teams increased, whereas loyalty and commitment to the organization decreased. Productivity and job performance, as well as morale and motivation, typically diminished for a short period after the downsizing, allowing a mourning period. Due to workload needs, employees could not afford much time to mourn before needing to pick up the pieces again. Lastly, potential improvements mentioned by participants focused on the importance of communication and good leadership in the postdownsizing environment.

The next section provides insight into the personal and professional impacts of participants and their downsizing experiences during downsizing decision making, implementation, and managing in the aftermath. Due to numerous similarities in many of the personal and professional impacts described by participants throughout the downsizing, the researcher chose to provide information relative to these areas collectively.

Personal impacts. The researcher identified participants' responses regarding personal impacts of their downsizing experiences as falling into the same four categories of well-being as identified in Chapter 2: *emotional, mental, physical, and social well-being*.

Emotional well-being. Analysis of participants' responses related to *emotional well-being* were presented earlier in this chapter, within analysis of an existing theme in the literature: *coping with the emotional experience*. That analysis explored common emotional themes identified through participants' responses, which included anxiety, nervousness; fear; sadness, depression; anger, frustration; numbness; sympathy, empathy, care; and remorse. These findings indicate that downsizing managers experience a tremendous amount of stress that impacts their personal and professional lives, and that downsizing managers manage a variety of emotions due to pressures of their role in the experience, which may be amplified if the downsizing manager is dealing with major personal matters as well.

Mental well-being. Participants' responses related to *mental well-being* covered three areas: distancing, downsizing employees with personal matters, or attempting to downsize an employee that may be protected by discrimination laws. Three participants discussed distancing themselves from discussion of downsizing or the act itself, whether the distancing occurred before, during or after the event (Nicholas, Victor, Wanda);

Nicholas: Generally, when I've had to do this sort of thing, I've always had to take a few steps back. Usually in those cases I try to leave everything at the office that I can and I try to do something that absolutely 100% takes my mind off of work.

Wanda: I was able to be really detached about it because the word *layoff* was never mentioned.

Two participants commented on how difficult it was to downsize an employee who was already coping with a difficult personal matter such as a recent serious health issue or divorce (Kate, Mindy).

Kate: She is a cancer survivor, she is a single mom, divorced, so a lot of, the breadwinner in her family, so she always was one of those people that was always stressed out that her job was going to be eliminated, and having gone through that before I can completely understand that.

Mindy: It was really tough with her because we had been through a lot for 2 years with her. She had breast cancer, she had gotten a divorce; it [downsizing this employee] was hard.

Two participants described their fear that downsizing certain employees could be viewed as discriminatory practice, such as an employee over 65, on disability, or pregnant (Henri, Wanda).

Henri: The other thing that was kind of an issue was, this particular individual was actually out on disability at the time and had been out on disability for an extended period of time. So it was kind of an unusual set of circumstances, as I have never been involved or thought that human resources department could get away with downsizing someone on disability when they were out on disability, but they could apparently.

These findings indicate that downsizing managers experience impacts to their mental well-being. These impacts may be through the use of distancing as a means to cope with the difficulty of their role; or managing the challenges involved in downsizing someone with personal matters or that may be protected by discriminatory laws.

Physical well-being. Participants' responses related to *physical well-being* included difficulty sleeping (Bill, Joaquin, Teresa, Wanda) and becoming physically sick (Bill, Nicholas, Sam, Teresa).

Kate: As it got closer I would, the night before [having to notify someone of their downsizing], I wouldn't sleep, but as it got closer, I would be up at 3 a.m. thinking, "Oh my God," the impact on the person.

Teresa: It's a pretty upsetting feeling. It's a lump in your throat, a kick to the stomach.

Bill: My wife often talks to me about it [my experience as a downsizing manager], and what I would wrestle with. I have health issues because of it [the downsizing experience]. I ended up with several attacks of diverticulitis, stress related, and ended up in the hospital for a week. She said, "What could you do, could you try to control the owner?" and she said, "You can't do it. It's his [the owner's] company. You were brought in to do a job, you helped grow it, and now you need to help shrink it, and just follow his lead."

These findings indicate that downsizing managers experience impacts to their physical well-being. Often, this occurs through difficulty sleeping or becoming physically ill throughout the process.

Social well-being. Participants' responses related to *social well-being* included strained relationships (Kate, Mindy, Sam, Teresa), difficulty separating personal matters from downsizing experience (Fred, Rose), and needing to be more considerate of reactions that downsized employees may have (Henri).

Kate: The toughest part [about] being in HR is that you have these personal relationships with people and you have information that you can't share with them, knowing that their position is going to be eliminated, and knowing that you are going to notify them on such-and-such date that their position is going to be eliminated, and continuing to work with them in the meantime

Sam: One thing I did notice more and more was that the personal relationships I had with everybody diminished a little bit.

Rose: Part of what I struggled with was that we did a downsizing . . . and my [relative] was in the hospital and she had just been diagnosed with cancer. So trying to go through that and, you know, trying to manage through a downsizing at the same time was really, really difficult.

Henri: The individual acknowledged, I mean the individual remained composed and everything, but I really think there was an element of shock that I wasn't expecting. . . . I think, it took me a while to recover from that, because I think I would have treated the communication a little differently had I known the individual was not going to be happy about this.

Participants described the personal impacts that they experienced throughout downsizing, which affected their emotional, mental, physical, and social well-being. In addition to downsizing managers' job responsibilities related to downsizing decision making, implementation, and managing in the aftermath of the downsizing, they must also manage the challenging personal impacts mentioned herein. Future downsizing managers may experience myriad of these personal impacts resulting from their own experience. Similarly, downsizing managers also experience and must cope with professional impacts throughout the downsizing process.

Professional impacts. The professional impacts downsizing managers experienced during downsizing decision making, implementation, and managing in the aftermath contained numerous similarities. Accordingly, the professional impacts described by participants during downsizing decision making, implementation, and managing in the aftermath are addressed herein collectively.

Participants indicated that their downsizing experience affected them professionally in a variety of ways. A professional impact one participant described was gaining credibility within her organization (Teresa).

Teresa: It actually helped me gain credibility in my organization because we were very thorough, and very fair about it. Ultimately, we ended up having no adverse legal [action]. Nobody sued us. Everyone signed the release agreements. Things went very well. I have gotten, it's kind of a sad thing to say, but I have gotten the reputation for being an HR professional who can very effectively deal with these

downsizing events, and I've been called on to support other organizations in my business to assist them when they are going through these sorts of things. So professionally, in a crazy sort of way, it helped me. Although you don't really want to be known as the Grim Reaper and the one that's so good at firing people.

Three participants described the professional impact as seeing their own manager or reporting managers in a different light based on their responses to the downsizing (Bill, Danny, Nicholas).

Bill: The owner was there, and he started crying and weeping, and trying to make it appear that he was caring, and so many people afterwards told me that they saw right through it.

Danny: One [of my direct employees] in particular had never gone through a downsizing before and he was a VP. . . . I found him (kind of) hiding most of the time and I didn't appreciate that, and he never really did step up to the plate very often, even though his organization was affected; he kind of cowered and let his first line managers handle it. I would notice he wasn't anywhere to be found when the employees were leaving. I was kind of disappointed in that, but it is what it is.

Nicholas: Most people had mostly the same reaction as I did. I've dealt with some managers that are cold as ice and were not affected one way or another, they just do it. I mean I've seen some managers that are maybe on the sadistic side, and maybe even enjoy it, I don't know.

Three participants mentioned a professional impact of the downsizing in terms of their reflection on the organization's future as well as their own future (Henri, Larry, Teresa).

Larry: The day before the announcement, I was ready to retire from the place, no problem, not even looking. The day of the announcement, I was getting my résumé in order. I was like, "I'm done. I'm, I can't wait." That day, I mean, after we found out in the morning, I was in my office updating my résumé.

Henri: Well, the personal impact was more personal introspection, and then, I won't even call it fear for your own job, but it was, you know, it's time to face reality. You know the writing's on the wall. It's not today, but it might be next week or the week after that. I think we all, including myself, we all felt that way.

Teresa: It's unsettling because I don't feel like I really understand how viable the business is going to be in the future. You know, it prompted me to update my résumé and start looking.

Since the downsizing experiences described for this study, eight participants received downsizing notices from the organizations in which they had served as downsizing managers. This included two of the three individuals who had reflected on their own or the organization's future, as represented above.

To this point, the data analysis and presentation has provided data and verbatim quotes from participants relative to their experiences as downsizing managers, organized into new themes, existing themes in the literature, answers to the research subquestions, and additional knowledge about the personal and professional impacts on the participants. The analysis culminates in a summation and synthesis of the data toward answering the study's central research question.

Summary of Results

The analysis thus far provides an assessment of the participants' responses to interview questions for potentially new theme(s), alignment with the existing theme(s) from the literature, answers informing the research subquestions, and participants' descriptions of personal and professional impacts of their experience as downsizing managers. These elements provide insight in response to this study's central research question: *What are the downsizing manager's personal and professional experiences of downsizing?*

New and Existing Themes

The study data indicates one new theme, *treating downsized employees humanely*, through participants' evidencing their respect and concern for the dignity of employees in the implementation of the downsizing, as well as their attention to providing resources, references, and/or assistance to downsized employees to identify other job opportunities. Participant responses also reflected evidence of each of the seven existing themes from the literature:

- *communicating a shared vision*, by first accepting the vision, making it easier to share it with employees; thereby causing executives and upper management to have increased credibility in the downsizing manager;
- *managing resistance to change*, by managing reactions to change effectively because managers or employees may exhibit resistance;
- *securing loyalty and commitment* of the manager's team and organization, by finding methods to confirm commitment to employees, as downsizing managers' loyalty to the organization typically decreases after subsequent downsizings; and attempting to assist employees (e.g., locating jobs, providing references or resources) as downsizing managers' loyalty to the team is typically increases;;
- *maintaining or restoring morale and motivation* by openly communicating where possible throughout the downsizing, due to the lackluster environment that typically exists within the organization;
- *maintaining productivity and job performance* by learning from others' experiences and planning for potential periods of increased, decreased, or mixed productivity in the postdownsizing environment;
- *coping with survivor syndrome*, by understanding that surviving employees experience a gamut of emotions, and may become introspective as to their future *with* the organization or the future *of* the organization; and
- *coping with the emotional experience* by identifying stress relievers, and other methods that may minimize the variety of emotions that downsizing managers and employees may experience throughout downsizing.

Participants' responses provided a deeper level of understanding of the existing themes in the literature, added an additional theme to the literature, and reflected the challenges faced in the role of a downsizing manager.

Experience with Downsizing Decision Making

The downsizing managers' experience with *downsizing decision making* reflected that downsizing managers' organizations provided, in most cases, with a formal decision-making process that included various elements on which to rate or rank employees to determine which employees should be included on the downsizing list. Additionally, many of the participants described good relationships with their direct managers, and the ability to make decisions with little pushback. Participants provided a few thoughts on potential improvements that the downsizing manager or the organization could have made: providing additional guidance and support from the headquarter office, anticipating the downturn in business earlier and identifying other change alternatives, or providing greater formality of the decision-making process in and across the organization.

Experience with Downsizing Implementation

The downsizing managers' experience with *downsizing implementation* reflected few strong, negative reactions from downsized employees, which participants described as parallel to humane treatment of employees and strong organizational cultures. Participants referred to this culture as family-like (Bill, Danny, Mindy, Sam, Victor). Lastly, potential improvements participants mentioned that would be helpful during downsizing implementation included the organization providing additional logistical

resources to managers and employees in carrying out the downsizing (e.g., availability of private meeting rooms and HR personnel).

Experience with Managing in the Aftermath

The downsizing managers' experience with *managing in the aftermath* of downsizing reflected a postdownsizing environment in many of the participants' organizations of grief, sadness, guilt, and some anger over the loss of downsized employees and the increased workload of remaining employees. A few of the participants remembered that the organizations' workloads did not allow for much of a mourning period. Participants saw the benefit of effective and regular communication to maintaining or increasing productivity and morale within the organization. Potential improvements mentioned by participants focused on the importance of effective and regular communication, strong leadership, and consideration of goals and processes due to the reduced workforce.

Personal and Professional Impacts

In addition to the participants' experiences described throughout downsizing decision making, implementation, and managing in the aftermath, participants also described the *personal and professional impacts* of the downsizing experience. Their identified personal impacts fell into one or more of four existing categories:

- *emotional well-being* included a variety of emotions as illustrated in Table 8 and described in further detail in the theme of *copying with the emotional experience* earlier in this chapter;
- *mental well-being* including distancing oneself from people or the situation, fear of downsizing employees already undergoing major personal matters, or that an employee might consider the downsizing to be discriminatory and file a lawsuit;

- *physical well-being* included participants' feelings of sickness or difficulty sleeping; and
- *social well-being* included strained relationships, difficulty separating personal matters from the downsizing experience, and needing to be more considerate of reactions that downsized employees might have.

These personal impacts influenced participants' reactions to, comfort levels with, and ability to handle their responsibilities as a downsizing manager.

Participants described the professional impacts of their experience as downsizing managers including increased credibility by upper management; increased introspection of what the future held for them, the company, and their employees; and seeing managers in a different light. These analyses of the subquestions provide building blocks for analysis of the study data as it informs the central research question.

Response to the Study's Central Research Question

In this study, participants provided insight into their experiences as downsizing managers. Participants' experiences reflected both the positive and negative impacts in their role as downsizing managers. Limited literature exists on the topic of the personal and professional experiences of downsizing managers. The participants' responses to interviews yielded

- identification of a new theme—*treating downsized employees humanely*—indicating that downsizing managers show downsized employees respect and dignity in the implementation of the downsizing and provide resources, references, or assistance in identifying other job opportunities;
- connections to existing themes in the literature—(a) *communicating a shared vision*, (b) *managing resistance to change*, (c) *securing commitment and loyalty*, (d) *maintaining or restoring morale and motivation*, (e) *maintaining productivity and job performance*, (f) *coping with survivor syndrome*, and (g) *coping with the emotional experience*—providing a deeper level of

understanding of the existing themes in the literature and reflecting the challenges faced in the role of a downsizing manager;

- understanding the *personal impacts*, including impacts to participants' social, mental, physical and social well-being, reflecting both the positive and negative impacts experienced in their role as a downsizing manager, and affected participants' reaction to, comfort level with, and ability to handle, their responsibilities as a downsizing manager;
- comprehension of the *professional impacts*, providing participants with increased credibility by upper management; increased introspection of what the future held for them, the company, and their employees; and understanding of how management operates; and
- connections with the study's research subquestions, providing substance to participants' experience with and potential improvements to *downsizing decision making, implementation, and managing in the aftermath*. Additionally, participants' responses provide additional insight into the participants' managers' reactions in decision making, appreciation for humane treatment of downsized employees during implementation, and the importance of communication in the postdownsizing environment.

These results reflect a deeper level of understanding of the experiences of downsizing managers, thus comprising the response to and informing this study's central research question of the downsizing manager's personal and professional experiences of downsizing.

CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this qualitative, exploratory study was to describe the personal and professional experiences of downsizing managers involved in decision making, implementation, and managing in the aftermath of the downsizing. Chapter 1 introduced the study. Chapter 2 presented a review of the literature informing the research questions and subquestions, and the design of the study. Chapter 3 detailed the study's methodology. Chapter 4 focused on the results of the researcher's analysis.

Chapter 5 includes discussion of study results, significance, comparison of the study's findings to the reviewed literature, and review of the study's methodology. This chapter also includes discussion of the study's implications, limitations, and recommendations for future research.

Summary of the Results

This section includes a review of the research problem, the significance of the study, the existing literature on topic, the methodology used, and the findings of this study.

Restatement of the Research Problem

As noted in Chapter 1, downsizing managers have a demanding role when faced with downsizing (Cameron, 1994; Gandolfi, 2008b). The necessary decisions and actions that downsizing managers must make throughout downsizing are difficult, due to the resulting impacts on the organization, its clients, and its people (Keyes, 2005; Sahdev, 2003, 2004; Self et al., 2005; Tamaren, 1995). Although literature is abundant on why

companies choose to downsize, and the effectiveness of downsizing, a gap exists in relation to the personal and professional experiences of downsizing managers involved in downsizing decision making, implementation, and managing in the aftermath (Band & Tustin, 1995; Clair & Dufresne, 2004; Gandolfi, 2008c).

This study addressed the management dilemma of how organizations prepare for and their managers cope with their own experiences in downsizing decision making, implementation, and its aftermath (Bonanzino, 2002; Cooper & Schindler, 2006). The central research question (Creswell, 2007, p. 108) of this study was *What is the downsizing manager's experience of downsizing?* Subpoints implicit in and clarifying this central question were *the downsizing manager's personal and professional experiences of*

- *downsizing decision-making,*
- *downsizing implementation, and*
- *managing in the aftermath of the downsizing.*

Significance of the Study

With the continuous use of downsizing in all industries, organizational leaders and downsizing managers must understand the managerial challenges involved in downsizing (Clair & Dufresne, 2004). The results of this study illuminate the perspectives of downsizing managers who experienced downsizing decision making, implementation, and managing in the aftermath, and provide them with a voice regarding various facets of the organization and its stakeholders:

- *to the organization's executive management team, unveiling a detailed reflection of the challenges involved in the process and position of the*

downsizing manager, which will inform executive leadership's high-level strategy and decision making on downsizing and its ultimate impacts from the perspectives of surviving managers;

- *among and to other managers* who may someday take on a similar role, illustrating the complexities of the situation and avail an opportunity to reflect on the personal and professional experiences of others to better prepare for and cope with their own experiences in downsizing decision making, implementation, and its aftermath (Bonanzino, 2002);
- *to employees, clients, and other organizational stakeholders* providing understanding and appreciation of the challenges associated with the situation and role of a downsizing manager; and
- *to the scholar-practitioner community*, contributing to the academic and professional literature related to downsizing, from the downsizing manager's perspective. This study provides a glimpse into the experience of a downsizing manager and may assist this community in preparing for future downsizing and identifying tools and coping strategies within the process as it occurs.

Accordingly, each of these key stakeholder groups may better understand the downsizing manager's experiences in the face of downsizing decision making, implementation, and aftermath, which in turn may better inform overall business decision making affecting the lives and livelihoods of organizations' human assets.

Overview of the Reviewed Literature

Organizational downsizing resides within the larger contexts of scholarly and business literature on organizational behavior, organizational change, and organization development, comprising specific examinations of the personal and professional approaches to and impacts (both positive and negative) of downsizing on employees, as well as the organization, its brand reputation, and its status within the industry and the economy (Band & Tustin, 1995; Bhattacharyya & Chatterjee, 2005; Birati & Tziner, 2000; Cascio, 1993; Clair & Dufresne, 2004; Palmer, Kabanoff, & Dunford, 1997). The

review of the literature that informed this study's design examined the convergence of the concepts of managing organizational change, decision making, and downsizing. Each of these key literatures is recapped below, including new research published while this study was in progress, which adds insight into the personal and professional experiences of downsizing managers.

Managing organizational change. The literature relative to managing organizational change includes models (Lewin, as cited in Burnes, 2007; Kotter, 1996) and strategies available to managers involved in organizational change (Baum & Locke, 2004; Kavanaugh, 2003; Peus et al., 2009; Palo & Panigrahi, 2004). Kotter's change model integrated and addressed the criticisms of Lewin's seminal change model, providing a practical and useful model for organizations. Current themes in the downsizing literature align closely to the stages of Kotter's model, further supporting the ongoing applicability and usefulness of Kotter's change model in today's organizations. Although the organizational change literature provided change models and management strategies for managers facing organization change, the literature did not address this study's research question, specific to the central issue of the manager's experience when facing organizational change such as downsizing.

Decision making. One critical aspect of leading and managing organizational change is decision making (Clair & Dufresne, 2004). The primary focus of the organizational change literature is on an executive's use of a decision-making process to identify the problem, access the alternatives, weigh the criteria, and then make and later evaluate the decision made. The organizational decision-making literature included three

distinct theories: normative (prescriptive), behavioral (descriptive), and naturalistic (Beach, 1997). Within these theories lie a myriad of decision-making models, as illustrated in Table 1 in Chapter 2. All of the organizational decision-making models provide a solid foundation and process for managers to use within their organizations to structure more effective decision making. Drucker (1954), known as *the father of management* (Johnson, 1995), expanded upon Simon's (1947) decision-making model, within behavioral decision-making theory. Managers continue to use Drucker's (1954) decision-making model to make decisions within organizations today. The organizational change and decision-making literatures provided decision-making models for organizational change, such as downsizing, but did not provide information specific to the personal and professional experiences of the individuals that used these models.

Downsizing. The organizational change literature provided information relative to why an organization might choose to downsize, alternatives available, and processes for downsizing (including deciding which employees to downsize, implementing the change, and managing in the aftermath). Common themes identified in the downsizing literature included communicating a shared vision, managing resistance to change, securing commitment and loyalty, maintaining or restoring morale and motivation, maintaining productivity and job performance, coping with survivor syndrome, and coping with the emotional experience. Literature pertaining to the human resources decision-making process is limited, likely due to the sensitive nature of the experience, as well as potential confidentiality agreements between the manager and the organization (Giachetti, 2009; Leonard, 2009; Schraeder et al., 2006).

Research and literature on topic have increased markedly over the last 2 decades, coinciding with the increased use of downsizing within organizations across the globe.

The downsizing literature reflected potential methods to overcome challenges that downsizing managers may experience during downsizing

- *decision making*, by carefully thinking through, documenting, and implementing the agreed upon and/or fair selection criteria, downsizing managers will decrease some of the stress experienced in downsizing by means that are fair to employees while also protecting the organization;
- *implementation*, by taking a careful approach to implementing the downsizing due to the trauma and uncertainty that employees within the organization experience associated with downsizing. The use of communication, motivation, support, and additional decision making (e.g., outsourcing, process redesign) must be strategic in order to respect employees and ensure the organization's success; and
- *managing in the aftermath*, through a greater understanding of the signs, impacts, and methods to alleviate survivor syndrome; and staying abreast of individual and team performance to ensure that standards are met or adjusted for an appropriate alignment with the changed environment (Asuman & Ayse, 2009; Cascio, 1993; Lewin & Johnston, 2000; Lewis, 1994).

Thus, the organizational change and downsizing literatures informed, but did not fully address the research question of the personal and professional experiences of downsizing managers, as there are very few documented experiences. Of those few documented downsizing managers' experiences, it was known that downsizing managers experienced impacts to their emotional (Allen, Jimmieson, Bordia, & Irmer, 2007; Herzig & Jimmieson, 2006; Gandolfi, 2008c; Sahdev, 2003, 2004), mental (Clair & Dufresne, 2004), physical (Deery, Iverson, & Walsh, 2006; Seo & Barrett, 2007), and social (Turnley & Feldman, 2000) wellbeing in relation to their downsizing experience.

New research. The results of research on downsizing published after the approval of the proposal for this dissertation are consistent with elements discussed herein, such as impacts on productivity and morale (Iverson & Zatzick, 2011), the importance of communication (Homburg, Klarmann, & Staritz, 2012), and managing in the aftermath of the downsizing (Scott, 2011). One quantitative case study provided insight into the correlation of age range and management level as impacting the manager's experience (Waraich & Bhardwaj, 2012). Recent additions to the downsizing research, including several of the studies listed above, focused on individual or organizational impacts outside of the United States.

The researcher did not identify any additional published research specific to the personal and professional experiences of downsizing managers after the approval of the proposal for this dissertation. The literature related to this research topic as reviewed in Chapter 2 informed this study's research question and subquestions. The qualitative research literature detailed in Chapter 3 informed the methodology for the study as recapped in the next section.

Methodology Used

This research, focused on uncovering information about the personal and professional experiences of downsizing managers, was qualitative, exploratory, and descriptive. The researcher obtained data for this study through in-depth interviews of 14 downsizing managers, who provided rich, descriptive data (Creswell, 2007; Seidman, 2006). As detailed in Chapter 3, the study criteria required that each participant (a) was a downsizing manager (as defined in Chapter 1); (b) lived within the US; (c) had a

downsizing experience at least 3 months, but no more than 10 years, prior to the study interview; and (d) was not employed with, nor previously known by the researcher.

As also detailed in Chapters 3 and 4, the researcher interviewed participants to explore their personal and professional experiences during downsizing decision making, implementation, and managing in the aftermath of a downsizing. Nine participants were male and five were female. Participants ranged in age from 31 to 70. To reduce potential bias, one of the requirements was that participants were neither known by nor employed at the same organization as the researcher.

Qualitative research was the most suitable approach for this study due to the need to explore and elicit a descriptive understanding of the personal and professional experiences of downsizing managers (Creswell, 2007; Weiss, 1994). The researcher used coding, thematic analysis, generating meaning, and composite descriptions of the data, which assisted in uncovering the deepest sense of the participants' experiences (Boyatzis, 1998; Ruona, 2005). Chapter 3 provided specific details related to the methodology used in this study, and Chapter 4 further detailed the data analysis.

Overview of Study Findings

The methodology described in Chapter 3 provided the researcher with the structure and design to explore participants' experiences as downsizing managers. Participants' experiences reflected both the positive and negative impacts in their role as downsizing managers. Chapter 4 included a summation and synthesis of the participants' responses to interview questions that allowed the researcher to

- identify a new theme (*treating downsized employees humanely*), in which participants showed downsized employees respect and dignity in the implementation of the downsizing and by providing resources, references, or assistance in identifying other job opportunities;
- make connections to existing themes in the literature (*communicating a shared vision, managing resistance to change, securing commitment and loyalty, maintaining or restoring morale/motivation, maintaining productivity and job performance, coping with survivor syndrome, and coping with the emotional experience*), providing a deeper level of understanding for the existing themes in the literature and reflecting the challenges and successes experienced by downsizing managers;
- understand the *personal impacts*, including impacts to participants' social, mental, physical and social well-being, which reflected both the positive and negative impacts experienced in their role as a downsizing manager, and affected participants' reaction to, comfort level with, and ability to handle, their responsibilities as a downsizing manager;
- comprehend the *professional impacts*, which provided participants with increased credibility by upper management; increased introspection of what the future held for them, the company, and their employees; and understanding of how management operates; and
- make connections with the study's research subquestions, providing substance to participants' experience with and potential improvements to *downsizing decision making, implementation, and managing in the aftermath*. Additionally, participants' responses provided additional insight into the participants' managers' reactions in decision making, appreciation for humane treatment of downsized employees during implementation, and the importance of communication in the postdownsizing environment.

These results reflected a deeper level of understanding of the experiences of downsizing managers, comprising the response to this study's central research question: *What are the downsizing manager's personal and professional experiences of downsizing?*

Relationship of the Findings to Existing Literature

As noted in Chapter 2, limited research exists with respects to the personal and professional experiences of downsizing managers, as defined in Chapter 1. The study

results, as detailed in Chapter 4, illustrate the personal and professional experiences of downsizing managers as reflective in a newly identified theme; existing themes from the literature (Chapter 4, Figure 6); the research subquestions (Chapter 4); and the personal and professional impacts.

The participants in this study described their experiences, including some experiences that proved somewhat difficult for participants to relive. It is an honor that they were all willing to participate and share their stories in support of the researcher and this study. The experiences they shared were emotional due to the challenges they faced in their role, as well as inspirational in the care and concern they displayed in taking their role and responsibilities seriously and treating all employees respectfully throughout the process.

As noted earlier, all participants lived in various areas of the United States, and across various industries, with one or more experiences as a downsizing manager (as defined in Chapter 1), that occurred at least 3 months, but no more than 10 years, prior to the study. Unless another researcher conducts the study with a different sample, possibly from a centralized area or organization, or outside of the United States, it is unknown whether the sample used is a limitation; study limitations are discussed further below. The section related to topics for future research explores this further. Nine participants were male and five were female. All participants had experience as a downsizing manager, as defined in Chapter 1, and were between the ages of 31 and 70.

Managing Organizational Change

The experiences of participants in this study reflected the “daunting managerial challenges” organizational changes pose (Luscher & Lewis, 2008, p. 221). Despite existing literature on managing organizational change, which includes insight into organizational change models, change management strategies, and managerial experiences with organizational change, the downsizing managers interviewed for this study had little to no knowledge or training on these topics. There was no reference in participant interviews to following a preset change process, such as Kotter’s (1996) 8-step model. Rather, the only formal process participants discussed in the event that an organization’s leadership prescribed a formal decision-making process.

Management strategies mentioned in the organizational change literature focused on effective communication and motivation. Numerous participants referred to the importance of communication throughout the downsizing: “Communicate, communicate, communicate, and make yourself available, talk to the team, love the team, pull them back together” (Danny). There were instances in which participants saw their direct manager or other managers shying away from communicating, and were dismayed (Danny, Teresa). Although the literature points to effective communication (Daly, Teague, & Kitchen, 2003; Herzig & Jimmieson, 2006; Kitchen & Daly, 2002), and the downsizing managers in this study understood the importance of communication during change, the literature sparsely addresses additional skills or methods used by or actual experiences of managers.

Motivation was an existing theme in the downsizing literature, which also appeared in interview responses related to managing in the aftermath of the downsizing, referring to the importance of “pick[ing] up the pieces” (Danny, Nicholas) as soon as possible and maintaining or improving morale. One method of motivating employees, as mentioned in the literature on managing organizational change, is empowerment of employees. Empowerment of employees during downsizing is not as easy as the literature makes it sound, as it is not always permissible to include employees in strategic planning and communication until the downsizing decision making has occurred. “Early models of change management followed a simple three-step process that included evaluating and preparing a firm for change, engaging change, and solidifying the change into the fabric of employee’s daily lives” (Gilley et al., 2009, p. 77). Whether through participants’ disagreement with the need to downsize, or through their recommendations (as noted in the Downsizing Decision Making section below), many of the downsizing managers in this study believed that the organization’s leadership had missed the mark on thoroughly “evaluating and preparing” for the downsizing.

Downsizing Decision Making

Downsizing managers in this study unconsciously used a decision-making model, reflective of Drucker’s (1954) decision-making model, to decide who would go and who would stay, through the following steps:

- *defining the problem* by understanding the need to decide who to downsize and who to keep with the organization;
- *analyzing the problem* through a formal or informal decision-making process; the formal processes included ranking or rating of various elements, such as

performance, work ethic, attendance, drama, character, role model, tenure, skills, attitude, and/or function;

- *developing alternative solutions* in a few instances whereas the downsizing manager (a) attempted to escape the inevitable (Victor); (b) had to compete with other managers for an employee to remain with the organization; (c) or attempted to eliminate processes before people;
- *deciding upon the best decision* by making the final choice on who would stay and who would go; and then
- *converting the decision into action* through the downsizing implementation process.

Interestingly, study participants who used a formal process did not refer to a clear-cut method to downsize, such as by seniority, position, or performance alone, but rather through numerous elements, such as character, performance, leadership, and skill sets.

Downsizing managers participating in this study described their experience as mostly smooth and positive due to the existence of formal decision-making processes and a supportive direct manager. They understood that the responsibility of downsizing decision making was necessary and they were, as one participant stated, “Just doing my job” (Victor), which was also a supposed preventative measure from being next on the chopping block. Whether a formal process existed or not, participants found it challenging to decide who to downsize when they took time to realize the implications, and saw employees as human beings with families, financial situations, lives, and obligations outside of the office.

Many of the downsizing managers in this study noted the existence of a supportive *direct* manager. The target for potential improvements was at the organization’s *executive management*, which included recommendations for them to

- anticipate the need to downsize the business sooner (in order to avoid it or prepare management for it);
- allow managers additional time to make decisions as to whom to downsize; and
- provide guidance, support, openness, or justification for the downsizing.

Downsizing Implementation

Downsizing implementation requires downsizing managers to roll out the decisions of who goes and who stays within the organization. Delivering difficult news is not an easy task, and proves no different for downsizing managers that must communicate these decisions. Downsizing managers in this study experienced a variety of emotions during implementation, such as anxiety, sadness, and relief. Although some participants were nervous as to employees' reactions, they may have also experienced sadness due to the impact on downsized and remaining employees, and/or relief in finally ending the decision-making stage and delivering the news.

Other critical elements in the downsizing literature that were reflected in participants' descriptions of their implementation experience were

- communicating clearly, consistently, and as much information as possible (Appelbaum, Everard, & Hung, 1999; Bhattacharyya & Chatterjee, 2005); and
- helping employees to deal with the trauma associated with the downsizing experience (Bhattacharyya & Chatterjee, 2005).

These downsizing managers made their best attempts to be open with employees and provide as much information as possible. One participant noted the need to "rip the band aid off and get it over with" (Larry). Another participant started his implementation conversation with downsized employees by stating, "We've split you guys into two groups and the reason that we're meeting today is to announce that we're going through a

downsizing and everyone in this room is impacted by it” (Joaquin). In addition to ensuring clear, consistent, and open communication with employees, the downsizing managers in this study were also considerate of downsized employees and did their best to treat them humanely. Many of the participants discussed providing downsized employees with time to collect themselves once learning the news of their downsizing, providing them with dignity and respect, and offering references and other resources to assist them in their search for another job.

Managing in the Aftermath

Although research has shown a positive correlation between training and development (T&D) and organizational performance (Gandolfi, 2009), executive management views T&D as a monetary and opportunity cost. This rang true with this study’s participants, as there was no formal training on how to downsize. One participant, a first-time downsizing manager, mentioned watching another manager in his organization who had experience so that he might learn more (Larry). The same participant referred to the training modules that managers are typically required to complete on topics such as timekeeping, codes of conduct, and sexual harassment, but that there was no module specific to how to downsize employees. Downsizing managers in this study referenced *survivor syndrome*, or the “low morale and lower productivity experienced by survivors of the downsizing” (Appelbaum et al., 1997, p. 278), and that this mourning period existed within their organizations only for a short time before employees had to return to maintained or improved levels of productivity.

The literature referred to downsizing managers, in playing a dual role as a downsizing manager and survivor with the organization, as also exhibiting signs of survivor syndrome (Clair & Dufresne, 2004; Dewitt et al., 2003; Gandolfi, 2007). Downsizing managers in this study reflected upon their own sadness in the postdownsizing environment and taking a few weeks to get through the mourning period. According to participants, some managers in participants' organizations either appeared unaffected or bounced back from the challenges of implementing the downsizing. In many cases, the organization's goals and processes remained unchanged despite the decrease in employees to handle the workload, causing an immediate need for surviving employees to increase morale and productivity; inability to do so could be cause for disciplining, terminating, or considering the individual for a future downsizing.

Summary of the Relationship of the Findings to Existing Literature

In summary, the participants in this study shared their personal and professional experiences as downsizing managers involved in downsizing decision making, implementation, and managing in the aftermath. Participants reflected upon the challenges and successes faced in the role. Their stories add to the existing, yet limited, body of literature on topic. One participant summarized the *personal experience* of the role as a downsizing manager, advising that

Rose: You have peoples' livelihoods at stake, and if you allow it to get to you it can really tear you apart. . . . You know, if you allow it to, it would eat you up. So you really try whatever you can do for yourself not to have that happen.

Another participant provided a telling quote that summarized the *professional experience* of a downsizing manager:

Bill: I look at it [the role of a downsizing manager] as an extremely valuable experience in that I was recognized for understanding the big picture of the company, and was charged with an awesome responsibility to help build the future. While at the same time being recognized as having the compassion and the ability to be able to deliver the message in a way that would be received well and/or in an optimal way to where the individual would not feel persecuted.

Participants' responses reflected the personal and professional experiences faced in their role as downsizing managers. The experiences described by the downsizing managers in this study resonate with the limited literature on downsizing manager's experiences, and provide significantly greater depth to the topic through the thick, rich descriptions obtained in this qualitative, exploratory study.

Implications of the Study Results

This study provides insights that organizations' executive management teams and current and future downsizing managers can use to understand some of the common themes in the challenges that downsizing managers may experience during downsizing decision making, implementation, and managing in the aftermath. This section describes implications for theory and practice, followed by recommendations for future research, which will continue to build upon this study's contributions to the literature.

Implications for Managing Organizational Change Theory and Practice

The managing organizational change literature includes change models, management strategies, and management experiences. The steps in an organizational change model may appear to be easy to implement, but the participants in this study proved that numerous challenges exist in managing change in their organizations.

Scholarly research studies called for greater organizational support of downsizing managers after identifying:

- a lack of planning, policies, and programs (Appelbaum et al., 1997; Cascio, 1993; Gandolfi, 2008d);
- inadequate emotional support (Clair & Dufresne, 2004; Gandolfi, 2008b); and/or
- a need for training materials (Cameron, 1994; Clair & Dufresne, 2004; Gandolfi, 2008b).

Downsizing managers who participated in this study echoed these organizational support needs, and recommended that the organizations' executive management teams should provide additional:

- *insight*, to the extent possible, as to why or how the change will happen;
- *structure*, so that managers have a fair and equitable format within which to base decisions, timeframes, and processes;
- *support*, of managers who play a key role in personnel and process decision making, implementation, and managing in the aftermath of the change, as well as the employees within the organization who will undergo the impact of the change, whether directly impacted or not; and
- *time*, to allow managers the opportunity to make appropriate decisions that will allow them to treat employees humanely throughout the change process.

Additionally, both the literature on managing organizational change and the participants in this study referred to communication as a powerful tool to initiate and manage change. Without communication, the change will be extremely challenging and more likely to fail (Thompson, 2005). The existing literature provides useful information on effective communication during change (Daly, Teague, & Kitchen, 2003; Herzig & Jimmieson, 2006; Kitchen & Daly, 2002), but remains sparse regarding additional skills or methods used by or actual experiences of such managers. Downsizing managers in this

study noted the value of communication by holding meetings with individuals or teams, management by walking around, and in appropriate social settings (e.g., lunch, employer reunions).

Implications for Downsizing Theory and Practice

The downsizing literature provides limited information relative to the personal and professional experiences of downsizing managers. The few doctoral or scholarly research studies available were quantitative (Armstrong-Stassen, 2005; Bonanzino, 2002; Erickson, 2007), related only to the executive management level (Bonanzino, 2002; Carritte, 2000), were outside of the United States (Gandolfi, 2008b), and/or focused on various types of organizational change (Bonanzino, 2002; Carritte, 2002), rather than downsizing specifically. The qualitative, semistructured interview format for this study allowed downsizing managers, as defined in Chapter 1, to share rich, meaningful descriptions of their downsizing experience(s).

Downsizing managers “will not be aware from the start what they will have to face during the process: others’ and their own unexpected emotional reactions” (Kets de Vries & Balazs, 1996, p. 118). Participants’ experiences as described this study reflect the challenging responsibilities involved in the role of a downsizing manager. Limited literature related to the experiences of downsizing managers exists, but it provides insight into the impacts that downsizing managers will experience to their emotional, mental, physical, and social well-being. Participants’ experiences resonated with these impacts, which influenced their reactions to, comfort levels with, and ability to handle their responsibilities as downsizing managers. As a result, knowledge of these impacts will

allow current and future downsizing managers to better prepare and cope with the likely impacts of their role in downsizing decision making, implementation, and managing in the aftermath.

Limitations

The limitations of this study include (a) generalizability and (b) researcher bias. The researcher made every attempt to explain and alleviate, where possible, these limitations as described herein.

Generalizability

The sample size for this study was small yet appropriate for a qualitative, exploratory study. Results of this study are not statistically significant or generalizable, but provide additional insight into the experiences of downsizing managers and augment the limited literature on topic. Triangulation also occurred through comparing and contrasting downsizing managers' interview responses, researcher bracketing and reflexivity, multiple interviews with each participant, and member checking (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Scandura & Williams, 2000) to ensure credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) . The purpose of this study was to add to the limited literature related to the personal and professional experiences of downsizing managers by providing rich, thick descriptions of downsizing managers' experiences during downsizing decision making, implementation, and managing in the aftermath of a downsizing. The findings of this study are consistent with themes existent in the literature, and provide a greater level of depth and detail for each of the existing themes. Additionally, one newly identified theme contributes to the furtherance of the literature related to the experiences of downsizing managers.

Additional study considerations for future researchers are included in the Recommendations for Future Research section.

In addition, the issues of time, location, and use of face-to-face interviews did not allow the researcher to interview a larger sample size. After 10 months of recruiting participants, the researcher was able to secure a sufficient number of eligible participants for this study. Although a participant may have had more than one experience that met the criteria for the study, often the individual did not have sufficient time or memory recall to discuss every experience. In those cases, the researcher asked the participant to answer interview questions relative to the eligible experience of which he or she had the best memory recall and time to discuss. Three participants had sufficient time to discuss two experiences, taking approximately 2 hours to complete the entire set of in-depth interview questions for both experiences.

None of the participants was geographically proximate to the researcher, so 13 participants completed phone interviews. One participant opted to complete his in-depth interview via the online, synchronous method, and that interview lasted almost 2 hours, despite discussing one experience. The researcher believes this may be due to the comfort level of the participant and researcher in talking while seeing each other on screen, and/or that the interview occurred in the evening, in which both the researcher and participant had sufficient time to talk. The research methodology literature recognizes phone interviews “effective means of data collection” (Sturges & Hanrahan, 2004, p. 115) and online synchronous interviewing as yielding functionality and results similar to face-to-face or telephone interviews (Salmons, 2010). Based on the difficulty experienced by the

researcher in recruiting participants for this study, securing opportunities for face-to-face interviews and obtaining additional time with each participant to discuss additional experiences were limitations.

Researcher Bias

As originally noted in Chapter 1, the researcher was not a downsizing manager, but many of her former colleagues and good friends took on this role. As detailed in Chapter 3, bracketing works to identify and disclose researcher preconceptions, realize and relive one's own thoughts and experiences, and remove researcher bias relative to the focus of the study (Creswell, 2007; Creswell & Miller, 2000; Gearing, 2004; Ruona, 2005). Bracketing enabled the researcher to write out her preconceived notions, personal experiences, and questions about downsizing and the role of a downsizing manager, as illustrated in Appendix A. Referring to the bracketing exercise prior to the participant interviews and revisiting these notes helped to identify the researcher's learning and any connections with her preconceived notions, personal experiences, and questions concerning the personal and professional experiences of downsizing managers.

Conclusion

The limitations discussed herein include generalizability and researcher bias. In addition, this is the first research study that the researcher has designed and implemented. The researcher worked closely with a mentor, who is an expert in research design and organizational change, throughout the research process. Although the extent to which the results of this study are generalizable is unknown, the purpose of the study was to understand and describe the personal and professional experiences of individual

downsizing managers related to their role throughout downsizing decision making, implementation, and aftermath, to inform organizational practice and future related decision making; and to begin to fill a gap that exists in the literature related to what downsizing managers experience during downsizing, both from personal and professional perspectives . The Recommendations for Future Research section provides suggestions for additional research in areas that may extend this study's findings and potentially increase the generalizability of these results.

Recommendations for Future Research

As noted throughout this study, research on the personal and professional experiences of downsizing managers is limited. Since organizations continue to opt for downsizing as a means to reduce expenses and streamline processes, the researcher highly recommends additional research on the topic as outlined below.

Training

The downsizing literature and a few of the participants in this study suggested guidance from their organizations through documentation, helpful hints, or training materials regarding how to conduct the downsizing (Cameron, 1994; Clair & Dufresne, 2004; Gandolfi, 2008b). Some participants recalled that their organization's human resources or law departments provided training or scripts, or presented formal training slides on how to conduct the downsizing, and what was appropriate or inappropriate to say throughout the downsizing. Other participants noted the lack of guidance or formal training, and did their best to carry out their responsibilities as humanely as they knew how. Also, there may be benefits in studying downsizing managers' job satisfaction level

in (a) organizations that take a formal approach to training their managers on conducting a downsizing versus (b) organizations that take an informal approach or have no training in place for managers conducting a downsizing. This recommended research may provide organizations with insight into whether formal training programs provide the support, guidance, and training needed by downsizing managers, as the downsizing literature and participants in this study identified this as a gap and recommendation, respectively.

Revised Downsizing Manager Definition

Research utilizing a similar study design, with a revised definition of *downsizing manager* to study individuals responsible for implementing a downsizing within an organization, but employed by an outsourced consulting firm that specializes in downsizing organizations, would be beneficial to organizations' executive and senior management teams. . Another option would be to compare and contrast the personal and professional experiences of *outsourced downsizing consultants* called in to implement a downsizing, versus *downsizing managers employed by the organization* and required to implement a downsizing. This recommended research will provide insight as to how the personal and professional experiences of downsizing managers from an outsourced consulting firm are similar or different from those of downsizing managers employed by the organization. The outcomes of this research may alter the decisions of organizations' executive and senior management teams on whether to utilize internal or external downsizing managers for downsizing decision making, implementation, and/or managing in the aftermath.

Treating Downsized Employees Humanely

Another potential area of future research is further examination of the newly identified theme discussed in this study, *treating downsized employees humanely*, to gain a deeper understanding of the obstacles that may exist in attempting to do so as a downsizing manager, and strategies for doing so for the benefit of all involved in a downsizing. Two of the participants in this study mentioned the importance of treating downsized employees humanely, so another perspective may be to identify if or how employees, front-line managers, middle managers, senior managers, and/or executives view the importance of this theme in downsizing. In addition, it would be interesting to understand whether various levels of management (e.g., front-line, middle, senior and/or executives) in other organizational change alternatives (e.g., early retirement, voluntary reductions) attempt to treat impacted employees humanely, and if so, how organizations achieve such humane treatment effectively. These recommendations for research will provide additional contributions to the literature relative to the downsizing manager's experience, downsizing, and the organizational change literature, respectively.

Conclusion

This research study informs the central research question of the downsizing manager's experience of downsizing, specific to the personal and professional experiences of downsizing decision making, implementation, and managing in the aftermath of the downsizing. Study participants' experiences provided a deeper level of understanding related to seven existing themes from the downsizing literature and one newly identified theme, as described more fully in Chapter 4. Participants also provided

rich, meaningful descriptions of their experiences as downsizing managers during decision making, implementation, and managing in the aftermath of downsizing. These downsizing managers faced challenging tasks in their roles that affected them both personally, in terms of their emotional, mental, physical, and social well-being, and professionally. A few participants referred to their involvement in this study as part of the healing process, and many participants agreed to share their experiences for this study with the intent that it will help others, such as

- *the organization's executive management team*, unveiling a detailed reflection of the challenges involved in the process and position of the downsizing manager, which informs executive leadership's high-level strategy and decision making on downsizing and its ultimate impacts from the perspectives of surviving managers;
- *other managers* who may someday take on a similar role, to illustrate the complexities of the situation and avail an opportunity to reflect on the personal and professional experiences of others to better prepare for and cope with their own experiences in downsizing decision making, implementation, and its aftermath (Bonanzino, 2002);
- *employees, clients, and other organizational stakeholders* to provide understanding and appreciation of the challenges associated with the situation and role of a downsizing manager; and
- *the scholar-practitioner community*, contributing to the academic and professional literature related to downsizing, from the downsizing manager's perspective. This study provides a glimpse into the experience of a downsizing manager and may assist this community in preparing for future downsizing and identifying tools and coping strategies within the process as it occurs.

The participants and researcher expect that the results of this study will allow each of these key stakeholder groups to better understand the downsizing manager's experiences in the face of downsizing decision making, implementation, and aftermath, which in turn may better inform overall business decision making affecting the lives and livelihoods of organizations' human assets.

REFERENCES

- Abbas, A. E., & Matheson, J. E. (2005). Normative target-based decision making. *Managerial & Decision Economics*, 26(6), 373-385. doi: 10.1002/mde.1234
- Agosto, D. E. (2002). Bounded rationality and satisficing in young people's web-based decision making. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science & Technology*, 53(1), 16-27. doi: 10.1002/asi.10024
- Ahn, M. J., Adamson, J. S., & Dornbusch, D. (2004). From leaders to leadership: Managing change. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*, 10(4), 112-123. doi: 10.1177/107179190401000409
- Allan, P. (1997). Minimizing employee layoffs while downsizing: Employer practices that work. *International Journal of Manpower*, 18(7), 576-596. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com.library.capella.edu/docview/231904517?accountid=27965>
- Allen, J., Jimmieson, N. L., Bordia, P., & Irmer, B. E. (2007). Uncertainty during organizational change: Managing perceptions through communication. *Journal of Change Management*, 7(2), 187-210. doi: 10.1080/14697010701563379
- Appelbaum, S. H., Close, T. G., & Klasa, S. (1999). Downsizing: An examination of some successes and more failures. *Management Decision*, 37(5), 424-436. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com.library.capella.edu/docview/212073923?accountid=27965>
- Appelbaum, S. H., Delage, C., Labib, N., & Gault, G. (1997). The survivor syndrome: Aftermath of downsizing. *Career Development International*, 2(6), 278-278. doi: 10.1108/13620439710178639
- Appelbaum, S. H., & Donia, M. (2000). The realistic downsizing preview: A management intervention in the prevention of survivor syndrome (part I). *Career Development International*, 5(7), 333-350. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com.library.capella.edu/docview/219322498?accountid=27965>
- Appelbaum, S. H., Everard, A., & Hung, L. T. S. (1999). Strategic downsizing: Critical success factors. *Management Decision*, 37(7), 535-552. doi: 10.1108/00251749910285674
- Armenakis, A. A., & Bedeian, A. G. (1999). Organizational change: A review of theory and research in the 1990s. *Journal of Management*, 25(3), 293-315. doi: 10.1177/014920639902500303

- Armstrong-Stassen, M. (2005). Coping with downsizing: A comparison of executive-level and middle managers. *International Journal of Stress Management*, 12(2), 117-141. doi: 10.1037/1072-5245.12.2.117
- Asuman, A., & Ayse, C. (2009). The effects of organizational downsizing and layoffs on organizational commitment: A field research. *Journal of American Academy of Business, Cambridge*, 14(2), 337-343. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com.library.capella.edu/docview/222865858?accountid=27965>
- Band, D. C., & Tustin, C. M. (1995). Strategic downsizing. *Management Decision*, 33(8), 36-45. doi: 10.1108/00251749510093923
- Banutu-Gomez, M. B., & Banutu-Gomez, S. M. T. (2007). Leadership and organizational change in a competitive environment. *Business Renaissance Quarterly*, 2(2), 69-90. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com.library.capella.edu/docview/212568992?accountid=27965>
- Barrett, D. J. (2002). Change communication: Using strategic employee communication to facilitate major change. *Corporate Communications*, 7(4), 219-231. doi: 10.1108/13563280210449804
- Baum, J. R., & Locke, E. A. (2004). The relationship of entrepreneurial traits, skill, and motivation to subsequent venture growth. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 89(4), 587-598. doi: 10.1037/0021-9010.89.4.587
- Bazerman, M. H. (2006). *Judgment in managerial decision making* (6th ed.): John Wiley & Sons.
- Beach, L. R. (1997). *The psychology of decision making: People in organizations*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.
- Bell, C. R. (2000). Management by wandering around. *Journal for Quality & Participation*, 23(5), 42-45. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=4343180&site=ehost-live&scope=site>
- Bhattacharyya, S., & Chatterjee, L. (2005). Organizational downsizing: From concepts to practices. *Vikalpa: The Journal for Decision Makers*, 30(3), 65-78. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=bth&AN=18462769&site=ehost-live&scope=site>

- Birati, A., & Tziner, A. (2000). Cost-benefit analysis of organizational interventions: The case of downsizing. *Journal of Business & Psychology, 15*(2), 277-286. doi:10.1023/A:1007894018069
- Bonanzino, A. D. (2002). *CEO strategic decision-making processes and the effects upon the decision maker: A multiple case study (Doctoral dissertation)*. Retrieved from Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3053697)
- Bordia, P., Hobman, E., Jones, E., Gallois, C., & Callan, V. J. (2004). Uncertainty during organizational change: Types, consequences, and management strategies. *Journal of Business & Psychology, 18*(4), 507-532. doi: 10.1023/B:JOBU.0000028449.99127.f7
- Bordley, R. F. (2001). Naturalistic decision making and prescriptive decision theory. *Journal of Behavioral Decision Making, 14*(5), 355-357. doi: 10.1002/bdm.382
- Bovey, W., H., & Hede, A. (2001). Resistance to organizational change: The role of cognitive and affective processes. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal, 22*(7/8), 372-382. doi: 10.1108/01437730110410099
- Boyatzis, R. E. (1998). *Transforming qualitative information: Thematic analysis and code development*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Brockner, J., Spreitzer, G., Mishra, A., Hochwarter, W., Pepper, L., & Weinberg, J. (2004). Perceived control as an antidote to the negative effects of layoffs on survivors' organizational commitment and job performance. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 49*(1), 76-100. doi: 10.2307/4131456
- Brown, F. W., & Finstuen, K. (1993). The use of participation in decision making: A consideration of the Vroom-Yetton and Vroom-Jago normative models. *Journal of Behavioral Decision Making, 6*(3), 207-219. doi: 10.1002/bdm.3960060304
- Bryant, M. (2006). Talking about change: Understanding employee responses through qualitative research. *Management Decision, 44*(2), 246-258. doi: 10.1108/00251740610650229
- Bryman, A. (2001). *Social research methods*. New York: Oxford University Press, Inc.
- Buchanan, L., & O'Connell, A. (2006). A brief history of decision making. *Harvard Business Review, 84*(1), 1-8. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=bth&AN=19256537&site=ehost-live&scope=site>
- Burnes, B. (2007). Kurt Lewin and the Harwood Studies. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, 43*(2), 213-231. doi: 10.1177/0021886306297004

- Cameron, K. S. (1994). Strategies for successful organizational downsizing. *Human Resource Management (1986-1998)*, 33(2), 189-211. doi: 10.1002/hrm.3930330204
- Carritte, N. L. (2000). *A phenomenological study of executive experiences in transitioning organizations (doctoral dissertation)*. Retrieved from Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 9989724).
- Cascio, W. F. (1993). Downsizing: What do we know? What have we learned? *The Executive*, 7(1), 95-104. doi: 10.5465/AME.1993.9409142062
- Cascio, W. F., & Wynn, P. (2004). Managing a downsizing process. *Human Resource Management*, 43(4), 425-436. doi: 10.1002/hrm.20034
- Cassell, C., Symon, G., Buehring, A., & Johnson, P. (2006). The role and status of qualitative methods in management research: An empirical account. *Management Decision*, 44(2), 290-303. doi: 10.1108/00251740610650256
- Chawla, A., & Kelloway, E. K. (2004). Predicting openness and commitment to change. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 25(5/6), 485-498. doi: 10.1108/01437730410556734
- Clair, J. A., & Dufresne, R. L. (2004). Playing the grim reaper: How employees experience carrying out a downsizing. *Human Relations*, 57(12), 1597-1625. doi: 10.1177/0018726704049991
- Clemen, R. T. (2001). Naturalistic decision making and decision analysis. *Journal of Behavioral Decision Making*, 14(5), 359-361. doi: 10.1002/bdm.385
- Cooper, D. R., & Schindler, P. S. (2006). *Business research methods* (9th ed.). Boston: McGraw-Hill.
- Costley, C., & Gibbs, P. (2006). Researching others: Care as an ethic for practitioner researchers. *Studies in Higher Education*, 31(1), 89-98. doi: 10.1080/03075070500392375
- Coucke, K., Pennings, E., & Sleuwaegen, L. (2007). Employee layoff under different modes of restructuring: Exit, downsizing or relocation. *Industrial and Corporate Change*, 16(2), 161-182. doi: 10.1093/icc/dtm002
- Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Creswell, J. W., & Miller, D. L. (2000). Determining validity in qualitative inquiry. *Theory Into Practice*, 39(3), 124-130. doi: 10.1207/515430421tip3903_2

- Cummings, T. G. (2004). Organization development: Foundations and applications. In J. Boonstra (Ed.), *Dynamics of Organizational Change and Learning* (pp. 25-42). New York: John Wiley.
- Daly, F., Teague, P., & Kitchen, P. (2003). Exploring the role of internal communication during organisational change. *Corporate Communications*, 8(3), 153-161. doi: 10.1108/13563280310487612
- Daniel, T. A. (1995). Planning for voluntary and involuntary workforce reductions. *Employment Relations Today (Wiley)*, 22(3), 47-65. doi: 10.1002/ert.3910220307
- Datta, D. K., Guthrie, J. P., Basuil, D., & Pandey, A. (2010). Causes and effects of employee downsizing: A review and synthesis. *Journal of Management*, 36(1), 281-348. doi: 10.1177/0149206309346735
- Deery, S. J., Iverson, R. D., & Walsh, J. T. (2006). Toward a better understanding of psychological contract breach: A study of customer service employees. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 91(1), 166-175. doi: 10.1037/0021-9010.91.1.166
- DeLisi, L. E., Maurizio, A., Yost, M., & Papparozi, C. F. (2003). A survey of New Yorkers after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. *The American Journal of Psychiatry*, 160(4), 780-783. doi: 10.1176/appi.ajp.160.4.780
- Devine, K., Reay, T., Stainton, L., & Collins-Nakai, R. (2003). Downsizing outcomes: Better a victim than a survivor? *Human Resource Management*, 42(2), 109-124. doi: 10.1002/hrm.10071
- Dewitt, R. L. (1991). *Strategies for downsizing: Breaking up is hard to do (Doctoral dissertation)*. Retrieved from Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 9421337)
- Dewitt, R. L., Trevino, L. K., & Mollica, K. A. (2003). Stuck in the middle: A control-based model of managers' reactions to their subordinates' layoffs. *Journal of Managerial Issues*, 15(1), 32-50. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=bth&AN=9709119&site=ehost-live&scope=site>
- DiFonzo, N., & Bordia, P. (1998). A tale of two corporations: Managing uncertainty during organizational change. *Human Resource Management*, 37(3/4), 295-303. doi: 10.1002/(SICI)1099-050X(199823/24)37:3/4<295::AID-HRM10>3.0.CO;2-3
- Dillon, S. M. (1998). *Descriptive decision-making: Comparing theory with practice*. Paper presented at the 33rd Annual Conference of the New Zealand Operational Research Society, August 31 - September 1, Waikato University, Hamilton.

- Doyle, M., Claydon, T., & Buchanan, D. (2000). Mixed results, lousy process: The management experience of organizational change. *British Journal of Management*, 11(S1), 559-580. doi: 10.1111/1467-8551.11.S1.6
- Drucker, P. (1954). *The practice of management*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Eland-Goossensen, M. A., Van De Goor, L. A. M, Vollemans, E. C., Hendriks, V. M., & Garretsen, H. E. L. (1997). Snowball sampling applied to opiate addicts outside the treatment system. *Addiction Research*, 5(4), 317-330. doi: 10.3109/16066359709004346
- Engelstad, F. (1998). The significance of seniority in layoffs: A comparative analysis. *Social Justice Research*, 11(2), 103-119. doi: 10.1023/A:1023251203422
- Erickson, R. (2007). *Here today but what about tomorrow? Reducing the attrition of downsizing survivors by increasing their organizational commitment (Doctoral dissertation)*. Retrieved from Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3258539)
- Farmer, B. A., Slater, J. W., & Wright, K. S. (1998). The role of communication in achieving shared vision under new organizational leadership. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 10(4), 219-235. doi: 10.1207/51532754xjpr1004_01
- Farrell, M., & Mavondo, F. T. (2004). The effect of downsizing strategy and reorientation strategy on a learning orientation. *Personnel Review*, 33(4), 383-402. doi: 10.1108/00483480410539470
- Feldheim, M. A. (2007). Public sector downsizing and employee trust. *International Journal of Public Administration*, 30(3), 249-270. doi: 10.1080/01900690601117739
- Finlay, L. (2009). Exploring lived experience: principles and practice of phenomenological research. *International Journal of Therapy & Rehabilitation*, 16(9), 474-481. Retrieved from: <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=c8h&AN=2010414173&site=ehost-live&scope=site>
- Ford, J. D., Ford, L. W., & D'Amelio, A. (2008). Resistance to change: The rest of the story. *Academy of Management. The Academy of Management Review*, 33(2), 362-377. doi: 10.5465/AMR.2008.31193235
- Freeman, S. J. (1999). The gestalt of organizational downsizing: Downsizing strategies as packages of change. *Human Relations*, 52(12), 1505-1541. doi: 10.1177/001872679905201202

- Fryer, B., Stybel, L. J., Peabody, M., Dormann, J., & Sutton, R. I. (2009). The layoff. *Harvard Business Review*, 87(3), 33-40. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=bth&AN=36589926&site=ehost-live&scope=site>
- Gandolfi, F. (2006). The downsizing process - conceptual frameworks. *The Business Review, Cambridge*, 6(2), 1-7. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com.library.capella.edu/docview/197297212?accountid=27965>
- Gandolfi, F. (2007). Downsizing, corporate survivors, and employability-related issues: A European case study. *Journal of American Academy of Business, Cambridge*, 12(1), 50-56. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com.library.capella.edu/docview/222861699?accountid=27965>
- Gandolfi, F. (2008a). Cost reductions, downsizing-related layoffs, and HR practices. *SAM Advanced Management Journal (07497075)*, 73(3), 52-58. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com.library.capella.edu/docview/231246437?accountid=27965>
- Gandolfi, F. (2008b). Downsizing executioners and the experience of executing downsizing. *Journal of American Academy of Business, Cambridge*, 13(1), 294-302. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com.library.capella.edu/docview/222872925?accountid=27965>
- Gandolfi, F. (2008c). Learning from the past -- downsizing lessons for managers. *Journal of Management Research (09725814)*, 8(1), 3-17. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com.library.capella.edu/docview/237232310?accountid=27965>
- Gandolfi, F. (2008d). Reflecting on downsizing: What have managers learned? *S.A.M. Advanced Management Journal*, 73(2), 46-55. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com.library.capella.edu/docview/231152645?accountid=27965>
- Gandolfi, F. (2008e). Surviving corporate downsizing: An Australian experience. *The ICFAI University Journal of Soft Skills*, 2(2), 13-25.
- Gandolfi, F. (2009). Training and development in an era of downsizing. *Journal of Management Research (09725814)*, 9(1), 3-14. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com.library.capella.edu/docview/237227058?accountid=27965>

- Gearing, R. E. (2004). Bracketing in research: A typology. *Qualitative Health Research*, 14(10), 1429-1452. doi: 10.1177/1049732304270394
- Giachetti, T. D. (2009). Look before you lay off. *Investment Advisor*, 29(10), 97-98.
Retrieved from
<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=bth&AN=45459413&site=ehost-live&scope=site>
- Gill, R. (2003). Change management - or change leadership? *Journal of Change Management*, 3(4), 307-318. doi: 10.1080/714023845
- Gilley, A., Gilley, J. W., & McMillan, H. S. (2009). Organizational change: Motivation, communication and leadership effectiveness *Performance Improvement Quarterly*, 21(4), 75-94. doi: 10.1002/piq.20039
- Goodstein, J., & Boeker, W. (1991). Turbulence at the top: A new perspective on governance structure changes and strategic change. *Academy of Management Journal*, 34(2), 306-330. doi: 10.2307/256444
- Grimshaw, D., Beynon, H., Rubery, J., & Ward, K. (2002). The restructuring of career paths in large service sector organizations: 'Delaying', upskilling and polarisation. *Sociological Review*, 50(1), 89-116. doi: 10.1111/1467-954x.ep6412541
- Hammond, J., Keeney, R., & Raiffa, H. (1998). *Smart choices: A practical guide to making better decisions*: Harvard Business School Press Books.
- Hanks, R. S. (1990). The impact of early retirement incentives on retirees and their families. *Journal of Family Issues*, 11(1), 424-437. doi: 10.1177/019251390011004005
- Harrison, E. F., & Pelletier, M. A. (1995). A paradigm for strategic decision success. *Management Decision*, 33(7), 53-59. doi: 10.1108/00251749510090593
- Hellriegel, D., & Slocum, J. W., Jr. (2007). *Organizational behavior* (11th ed.). Mason, Ohio: Thomson.
- Herrbach, O., Mignonac, K., Vandenberghe, C., & Negrini, A. (2009). Perceived HRM practices, organizational commitment, and voluntary early retirement among late-career managers. *Human Resource Management*, 48(6), 895-915. doi: 10.1002/hrm.20321
- Herzig, S. E., & Jimmieson, N. L. (2006). Middle managers' uncertainty management during organizational change. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 27(8), 628-645. doi: 10.1108/01437730610709264

- Hitt, M. A., Keats, B. W., Harback, H. F., & Nixon, R. D. (1994). Rightsizing: Building and maintaining strategic leadership and long-term competitiveness. *Organizational Dynamics*, 23(2), 18-32. doi: 10.1016/0090-2616(94)90066-3
- Hoffrage, U., & Reimer, T. (2004). Models of bounded rationality: The approach of fast and frugal heuristics. *Management Revue*, 15(4), 437-459. Retrieved from
Retrieved from
<http://search.proquest.com.library.capella.edu/docview/201558484?accountid=27965>
- Hofmann, E., Hoelzl, E., & Kirchler, E. (2008). A comparison of models describing the impact of moral decision making on investment decisions. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 82(1), 171-187. doi: 10.1007/s10551-007-9570-6
- Holt, D. T., Self, D. R., Thal, J., Alfred E. , & Lo, S. W. (2003). Facilitating organizational change: A test of leadership strategies. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 24(5/6), 262-272. doi: 10.1108/01437730310485761
- Holton, E. F., & Naquin, S. (2005). A critical analysis of HRD evaluation models from a decision-making perspective. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 16(2), 257-280. doi: 10.1002/hrdq.1136
- Homburg, C., Klarmann, M., & Staritz, S. (2012). Customer uncertainty following downsizing: The effects of extent of downsizing and open communication. *Journal of Marketing* 76(3), 112-129. doi: 10.1509/jm.09.0486
- Hornstein, H. (2009). Downsizing isn't what it's cracked up to be. *Ivey Business Journal Online*. Retrieved from
<http://www.iveybusinessjournal.com/topics/strategy/downsizing-isn%E2%80%99t-what-it%E2%80%99s-cracked-up-to-be#.UQNTyb9X2jk>
- Huberman, A. M., & Miles, M. B. (1983). Drawing valid meaning from qualitative data: Some techniques of data reduction and display. *Quality & Quantity*, 17(4), 281-339. doi: 10.1007/BF00167541
- Isabella, L. A. (1989). Downsizing: Survivors' assessments. *Business Horizons*, 32(3), 35-41. doi: 10.1016/0007-6813(89)90006-2
- Iverson, R. D., & Zatzick, C. D. (2011). The effects of downsizing on labor productivity: The value of showing consideration for employees' morale and welfare in high-performance work systems. *Human Resource Management*, 50(1), 29-44. doi: 10.1002/hrm.20407
- James, N., & Busher, H. (2009). *Online interviewing*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

- Johnson, M. (1995). Drucker speaks his mind. *Management Review*, 84(10), 10-15.
Retrieved from
<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=bth&AN=9510206879&site=ehost-live&scope=site>
- Kark, R., & Van Dijk, D. (2007). Motivation to lead, motivation to follow: The role of the self-regulatory focus in leadership processes. *Academy of Management Review*, 32(2), 500-528. doi: /10.2307/20159313
- Karp, T. (2005). Unpacking the mysteries of change: Mental modelling. *Journal of Change Management*, 5(1), 87-96. doi: 10.1080/14697010500057573
- Kavanagh, N. (2003). Communicating for performance: The challenge of modern business. *Human Resource Management International Digest*, 11(6), 2-4. doi: 10.1108/09670730310494575
- Kawaguchi, D., & Ohtake, F. (2007). Testing the morale theory of nominal wage rigidity. *Industrial & Labor Relations Review*, 61(1), 59-74. doi: 10.2139/ssrn.550621
- Kazem, C., Adcroft, A., & Willis, R. (2005). Organisations, transformability and the dynamics of strategy. *Management Decision*, 43(1), 6-12. doi: 10.1108/00251740510572443
- Kets de Vries, M., & Balazs, K. (1996). The human side of downsizing. *European Management Journal*, 14(2), 111-120. doi: 10.1016/0263-2373(95)00055-0
- Keyes, J. D. (2005). Layoffs: A 12-step program for getting through down(sizing) times. *Venulex Legal Summaries*, 1-6. Retrieved from
<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=bth&AN=23566723&site=ehost-live>
- Kidder, D. L. (2005). Is it 'who I am', 'what I can get away with', or 'what you've done to me?': A multi-theory examination of employee misconduct. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 57(4), 389-398. doi: 10.1007/s10551-004-6713-x
- Kitchen, P. J., & Daly, F. (2002). Internal communication during change management. *Corporate Communications*, 7(1), 46-53. doi: 10.1108/13563280210416035
- Klein, S. M. (1994). Communication strategies for successful organizational change. *Industrial Management*, 36(1), 26-31. Retrieved from
<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=bth&AN=9411284178&site=ehost-live&scope=site>
- Koeber, C. (2002). Corporate restructuring, downsizing, and the middle class: The process and meaning of worker displacement in the "new" economy. *Qualitative Sociology*, 25(2), 217-246. doi: 10.1023/A:1015414600875

- Korns, M. (2009). *Organizational change, restructuring and downsizing: The experience of employees in the electric utility industry (Doctoral dissertation)*. Retrieved from Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3352428)
- Kotter, J. P. (1995). Leading change: Why transformation efforts fail. *Harvard Business Review*, 73(2), 59-67. doi: <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=bth&AN=9503281992&site=ehost-live&scope=site>
- Kotter, J. P. (1996). *Leading change*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.
- Kuchi, T. (2006). Constant change and the strategic role of communication. *Library Management*, 27(4/5), 218-235. doi: 10.1108/01435120610668160
- Lakshman, C. (2005). Top executive knowledge leadership: Managing knowledge to lead change at General Electric. *Journal of Change Management*, 5(4), 429-446. doi: 10.1080/14697010500401540
- Langley, A., Mintzberg, H., Pitcher, P., Posada, E., & Saint-Macary, J. (1995). Opening up decision making: The view from the black stool. *Organization Science*, 6(3), 260-279. doi: 10.1287/orsc.6.3.260
- Lautsch, B. A., & Scully, M. A. (2007). Restructuring time: Implications of work-hours reductions for the working class. *Human Relations*, 60(5), 719-743. doi: 10.1177/0018726707079199
- Leonard, L. S. (2009). RIFS: A legal overview. *Compensation & Benefits for Law Offices*, 9(1), 7-7. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=bth&AN=35897786&site=ehost-live&scope=site>
- Levy, B. (2009). Hiring put on ice. *Money Management*, 23(20), 5-5. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=bth&AN=43047909&site=ehost-live&scope=site>
- Lewin, J. E., & Johnston, W. J. (2000). The impact of downsizing and restructuring on organizational competitiveness. *Competitiveness Review*, 10(1), 45-55. doi: 10.1108/eb046388
- Lewin, K. (1951). *Field theory in social science*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Lewis, D. S. (1994). Organizational change: Relationship between reactions, behaviour and organizational performance. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 7(5), 41-55. doi: 10.1108/09534819410068912

- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985) *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.
- Lipshitz, R., Klein, G., Orasanu, J., & Salas, E. (2001). Focus article: Taking stock of naturalistic decision making. *Journal of Behavioral Decision Making*, *14*(5), 331-352. doi: 10.1002/bdm.381
- Littler, C. R., Wiesner, R., & Dunford, R. (2003). The dynamics of delayering: Changing management structure in three countries. *Journal of Management Studies*, *40*(2), 225-256. doi: 10.1111/1467-6486.00339
- Longenecker, C. O., & Ariss, S. S. (2004). Who goes? *Industrial Management*, *46*(3), 8-13. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=bth&AN=13226347&site=ehost-live&scope=site>
- Louisiana Homeland Security. (2009). *Atlantic hurricane and tropical storm names*. Retrieved from <http://www.ohsep.louisiana.gov/hurricanerelated/2009hurrNme.htm>
- Lovvorn, A. S. (2008). The consequences of strategic decisions: Firm downsizing and CEO exit. *Academy of Management Proceedings*, 1-6. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=bth&AN=33716527&site=ehost-live&scope=site>
- Luscher, X., & Lewis, X. (2008). Organizational change and managerial sensemaking: Working through paradox. *Academy of Management Journal*, *51*(2), 221-240. doi: 10.5465/AMR.2008.31767217
- Macri, D. M., Tagliaventi, M. R., & Bertolotti, F. (2002). A grounded theory for resistance to change in a small organization. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, *15*(3), 292-310. doi: 10.1108/09534810210429327
- Maitlis, S., & Ozcelik, H. (2004). Toxic decision processes: A study of emotion and organizational decision making. *Organization Science*, *15*(4), 375-393. doi: 10.1287/orsc.1040.0070
- Manson, S. M. (2006). Bounded rationality in agent based models: Experiments with evolutionary programs. *International Journal of Geographical Information Science*, *20*(9), 991-1012. doi: 10.1080/13658810600830566
- Marshak, R. J. (2002). Changing the language of change: How new contexts and concepts are challenging the ways we think and talk about organizational change. *Strategic Change*, *11*(5), 279-286. doi: 10.1002/jsc.604

- Mathews, J. (2009). Models of change management: A reanalysis. *ICFAI Journal of Business Strategy*, 6(2), 7-17. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=bth&AN=40827095&site=ehost-live&scope=site>
- Mau, D. C. (2002). *Survivors of downsizing: Informal learning of older adults who remain in the workplace after their organization experiences a downsizing (Doctoral dissertation)*. Retrieved from Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3052898)
- McLean, J. (2004). Responding to change ensures survival. *The British Journal of Administrative Management*, 16-16. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=bth&AN=15327780&site=ehost-live&scope=site>
- Mentzer, M. S. (1996). Corporate downsizing and profitability in Canada. *Revue Canadienne des Sciences de l'Administration*, 13(3), 237-250. doi: 10.1111/j.1936-4490.1996.tb00734.x
- Messmer, M. (2005). Communicating effectively with employees. *Strategic Finance*, 86(8), 15-16. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=bth&AN=15827231&site=ehost-live&scope=site>
- Meyer, J. P., Allen, N. J., & Topolnytsky, L. (1998). Commitment in a changing world of work. *Canadian Psychology*, 39(1/2), 83-93. doi: 10.1037/h0086797
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Miller, R. L. (1992). Managing before a reorganization. *Training & Development*, 46(7), 57-61. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ehh&AN=9091943&site=ehost-live&scope=site>
- Mirabal, N., & DeYoung, R. (2005). Downsizing as a strategic intervention. *Journal of American Academy of Business, Cambridge*, 6(1), 39-45. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=bth&AN=15637353&site=ehost-live&scope=site>
- Mishra, A. K., Mishra, K. E., & Spreitzer, G. M. (2009). Downsizing the company without downsizing morale. *MIT Sloan Management Review*, 50(3), 39-44. doi: 10.1225/SMR310

- Mishra, A. K., & Spreitzer, G. M. (1998). Explaining how survivors respond to downsizing: The role of trust, empowerment, justice, and work redesign. *Academy of Management. The Academy of Management Review*, 23(3), 567-588. doi: 10.5465/AMR.1998.926627
- Mishra, K. E., Spreitzer, G. M., & Mishra, A. K. (1998). Preserving employee morale during downsizing. *Sloan Management Review*, 39(2), 83-95. doi: 10.1225/SMR035
- Mitchell, T. R., & Scott, W. G. (1988). The Barnard-Simon contribution: A vanished legacy. *Public Administration Quarterly*, 12(3), 348-368. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=bth&AN=7339883&site=ehost-live&scope=site>
- Mohrman, S. (2008). Leading change. *Leadership Excellence*, 25(10), 5-5. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=bth&AN=35003586&site=ehost-live&scope=site>
- Monippally, M. M. (2003). The kinder cut: A macro communication strategy for delivering news of job termination. *Vikalpa: The Journal for Decision Makers*, 28(3), 31-44. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=bth&AN=10974840&site=ehost-live&scope=site>
- Munkeby, S. (2007). *Middle manager competencies required for success in the 21st century (Doctoral dissertation)*. Retrieved from Dissertations and Theses database (UMI No. 3272243)
- Myers, J. E. (1993). Downsizing blues: How to keep up morale. *Management Review*, 82(4), 28-32. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=bth&AN=6039140&site=ehost-live&scope=site>
- Newcomb, J. E. (1993). The dilemma of restructuring. *Quality*, 32(8), 15-15. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com.library.capella.edu/docview/235211417?accountid=27965>
- Nobel Prize. (2011, January 8). *All prizes in economic sciences*. From http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/economics/laureates/
- Novick, G. (2008). Is there a bias against telephone interviews in qualitative research? *Research in Nursing & Health*, 31(4), 391-398. doi: 10.1002/nur.20259.

- Noy, C. (2008). Sampling knowledge: The hermeneutics of snowball sampling in qualitative research. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 11(4), 327-344. doi: 10.1080/13645570701401305
- Nutt, P. C. (2008). Investigating the success of decision making processes. *Journal of Management Studies*, 45(2), 425-455. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-6486.2007.00756.x
- O'Brien, M. J. (2008). 5 approaches to leading successful organizational change. *HFM (Healthcare Financial Management)*, 62(9), 138-140. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com.library.capella.edu/docview/196385931?accountid=27965>
- Palmer, I., Kabanoff, B., & Dunford, R. (1997). Managerial accounts of downsizing. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 18(7), 623-639. doi: 10.1002/(SICI)1099-1379(199711)18:1+<623::AID-JOB909>3.0.CO;2-T
- Palo, S. & Panigrahi, S. (2004). Managing change during a transition period. *Development and Learning in Organizations*, 18(6), 4-9. doi: 10.1108/1477728041056416
- Paulsen, N., Callan, V. J., Grice, T. A., Rooney, D., & et al. (2005). Job uncertainty and personal control during downsizing: A comparison of survivors and victims. *Human Relations*, 58(4), 463-496. doi: 10.1177/0018726705055033
- Periyakoil, V. S. (2009). Change management: The secret sauce of successful program building. *Journal of Palliative Medicine*, 12(4), 329-330. doi: 10.1089=jpm.2009.9645
- Perry, L. T. (1986). Least-cost alternatives to layoffs in declining industries. *Organizational Dynamics*, 14(4), 48-61. doi: 10.1016/0090-2616(86)90043-4
- Peters, T., & Austin, N. (1985). MBWA (management by walking around). *California Management Review*, 28(1), 9-9. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com.library.capella.edu/docview/206298434?accountid=27965>
- Peus, C., Frey, D., Gerhardt, M., Fischer, P., & Traut-Mattausch, E. (2009). Leading and managing organizational change initiatives. *Management Revue*, 20(2), 158-175. doi: 10.1688/1861-9908_mrev_2009_02_Peus
- Pfadenhauer, D. M. (2009). Selection and communication in layoff planning: The cornerstones of a successful reduction in force. *Journal of Private Equity*, 12(3), 94-103. doi: 10.3905/JPE.2009.12.3.09

- Priest, H. (2002). An approach to the phenomenological analysis of data. *Nurse Researcher*, 10(2), 50-63. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=c8h&AN=2003044064&site=ehost-live&scope=site>
- Probst, T. M., & Brubaker, T. L. (2007). Organizational safety climate and supervisory layoff decisions: Preferences versus predictions. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 37(7), 1630-1648. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=sih&AN=25535508&site=ehost-live&scope=site>
- Radner, R. (2000). Costly and bounded rationality in individual and team decision-making. *Industrial & Corporate Change*, 9(4), 623-659. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=bth&AN=4234579&site=ehost-live&scope=site>
- Reese, S. (2009). Management by walking around. *Techniques* 84(1), 10-11. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ehh&AN=35881716&site=ehost-live&scope=site>
- Richardson, P., & Denton, K. (1996). Communicating change. *Human Resource Management (1986-1998)*, 35(2), 203-216. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=bth&AN=12496224&site=ehost-live&scope=site>
- Richey, M. (1992). The impact of corporate downsizing on employees. *Business Forum*, 17(3), 9-14. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=bth&AN=9609090376&site=ehost-live&scope=site>
- Ritchie, J., & Lewis, J. (2003). *Qualitative research practice*. London: Sage Publications.
- Roth, W. F. (2009). Downsizing: The cure that can kill. *Global Business & Organizational Excellence*, 28(6), 46-52. doi: 10.1002/joe.20287
- Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. S. (2004). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Ruona, W. E. A. (2005). Analyzing qualitative data. In R. A. Swanson & E. F. Holton III (Eds.), *Research in Organizations: Foundations and Methods of Inquiry* (pp. 233-263). San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler.
- Sachau, D. A. (2007). Resurrecting the motivation-hygiene theory: Herzberg and the positive psychology movement. *Human Resource Development Review*, 6(4), 377-393. doi: 10.1177/1534484307307546

- Sahdev, K. (2003). Survivors' reactions to downsizing: The importance of contextual factors. *Human Resource Management Journal*, 13(4), 56-74. doi: 10.1111/j.1748-8583.2003.tb00105.x
- Sahdev, K. (2004). Revisiting the survivor syndrome: The role of leadership in implementing downsizing. *European Journal of Work & Organizational Psychology*, 13(2), 165-196. doi: 10.1080/13594320444000056
- Sahoo, C. K., Behera, N., & Tripathy, S. K. (2010). Employee empowerment and individual commitment: An analysis from integrative review of research. *Employment Relations Record*, 10(1), 40-56. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=bth&AN=60258608&site=ehost-live&scope=site>
- Saksvik, P. Å. y., Tvedt, S. D., NytrÃ, K., Andersen, G. R., Andersen, T. K., Buvik, M. P. et al. (2007). Developing criteria for healthy organizational change. *Work & Stress*, 21(3), 243-263. doi: 10.1080/02678370701685707
- Salmons, J. (2010). *Online interviews in real time*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Scandura, T. A., & Williams, E. A. (2000). Research methodology in management: Current practices, trends, and implications for future research. *Academy of Management Journal*, 43(6), 1248-1264. doi: 10.2307/1556348
- Schraeder, M., Self, D. R., & Lindsay, D. R. (2006). Performance appraisals as a selection criterion in downsizing: A comparison of rank-order and banding approaches. *Managerial Law*, 48(5), 479-494. doi: 10.1108/03090550610715972
- Scott, K. O. (2011). Remedies for the post-layoff hangover. *American Banker*, 176(136), 9-9. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=bth&AN=65215801&site=ehost-live&scope=site>
- Scott-Ladd, B., & Chan, C. C. A. (2004). Emotional intelligence and participation in decision-making: strategies for promoting organizational learning and change. *Strategic Change*, 13(2), 95-105. doi: 10.1002/jsc.668
- Seidman, I. (2006). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences* (3rd ed.). New York: Teachers College Press.

- Self, D. R., Schraeder, M., & Smola, K. (2005). The pursuit of survivor commitment in the context of downsizing: An exploration of perceptions related to severance packages. *Journal of Applied Management and Entrepreneurship*, 10(3), 66-77. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com.library.capella.edu/docview/203920719?accountid=27965>
- Senge, P. M., Carstedt, G., & Porter, P. L. (2001). Innovating our way to the next Industrial Revolution. *MIT Sloan Management Review*, 42(2), 24-38. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=bth&AN=4388458&site=ehost-live&scope=site>
- Seo, M.-G., & Barrett, L. F. (2007). Being emotional during decision making - good or bad? An empirical investigation. *Academy of Management Journal*, 50(4), 923-940. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com.library.capella.edu/docview/199793853?accountid=27965>
- Shaffer, J. & Perrin, T. (1997). Organizational communication best practices. *Strategic Communication Management*, 2(1), 16-21. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=bth&AN=7007825&site=ehost-live&scope=site>
- Sherman, W. S., & Garland, G. E. (2007). Where to bury the survivors? Exploring possible ex post effects of resistance to change. *S.A.M. Advanced Management Journal*, 72(1), 52-62. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com.library.capella.edu/docview/231150761?accountid=27965>
- Shubik, M. (1997). Bounded rationality and economic evolution: A contribution to decision making, economics and management. *Journal of Economics*, 66(2), 206-206. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=bth&AN=4802404&site=ehost-live&scope=site>
- Simon, H. (1947). *Administrative Behavior: A study of decision making processes in administrative organizations* (1st ed.). New York: Free Press.
- Simon, H. (1997). *Administrative Behavior: A study of decision making processes in administrative organizations* (4th ed.). New York: The Free Press.
- Simon, H. A. (1960). *The new science of management decision*. New York, NY: Harper & Brothers.

- Smith, F., Wright, A., & Huo, Y. P. (2008). Scapegoating only works if the herd is big: Downsizing, management turnover, and company turnaround. *Journal of International Business Strategy*, 8(3), 72-83. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=bth&AN=35637665&site=ehost-live&scope=site>
- Society for Human Resources Management. (2001). *Layoffs and job security survey*. Retrieved from http://www.shrm.org/research/surveyfindings/articles/pages/layoffs_20and_20job_20security_20survey.aspx
- Spreitzer, G., M., & Mishra, A. K. (2002). To stay or to go: Voluntary survivor turnover following an organizational downsizing. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 23(6), 707-729. doi: 10.1002/job.166
- Stainer, L. (2004). Ethical dimensions of management decision-making. *Strategic Change*, 13(6), 333-342. doi: 10.1002/jsc.688
- Sturges, J. E., & Hanrahan, K. J. (2004). Comparing telephone and face-to-face qualitative interviewing: A research note. *Qualitative Research* 4(1), 107-118. doi: 10.1177/1468794104041110
- Sugarman, B. (2001). A learning-based approach to organizational change: Some results and guidelines. *Organizational Dynamics*, 30(1), 62-76. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=bth&AN=5220134&site=ehost-live&scope=site>
- Tamaren, M. S. (1995). How to survive a downsizing. *Telecommunications*, 29(3), 84-86. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=bth&AN=9504053807&site=ehost-live&scope=site>
- Terek, M. (2009). Normative and descriptive approaches to multiattribute decision making. *China-USA Business Review*, 8(12), 12-22. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=bth&AN=48176687&site=ehost-live&scope=site>
- Thompson, I. (2005). The communication game. *Supply Management*, 10(20), 34-34. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com.library.capella.edu/docview/222189434?accountid=27965>
- Thornhill, A., & Gibbons, A. (1995). The positive management of redundancy survivors: Issues and lessons. *Employee Counseling Today*, 7(3), 5-12. doi: 10.1108/13665629510091060

- Thornhill, A., Saunders, M. N. K., & Stead, J. (1997). Downsizing, delaying - but where's the commitment? The development of a diagnostic tool to help manage survivors. *Personnel Review*, 26(1/2), 81-98. doi: 10.1108/00483489710157805
- Tiwana, A., Wang, J., Keil, M., & Ahluwalia, P. (2007). The bounded rationality bias in managerial valuation of real options: Theory and evidence from IT projects. *Decision Sciences*, 38(1), 157-181. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=bth&AN=24500758&site=ehost-live&scope=site>
- Tomasko, R. M. (1991). Downsizing: Layoffs and alternatives to layoffs. *Compensation & Benefits Review*, 23(4), 19-32. doi:10.1177/088636879102300404
- Tomer, J. F. (1992). Rational organizational decision making in the human firm: A socio-economic model. *Journal of Socio-Economics*, 21(2), 85-107. doi: 10.1016/1053-5357(92)90015-Y
- Travaglione, A., & Cross, B. (2006). Diminishing the social network in organizations: Does there need to be such a phenomenon as "survivor syndrome" after downsizing? *Strategic Change*, 15(1), 1-13. doi: 10.1002/jsc.743
- Turnley, W. H., & Feldman, D. C. (2000). Re-examining the effects of psychological contract violations: Unmet expectations and job dissatisfaction as mediators. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 21, 25-42. doi: 10.1002/(SICI)1099-1379(200002)21:1<25::AID-JOB2>3.0.CO;2-Z
- Ulrich, D. (1998). *Champions of change: How CEOs and their companies are mastering the skills of radical change*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis. (2012). *Gross domestic product*. Retrieved from <http://www.bea.gov>
- U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau. (2011, June 3). *State and county quick facts*. Retrieved from <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/00000.html>
- U.S. Department of Labor, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2012). *Mass layoff statistics*. Retrieved from <http://www.bls.gov>
- U.S. Department of Labor. (2009). *The Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act*. Retrieved from <http://www.dol.gov>
- Vakola, M., Soderquist, K. E., & Prastacos, G. P. (2007). Competency management in support of organisational change. *International Journal of Manpower*, 28(3/4), 260-275. doi: 10.1108/01437720710755245

- Varkey, P. (2010). Change management for effective quality improvement: A primer. *American Journal of Medical Quality*, 25(4), 268-273. doi: 10.1177/1062860610361625
- Victor, P., & Franckeiss, A. (2002). The five dimensions of change: An integrated approach to strategic organizational change management. *Strategic Change*, 11(1), 35-42. doi: 10.1002/jsc.567
- Walton, E., & Russell, M. (2004). Organizational change: Strategies and interventions. In J. Boonstra (Ed.), *Dynamics of organizational change and learning* (pp. 133-148). New York: John Wiley.
- Waraich, S. B., & Bhardwaj, G. (2012). Perception of workforce reduction scenario and coping strategies of survivors: An empirical study. *South Asian Journal of Management*, 19(3), 34-49. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com.library.capella.edu/docview/1152415604?accountid=27965>
- Weiss, R. S. (1994). *Learning from strangers: The art and method of qualitative interview studies*. New York, NY: The Free Press.
- What drives downsizing decisions? (2005). *Business Finance*, 11(6), 10-10. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=bth&AN=17531353&site=ehost-live&scope=site>
- Whyte, G. (2001). Perspectives on naturalistic decision making from organizational behavior. *Journal of Behavioral Decision Making*, 14(5), 383-384. doi: 10.1002/bdm.397
- Williams, M. S. (2004). Downsizing - intellectual capital performance anorexia or enhancements? *The Learning Organization*, 11(4/5), 368-379. doi: 10.1108/09696470410538260
- Yukl, G. A., & Becker, W. S. (2006). Effective empowerment in organizations. *Organization Management Journal*, 3(3), 210-231. doi: 10.1057/omj.2006.20
- Yukl, G., & Lepsinger, R. (2006). Leading change: Adapting and innovating in an uncertain world. *Leadership in Action*, 26(2), 3-7. doi: 10.1002/lia.1154

APPENDIX A. RESEARCHER BRACKETING

As detailed in Chapter 3 herein, bracketing works to identify and disclose researcher preconceptions, realize and relive one's own thoughts and experiences, and remove researcher bias relative to the focus of the study (Creswell, 2007; Creswell & Miller, 2000; Gearing, 2004; Ruona, 2005). This appendix served to conduct and disclose such bracketing, which enabled me to write out my preconceived notions, opinions, biases, personal experiences, and questions about downsizing and the role of the downsizing manager before beginning the research herein.

I had significant interest in communication used by managers during all stages of organizational change, specifically downsizing. Having worked for a financial services organization for almost two decades, I watched as numerous reorganizations and downsizings took place within the company. Although the business's decisions to change were strategic moves to increase its competitive advantage, the downsizing managers faced the difficult task of communicating potentially life-changing news to employees. I was not in a management position until April, 2012, nor directly affected by the downsizing events, yet many of my close friends and coworkers faced downsizing decision making, implementation, and managing in the aftermath. .

Thus, my own experience with downsizing is as a surviving employee, not a *downsizing manager* making and carrying out the decisions of how to reduce the workforce and who will stay or go. I have done my bracketing work below reflecting the stages of downsizing: decision making, implementation, and managing in the aftermath.

Downsizing Decision Making

Years prior to my experience as a survivor of downsizing, I thought that downsizing managers were greedy and mean, and specifically not losing sleep over their decisions or the impacts of those choices on the organization and its people. I look back now and see that this way of thinking was the easy way, as it minimized the challenges that downsizing managers had to face throughout downsizing. This way of thinking placed blame upon the downsizing managers rather than attempting to understand their role and its difficulties.

I interviewed a downsizing manager for a project during my Master's degree program. The downsizing manager's responses intrigued me and sparked my interest in learning more about the personal and professional experiences of downsizing managers. The individual told me about feeling sickened and losing sleep over the decisions that needed to be made. That interview enabled me to see that my original thoughts about downsizing managers were not necessarily always accurate. That discussion was a big part of why I decided to embark upon a higher degree in leadership, and to focus my dissertation on this topic.

Downsizing decision making, as detailed in this study, relates to the decision making of downsizing managers, such as who goes and who stays. My interest in their experience was to gain a better understanding of how downsizing decision making occurred. What methods have downsizing managers utilized to make these decisions—performance review ratings, salary, or position? In addition, how have downsizing

managers accepted and defended these decisions, especially those that affect individuals with personal situations (divorce, sick family member, spouse not working)?

Downsizing Implementation

It has been almost a decade now since I had my first encounter with downsizing. Initially, a director came out and tapped employees on the shoulder, took the employees to Human Resources, then presented those employees with severance packages and the rest of the day to clean out their desks and exits the building. Everyone was crying and fearful of who was next to go. Some of the people tapped seemed obvious choices (e.g., slackers, employees with little to no work ethic), but diligent, smart, and hard-working employees were also downsized, which was part of the reason that many people were fearful. There was no discernible rhyme or reason as to who became a victim. With that realization, I, too, feared a tap on my shoulder.

Over the last 4 years, my organization has taken steps to shift the business model within one particular area of the company. This reorganization and downsizing occurred over a long period, as the shift required buy-in from new clients, and a switch from the old way of doing business to developing new and more efficient processes. With this shift, management expected better organizational alignment with client challenges and needs in the years ahead. While this particular scenario is an exception to the original form of downsizing that I originally experienced, I can see where the downsizing managers attempted to do the right thing and respected the employees throughout the process. Open and frequent communication was available to all employees, and it felt as if there was more empathy within the organization. Thus far, through all of these

occasions, I have been a survivor, but have watched long-time colleagues and friends downsized or that experienced the difficult role of the downsizing manager.

In my observation, employees' feelings and ways of coping with actual downsizing could be extremely personal; whether one is downsized or not, the primary focus is on what effects the changes will have on oneself: on *me*. I highly doubt that an employee thinks, at the moment that downsizing is occurring, that it is the right move for the organization and for oneself—possibly after experiencing numerous downsizings, but I cannot imagine that being one's first thought. On the other hand, experienced business professionals and shareholders may view downsizing as one way in which the organization attempts to move forward to achieve or maintain success, especially during difficult economic times.

Managing in the Downsizing Aftermath

Although downsizing managers must face the hardship of decision making and implementation, they must also face the task of helping the organization that survives maintain or achieve success in the aftermath of downsizing. Strong management is necessary for a productive and efficient working environment. Accordingly, it seems to me that downsizing managers should be equipped with the tools to handle employee interactions after the trauma has ended. Professional development and human resources training are critical needs for downsizing managers, to assist in healing survivors' wounds from downsizing.

Returning to my original thoughts on downsizing managers, many employees may follow a similar mindset; have a grudge against the downsizing manager or

executioner; and have an extremely difficult time with trust, communication, and/or loyalty in the aftermath. Accordingly, in this study, I wanted to learn what tools and tips downsizing managers had, that assisted them during this stage of downsizing. What was helpful and beneficial for the downsizing manager in regaining employees' trust and cooperation? How long did that process take, or were employees able to allow emotions to subside and begin or resume thriving productivity? In looking back, what would the downsizing manager have done differently throughout the process?

Summary

Before I encountered the process and talked in-depth with a downsizing manager, I had a tunnel-vision approach to the experience of downsizing managers, which led me to more questions about their experiences. I mentioned some of these questions above, and incorporated these and many more into this study, of course informed by the literature as well. My expectation was that this study would reveal even more about the personal and professional experiences of downsizing managers, and that it would serve as a valuable tool for many others to capture the essence of the challenges that these brave souls faced.

The completion of this study provided me with a new lens through which to view my new role as a manager. In April of 2012 and during the early stages of participants' in-depth interviews, I became a manager and began to feel an increased amount of sympathy for study participants as they described the challenges and successes of their experiences, and their personal and professional impacts as downsizing managers.

Participants exhibited great strength and hope in sharing their stories, of which I will be forever grateful.

APPENDIX B. CALL FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

[This language went to potential participants through the networks/methods identified in Chapter 3. It provided summary information regarding the study and participant criteria, as well as my contact information. It requested that interested potential participants e-mail me so that I could call and conduct the screening process. The reading level for the body of this appendix is 8.0.]

Do you have experience as a downsizing manager?



I am Tracy Shroyer, a doctoral student at Capella University. I am working on a research study about downsizing managers and need volunteers to be part of my study. The reason for the study is to look at the personal and professional experience of downsizing managers.

To be part of the study, you must fit the following:

- Meet the definition of a *downsizing manager*: a person involved in decision making, implementing, and then managing after a downsizing. This person is or was employed by the downsizing organization.
- Experience is at least 3 months old, but no more than 10 years ago
- Live within the United States
- Not known to me, nor an employee of the same company as me

If you volunteer and are asked to be part of the study, it should take 1 to 2 hours of your time. During the 8-week time period there will be three interviews. These interviews may occur in person, on-line video, or by phone.

If you feel this describes you and you want to discuss your experience, please email me. Use your personal email (do not use work email) or call me. This is a volunteer activity and you will not be paid.

Public law requires that you be protected by keeping all information about you private. Several methods will keep your identity and personal information as private as possible. This includes use of a secure computer and your review and approval of the interview text.

Tracy Shroyer, Ph.D. Candidate
Capella University
School of Business and Technology

This study has been approved by Capella University's IRB 260830-6, effective from June 4, 2012 through November 28, 2012. Organizations that have approved the researcher's access to their participants include: Change Consulting group, Human Resources Association of Central Ohio, Macomb County Chamber of Commerce, International Public Management Association, Midatlantic Employers' Association, AT&T Alumni, AT&T Employee Alumni, AT&T Connections Group, Chase Alumni Association, Linked: HR (#1 Human Resources Group), and Human Resources Professionals: THE "Unofficial" forum for SHRM.

The language in the flyer read as follows, and was used in place of the flyer for any on-line groups that were unable to post the flyer above.

DO YOU HAVE EXPERIENCE AS A DOWNSIZING MANAGER?

I am Tracy Shroyer, a doctoral student at Capella University. I am working on a research study about downsizing managers and need volunteers to be part of my study. The reason for the study is to look at the personal and professional experience of downsizing managers.

To be part of the study, you must fit the following:

- Meet the definition of a *downsizing manager*: a person involved in decision making, implementing, and then managed after a downsizing. This person is or was employed by the downsizing organization.
- Experience is at least 3 months old, but no more than 10 years ago
- Live within the United States
- Not known to me, nor an employee of the same company as me

If you volunteer and are asked to be part of the study, it should take 1 to 2 hours of your time. During the 8-week time period there will be three interviews. These interviews may occur in person, on-line video, or by phone.

If you feel this describes you and you want to discuss your experience, please email me. Use your personal email (do not use work email) or call me. This is a volunteer activity and you will not be paid.

Public law requires that that you be protected by keeping all information about you private. Several methods will keep your identity and personal information as private as possible. This includes use of a secure computer and your review and approval of the interview text.

Tracy Shroyer, Ph.D. Candidate
Capella University
School of Business and Technology
[phone number, email address]

This study has been approved by Capella University's IRB 260850-6, effective from June 4, 2012 through November 28, 2012. Organizations that have approved the researcher's access to their participants include: Change Consulting group, Human Resources Association of Central Ohio, Macomb County Chamber of Commerce, International Public Management Association, and Midatlantic Employers' Association AT&T Alumni, AT&T Employee Alumni, AT&T Connections Group, Chase Alumni Association, Linked: HR (#1 Human Resources Group), and Human Resources Professionals: THE "Unofficial" forum for SHRM.

APPENDIX C. INTERVIEW #1: PARTICIPANT SCREENING

[This script allowed the researcher to collect information from potential participants in order for me to select participants for the study. The participant screening process occurred within 3 business days from the receipt of an e-mail inquiry from a potential participant (Appendix B). The questions contained in the participant screening were demographic, to determine whether individuals qualify for this study. The researcher took notes related to responses to questions in the participant screening, and this interview was not recorded. The reading level for the body of this appendix is 9.1. This reading level is sufficient as 84.6% of people in the U.S. age 25 and older between 2005 and 2009 were high school graduates (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2011).]

Opening Script

Hello. This is Tracy Shroyer. I received your e-mail response to my call for participants for my dissertation study on the personal and professional experiences of downsizing managers. Thank you for your willingness to take part in this study. I am currently a Ph.D. Candidate at Capella University, conducting a study titled, “The Personal and Professional Experiences of Downsizing Managers: A Qualitative Exploratory Study.” The purpose of this qualitative exploratory study is to gather experiences of downsizing managers from 20 individuals, to understand their experiences during the decision making, implementation, and managing in the aftermath of a downsizing. I’d like to take about 15 minutes to ask you some questions that will assist me in determining your eligibility.

Demographics

1. What is your gender?
2. What year were you born?
3. What state do you currently reside in?
4. What is the highest level of education you completed (High School Graduate/Some College/ College Degree/Graduate Degree/Postgraduate)? [If participant attended college] What was your major/area of academic concentration?
5. In what industry are you presently employed?
6. How long have you been employed at your current organization?
7. Are you employed by [researcher’s current employer]?

8. What is your professional position/role/title within the organization?
9. Do you supervise other people? If so, how many?

Downsizing Manager Role [refer to definition as needed]

10. Have you had more than 1 experience as a downsizing manager?
 - a. If yes, how many experiences have you had as a downsizing manager?
11. Did the downsizing event(s) that you were involved in as a manager occur within the organization that you currently work? If no, let's get your answers to the subset of questions below for each organization that you were involved in as a manager for a downsizing event:
 - a. What industry was that organization a member?
 - b. How long were you employed at that organization prior to the downsizing event(s) that you were involved in as a manager occurred?
 - c. What was your professional position/role/title within that organization?
 - d. Did you supervise other people? If so, how many?
 - e. When did the downsizing event(s) that you were involved in as a manager occur [month(s)/year]?
 - f. What was your reason for leaving this organization [e.g., downsized, another opportunity, etc.]?
12. When did the downsizing event(s) that you were involved in as a manager occur [month(s)/year(s)]?
13. What was your position/role/title at the time of [each of] your downsizing experience[s]?
14. What were your responsibilities related to downsizing decision making [e.g., deciding how many people to downsize, who goes, and who stays within the organization]?

[If more than 1 experience, repeat this question for each experience that fits the criteria of this study.]
15. What were your responsibilities related to the downsizing implementation [e.g., communication of downsizing to employees, including survivors and victims]?

[If more than 1 experience, repeat this question for each experience that fits the criteria of this study.]
16. What were your responsibilities related to managing in the postdownsizing environment [e.g., managing employees, productivity, etc. in the aftermath].

[If more than one experience, repeat this question for each experience that fits the criteria of this study.]

Additional Questions

17. Are you able to participate in an in-depth interview in 2-3 weeks that will last approximately 1 to 1½ hours?

IF YES (and if geographically possible), are you able to meet in person in a mutually agreed upon location, at a time where there is privacy and quiet so that we can talk more about your experience and I can record our conversation?

IF NO, are you able to meet online via a service such as Skype? telephone?

18. Do you have any questions or concerns regarding the study in particular, or your possible participation in this study?

Thank you very much for your interest in my study and your time today. I am currently screening potential participants and will provide a response regarding your eligibility within the next few days. I will send you an e-mail notification regarding whether you are a selected participant for this study. If chosen to participate, I will send you the Participant Consent Letter and Form to review and sign prior to the interview, and we will set up a date, time and location for the interview.

APPENDIX D. INTERVIEW #2: IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW

[The semistructured, face-to-face, online, or telephone interview with each participant used the questions in this appendix as a guide to ensure that the interview addressed the necessary points. Once completed, the researcher transcribed each interview and provided a copy to the participant to confirm or provide clarifications. The reading level for the body of this appendix is 11.6. This reading level is sufficient as 84.6% of people in the U.S. age 25 and older between 2005 and 2009 were high school graduates (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2011).]

Interview Questions

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. I have questions for you relative to your experience with downsizing decision making, implementation, and managing in the aftermath. We will repeat the question set in its entirety for each eligible downsizing experience that we discussed in the screening interview. I may also ask follow-up questions based on your responses. Any notes I make during the interview are only for the purpose of reminding me of a follow-up questions I would like to ask, so I will not interrupt you during your response. I will be recording our conversation today so that I can accurately transcribe this interview for use in my study. Just as a reminder, your participation in this study and your responses are confidential, and your name will not be published results of this study. If you have no initial questions, I will begin.

1. How did you first get involved in the downsizing as a manager?
2. What were your initial thoughts when you realized that you would have to decide who to downsize within the organization?
3. Describe your experience with downsizing decision making, including, but not limited to, the following:
 - Your reaction
 - Reactions of others in your same role
 - Your manager's reaction and any other reactions up your line of management
 - Your experience with the process itself (including communication with your manager, your peers, and employees)
 - Other downsizing managers' experience with the process
 - Professional impact(s) on you
 - Personal impact(s) on you
 - Describe any specific experience or incident that captures for you the decision making part of your downsizing experience.

4. What, if anything, could you or the organization have done to improve the decision making experience?
5. How much time passed between the time your decision was made as to who would be downsized and the actual implementation of the downsizing? What were you thinking and feeling during this time [e.g., anger, sadness, guilt, shame]?
6. Describe your experience with implementing the downsizing, including, but not limited to, the following:
 - Downsized employees' reactions
 - Survivor or nondownsized employees' reactions
 - Your own reactions
 - Reactions of others in your same role
 - Your manager's reaction and any other reactions up your line of management
 - Your experience with the process itself (including communication with your manager, your peers, and employees)
 - Other downsizing managers' experience with the process
 - Professional impact(s) on you
 - Personal impact(s) on you
 - Describe any specific experience or incident that captures for you the implementation part of your downsizing experience.
7. What, if anything, could you or the organization have done to improve the downsizing implementation experience?
8. Describe your experience with managing in the postdownsizing environment, including, but not limited to the following:
 - Relationships with downsized employees
 - Relationships with nondownsized or survivor employees
 - Reactions of others in your same role
 - Your own reactions
 - Your manager's reaction and any other reactions up your line of management
 - Your experience with the process itself (including communication with your manager, your peers, and employees)
 - Other downsizing managers' experience with the process
 - Your loyalty (to team, to organization)
 - Professional impact(s) on you
 - Personal impact(s) on you
 - Impact(s) on your productivity
 - Impacts on your morale/motivation
 - Describe any specific experience or incident that captures for you the aftermath of your downsizing experience.

9. What, if anything, could you or the organization have done to improve the ability to manage in the postdownsizing environment?
10. What else do you feel is important for me to know regarding your experience as a downsizing manager? Any other experiences, incidents, or lingering stories that capture your experience as a manager at any point in the downsizing?
11. Do you have any questions for me related to the questions in this interview or the overall process of this study?

Thank you again for your willingness to participate in this study. I will contact you by phone or e-mail within 4-5 days to follow-up.

APPENDIX F. INTERVIEW #3: MEMBER CHECKING

[The script below was either spoken or e-mailed during a follow-up session (method is dependent on the participant's availability). The reading level for the body of this appendix is 9.1. This reading level is sufficient as 84.6% of people in the U.S. age 25 and older between 2005 and 2009 were high school graduates (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2011).]

Member Checking Script

I would like to thank you for your time and responses to the items we discussed. Is there anything else you thought of that I should include related to your experience as a downsizing manager? Do you have any questions or concerns regarding the study in particular, or your participation in this study?

I appreciate your willingness to be open and honest in our conversations, and look forward to reviewing all of the responses and learning more from them. I will provide notice when my study is complete, so that you may review the overall study and results, if desired. Thank you again and best wishes to you for a successful future!