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INFORMATIONAL SOCIAL SUPPORT AND THE STRESS INVOLVED IN SURVIVING A REDUCTION-IN-FORCE

A Thesis

Presented to the

Faculty of

California State University,

San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science

in

Psychology:

Industrial/Organizational

---

by

Woodstock Leben Koch-Wain

December 2009

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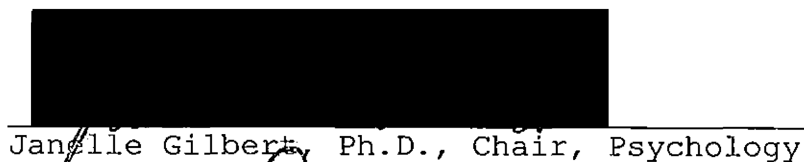

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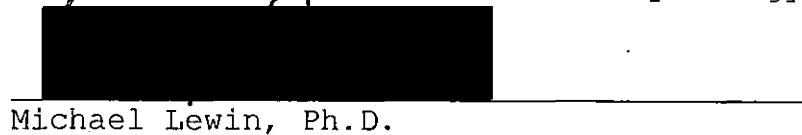

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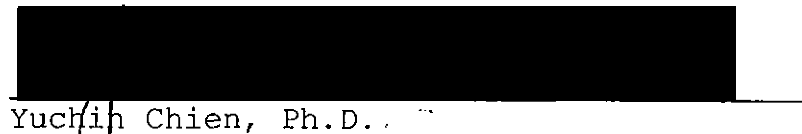

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ABSTRACT

Companies experiencing severe economic downturns often enact reductions-in-force (RIF) to help mitigate financial short fallings. While employing a smaller work force initially saves capital, the psychological ramifications of such a process can be detrimental for those employees released (i.e., leavers) as well as those that remain (i.e., survivors). After a RIF, survivors often experience multiple work related uncertainties; questions arise such as how they will be able to adapt to the new work environment and whether or not there will be more reductions. The behaviors exhibited by those dealing with this stressful experience have been described as layoff-survivor-symptoms. One type of assistance that has been effective in reducing the negative effects of stressful situations, such as layoff-survivor-symptoms, is social support. However, there has been uncertainty as to what type of social support is most effective in these types of stressful situations. The present study addressed this uncertainty by examining whether informational social support was more effective than emotional or instrumental social support in reducing the negative effects of RIF survivor stress. The participants

were individuals who have worked at an organization that has gone through a RIF (i.e., survivors). All participants were asked to fill out a questionnaire containing three measures (social support, stress, and procedural justice) as well as demographic questions that asked the participants' age, sex, and length of employment with the company that initiated the RIF. Additional questions addressed: if they had gone through a RIF within the last year, whether they thought their supervisors were partly responsible for the RIF, and whether they believe that the organization facilitated inter-office social support. The research on the beneficial qualities of equity in RIFs has been established and this study attempted to demonstrate that survivors' need for information is essential for operating in a post-RIF work environment. Fairness was a mediating factor between informational social support and the stress-induced layoff-survivor-sickness (i.e., strain). The hypothesis that proposed that informational social support from work-based sources would be a stronger predictor of stress than emotional or instrumental social support, in a RIF sample, was partially supported. And the hypothesis that proposed

that procedural justice would mediate the relationship between informational social support and stress was also supported.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

As the ebb and flow of national economies shift, the administrations for many organizations often find themselves in a position of believing that they must reduce their work force. These reductions go by many names: building-down, demassing, deorganization, growth-in-reverse, rightsizing, rebalancing, layoffs, downsizings, staff reductions, or reductions-in-force (i.e., RIF), but throughout most of this paper, the acronym RIF will be used to describe this action. Organizations are prompted to conduct RIFs for many reasons (not always explicitly reducing labor costs) such as reducing redundancy in the workforce, changing organizational workflow, reacting to legislative actions, or moving away from obsolete technologies or work practices. But since a common reason is cost reduction, this paper will use the following general definition to define RIFs: "...permanent, involuntary separation of individuals from the organization due to the need to cut costs" (Brockner, 1988, p. 214).

In the second quarter of 2008, RIFs hit the highest levels since the second quarter of 2003 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2008) and these increases have occurred in multiple fields (Boeing, 2002; Feinberg, 2002; Sutter, 2002; Walsh, 2003). While organizations' administrations have always hoped for positive results from these reductions (i.e., a leaner more efficient work force), the focus has begun to shift to dealing with the long-term ramifications of RIFs (Zimmerman, 2001). Initial consequences of RIFs has generally focused on those employees who had been released (i.e., leavers), but additional research has given more attention to those employees who have remained after the reduction, the so-called survivors. Survivors are the employees that remain after a RIF, and for every layoff victim there are anywhere from five to ten survivors (Robbins, 1999). These are full-time employees, not temporary or seasonal workers, that consider the work they do at their company to be their primary occupation.

One of the detriments of these reductions is the stress and strain that both leavers and survivors experience. While leavers must deal with their anger and resentment of being released, survivors also feel

increased levels of stress as they attempt to work in the new organizational environment (Brockner, 1988). Examples of survivors' concerns are: if they will experience difficulty adjusting to the new organizational environment, how their career advancement will be affected, if they will be competent in their newly restructured jobs, and whether or not they will be laid off (Applebaum, Close, & Klasa, 1999). Other common feelings such as perceptions of unfairness, stress from increased workloads, and feelings of not being kept informed contribute to survivor difficulty in the new work environment (Robbins, 1999). The overall negative symptoms survivors experience after a RIF has been labeled "layoff-survivor-sickness" (Allen, Freeman, Russell, Reizenstein, & Rentz, 2001).

Unfortunately, it is often only when these feelings are expressed in employee behavior that administration representatives then take notice. These feelings can often be exhibited in docile ways, such as a reduction in risk taking, lowering productivity, a continuous search for information about the RIF (Noer, 1993), or in more caustic ways such as self-selected departure from the job or employees inflicting damage to the employer's

property. While these are feelings that many employees experience throughout their work life, they are heightened for survivors in the time immediately after a RIF.

Survivor reaction to RIFs is influenced by various variables: the nature of their work, individual differences, formality of the organization, organizational stress, and the environmental conditions. But while survivor reactions' may differ, Brockner's model of survivor behavior (1988) suggests that the conceptual model of the survivor experience falls into three major components. The first component is that survivors of RIFs have the potential to experience different psychological states ranging from job insecurity to anger to relief (i.e., neither intrinsically positive nor negative). The second component is that these states can potentially affect survivors' work behaviors (e.g., level of performance) and attitudes (e.g., satisfaction). The third component is that there are variables that influence the impact of RIFs on survivors. These influences can affect the relationship between layoffs and the survivors' psychological states, as well as the relationship between

the psychological states and the survivors' work behaviors and attitudes.

Survivor Reactions and Perceptions of Fairness

Some of the theories as to why survivors experience different psychological states have come from the research on equity theory. In equity theory, it is suggested that employees are motivated to attain fairness with their work organizations (Adams, 1965). Workers are less prone to cognitive dissonance when they believe that the inputs that they and other workers put toward their jobs are relatively equal to the outputs they receive. This can be observed within many aspects of the job, ranging from pay rate to job satisfaction. When there is an imbalance in the amount of input and output, the survivors can feel either negative or positive inequity. Negative inequity will often occur when employees feel as though the organization was less than fair with them, and positive inequity can occur when they feel the organization was more than fair with them. This is important when planning a RIF because it is the employee's perceptions of fairness and stress that can affect their behavior and their attitudes after a layoff

(Brockner, 1988) and negative inequality can be detrimental to the organization. Employers attempt to minimize survivors' negative inequity by dealing with them in what is perceived to be a fair manner.

The concept of fairness is a difficult one for employers to wrestle with because it encompasses both how the leavers as well as how the survivors are treated. Fairness can be determined by the survivor's opinion of how the RIF occurred as well as how it was implemented (Brockner, 1992). This becomes an issue for organizational production because survivor worker performance decreases when a co-worker is laid off in a way that is interpreted as unfair (Brockner, Davy, & Carter, 1985). Opinions of the organization are more positive if the survivors believe that those employees who were laid off were done so in a fair manner (Brockner, 1988; Brockner, Wiesenfeld, & Martin, 1995). In fact, consistent with equity theory, worker performance will tend to increase when it is believed that dismissals are due to a random process as opposed to prior performance. Survivors attempt to address the perceived inequity by working harder out of fear that they could have been randomly dismissed, instead of the

their coworker. In addition, they feel that the RIF was based on business need and not an attempt by management to let go specific individuals (Brockner, Greenberg, Brockner, Bortz, Davy, & Carter, 1986). This information suggests the importance of conducting a RIF in a way that is considered to be fair by both survivors and leavers.

This is not to say that survivors don't experience adverse psychological states that aren't related to equity theory (Brockner, 1988). But it does suggest that survivors will be more prone to negative behaviors if they perceive that those who were laid off were treated unfairly (Brockner, Grover, Reed, DeWitt, & O'Malley, 1987). The perception of fairness in the form of negative inequality seems to be a contributing factor to layoff-survivor-sickness, but another question is how to convey a sense of fairness to the survivors.

One way to examine perceived fairness is to look at survivors' perception of the organization's procedural justice. While a measure of a behavior can be construed as the degree of "fairness", the way in which it is done in an organizational setting can be described as "procedural justice". And it is not uncommon for procedural justice to be used to describe the feeling of

fairness in a work setting: "This knowledge then assures employees that decision makers are not abusing their powers, resulting in decisions that will be regarded as consistent, unbiased, and therefore procedurally fair" (Schappe, 1996, p. 341).

Furthering this connection, Schappe (1996) has demonstrated that there is a significant and positive relationship between the perception of organizational procedures and the perception of procedural justice. When the employees believed that they were being kept informed about the organization's procedures, they then also believed that the organization was operating in a fair manner. This is similar to what is being examined in the present study, that is, the satiation of employees' need for information about how an organization goes through a procedure (i.e., RIF), leading to an interpretation that the organization's representatives are behaving fairly.

The importance of survivor's reactions to a RIF stems from the fact that after an organization goes through a RIF, it is up to the survivors to run the organization with less people. An organization's administration needs to accept that this process is likely to be interpreted as unfair if these expectations

are not explained to the survivors. The survivors will want to know the answers to many questions, such as, explicitly why the staff was reduced, why other less detrimental solutions were not adequate, and what will be the future of the workforce. If the survivors are not informed then they may think worse-case-scenario, act out of fear, and express their displeasure in ways that are counter productive to an organization's advancement. Because these behaviors are the effect of layoff-survivor-sickness, researchers have begun to put together formal procedures to attempt to preemptively limit these behaviors (Anonymous, 2002). While some companies have had more success than others (Applėbaum, Close, & Klasa, 1999), it is clear that downsizings done poorly can negatively affect organizational welfare (Fisher & White, 2000).

While there is a link between negative organizational behaviors and RIFs, it is not always as definitive as expected (Appiah-Mfodwa & Horwitz, 2000) and therefore, management is not always forced to patch up the broken bonds between the survivors and the organization. In fact, a RIF can be beneficial to the administration (e.g., lower payroll, reduced redundancy)

as well as the survivors (e.g., given more responsibility in an arena to demonstrate different skills). While the survivors' first reaction to downsizing may be negative, as time goes on employees can learn to see the benefits of the change (Allen et al. 2001; and Appiah-Mfodwa & Horwitz, 2000). The loss of a survivor's coworker can lead to a loss of a friendship, but it can also increase the availability of advice from other sources (Shah, 2000). Allen et al. (2001) showed that while most of the employee's attitudes were less favorable during the quarter following the downsizing, as time went on their attitudes improved. After a year has passed from the end of a RIF, many of the layoff survivor's symptoms lessen (Armstrong-Stassen, 2002; Werbel, 1983). But this isn't to say that the problems associated with RIFs will go away without ill effects or without the need for organizational involvement. There is still a period of decreased productivity following a RIF and negative organizational behavior even by those survivors who have improving attitudes. This period can be catastrophic for organizations because RIFs generally don't occur when times are good and a drop-off in production can be tolerated, in fact it is often quite the opposite. It is

this period that the organization must show stockholders, the general public, and potential recruits that it is a company that can recover and grow. It is up to the administration to facilitate understanding and acceptance of the reduction process by setting up programs that help survivors see the downsizing as an opportunity of personal growth (Armstrong-Stassen, 2002). Therefore, it is less of a question of whether survivors need assistance than what kind of assistance they need.

To avoid hardships, it is up to administration to concentrate on the needs of both the survivors and the leavers. For the organization to win the favor of the survivors it is more important to concentrate on the way a downsizing is done, rather than how many people end up losing their jobs (Cameron, Kim, Freeman, & Mishra, 1991). This can be done in an array of ways, such as involving the employees in the RIF process, showing them that the leavers were cared for as they left, and explaining the rationale behind the decision to reduce the work force. For the leavers there must be a feeling of support and assistance, backed up by justification of the reduction, and job search assistance. Overall, those companies that have been successful (i.e., demonstrative

benefits after a RIF) have provided services, empathy, and flexibility for both survivors and leavers (Applebaum, Close, & Klasa, 1999). By maximizing these behaviors, organizations can help to minimize survivor sickness.

While these behaviors often entail doing things that are not commonly done, the flexibility to make these changes will demonstrate an investment in the employees. Appiah-Mfodwa and Horwitz (2000) have shown that flexibility can be demonstrated through a variety of ways including: changes in the way work is done, staffing modifications, varying the pay systems, and by allowing part-time/over-time/shift work. This openness to change demonstrates that the organization considers the survivor to be important and will take the necessary steps to work with the workforce. When organizations take a proactive approach (such as providing information to survivors about the direction of the organization or demonstrating flexibility), they can sustain higher worker productivity and organizational commitment (Rober, Hawkins, & Hawkins, 1995). Therefore, it is essential for administration representatives to be committed to making changes so that they demonstrate that they are concerned with the needs

of the employees. This means facilitating fair and open communication, as well as inquiring as to the effectiveness of the RIF process as it is seen through the eyes of the survivors.

Occupational Stress and Strain

Once an organization's representatives understand the need to address the survivors' concerns and they are committed to taking a proactive approach to dealing with those stressors, then they can address one of the roots of the problem: stress leading to strain. A key precursor to survivor's detrimental behavior, and a component of layoff-survivor-sickness, is an increased level of stress (Tombaugh & White, 1990). This stress can be directly related to RIF environments and employment uncertainty (Zeitlin, 1995). If the survivors do not know whether there will be more reductions or what is happening during the reductions, then their stress level will likely increase.

Stress has a direct influence on organizational operations because survivors who sense an increase in their stress level may feel more dissatisfied with their company and have a heightened desire to leave (Tombaugh &

White, 1990). This is precisely what the organization does not want since it is the survivors who are the employees deemed the most capable of doing their jobs, for that is why they were shielded from the reduction. Survivor job security is likely to adversely affect their stress level, and job insecurity is one of the symptoms of layoff-survivor-sickness.

Fortunately for organizations, the relationship between social support, stress, and work has been investigated before (Payne & Jones, 1987). In fact, many of the problems that workers experience are due to their working environment (Donovan, 1987). These problems are often stressors brought on by events in the workplace. But in order to understand stress in the work place, or stress relating to a RIF, it is important to understand what it means when a survivor complains of stress.

Particular environmental stressors cause the sensation of stress; and a stressor is an external stimuli that evokes a stress response, such as adverse physiological changes, physical symptoms, or psychological symptoms. Work related external stimuli can induce any of these responses, but the responses studied here will concentrate on the psychological symptoms that

one experiences after surviving a RIF. And throughout this paper the term "stress" will be used to represent the perception of stress in the work environment. While any stimulus can arouse a stress response in a particular person, this paper will focus on the response from one particular stimulus (i.e., surviving a RIF). But even from one source, stress will not affect every employee with the same intensity. Lazarus (1974) explained that the severity of the stress disorder depends on at least three factors: characteristics of the environment (e.g., such as the availability of a social support system), quality of the emotional response generated by the demands, and the process of coping mobilized by the stressful situation. In an attempt to decrease stress severity, this study examined characteristics of the work environment.

An individual's inability to deal with stress will cause strain, and the negative impact of perceived stress as strain has been demonstrated (Grant & Langan-Fox, 2007). Beehr et al. (2003, p. 220) have described the relationship: "Occupational stress occurs when characteristics of the work environment (stressors) affect an employee's health and welfare adversely

(strain)." While there are cases in which a stressor doesn't evoke a strain response, this doesn't necessarily mean that the stimulus isn't a stressor. It could just mean that the recipient has responded differently. The effects of previous experiences or coping styles that allowed recipients to function under stress without exhibiting the negative effects of strain is called "host resistance" (Kahn, & Byosiere, 1992). It is this positive coping behavior that organizations must attempt to maximize in order to preemptively deal with layoff-survivor-symptoms such as stress and strain.

The occupational stressors that workers experience are not all the same. Beehr, Jex, Stacy, and Murray, (2000) identify stressors as those that can fall into any of four categories: chronic-generic, chronic-job specific, acute-generic, and acute-job specific. They are differentiated by how salient the stressors are and by how frequently the stressors occur. The generic stressors are the ones that are more commonly experienced and the specific acute stressors only happen in certain situations. While most research involving job stress has focused on chronic work related stressful events (similar stressful situations that occur on a regular basis) there

has also been work involving stressors with a finite temporal condition, or acute stressors (Werbel, 1983). Beehr et al. (2000) attempted to clarify the differences between the four by suggesting that stressors that are more specific (chronic or acute) should have the most impact in the workplace, for they are most salient to employees. This is not to say generic stressors are less important but rather that there may be a different process that an employee goes through depending on the type of stressor. As events that don't happen on a regular basis and for which the impact diminishes as time goes by, reductions-in-force stressors fall into the quadrant of acute and job-specific.

Once an employee experiences a type of stressor as a strain, there are a variety of negative responses that the person may exhibit. Generally, the responses fall into the three major categories of: behavioral, physiological, and psychological. The behavioral responses to stress from the work environment are broken into five sub-categories: disruption of the work role (e.g., irresponsibility at work), aggressive behavior at work (e.g., stealing or purposeful damage), flight from the job (e.g., absenteeism), disruption of other life

roles (e.g., spousal abuse), and self-damaging behaviors (e.g., drug use). Physiological responses (e.g., high blood pressure) have also been presented in the work environment (Chan & Brown, 1995), but when addressing RIFs and stressors that come from the workplace, much of the research has addressed the psychological responses (e.g., anxiety, or depression).

Kahn and Byosiere (1992) did extensive research on stress at work and they found three distinct trends. The first trend is that experimenters have investigated a wide range of responses to stress at work, ranging from anxiety to vigor. Second, that while there have been many responses investigated, few have been studied multiple times by different experimenters (job stress and job dissatisfaction are generally the most popular of those studied). And the third trend was that there has been a lot of overlap on the responses categories that the researchers have used (e.g., similarity between boredom and tedium). One of the most relevant suggestions made by Kahn and Byosiere (1992) was that there needs to be further exploration into the specific differences between the types of social support and stress.

It is the strain from the stressor that will often lead to the detrimental worker behavior that organizations fear. The strains are not inherently matched to the RIF, but rather a result of how the survivor deals with the situation. Survivors can respond to this state, not by dealing with the cause of the stressor, but rather removing themselves from the situation (leaving the organization) or by striking back at the perceived causal agent (the organization). This caustic behavior can be due to the survivors' belief that there are elements about the RIF that are not being conveyed to them. They know that during a RIF there is a reasoning process that management uses to decide what is done with both the survivors and the leavers. Employees believe that the fair and just method would be to let them know what is going on so that they may plan their lives and behaviors accordingly. It is when management isn't proactive, open, flexible, and fair, that the feelings of trepidation and anxiety about the future cloud survivors' vision and adversely affect their attitude and behavior toward the organization.

The negative effects of stress are not new to the field of business. Stress-related absences have long

resulted in productivity losses, as well as increased recruitment and retraining costs (Liukkonen, Cartwright, & Cooper, 1999). However, these detriments are not the exclusive domain of the organization. Occupational stressors can affect both job performance as well as the individual's psyche (Beehr, Jex, Stacy, & Murray, 2000). Work related stressors also have behavioral effects that are manifested both on the job as well as at home, and unfortunately these behaviors negatively influence both places (Kahn, & Byosiere, 1992). In sum, employees need assistance in dealing with their stress and that assistance can come in the form of social support.

Primary Elements of Social Support

There are several conditions that fall under the rubric of social support, and Tardy (1985) lists five interdependent primary elements: (1) Direction: Whether the support is provided or received. (2) Disposition: The quantity, quality, or utilization of the support. (3) Description/Evaluation: How the nature of the support is evaluated. (4) Network: The sources of the support (e.g., supervisor, co-worker, non-work source). And (5) Content: The type of the social support (e.g.,

emotional, instrumental, or informational). To give an appreciation for the depth of this topic, parts of these elements will be parceled out and addressed in the following pages.

For this study, the direction of the support is from co-workers to survivors of RIFs. The dispositional aspect of social support is determined by what kind of effect the support has on the individual and on the perceived stressors/strain. Cohen and Wills (1985) have noted that there are mainly three accepted hypotheses about the effect of support. The first is that there is a direct or main effect of social support on stressors, that is, social support might reduce the harmful effects of job stressors by reducing the strength of the stressors (social support having a direct positive impact). The second hypothesis is that there is a main effect of social support on strains, or that social support has a negative impact on strains at work. The third hypothesis (and much debated) is that there is some type of interaction or buffering effect that social support has on stressors (social support works as a buffer and prevents stressors from developing).

A significant aspect of the buffering effect is the suggested difference in effect of social support between people who are in high versus low stress situations. Individuals who are in highly stressful situations, and receive social support, can benefit more than those who are in less stressful situations and also receive the support (House, 1981). When people receive high amounts of support it is posited that they will be protected from the detrimental effects of stressors. Cohen and Hoberman (1983) demonstrated that the buffering hypothesis can be valid when considering the protective value of social support on stress-induced pathology (for both depression and physical symptoms). Many studies have also shown the benefits of buffering when considering the effects of life events as sources of individual psychological distress (Wilcox, 1981; Cohen & Wills, 1985; Etzion, 1984; Lu, 1999; Pretorius 1994; Raghuram & Garud, 2001) and Ducharme and Martin (2000) have demonstrated that there are conditions when instrumental support could buffer the effect of unrewarding work on job satisfaction. However, other researchers have found the buffering effect to be minimal, if significant at all (Burton, Stice, & Seeley, 2004; Ganster et al., 1986;

Schaefer, Coyne, & Lazarus, 1981; Gore, 1978; Blau, 1981). Even when using the work place setting and support of co-workers and supervisors, the buffering effects can be marginal (LaRocco & Jones, 1978).

Further opposing the buffering hypothesis, Carlson and Perrewe (1999) have suggested that social support might be better viewed as an antecedent to perceived stressors. In this antecedent theory, individuals who perceive themselves as having strong social support networks are less likely to perceive demands on their environment as stressors. That is, social support can serve as a protective function and individuals with strong social support networks are less likely to perceive demands in the environment as stressors. While this theory, and others like it, have just begun to attract an academic following, the buffering hypothesis continues to be the dominant theme in the field of social support research.

Addressing Tandy's description/evaluation and network conditions of social support are the studies that have suggested that the source of the support (e.g., supervisor, friends, family, co-worker) can also be a good determinant of the effect of the support (Lu, 1999;

Dormann & Zapf, 1999). There have been varying opinions as to which source is the most influential in enhancing the level of social support. But it has been suggested that in certain situations, when the source of the stress is completely work based, the most beneficial support will also be work-based. House (1995) endorsed support from co-workers and supervisors as pivotal in stress-reduction and health-enhancement in the work environment, and Blau (1981) has shown how support from these sources was significantly negatively related to job dissatisfaction. However, the amount of support from any group will be dependent on the groups' knowledge base and personal values.

Raghuram and Garud (2001) suggested that supervisors in particular have significant influence in the employee's lives, because they are better able to influence the work environment and can thus be a powerful form of work-based social support. Supervisor support has been shown to be effective in relation to various affective and somatic outcomes (Ganster et al., 1986) as well as being more effective than support from co-workers or friends when coping with occupational stressors (Lu, 1999). These studies have demonstrated that supervisor's

support can be better than co-worker support when the problem is under management's control. The presence or absence of clear explanations from management about what survivors should do and expect, will have significant impact on survivors' reactions to the RIF (Brockner, DeWitt, Grover, & Reed, 1989). Some have suggested that surviving middle managers can better handle the stressors by being proficient in certain skills such as assertive communication, active listening, problem solving, and negotiation (Antonioni, 1995).

It is important to note that supervisor support may not always be effective. Some have suggested that when a supervisor is the cause of the stress, the employee may feel more stress when the supervisor offers his support. La Rocco and Jones (1978) have suggested that even when support comes from group leaders or peers, they may not be able to remove the negative influences of stress, regardless of the situation. So if the survivors see their co-workers or supervisors as negatively contributing during a RIF, then the support may not be welcome.

Organizational facilitated participation and endorsement of social support can facilitate both

co-workers and supervisors ability to provide the support. To look for areas to promote healthy communication between workers, administrators in the organization can examine the number of employees a supervisor supervises, the nature of the supervision role, and the physical work environment. Research in the structure of work rewards further demonstrates that the influence can be inherent to the work environment (House, 1995). It is because of this that we can also see why competitive environments or unequal work settings are not conducive to worker support and organizations that facilitate flexibility, fairness, and cooperation are more likely to get this work-based support.

While supervisors or co-workers may have more influence in certain situations, Etzion (1984) suggested that the social support recipients may use their sources differently depending on their sex. Men mainly used co-workers and supervisors when it came to dealing with work stressors, while women tended to use more life sources (i.e., family, friends) for dealing with those same type of stressors. However, just because men and women can get support from different sources doesn't mean that they have to get support from only those sources.

The effect of non-worker support can overlap into the type of work-environment support that an employee receives. In single-company or single-industry communities there is more of a chance that friends and relatives will be familiar with work-related problems and may carry dual roles of wife/co-worker or friend/supervisor. The multiplexity of relationships (Friedman, Kane, & Cornfield, 1998) often makes it difficult to delineate the source of support, and makes it unclear what role one is in when they are giving support.

When referring to group make-up, we must realize that these aspects of a group (size, racial homogeneity, and frequency of interaction) can cause significant differences in the resources that one can get from a group. An example of this is how minority managers tend to have more racially heterogeneous groups, as well as fewer intimate network relationships, fewer high-status ties, and less overlap between social and work group members (Ibarra, 1995). Other studies have suggested that different ethnic groups will be more likely to seek non-work sources for support (Kim & Mckenry, 1998). And

consistent with prior research, this may affect the type and content of the support received.

While source of support can affect recipient behavior, the strength of the support network can also be influential. Some research has posited that the positive aspects of one's social network are related to the size of the network and that having a relationship with group members is equivalent to getting support from them (Cohen & Hoberman, 1983; Schaefer, Coyne, & Lazarus, 1981). Another study has created an index to focus on the quality of the support network relationships rather than the size of the group (Wilcox, 1981). Wicox showed that it is the quality of the support that is the more important variable in alleviating the effects of psychological stressors. Even on an organizational level, when there is a removal of individuals from a network, the loss is greater than just the vacuum left by those that have departed (Fisher & White, 2000). An individual must not only cope with the removal of a member of the network but will also attempt to fill that void with another. And with this replacement comes hope that the person's contributions are as beneficial as those from the one who left.

The content of the communication between members of the support network and the focal person also can affect the person's behavioral outcome (Beehr, 1995). Whether the information conveyed to the recipient is negative or positive, or whether it is job-related or non-job-related, it will affect the recipient's response. It has also been observed that individuals who engage in greater discussions of positive aspects of their jobs reported less burnout (Zellars & Perrewe, 2001). This may be due to a variety of reasons such as negative communication leaving someone to feel worse about her or his situation. Talking to stressed people about the negative or unpleasant aspects of the workplace situation may not be perceived as supportive, but in fact have a negative effect on that person's predisposition (Beehr, King, & King, 1990). That is, observational commentary from a social support network made up of supervisors and co-workers can be beneficial when it is positive and job-related. This further suggests that there is more to support than just having a network, but also how the support is provided.

While the content or type of social support can be described a multiple of ways, this paper isolates three

types: emotional, informative, and instrumental. Schaefer, Coyne, and Lazarus (1981) define emotional support as intimacy and attachment, reassurance, and being able to confide in and rely on another, or a feeling that one is loved or cared about. Instrumental support was described as direct aid or services, which can include loans, gifts of money or goods, or a provision of services such as taking care of needy persons. And, informational support was defined as the giving of information and advice, which could help a person solve a problem, or providing feedback about how a person is doing.

The types of support greatly influence the social support arena because a recipient will respond differently dependent on the interactions between the types of support and the situation. Emotional support has been studied the most, and in a variety of different situations. Examples of studies investigating emotional social support are: Gore's (1978) findings that after a plant closing workers receiving emotional support from non-work related sources had less physiological strain than those with low levels of support; and Zellars and Perrewe's (2001) work on how emotional support could

negatively affect burnout when the respondents indicated that they engaged in conversations of different content with their coworkers.

While most research stresses the benefits of emotional support, it is not the only type of support that can be influential. Schaefer and Coyne (1981) demonstrated that instrumental support can be inversely related to both depression and negative morale. Not only do the types of support have different functions, but Ducharme and Martin (2000) claim that they also happen at different frequencies. That is, emotional support happens relatively frequently while instrumental and informational occur only when there are particular stressors or situations. When to use the different type of measures has been debated, and Dormann and Zapf (1999) believe that generally emotional and informational support match up to a greater variety of situations than does instrumental support. That is, the content of the support depends on the problem that is being studied. One such time for informational support, is the acute specific situation that results from a RIF.

Most empirical analyses suggest that, when attempting to study social support, emotional support

should be distinguished from instrumental support and that both of these should be distinguished from informational support (House, 1981). This can be difficult because of the intrinsic similarities between emotional and informational support. It is further compounded because the source of the support is also often similar (as well as prior compounding variables already discussed), in that the people that give emotional support are also often the ones that give informational and instrumental support (House & Kahn, 1985). However, there have been studies that have shown a distinct difference between informational support and both emotional and instrumental support (Schaefer, Coyne, & Lazarus, 1981).

It has been shown that instrumental support can have a stronger effect on job stressors than emotional support, and that emotional support can have a stronger effect on strains than instrumental support (Beehr, 1995). While this data does not directly identify informational support, the similarity between informational and emotional may suggest that informational support may have a strong effect on strains. Information social support in particular, rather

than some other aspect of social relationships, has been shown to be significant in decreasing workers' negative affect, ranging from depression to decreased morale (Schaefer, Coyne, & Lazarus, 1981). It is specifically that type of behavior that survivors of RIFs experience and it is those behaviors that need to be reduced to stave off layoff-survivor-sickness.

Surviving a Reduction-In-Force

Survivors of reductions-in-force are asked to work in a completely new work environment. This situation often leaves them feeling overworked because they must make-up for work that must be done when the leavers are gone, as well as feeling an increase in anxiety due to the uncertainty of a new work environment. Will there be more layoffs? What should be done to prevent this from happening to me? What are my options? These are common questions that survivors often struggle with. Worse than an answer they don't like, lack of information often leads a survivor to imagine the worse. As the stress level increases, the desire for information increases, and when that information is not forthcoming survivors often deem the process as unfair. Survivors need

assistance from those around them to help them understand the situation and understand their options. The question is what must they do in this new situation, and the answer comes from knowing what brought on the RIF as well as what will happen after the RIF. Without this information support and assistance, there is a higher likelihood of feelings of inequity, stressful layoff-survivor-symptoms and the negative behaviors that come with it.

Liukkonen et al. (1999) have suggested a three-prong approach to dealing with a stressful post-RIF work environment. The first thing that should be addressed is to modify or eliminate the sources of stress (stressors) in the workplace. One major source of stress in a post-RIF environment is the lack of information about the RIF (e.g., what lead to the reduction). The next thing administrators must do is create interventions that focus on the individual. This is done with increased awareness and extended physical and psychological resources for the employees. This will enable staff to minimize the damaging effects of stress and manage it more effectively. The third prong is recuperative rather than preventative; in that, there needs to be services for

individuals who are already suffering from stress ailments.

Unfortunately, not all stressors can be eliminated, but Wilcox (1981) suggested that in high levels of life change, such as a RIF, social support can protect a person from the negative effects of stressful life events. Work-related social support appears to be useful means for not only offsetting negative workers feelings about their jobs but also for offsetting some perceived job stresses (Blau, 1981) and perceived role stresses (Carlson & Perrewe, 1999). In these times of high stress, people often take cues from those around them. People in the workplace can be more helpful in reducing the detrimental effects of work-related stress (House, 1981). Stressful situations that include job insecurity can lead to undesirable outcomes, and these outcomes may be able to be reduced by utilizing survivor's social support systems (Lim, 1996).

The necessity to study informational social support in particular, can be clearly identified in the variety of results brought on by the various inconsistencies in the research on the effects of social support (Schaefer, Coyne, & Lazarus, 1981). Social support has been a

heavily researched topic, yet the specifics of the type of effects are still to be determined. It is specifically when there are discrepancies, that we must further delve into the variable (i.e., type of social support) and find out when different types of social support are more effective.

The key benefit that informational support provides is the opportunity for individuals to understand the problematic event. Employers don't need to merely take care of those being laid off, but also communicate this behavior to the survivors (Robbins, 1999). A lack of information has been a notorious problem for survivors of RIFs, and employees are often insatiable in their quest for information (Brockner, 1988). When survivors believe that there may be additional reductions and if they are attached to the layoff victims, then they are very motivated to find information about why the RIFs occurred (Brockner, DeWitt, Grover, & Reed, 1989). And if outcomes are negative or unexpected, individuals are especially prone to be influenced by the presence or absence of information that would help them understand why the outcomes occurred (Brockner, DeWitt, Grover, & Reed, 1989; Tombaugh & White, 1990).

Without information, survivors will rely on rumors and inferences of organizational behaviors to justify their post-RIF behavior (Thornhill & Saunders, 1998). These cues can be as unrelated as, for example, fellow survivors attractiveness (Brockner, Wiesenfeld, Stephan, Hurley, Grover, Reed, DeWitt, & Martin, 1997), but they are influential all the same. By having more information, there is direct and positive prediction of fairness and performance (Evans, 2000). It has been suggested that if survivors get a clear explanation of the situation it may help them interpret the RIF situation as fair (Brockner, Wiesenfeld, & Martin, 1995). The belief in the process being fair is one of the leading variables for less negative organizational beliefs and behaviors attached to layoff-survivor-symptoms. By keeping them informed, survivors will believe that they are being dealt with fairly and management will be able to preemptively work to prevent layoff-survivor-sickness. It is informational support that will quench their need and decrease their perceived stress level. Survivors need to know why the RIF occurred and what they need to do to prevent it from happening to them.

Not all of the prior studies have supported the claim that social support will be beneficial in the work environment. While social support has demonstrated a main effect on strains, it doesn't always moderate the effects of stress in the work environment (Ganster, Fusilier, & Mayes, 1986; Beehr, Jex, Stacy, & Murray, 2000). In fact, it has been suggested that social support can strengthen the relationship between stressors and strains (Kaufmann & Beehr, 1986).

However, the suggestion of contradictory information does not necessarily mean that social support doesn't reduce the detriments of stress, for there is plenty of support for this. It does mean, however, that the specifics of support and stress need to be addressed. The previous research in this area has its share of discrepancies, such as the lack of an unambiguous variable identifying the content of the support, uncertainty of the impact of the sources of social support, and lack of clear direction as to how different populations respond to different types of content support. One way to chip away at the unknown is to examine the effects of different types of support on job-related stress. The author of this study has

attempted to do this by hypothesizing that informational social support would be more effective than emotional or instrumental social support in reducing the negative effects of stress felt by survivors of reductions-in-force. Because the need for information is considered to be essential for survivor satisfaction, fairness was examined to see if it is a mediating factor between the relationship between informational social support and layoff-survivor-sickness (i.e., stress).

Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1: Informational social support from work-based sources will be a stronger predictor of stress than emotional or instrumental social support in a RIF sample.

Hypothesis 2: Procedural justice will mediate the relationship between informational social support and stress.

CHAPTER TWO

METHODS

Participants

The participants of this study were public and private sector employees that had been/are employed by an organization that had conducted a reduction-in-force (i.e., employed during a RIF but had not been released, or survivors). Employers of these RIF survivors ranged from school districts to hospitals. This was a cross sectional sample that came from both the private and public sector and there was no one organization or organization type that was over represented in the sample. Based on a power analysis borrowed from Cohen (1992), significance criterion was put at $P < .05$ level, an anticipated effect size was set at medium (0.15), and a desired power was put at .80. The number of desired participants was 76 and the number of obtained participants was 82 (49 females, 23 males, and 9 choosing not to report). One survey was rejected due to faking; this put the final tally at 81 participants. The average age of the participants was 38.31 years old with a range between 21 and 69 years. At the time of the survey, the

participants had been at their jobs an average of 5 years and 9 months, ranging from one month to 27 and one half years. The start date for their jobs ranged from June 3, 1974 to June 4, 2007. The company that conducted the RIF for these survivors was a public agency seventy-seven percent of the time and a private agency twenty-three percent of the time.

Procedure

The participants were informed of the general nature of the study and the approximate length of time that they should expect to complete the study. The data was collected over a 24-month period. All participants were asked to anonymously fill out a questionnaire containing three measures (i.e., social support, stress, and procedural justice) as well as demographic questions that queried the participants' age, sex, and length of employment with the company that initiated the RIF. Additional questions addressed: if the survivor had gone through a RIF within the last year, whether the survivor thought his/her supervisor was partly responsible for the RIF, and whether the survivor believed that the organization facilitated inter-office social support. All

information was requested through a questionnaire, and this was administered via the internet (i.e., on-line survey posted on on-line community discussion boards) and through face-to-face solicitation. The total length of the questionnaire was 86 items. At the end of the study, the participants were debriefed about the nature of the study and its implications to the field. Also, the researcher's contact information was given so that the participants could receive additional information pertaining to the study.

Procedures/Measures

In this study the participants were given an informed consent form, which stated that the participants were partaking in a research study about reductions-in-force and that it had been approved by the Department of Psychology Institutional Review Board Sub-Committee at California State University, San Bernardino (see Appendix A). Participants were also provided a demographic sheet (see Appendix B), a debriefing statement (see Appendix C), and the following scales:

Measure of Social Support

The measure for perceived availability of social support was a modified version of Cohen and Hoberman's (1983) Interpersonal Support Evaluation List (ISEL). The reason for the modification is that the original ISEL was used to measure the type of support college students enrolled in an introductory social psychology class at the University of Oregon received and the items in the measure were intended to be reminiscent of college life. Since the population used in the present study was distinctly business oriented, the items were changed to reflect this. The other modification was the removal of the "self-esteem" subscale; the author determined that the necessary, and considerable, rewording of the items would sacrifice the fidelity of the scale.

This measure differentiated received support as emotional, informational, or instrumental, and provided an overall support measure. The "tangible" subscale was used to measure perceived availability of material aid, and it contained 12 items (i.e., instrumental social support). The "appraisal" subscale measured the perceived availability of having someone to talk to about one's problems, and this also contained 12 items (i.e.,

emotional social support). The last subscale was the "belonging" subscale, and this examined the perceived availability of people one can do things with and contained 16 items (i.e., informational social support).

The Cohen and Hoberman (1983) mean correlations between each item and its own subscale are: instrumental (.49), informational (.52), and emotional (.59); while the intercorrelations are: instrumental - informational (.56), instrumental - emotional (.22), and informational - emotional (.48). Convergent and discriminant validity were established through other measures of social support (i.e., the Inventory of Socially Supportive Behaviors scale). Cohen and Hoberman's (1983) internal consistency reliabilities (Cronbach's alpha) for the total scale, as well as each subscale, are as follows: total scale (.77), instrumental (.71), informational (.75), and emotional (.77). For this project the internal consistency reliabilities were: instrumental (.82), informational Social (.79), and emotional (.90).

The modified ISEL contained 40 statements involving perceived availability of potential social resources (i.e., 16 items for the informational subscale and 12 each for emotional and instrumental subscales). Half of

the items were positive statements about social relationships (e.g., "I know someone at work who would drive me to work and back if I needed it."), while the other half were negative statements (e.g., "Even if I needed it my co-workers would (or could) not give me money to help me pay a debt."). Participants were asked to identify if each statement was "probably true" or "probably false" about themselves. Participants received a score of "1" on an item if they responded with a "probably true" response on the positive statements or if they responded with a "probable false" on the negative statements. Participants received a score of "0" with responses of "probable false" on the positive statements and with responses of "probable true" on the negative statements. The overall range for this scale is from 0 to 40, but this is composed of three subscales with ranges of 0 to 12 for the instrumental and emotional subscales, and 0 to 16 for the informational subscale. For all three subscales, the higher score indicated more perceived social support and a lower score indicated less perceived social support. The ISEL has been demonstrated as a dependable measure in that it reliably measures social support and that each of the subscales measures separate

and identifiable variables (Cohen & Hoberman, 1983; and Dahlen & Martin, 2005). The modified ISEL is listed in Appendix D.

Measure of Procedural Justice

The measure for procedural justice was a full scale (19-items) from Schappe (1998). No modification of this measure was needed, and the complete measure is presented in Appendix E. For each item, respondents were asked to indicate how much agreement or disagreement they have with each statement pertaining to the structural dimension of procedural justice. The measure was a 7-point Likert-type scale, with the anchor for strong disagreement as "1" and the anchor for strong agreement as "7". The 19 items were a mix of 5 items negatively worded (e.g., "The procedures used to make decisions in your organization are unethical") in which a strong disagreement would indicate high perceived procedural justice, and 14 items positively worded (e.g., "The procedures used to make decisions in your organization take into account all the relevant information that should be when decisions are made.") in which a strong disagreement would indicate low perceived procedural justice. The negatively worded statements were reverse

coded. The range of possible scores is from 19 to 133, with a higher score indicating more perceived procedural justice and a lower score indicating less perceived procedural justice. The items were set up to measure six procedural elements: namely that procedures are (1) used consistently across time, (2) are unbiased, (3) contain accurate information, (4) allow for reverse decisions, (5) reflect the concerns of those affected, and (6) do not stray from ethical standard guidelines. The internal reliability for the six subscales ranges from .64 (for represenativeness) to .89 (for ethicality) with the overall reliability coefficient at .77 (Schappe, 1996). An additional 8-item scale (see Appendix F) was added by the original measure's author to examine the interpersonal dimension of procedural justice. An example of this scale is: "With regard to carrying out the procedures at your organization, your supervisor takes steps to deal with you in a truthful manner." This was used to look into how respondents describe interpersonal treatment they receive, as well as how adequately the decisions were explained to them. The scoring was the same as it was for the procedural justice scale, but the scores were not combined (each was treated as a separate

scale) in order to preserve the separations of the participants' interpretation of organizational procedural justice and supervisory procedural justice. The range of possible scores is from 8 to 56, with a higher score indicating more perceived procedural justice and a lower score indicating less perceived procedural justice. Reliability estimates for the full structural procedural justice scale is .92, while the reliability for the interpersonal procedural justice scale is .97 (Schappe, 1996).

Measure for Perceived Stress

The tool used to determine stress was LaRocco, House, and French's (1980) Perceived Job Stress measure. This consists of a three category 12-item scale that measures the perceived stress in the job environment, and it was taken directly from LaRocco, House, and French's (1980) study investigating perceived job stress and social support (see Appendix G). The first category is *quantitative workload*, and this examined the amount of work a person is given to do: this was measured using a four-item scale. The second category is *role conflict*, this assessed the presence of conflicting demands from role senders, and also used a four-item scale. The third

category is *job future ambiguity*, and it examined the lack of opportunity to use one's skills and abilities for which one had received training or experience; this also was measured with a four-item scale. The measure was a 5-point Likert-type scale, with a mark of "1" indicating low stress and a "5" indicating high stress for each item. The range of possible scores is from 12 to 60 with a higher score indicating more perceived stress and a lower score indicting less perceived stress. Caplan, Cobb, French, Van Harrison, and Pinneau (1975) reported coefficient alpha reliabilities for these measures ranging from .71 to .89. The desire to use this measure is due to the appropriateness of this measure in the field of social support and stress (Cohen & Wills, 1985).

CHAPTER THREE

RESULTS

Participants' responses were examined and all of the variables contained values within the expected range. Data were missing from the demographics and supplemental questions for thirty-two participants, but none for the data that the hypotheses were based on. Pertaining to demographics, ten participants failed to report their age and nine failed to list their sex. As for the supplemental questions: three participants failed to indicate the length of employment with the organization that conducted the reduction-in-force (i.e., RIF company), nine participants failed to indicate the date that they begun working for the RIF company, and five participants did not report whether or not they thought the work environment that conducted the reduction-in-force facilitated office social support. Twenty participants failed to report if the RIF company was a public or private company, three participants failed to list whether or not they thought their supervisor was partly responsible for the

reduction-in-force, and eight participants did not list the date of the RIF.

The model was tested and analyzed using correlation and regression analyses in SPSS, and the mediated model was tested using SPSS and confirmed using structural equation modeling in EQS. Using $\underline{z}$ scores and a criterion of $\underline{p} = .001$, all variables were examined for univariate outliers and there were no variables with significant univariate outliers. Multivariate outliers were examined through the use of the Mahalanobis distance ($X^2 = 26.125$) with a criterion of $\underline{p} < .001$. One multivariate outlier was detected and it was deleted; upon inspection of the responses, the participant responded with the same answer for all items on the modified ISEL (i.e., emotional, informational, and instrumental social support subscales) and all items in the procedural justice scales (including reverse coded items). Because of this it was determined that the participant did not candidly answer the questions and inclusion of these scores would distort the results.

The assumptions of normality, linearity, and homoscadasticity were examined through an examination of scatter plots of residuals and predicted scores. There

was evidence that these assumptions were met, even though the Instrumental (z = -3.13), Informational (z = -3.62), Emotional (z = -3.74), and Procedural Justice Supervisor (z = - 2.50) subscales were slightly negatively skewed (assuming +2 to -2 is a normal distribution). These outcomes were moderate so a transformation of data was deemed not necessary. Multicollinearity was examined by checking the correlation of the predictors and since no correlation was at .9 or higher, no transformation was executed (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). Singularity was examined by checking for redundant variables, and none were found. Finally, the five major scales were examined for ordering effects but none were found. After evaluation of the assumptions, the major analyses were performed on 81 cases.

Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations, and internal consistency reliabilities for the six scales (i.e., instrumental social support, informational social support, emotional social support, stress, procedural justice, and procedural justice supervisory). From the data on the table it can be discerned that the participant's mean assessment of social support, procedural justice, and stress were all above the

midpoints on the respective scales. The internal consistency reliabilities ranged from a low of .7893 (informational social support) to a high of .9563 (procedural justice, supervisory). The participants' average assessment of their instrumental, informational, and emotional social support were all found to be on the high end of the scale, indicating relatively high perceived social support in the workplace. Their average feedback of informational social support (.82) was higher than either emotional (.72) or instrumental (.72) indicating higher perceived informational social support. The feedback for the procedural justice showed a mean score (76.222) that was roughly at the midpoint of the range, suggesting that the participants could neither agree nor disagree that procedural justice influenced decisions at their workplace. However, the mean score for the procedural justice of the supervisors (38.889) was slightly above the midpoint of the scale, indicating that the participants may believe the supervisor worked in a more just or fair manner. Finally, the mean score for stress (32.247) was also roughly at the midpoint, suggesting a moderate amount of perceived stress.

Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations, and Cronbach's Alpha for Instrumental Social Support, Informational Social Support, Emotional Social Support, Procedural Justice, Procedural Justice Supervisory, and Stress

Scales	Means M	Standard Deviation SD	Internal Consistency Reliabilities α
Instrumental Social Support	8.6543	2.9545	0.8167
Informational Social Support	13.1358	2.8799	0.7893
Emotional Social Support	8.7531	3.6247	0.9018
Procedural Justice	76.2222	24.5952	0.9443
Procedural Justice Supervisory	38.8889	12.9779	0.9563
Stress	32.2469	8.6798	0.8576

Baron and Kenny (1986) describe that "a given variable may be said to function as a mediator to the extent that it accounts for the relation between the predictor and the criterion" (p. 1176). These researchers described the parameters when a variable functions as a mediator (see Diagram 1) as:

> when the following conditions occur: (a) variations in levels of the independent variable significantly account for variations in the presumed mediator (i.e., Path a), (b) variations in the mediator

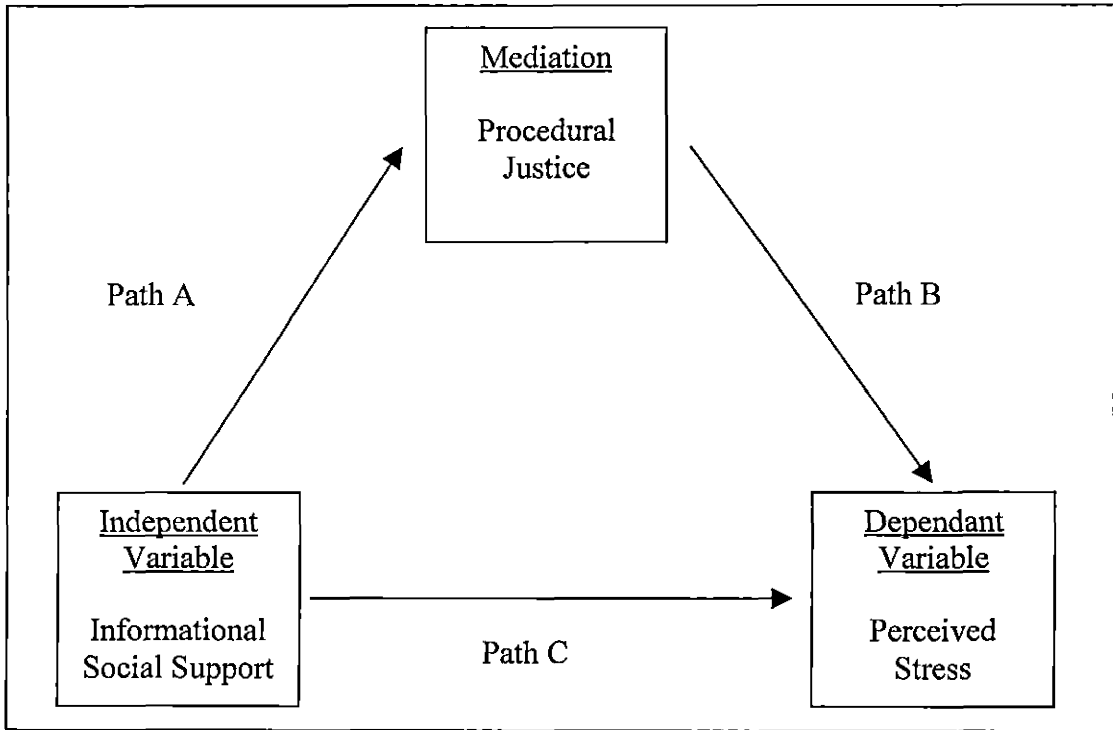

Diagram 1. Mediation Diagram

significantly account for variations in the dependant variable (i.e., Path b), and (c) when Paths a and b are controlled, a previously significant relation between the independent and dependent variables is no longer significant, with the strongest demonstration of mediation occurring when Path c is zero. (Baron & Kenny, 1986, p. 1176)

Table 2. Intercorrelations between Stress, Instrumental Social Support, Informational Social Support, Emotional Social Support, Procedural Justice, and Procedural Justice Supervisory

Scales	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Stress	--					
2. Instrumental Social Support	-.199*	--				
3. Informational Social Support	-.325**	.583**	--			
4. Emotional Social Support	-.289**	.625**	.495**	--		
5. Procedural Justice	-.511**	.311**	.369**	.195*	--	
6. Procedural Justice Supervisory	-.527**	.411**	.611**	.386**	.639**	--

Note. **$p < .01$ level, *$p < .05$

Correlations

Table 2 indicates the intercorrelations between Instrumental Social Support, informational social support, emotional social support, Procedural Justice, Procedural Justice Supervisory, and Stress.

Hypothesis 1 proposed that informational social support from work-based sources would be a stronger predictor of stress than emotional or instrumental social support in a RIF sample. After utilizing Cohen and

Cohen's (1984) t-test for analyzing multiple coefficients with different independent variables within one sample, it was discerned that this hypothesis was partially supported. By examining the significance of the difference between the partial regression coefficients of informational social support (beta = -.274) and instrumental social support (beta = .091), with a standard error of difference of .0705, it was determined that the difference was significant ($t = 5.180$, $p < .05$). However, when looking into the significance of the difference between the partial regression coefficients of informational social support (beta = -.274) and emotional social support (beta = -.210), with a standard error of the difference of .0705, it was determined that the difference was not significant ($t = .7195$, $p > .05$).

There was a significant negative relationship between stress and the instrumental social support ($r = -.200$, $p < .05$), where an increase in instrumental social support resulted in a decrease in perceived stress. There was also a significant negative relationship between stress and informational social support ($r = -.325$, $p < .01$), where an increase in informational social support resulted in a decrease in

perceived stress. And finally there was a significant negative relationship between stress and emotional social support ($r = -.289$, $p < .01$) where an increase in emotional social support resulted in a decrease in perceived stress. The amount of variance accounted for by the three types of social support showed that emotional accounted for 8.35%, the instrumental subscale accounted for 3.96%, and informational accounted for 10.56% of the variance in stress.

Hypothesis 2 proposed that procedural justice would mediate the relationship between informational social support and stress. This hypothesis was supported. The mediation effect was tested using SPSS and confirmed using structural equation modeling in EQS. The mediation model was submitted to EQS. The independence model that tests the hypothesis that the variables are uncorrelated was rejected as expected, $\chi 2$ ($df = 3$) $= 38.31$, $p < .01$. The comparative fit index (CFI) was .96, above the recommended threshold of .95, thus supporting the model. In addition to supporting the hypothesis that procedural justice mediated the relationship between informational support and stress, the model also indicated an indirect effect from informational support to stress. The model

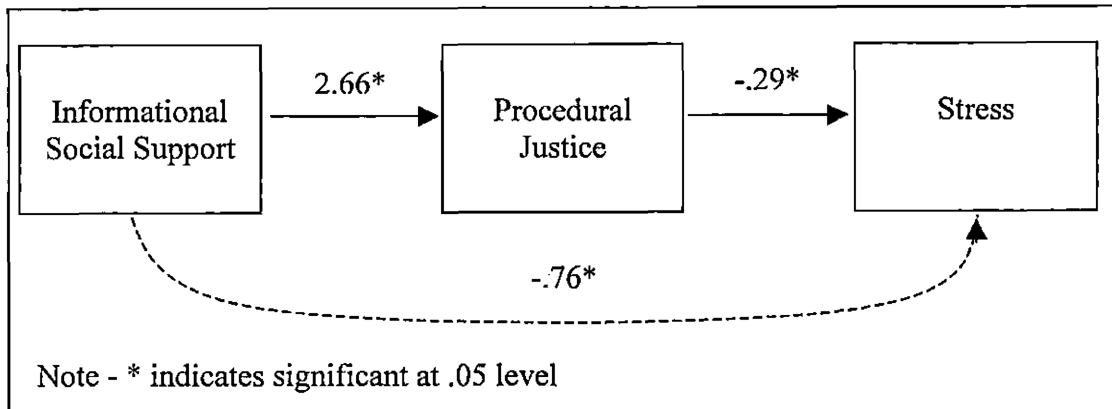

Figure 1. Mediation Model with Unstandardized Coefficients

explained 26.1 percent of the variance in the variables. See Figure 1 for model with coefficients.

To further explore the role of the other dimensions of support, another model was run including instrumental and emotional support as covariates of informational support. The independence model that tests the hypothesis that the variables are uncorrelated was rejected as expected, χ^2 (df = 10) = 120.10, $p < .01$. The comparative fit index (CFI) was .99, above the recommended threshold of .95, thus supporting the model. The Lagrange Multiplier test suggested the addition of a direct path from emotional support to stress. However, this path was not significant and was not included in the final model. The lack of additional paths from the other types of

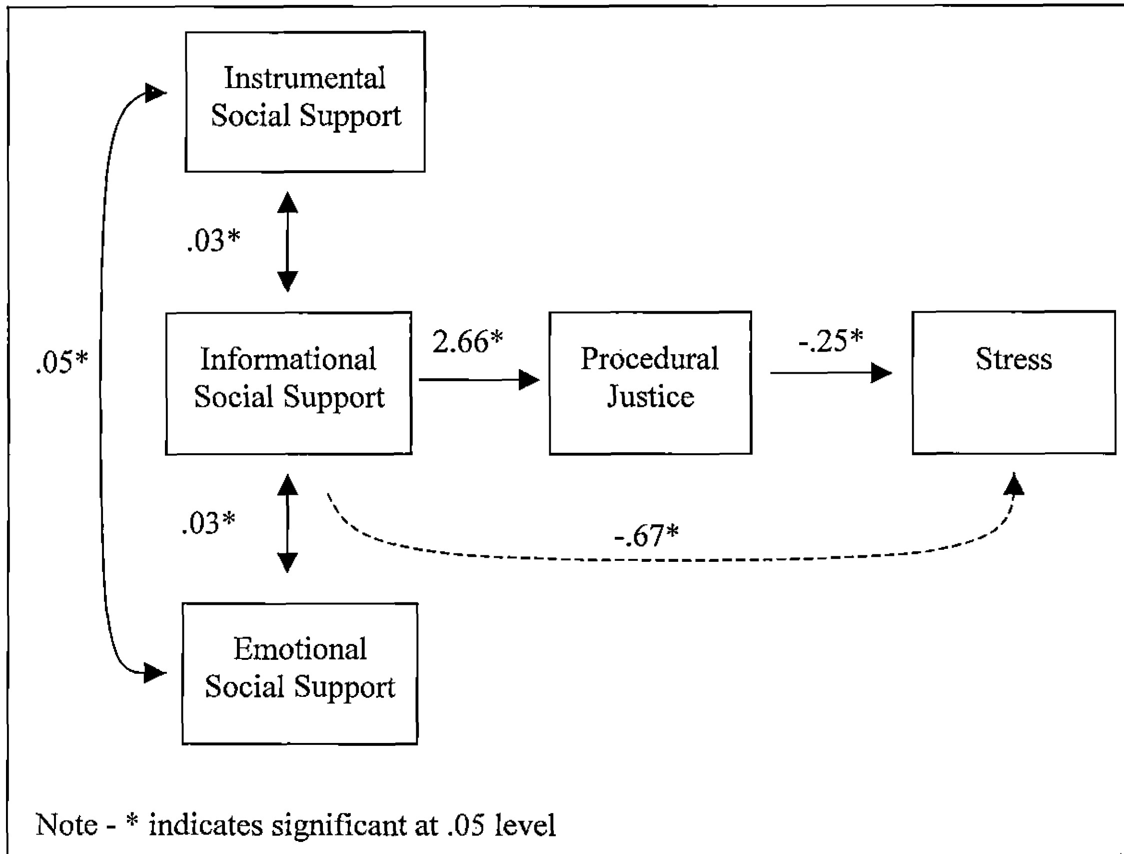

Figure 2. Additional Path Analysis Model with Coefficients and Error Terms

support further supports hypothesis 1. See Figure 2 for model with coefficients.

Using SPSS, two additional analyses were performed to determine whether there is an indirect effect when either emotional social support or instrumental social support is used as the independent variable. For both analyses, procedural justice was the mediator and stress was the dependant variable. Results indicated that there

was not a significant indirect effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable with the mediator, when emotional social support was used, Z(75) = -1.63, P > .05. But when instrumental social support was used, there was a significant indirect effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable with the mediator Z(75) = -2.46, P < .05.

The effect of the independent variable (i.e., informational social support) on the dependent variable (i.e., stress) was significantly different from zero; survivors of RIFs who indicated that they had informational social support also indicated that they had perceived less stress. The effect of the independent variable on the mediator (i.e., procedural justice) was also significant from zero; survivors of RIFs with more informational social support indicated that they perceived more procedural justice at the workplace. The effect of the independent variable on the dependant variable controlling for the mediator was not significantly different from zero. This indicates that survivors of RIFs who had more informational social support did not have significantly less stress when controlling for procedural justice. There was a

significant indirect effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable mediated by procedural justice. This indicates that survivors of RIFs who had more informational social support did have significantly less stress when the relationship was mediated by procedural justice.

There were fifty-nine percent of respondents that indicated that they thought the work environment at the organization that conducted the reduction-in-force facilitated office social support. There was a significant negative correlation between facilitated social support at work and procedural justice ($r = -.389$, $p < .01$). There was a significant negative correlation between facilitated social support at work and sex ($r_{ø} = -.258$, $p < .05$) in that a significant number of females reported that the organization that conducted the reduction-in-force facilitated social support at work, $t(68) = 2.132$, $p = .039$.

Slightly over seventy percent of the participants identified their supervisors as partly responsible for the reduction-in-force. There was a significant positive correlation between supervisor responsibility and social support (instrumental, $r_{pb} = .228$, $p < .05$; informational,

r_{pb} = .253, p < .05; and emotional, r_{pb} = .348, p < .01) in that those who thought their supervisor was partly responsible also reported that they received more social support at the workplace. There was a significant negative correlation between facilitated social support at work and: instrumental social support (r_{pb} = -.311, p < .01), emotional social support (r_{pb} = -.245, p < .05), but not informational social support (r_{pb} = -.190). Instrumental social support was positively correlated with sex of the participant $t(70)$ = 2.803, p = .012, suggesting that men, compared to women, may be more receptive of physical assistance. Perceived social support at work was negatively correlation with procedural justice (r_{pb} = -.342, p < .01), suggesting that participants who perceived little social support at work also perceived less fairness in the workplace. Perceived supervisor responsibility was positively correlated with supervisory procedural justice, suggesting those who thought the supervisor was partly responsible for the RIF also perceived more fairness from the supervisor. Less intuitively, perceived stress was positively correlated with social support at the workplace (r_{pb} = .259, p < .05).

CHAPTER FOUR

DISCUSSION

Reductions-in-force (RIFs) are an all too common part of business and, with the recent economic downturn and corresponding increase in the number of people getting laid-off (US Department of Labor, 2008), they are back in the spotlight again. While causes may vary (e.g., poor economy, mergers, new technology resulting in unneeded worker skill set), the frequency and consistency throughout the years, suggests that RIFs are entrenched within capitalistic business practices.

For survivors, a frequent byproduct that comes with a reduction-in-force is stress (Ashford, 1988). And as stated earlier, the term "stress" is used to represent the perception of stress in the work environment. While stress can have its benefits, it is often felt as strain (Kalimo, Taris, & Schaufeli, 2003; Kahn, & Byosiere, 1992). Symptoms of strain include stress-induced layoff-survivor-sickness (LSS), and this has the dual consequence of being neither good for the employee nor good for the company (Allen, Freeman, Russell, Reizenstein, & Rentz, 2001). For the workers that

experience LSS, their performance decreases and their health degrades. They are forced to deal with both physical and emotional pain, neither sure of a solution nor confident about the future. However, this sickness does not have to be inevitable. Social support is demonstrably beneficial in alleviating survivor stress (Misra, Crist, & Burant, 2003), and procedural justice has been shown to mediate the effects of change and the experience of stress (Brotheridge, 2003). The present study attempts to bring these events together to clarify the beneficial relationship between organizational social support and procedural justice on stress-induced strain for survivors of reductions-in-force.

The idea that organizational social support can reduce the negative effects of stress has been demonstrated before (Kahn & Byosiere, 1992; Misra, Crist, & Burant, 2003). A familiarity that coworkers have with each other may be part of the reason why they are able to help each other when times are difficult. Having other coworkers available in a time of need allows workers to resist the negative effects of stress (Haslam & Reicher, 2006) and may allow them to concentrate on the beneficial aspects of their position. While the negative effects in

this study are the psychological strains from RIFs, it has been demonstrated that even physical violence can be ameliorated with organizational support (Schat & Kelloway, 2003). In fact, employees who see themselves as being in a situation that requires support (i.e., survivors), perceive greater support than those not in that type of situation (Knudsen, Johnson, Martin, & Roman, 2003). This suggests the power of the situation (e.g., RIF) may drive people to look for support, and facilitate receiving help from coworkers.

There have been academic debates as to the ways in which social support helps survivors. This list includes: the benefits of buffering (Wilcox, 1981; Cohen & Hoberman, 1983; Cohen & Wills, 1985; Etzion, 1984; Lu, 1999; Pretorius 1994; Raghuram & Garud, 2001), buffering being minimally beneficial (Burton, Stice, & Seeley, 2004; Ganster et. al., 1986; Schaefer, Coyne, & Lazarus, 1981; Gore, 1978; Blau, 1981), social support acting as a moderator between stressors and negative symptoms (Cohen & Wills, 1985), and even the lack of social support as detrimental (Nielsen, 2003). The results of this study suggest that it is the increase in availability of

work-based social support that reduces survivors' feelings of stress.

Work-based social support can help survivors with their stress, but within that benefit there is the type of social support that needed to be parsed out. In this study, social support was split into the three types: instrumental, emotional, and informational. Instrumental is the perceived availability of material aid, emotional is the perceived availability of having someone to provide sympathy/empathy when dealing with problems, and informational is the perceived availability of people one can obtain information from and communicate with. While all three negatively correlated with levels of stress, they were not all equal. Out of the three, informational social support showed the strongest correlation. It was hypothesized that informational social support would be the most helpful in dealing with this specific type of strain (i.e., LSS) due to lack of communication as a common critique of a RIF process, and the initial feedback endorsed this belief. Informational social support may have been used to bridge the information schism, which resulted in a higher negatively correlation between stress and social support. And perhaps another

reason why informational social support was the strongest predictor is because it can take on a dual function. That is, the act of receiving information from a coworker can be both emotionally soothing and it can reduce uncertainty.

The use of work-based resources to deal with work-based problems may also be why information social support was significantly effective in reducing stress in this study and why it has been effective in reducing layoff-survivor-symptoms in other studies (e.g., Krohne & Slangen, 2005). Emotional social support was also significantly effective in the reduction of workplace stress. This may be due to the fact that emotional support can come from a variety of sources (including the workplace) but most likely, and most strongly, come from family and people who have a more intimate and emotional relationship with the survivor. It may have been that the work setting was not the best place to observe the strength of this type of support nor was it the best place to see those that would provide this type of support, yet it was strong enough to show benefit in this study.

Instrumental social support also can occur at the worksite but may also not be as appropriate for coping with the stressors associated with surviving RIFs. A common example of instrumental social support is financial assistance, and perhaps the strength of instrumental social support lies in assisting leavers with the all-too-common problem of paying their bills. Conversely, it may have been informational social support that helped survivors by providing them with the information necessary to make more informed decisions about whether to stay at a job, move on, or how to better position themselves in the new work environment. It is the coworker who is more likely to provide or deliver more applicable information about the RIF because it is the coworker who is closest to it. Coworkers also have a vested interest in finding out about the same type of information for their own benefit and when this information is shared it may alleviate the stress experienced by survivors.

The results from this study give credence to the benefit of three types of social support (i.e., emotional, informational, and instrumental) in the reduction of survivor strain. In particular, when the

support came from the work setting and when it was informative it was the most effective. This paper's suggestion that informational social support from work-based sources reduces perceived stress more than emotional or instrumental social support in RIF survivors, appears to have credence.

Procedural justice also seems to have a significant position in the realm of RIFs. It has been suggested that during organizational transitions (such as with a RIF) employees expect to be informed, and whether or not this occurs is directly related to how fair they perceive the process to be (Daly & Geyer, 1994). Employees want their employers to deal with them in a fair and just manner (Brotheridge, 2003). So when there is a major event that has such a dramatic change on their work behaviors, it is directly affected by their perceived procedural justice. Whether the fairness is in regards to how the company deals with the employees before the RIF, how employees are dealt when they leave an organization (i.e., leavers), or how the survivors are dealt with after the RIF, procedural justice is pivotal.

For organizations who want the surviving employees to remain with the company, procedural justice is an

important predictor for organizational commitment (Clay-Warner, Hegtvdt, & Roman, 2005). The perception of fairness gives employees a platform to build upon. If they perceive the environment as fair, they can extrapolate on the information they receive about other survivors with more confidence. That is, by observing fair treatment to others they can assume that they will be dealt with in an equally fair way. This would provide them with stability in an otherwise turbulent work environment.

High stress levels have been positively associated with negative work behaviors such as intention to quit (Brotheridge, 2003) and in this study both procedural justice and supervisory procedural justice were negatively correlated to stress. This suggests that survivors may experience less stress when they perceive that they are being dealt with in a fair manner. While this is not the first study to suggest this (other research has demonstrated a negative correlation between fairness and employee strain, examples include: Tepper, 2001 and Riolli & Savicki, 2006) what is significant to this study is the strength of the correlations between both types of procedural justice examined. Employees

seemed to take stock in not only how the organization as an entity was treating them, but in particular how their supervisors behaved. When supervisors were perceived as being more even-handed, the perceived level of stress was reduced.

A life-changing event will inevitably cause most individuals to experience stress and RIF will generally cause stress for all parties involved (e.g., management, survivors, leavers). But not all parties feel it the same way, nor do all people react the same. In fact, the effects of a RIF on a middle manager is often more difficult than it is for executives, for the managers are more likely to perceive job insecurity and feel negative health effects (Armstrong-Stassen, 2005). This puts them in a peculiar situation of potentially being both an instrument, as well as a victim, of a downsizing.

Coincidentally, even though a majority of respondents to this study thought that office social support was facilitated, more respondents interpreted the work environment as being less fair. Those who thought their supervisor was partly responsible also reported that they received more social support at the workplace. This is agreement with Beehr, Farmer, Glazer, Gudanowski,

and Nair, (2003) who suggested that even when the supervisor is perceived to be a source of a stressor as well as a source of social support, the effect of social support is not diminished. It is the assistance that social support provides in weakening the stressor-strain relationship, regardless of the relationship between source of support and source of strain (Beehr et al., 2003).

The role of the supervisor in a RIF may be perceived differently by survivors, but with this study the influence is substantial as it relates to perceptions of fairness. Slightly over 70% of the participants identified their supervisors as partly responsible for the reduction-in-force, suggesting that they may not be a source of support for the survivor and perhaps more likely to be seen as the person making the reduction. Yet, when the participants described the supervisor as fair, the perceived level of survivor stress decreased. And fortunately for the supervisors, the perception of unfairness can be ameliorated with time. As the days pass, the perception of a supervisor will improve and satisfaction will tend to increase (Allen, Freeman, Russell, Reizenstein, & Rentz, 2001). In fact, this

fairness can mediate other situations such as the impact of employee development on their trust in their managers (Tzafrir, Harel, Baruch, & Dolan, 2003).

Procedural justice has been shown as a good mediator as it relates to the effects of change on the experience of stress (Brotheridge, 2003), as well as for maintaining organizational attraction (Bauer, Truxillo, Tucker, Weathers, Bertolino, Erdogan, & Campion, 2006). And in this study the prediction that procedural justice would mediate the relationship between informational social support and stress was supported. The survivors who received informational social support in the workplace and believed that they were being dealt with in a fair and just manner, reported less stress. This confluence may be due to survivors having faith that the information they received would be reliable. That is, if a co-worker had recommendations on how to cope in a post-RIF environment and these recommendations stemmed from prior experiences with the same organization, the survivor may have faith that if he/she behaved in a similar fashion it would result in similar experiences. An example of this would be a coworker informing a fellow survivor that, in the past when the company became more profitable the

managers would reward those survivors who took on more responsibility with higher pay. Another benefit may be that the survivors are comforted with consistency and information in a time of insecurity and instability. The information may be used to guide behavior and assist in coping or in finding other ways to reduce stress/strain.

Limitations

There are multiple limitations that may have impacted the findings of the present study. One of the first limitations to consider is the sample size. This study had a smaller than expected sample size, which did not allow for a more expansive statistical analysis. Due to significant difficulty convincing organizational management of the benefits of an analysis of their work environment in a post-RIF atmosphere, the author was forced to evaluate participants from many different organizations individually as oppose to a few company-wide evaluations. This led to another limitation, in that the survivor population used was not homogeneous. Multiple attempts were made to isolate specific organizations that had experienced a RIF, but consistent resistance from multiple administrative representatives

did not allow for this. Rather than recruiting an organization and having the survey disseminated to the remaining survivors, the author solicited participation through face-to-face requests and through on-line internet requests. This resulted in a collection of individuals from a variety of occupational fields in both the public and private sector. While there is the benefit of the representation of multiple fields, there is also the multiplicity of other unexplored variables (due to the lack of consistency and the significantly different RIF environment each survivor experienced).

This limited population also contributed to the author not conducting a pilot study on the modification to the ISEL. The original ISEL was used to measure the type of support college students received and the items were reflective of college-life scenarios. The author did as little modification as possible to maintain the reliability of the original study, but an analysis of the effects of these changes would have been beneficial.

Another limitation pertains to the study's demographics and job-type of the participants. While general information about the survivors' position was obtained (e.g., public or private), there may be some

benefit to knowing specific job-types and positions within the organization. It was unknown how many participants were also supervisors and how that impacted their perception of the RIF. The position of supervisor, in some RIFs, may bring added benefits of determining who is released and who remains. This would influence not only feelings of control but also the potential reduction (or lack of) for a survivor's support network. Information regarding rank in the organization may also be beneficial when looking at procedural justice and fairness. In that, survivors in positions that do not generally lead to promotion (e.g., many entry-level classifications) may be negatively related to perceptions of fairness of the organization regardless of the RIF.

Other limitations include information about contracts, collective bargaining agreements, and established protocol surrounding the execution of a RIF. Agreements such as the weighting of seniority at the time of a RIF (agreed upon by management and union representatives) may impact a survivor's perception. Knowing ahead of time about the amount of risk of being reduced would inevitably impact a survivor's stress-strain relationship. Union membership, or union

involvement, may also impact a survivor's perception of whether the organization operates fairly or treats its employees fairly.

Other limitations are attached to the specifics of each of the RIFs. The length of the RIF may affect how the survivor perceives the stressful situation and it may cause it to progress from an acute event to a chronic one. The survivor may determine that that constant and consecutive RIFs may be a work hazard, that is, something that is an inherent risk with employment at a particular organization. The severity of the RIF may also be significant. A survivor who works in the sales department at an organization that reduces the human resources department, may not feel the same level of stress that a sales survivor who works at a company that conducted an "across-the-board" reduction. The severity is also important as it relates to the percentage of the reduction. Organizations that reduce by 5% and those that reduce by 50% may have different reactions by the surviving workforce. And finally, the severity of the RIF to an individual's social network may impact a survivor's reaction. If one were to survive along with the majority of his/her social network, it may facilitate the amount

and type of support received and therefore improve the chance of avoiding layoff-survivor-sickness.

Future Research

One area of future research can be to expand upon what it is about informational social support that appears to help survivors with stress. Does having information provide them with a sense of control over a potentially unstable work environment? The cessation of control is thought to contribute to the stress/strain experienced by survivors (Brockner, 1988) and individuals with perceived job control experience less strain due to a RIF (Devine, Reay, Stainton, & Collins-Nakai, 2003). Perhaps the confluence of informational social support and fairness lends itself to feelings of control. Organizational support has shown to be related to control-oriented coping during periods of organizational upheaval (such as during a RIF) and this coping has also been related to an employee's intention to stay with an organization (Armstrong-Stassen, 2004). Future studies may look into the relationship between informational organizational social support, fairness, and control-oriented coping.

Other areas to expand from this research may be with the relationship between supervisor and survivor. Some studies have suggested that supervisor communication may be useful for reducing supervisor-induced stress (Beehr et al., 2003), and perhaps specific (e.g., informational) social support from supervisors my help survivors improve the stress-strain relationship.

Another area for future research would be the duration of RIF or threat of RIF. If the time of the RIF or threat of RIF lengthens, there maybe a risk of this acute event transitioning into a chronic event. This in turn may change how survivors interpret the event from a significant job change into a hazard of working for the organization. This probably does not lead to immunity from the effects of RIFs, because repeated contact with mass RIFs has been associated with negative health outcomes (Grunberg, Moore, & Greenberg, 2001). Other areas of exploration of the RIF include: the type of reduction (e.g., targeted or across-the-board), amount of reduction (i.e., 5% or 50%), size of the organization being reduced, and the transitional environment setup by an organization to help the workforce deal with the RIF.

Another question that may need to be addressed is: if social support is beneficial when coping with stress, then how specifically can organizations facilitate social support in the workplace (in anticipations of stressful situations)? Bowling, Beehr, Johnson, Semmer, Hendricks, and Webster (2004) have suggested that employees who provide social support in the workplace will receive social support from their coworkers. How far can an organization go to facilitate this support and at what point does it infringe on the rights of an employee? Some might suggest that the focus of a surviving employee would shift from helping fellow employees to saving his/her own job, yet employee survival has been associated with organizational support as well as an increase in the willingness to assist other employees (Knudsen, Johnson, Martin, & Roman, 2003). What are the limitations of this support? In summary, there are multiple steps that both the organization as well as the employees can take to facilitate support in the workplace, and both areas are in need of more exploration.

Implications

The implication from this research suggests that there is plenty of room for survivors to be empowered in dealing with RIFs. Some of it lies in how they are treated and whether or not the work environment espouses fairness, and there does appear to be benefits of organizational social support and procedural justice on stress induced strain for survivors of reductions-in-force. By capitalizing on the significance of informational support on survivors, organizations that are expecting to go through a RIF can attempt to reduce the strain experienced by the survivors.

Survivors are retained, while others are let go, because they are perceived to be the most skilled at their jobs and most capable of helping the organization grow in a time of economic strife. With more informational support and less stress, survivors may exhibit less detrimental behaviors and be better equipped to stay and benefit an organization. This is important to organizations going through a RIF because it is the surviving employees who are expected to help a company recover from a retrenchment. And as reductions tend to be

cyclical, the survivor of today may also be the survivor of tomorrow.

Survivors of RIFs have indicated higher levels of mental and physical problems (Moore, Grunberg, & Greenberg, 2004). McElroy, Morrow, and Rude (2001) have suggested that the organization will be more likely to experience a higher level of adverse effects with a RIF, as oppose to a voluntary turnover (e.g., attrition). Even the anticipation of a RIF can have detrimental effects on survivors' well being (commonly exhibited in increased levels of strain, see Kalimo, Taris, & Schaufeli, 2003). This is a very important issue for organizational management because while an increase in work-related stress and RIFs separately can result in negative health effects, the combination of the two can result in greater negative health effects (Dragano, Verde, & Siegrist, 2005). The release of coworkers reduces a survivor's social network and is also associated with negative health outcomes (Grunberg, Moore, & Greenberg, 2001). With this strain, stress, and poor health, the workforce will be in no condition to help themselves deal with the RIF, let alone help the organization recover from the retrenchment or help prevent additional RIFs.

When survivors exhibit less strain as a result of the RIF, then there may be less layoff-survivor-sickness and greater probability that they will act in ways that are demonstrative of their high level of skills and abilities. Examples of such behavior are: a continuation of innovative behaviors, an acceptance of additional workloads, and the belief that they can comfortably work in the new environment. It is these behaviors that can drive a workforce to achieve more, and this then helps the organization grow and recover from the economic downturn. Without the assistance and support of the workforce, companies that are going through reductions may have a difficult time recovering from both the damage done on the survivors due to a mismanaged RIF as well as the damage that necessitated the RIF in the first place.

Ironically, after a RIF it is often the leavers who experience more control and less strain than the survivors (Devine, Reay, Stainton, & Collins-Nakai, 2003). Survivors generally report less organizational commitment and more stress, and report that the organizations are less supportive (Knudsen, Johnson, Martin, & Roman, 2003). Perhaps part of the reason why survivors in this study indicated the benefit of social

support was that a significant percent also indicated how helpful the organization was in facilitating social support.

The effects of the RIF can have a lasting effect and strain can be measured just in experiencing or anticipating a RIF (Kalimo, Taris, & Schaufeli, 2003). It is not easy for the survivors and their road may be more difficult than the leavers (Devine, Reay, Stainton, & Collins-Nakai, 2003; Noer, 1993), but it is up to those who remain at an organization to put the pieces back together in a new work environment. Perhaps by facilitating social support at the workplace and establishing fair standards, organizational administrators can both help survivors deal with a RIF and help the organization recover. While this study does not fully explain how survivors deal with layoff-survivor-sickness, it may suggest the benefits of procedural justice and social support during a RIF.

APPENDIX A

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

INFORMED CONSENT

The study in which you are invited to participate in is designed to investigate aspects of the work environment. It is being assessed through a survey design in which you will be asked to read and answer questions pertaining to a reduction-in-force (i.e., downsizings). This study is being conducted by Woody Koch-Wain as part of a master's thesis, and it is under the supervision of Dr. Janelle Gilbert, professor of Psychology at California State University in San Bernardino and it is NOT related to the County of San Bernardino. This study has been approved by the Department of Psychology Institutional Review Board Sub-Committee of California State University, San Bernardino, and a copy of the official Psychology IRB stamp of approval should appear somewhere on this consent form. The University requires that you give your consent before participating in a research study.

The survey should take about 30 minutes to complete. Please be assured that any information you provide will remain completely anonymous. At no time will your name be reported with your responses nor will it be collected. All data will be reported in group form only. At the conclusion of this study, you may receive a report of the results. There are no foreseeable risks to you in participating in this study.

Please understand that your participation in this research is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw at anytime during this study without penalty, and remove any data at any time during this study. Any questions or inquiries about this research should be directed to Dr. Janelle Gilbert, at (909) 537-5587. Results of this study will be available after June 1, 2007.

By placing a check in the box provided below, I acknowledge that I have been informed of, and understand, the nature and purpose of this study, and I freely consent to participate. By this mark I further acknowledge that I am at least 18 years of age.

Give your consent to participate by making a check or "X" mark here: __________

Today's date is ____________________.

APPENDIX B

DEMOGRAPHICS SURVEY

Demographics

1. What is your age? (optional)

   Age ________

2. What is your sex? (optional)

   Male _____ Female _____

3. How long have/had you worked for the employer who initiated the reduction-in-force?

   Years ____ Months _____

4. When did you start working for the employer who initiated the reduction-in-force?

   Date (e.g., 2/5/98) _______________

5. When did the reduction-in-force occur?

   Approximate date (e.g., 5/1/2000) _______________

6. Do you think the work environment at the organization that conducted the reduction-in-force facilitated office social support?

   Yes _____ No ______

7. The organization that conducted the Reduction-In-Force, was it a public agency (e.g., local government or school district) or private agency (e.g., Aerospace Company or Automaker)?

   Public ___ Private ______ Other (please specify) _________

8. Do you think your supervisor was partly responsible for the reduction-in-force?

   Yes _____ No ______

Comments:

APPENDIX C

DEBRIEFING STATEMENT

DEBRIEFING STATEMENT

Thank you for participating in this study. The reason for conducting this study was to better understand the "survivor effect" (i.e., emotional difficulties, such as high stress, that survivors of reductions-in-force often experience) and attempt to discover how it can be mitigated through informational social support. If you would like to obtain results of this study or, if you have any questions or concerns about this research, please contact Dr. Janelle Gilbert, (909) 537-5587. Results will be reported in group form only. Please do not discuss the nature of this study with anyone who may be a potential participant.

APPENDIX D

SOCIAL SUPPORT SCALE

SOCIAL SUPPORT SCALE

For clarity, each subscale is listed separately. The scale presented to participants consists of all 40 items listed in random order. For the first and third subscale (Instrumental and Emotional Support Scales), the first six items are written so that a "true" response indicates support, while for the second six items a "false" response indicates support. For the second subscale (Informational Support Scale), the first eight items are written so that a "true" response indicates support, while for the second eight items a "false" response indicates support. The items in which a "false" response indicates support, will be reversed coded. All supportive responses will be given a score of "1" and all non supportive responses will be given a score of "0". All the subscales will be summed and each participant will then have a score for each of the subscales as well as a total score. A high score will indicate a lot of support while a low score will indicate little support (both for the total scale as well as the subscales).

Instructions

This scale is made up of a list of statements each of which may or may not be true about you. For each statement we would like you to enter probably TRUE (PT) if the statement is true about you or probably FALSE (PF) if the statement is not true about you.

You may find that many of the statements are neither clearly true nor clearly false. In these cases, try to decide quickly whether probably TRUE (PT) or probably FALSE (PF) is most descriptive of you. Although some questions will be difficult to answer, it is important that you pick one alternative or the other. Remember to indicate only one of the alternatives for each statement.

Please read each item quickly but carefully before responding. Remember that this is not a test and there are not right or wrong answers.

Instrumental Support Scale

A1. I know someone at work who would drive me to work and back if I needed it.
A2. I know someone from work who would give me a copy of a resume or loan me a resume/cover letter writing guide.
A3. I know someone who would loan me $100 to help me pay a debt.
A4. If I needed it my co-workers would give me money.
A5. If I wanted a date for a company outing, I know someone at work who would fix me up.
A6. If I were sick, I know someone at work who would bring me notes from a staff meeting to my house or apartment.
A7. I don't know anyone at work who would loan me several hundred dollars to pay a doctor bill or dental bill.
A8. I don't know anyone at work who would help me with my computer.
A9. Even if I needed it my co-workers would (or could) not give me money to help me pay a debt.

A10. I don't know anyone at work who would help me work on a report I needed to give to my supervisor.
A11. I don't know anyone at work who would loan me a car for a couple hours.
A12. I don't know anyone at work who would get me my workload from my supervisor if I was sick.

Informational Support Scale

A13. There are people at work who I regularly talk to.
A14. When I am sick, my co-workers keep me informed about what I missed.
A15. I am well informed about organizational procedures.
A16. If I decided during the day to take a break and go talk to someone in office, I could easily find someone to talk to.
A17. People come to my workstation during the day to talk to me.
A18. I belong to a group at work that meets to discuss work related events.
A19. I talk to my supervisor at least once a day.
A20. I am told of company-wide changes before the rest of the staff.
A21. I don't feel comfortable going to my supervisor with a question.
A22. Lately, I often feel lonely at work, like I don't have anyone to talk to.
A23. I don't have friends at work that would tell me if I missed some information at a meeting.
A24. I don't often get invited to discuss policy with my co-workers.
A25. I don't discuss company policy with my co-workers.
A26. When administration enacts a new regulation, I am one of the last employees to hear about it.
A27. I don't talk to my supervisor about non-work related topics.
A28. My supervisor only tells me information that I need to know to do my present task.

Emotional Support Scale

A29. I know someone at work whom I would feel perfectly comfortable talking about problems I might have budgeting my time between work and my social life.
A30. I know someone at work whom I would feel perfectly comfortable talking about any problems I might have adjusting to a new task.
A31. I know someone at work whom I would feel perfectly comfortable talking about a problem with a co-worker.
A32. I know someone at work whom I would feel perfectly comfortable talking about any problems I might have meeting people.
A33. I know someone at work whom I would feel perfectly comfortable discussing any social problems I might have.
A34. I know someone at work whom I would feel perfectly comfortable talking about any problems I might have with alcohol or drugs.

A35. There isn't anyone at work with whom I would feel perfectly comfortable talking about any problems I might have making friends.
A36. There isn't anyone at work with whom I would feel perfectly comfortable talking about any problems I might have with my supervisor.
A37. There isn't anyone at work with whom I would feel perfectly comfortable talking about difficulties with my social life.
A38. There isn't anyone at work with whom I would feel perfectly comfortable talking about my feelings of loneliness and depression.
A39. I don't know anyone at work who makes my problems clearer and easier to understand.
A40. Lately, when I've been troubled, I keep things to myself.

APPENDIX E

PROCEDURAL JUSTICE SCALE

PROCEDURAL JUSTICE SCALE

The questions in this section ask you how you feel about the procedures used to make decisions in your organization. Indicate the extent to which you disagree or agree with each statement. To do this, use the following scale:

Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

The **procedures** used to make decisions in your organization:

B1.	... allow supervisors to get away with using an inconsistent approach in making decisions. (R)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
B2.	... are consistently applied from one time to the next.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
B3.	... are consistently applied across different employees.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
B4.	... make sure that any biases supervisors have will not affect the decisions they make.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
B5	... are unbiased.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
B6.	... dictate that the decisions made will not be influenced by any personal biases people have.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
B7.	... make sure that the decisions made are based on as much accurate information as possible.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
B8.	... take into account all the relevant information that should be when decisions are made.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
B9.	... maximize the tendency for decisions to be based on highly accurate information.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
B10.	... increase the likelihood that improper decisions will be changed.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
B11.	... make it very probable that improper decisions will be reviewed.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
B12.	... provide an opportunity for the reversal of improper decisions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
B13.	... do not take into consideration the basic concerns, values, and outlook of employees. (R)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
B14.	... do not take into consideration the basic concerns, values, and outlook of management. (R)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
B15	... guarantee that all involved parties can have their say about what outcomes are received.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
B16.	... ensure that all involved parties can influence decisions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
B17.	... are consistent with basic ethical standards.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
B18.	... are not consistent with my own values. (R)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
B19.	... are unethical. (R)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

APPENDIX F

PROCEDURAL JUSTICE SCALE - SUPERVISORY

PROCEDURAL JUSTICE SCALE - SUPERVISORY

For this section your "supervisor" refers to the person to whom you directly report. Circle the extent to which you disagree or agree with the following statements. To do this use the following scale:

Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

With regard to your supervisor ***carrying out*** the procedures at your organization, your supervisor:

C1.	... considers your viewpoint.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
C2.	... provides you with timely feedback about decisions and their implications.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
C3.	... treats you with kindness and consideration.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
C4.	... considers your rights as an employee.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
C5	... takes steps to deal with you in a truthful manner.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
C6.	... provides reasonable explanations for the decisions s/he makes.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
C7.	... gives adequate reasons for the decisions s/he makes.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
C8.	... attempts to describe the situational factors affecting the decisions s/he makes.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7

APPENDIX G

STRESS SCALE

STRESS SCALE

Certain pressures or stressors in our work occasionally bother all of us. Here is a list of things that sometimes bother people. Please indicate how often you are bothered by each of them in your work.

Not at all	Rarely	Sometimes	Rather Often	Nearly all the time
1	2	3	4	5

D1. Not having enough help and equipment to get the job done well.
D2. Feeling you have too much responsibility for the work of others.
D3. Thinking that you'll not be able to meet the conflicting demands of various people you work with.
D4. Having to do or decide things where mistakes could be quite costly.
D5. Not knowing just what the people you work with expect of you.
D6. Thinking that you have to do things on the job that are against your better judgment.
D7. Feeling that you have to do things on the job that are against your better judgment.
D8. Feeling that your job tends to interfere with your family life.
D9. Feeling unable to influence your immediate supervisor's decisions and his actions that affect you.
D10. Having to deal with or satisfy too many different people.
D11. Being asked to work overtime when you don't want to.
D12. Feeling trapped in a job you don't like but can't change and can't get out of.

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