

## EXPLAINING HOW SURVIVORS RESPOND TO DOWNSIZING: THE ROLES OF TRUST, EMPOWERMENT, JUSTICE, AND WORK REDESIGN

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In this article we develop a stress-based framework of survivors' responses to downsizing. First, we synthesize prior research findings into a typology of survivor responses delineated by two underlying dimensions: constructive/destructive and active/passive. Drawing on Lazarus's theory of stress, we then posit that how survivors appraise the downsizing will shape their responses to it. We argue that trust and justice influence primary appraisal and facilitate more constructive responses because they reduce the extent to which organizational downsizing is evaluated as a threat. Likewise, we argue that empowerment and work redesign influence secondary appraisal and facilitate more active responses because they enhance survivors' assessments of their capacity to cope with the threat. Finally, we discuss contributions of the framework and implications for research and practice.

During the last decade, downsizing has become the strategy favored by many companies attempting to cope with fundamental, structural changes in the world economy. The popular press has suggested that downsizing does not appear to be dissipating—60 percent of companies plan to continue downsizing over the next few years (Peterson, 1996). Although laid-off workers have had to pay a high price, the effects on employees who survive organizational downsizings have been substantial as well. Trust and morale often erode as workloads increase and job insecurity escalates (Fisher, 1991). More than one-half of survivors report increased job stress and symptoms of burnout following downsizing (Cascio, 1993).

However, some survivors do not experience emotional distress; instead, they are energized

and consider downsizing to be an opportunity for personal growth (Emshoff, 1994; Henkoff, 1994; Isabella, 1989). Indeed, empirical researchers have documented a range of seemingly contradictory survivor responses to downsizing. For example, following a downsizing announcement, survivors have responded by working harder, reducing their efforts, or not changing their efforts at all (Brockner, Grover, & Blonder, 1988). Some survivors increase their good citizenship behaviors (Bies, Martin, & Brockner, 1993), whereas others withdraw (Brockner, 1990). One of our purposes in this article is to develop a typology of survivor responses that not only synthesizes prior research but also identifies the underlying dimensions of these varied responses.

Our second purpose is to develop a theoretical framework to explain the factors that influence the different survivor responses identified in our typology. Thus, we draw on the Lazarus theory of stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) and its focus on cognitive appraisal. Through primary appraisal, survivors evaluate the potential threat of the downsizing. We posit that trust in management (because survivors believe that management is competent, reliable, open, and con-

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cerned about all stakeholders) and a perceived just implementation of the downsizing (because survivors believe they will be treated fairly) will reduce threat assessments and, in turn, will lead to more cooperative survivor responses. Through secondary appraisal, survivors evaluate their capability for coping with the downsizing. We posit that survivor empowerment (because of an enhanced sense of personal control) and the redesign of work (because of increased intrinsic job quality) will increase survivors' sense that they have the capability to cope with the downsizing and, in turn, will lead to more active responses to the downsizing.

Many downsizing researchers have focused on one of these variables—justice—and its interactions with outcome favorability (e.g., Brockner et al., 1994; Brockner, Wiesenfeld, & Martin, 1995), the nature of work (e.g., Brockner, Wiesenfeld, Reed, Grover, & Martin, 1993), individual differences of survivors (e.g., Brockner, Tyler, & Cooper-Schneider, 1992), and social ties with victims (e.g., Brockner, Grover, Reed, DeWitt, & O'Malley, 1987). In our theoretical framework we build on this substantial body of research on justice by articulating how survivor trust, empowerment, and the redesign of work also may have powerful influences on survivors' responses to downsizing. With the exception of some recent work focusing on the relationship between trust and justice (Brockner & Siegel, 1996; Brockner, Siegel, Daly, Tyler, & Martin, in press), few authors have examined the effects of these other constructs on survivors' responses.

Yet, trust, empowerment, and work redesign may have important effects on survivors during downsizing. As we describe in our propositions, if survivors do not *trust* that top management is concerned with the interests of all organizational stakeholders, is open and honest with employees, or is competent to lead the organization through the downsizing, then survivors are more likely to be threatened by the downsizing and to respond in destructive ways. Without trust, survivors are more likely to either withdraw from the organization or retaliate against management and the downsizing implementation.

If survivors do not feel *empowered* to take an active role in their work, then they will believe they have less capacity to cope with the downsizing and will be more likely to respond passively. Without empowerment, survivors experi-

ence a lack of personal control and feel helpless in the face of change.

Likewise, if work is not *redesigned* to minimize overload or reductions in job autonomy that typically accompany downsizing, then survivors will see themselves as having less capacity to cope with the downsizing and will be more likely to respond passively. On the contrary, when survivors experience enhanced job variety and autonomy, they will be more likely to take an active role in the downsizing. Thus, because trust, empowerment, and work redesign may have important effects on survivor responses beyond the well-documented effects of justice, a theoretical framework that includes these additional constructs should contribute to the literature.

We organize the article as follows. After defining downsizing, we introduce our typology of survivor archetypes, which begins to synthesize the growing body of research on survivor responses to downsizing. We then provide an overview of the Lazarus theory of stress and discuss its relevance in explaining the wide range of survivor responses to downsizing. We draw on the primary and secondary appraisal processes central to the Lazarus theory to develop our propositions, which explain how trust, empowerment, justice, and work redesign affect the range of survivor responses to downsizing delineated in our typology. We conclude with a discussion of the potential contributions of the framework, some directions for future research, and some implications for practice.

## A TYPOLOGY OF SURVIVOR RESPONSES

Many scholars define downsizing as a purposeful reduction in the size of an organization's workforce (Cameron, Freeman, & Mishra, 1991; Cascio, 1993). Downsizing is conceptually distinct from organizational decline, because its aim is the improvement of organizational efficiency, productivity, and competitiveness (Cameron et al., 1991; D'Aunno & Sutton, 1989; Kozlowski, Chao, Smith, & Hedlund, 1993). Victims of downsizing—that is, those who have lost their jobs—have been studied extensively in prior research (e.g., Latack, Kinicki, & Prussia, 1995; Leana & Ivancevich, 1987). Here, we focus on survivors of downsizing—that is, those who remain employed at the organization—because they can either facilitate or impede the out-

comes of the downsizing (Davy, Kinicki, & Scheck, 1991). Some researchers have speculated that intended outcomes, such as greater productivity or profitability, do not result because of poor survivor morale or implementation problems (Cascio, 1993).

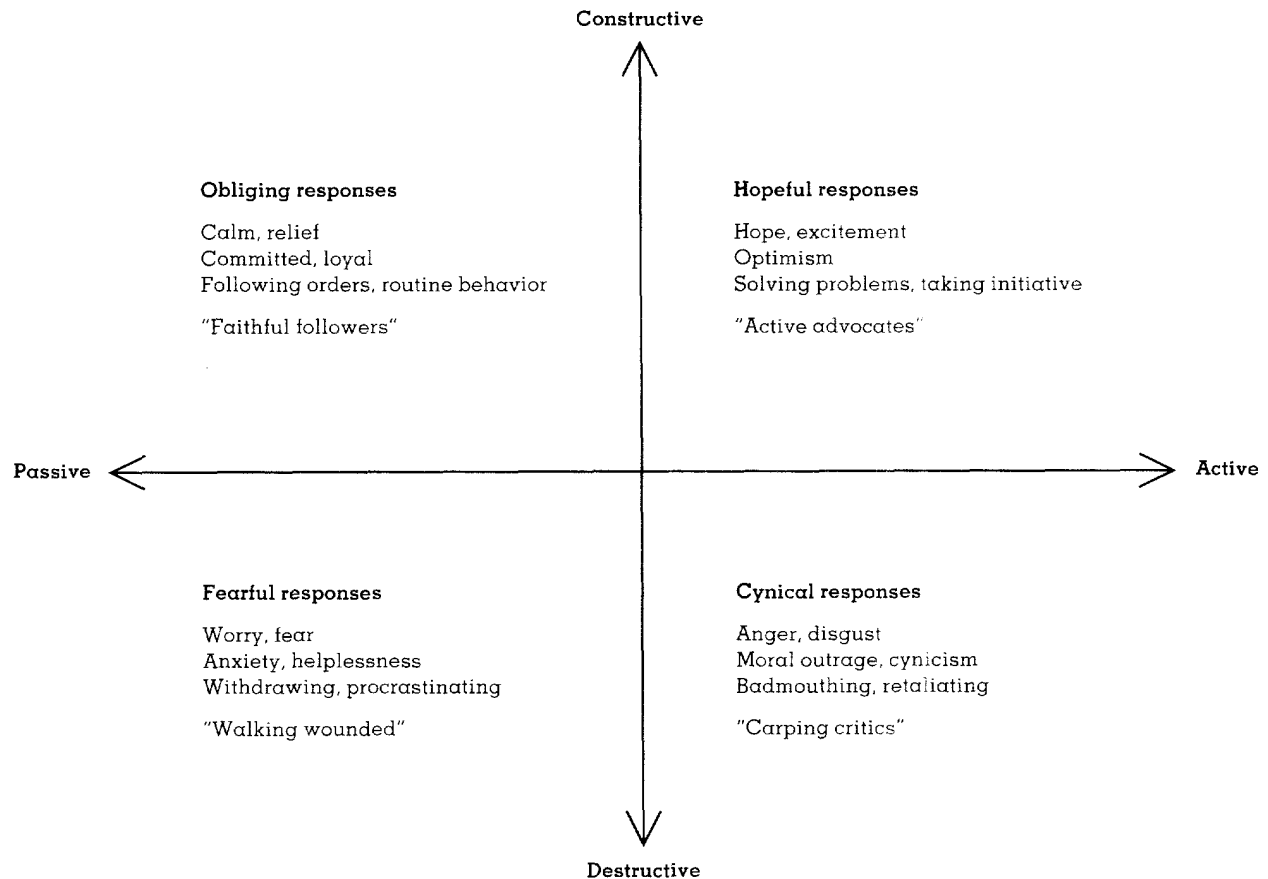
Survivors may have a wide variety of responses to downsizing. We draw on Farrell's (1983) exit, voice, loyalty, and neglect (EVLN) framework in building our typology. Building on Hirschman (1970), Farrell (1983) argues that responses to job dissatisfaction can be aligned along two separate dimensions: constructive/destructive and active/passive (see Figure 1). We apply these two dimensions to delineate the different survivor responses to downsizing.

*Constructive* survivors do not view significant threat or harm from the downsizing and, thus, are willing to cooperate with top management in implementing the downsizing. For example,

survivors may work more hours without compensation to help the organization through the transition. In contrast, *destructive* survivors feel more threatened or evaluate more potential for harm from the downsizing and are less willing to cooperate in implementing the downsizing. For example, survivors may hoard resources within their own department that could be better used elsewhere in the organization. This constructive/destructive dimension is consistent with the cooperative/uncooperative dimension in Thomas's (1976) model of conflict behavior.

An *active* survivor response reflects a belief that the survivor can cope with the downsizing, and is manifested as an assertive response. For example, survivors may initiate efforts to identify redundancies in their unit or may offer informal or formal protests to the downsizing. In contrast, *passive* survivors see themselves as having less ability to cope with the downsizing

**FIGURE 1**  
**Archetypes of Survivor Response**



and tend to have little personal initiative in responding to the downsizing. For example, survivors may simply wait for their superiors to identify ways to reduce costs or eliminate unnecessary tasks. An active response deals with the problem, whereas a passive response avoids or neglects the problem (Rusbult, Farrell, Rogers, & Mainous, 1988). This dimension is consistent with the assertive/unassertive dimension found in Thomas's (1976) framework of conflict behavior.

The juxtaposition of these two dimensions results in four archetypes of survivor responses to downsizing: (1) fearful, (2) obliging, (3) cynical, and (4) hopeful. The *hopeful* and *obliging* responses are *constructive*, because they reflect survivors' beliefs that they will not be unduly threatened or harmed by the downsizing. In contrast, the *fearful* and *cynical* responses are *destructive*, because survivors believe there is significant potential for threat or harm from the downsizing. Likewise, *hopeful* and *cynical* responses are *active*, because survivors believe they have the capability to cope with the downsizing. In contrast, *obliging* and *fearful* responses are *passive* responses to the downsizing, because survivors do not believe they have the capability to cope with the downsizing.

Our survivor archetypes capture the emotions, cognitions, and behaviors that survivors use to cope with the stress of downsizing (Kets de Vries & Balazs, 1997). Similar to the EVLN typology (Withey & Cooper, 1989), our archetypes are affective, cognitive, and behavioral composites. To help explicate the similarities and differences across the archetypes, we discuss the various emotional, cognitive, and behavioral components of each archetype below (Smith, Haynes, Lazarus, & Pope, 1996). However, we note that not every survivor will experience all of the components of a specific archetype but may experience different components selectively.

### The Fearful Response: "Walking Wounded"

Fearful survivors consider the downsizing as potentially harmful and believe that they have few resources to cope. Consequently, these survivors are destructive and passive in their response to a downsizing (see Figure 1). The fearful archetype corresponds to the "neglect" quadrant in the EVLN framework (Farrell, 1983),

the "retreat" quadrant in Robinson's (1992) typology of responses to dissatisfaction, and the "avoiding" quadrant in Thomas's (1976) conflict framework.

Those manifesting a fearful response might be labeled the "walking wounded" of the organization. Because they believe they can be harmed by the downsizing, fearful survivors commonly experience fright, depression, and worry. Typical cognitive responses associated with this archetype might be anxiety (Astrachan, 1995), reduced concentration (Kets de Vries & Balazs, 1997), a sense of being out of control (cf., Folkman, 1984; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), and helplessness (Seligman, 1975). These survivors may reduce their level of commitment to the organization, because they identify with the loss of respected coworkers and friends (Brockner et al., 1987).

Behaviorally, these survivors tend to withdraw from work (Brockner, 1988) and procrastinate about decision making (Kets de Vries & Balazs, 1997). Because they believe that they have few resources to cope with the downsizing, they may attempt to escape through absenteeism and lateness (Robinson, 1992) or by focusing on nonwork interests and activities (Withey & Cooper, 1989).

### The Obliging Response: "Faithful Followers"

Similar to fearful survivors, obliging survivors do not believe that they have the personal resources to adequately cope with the downsizing. However, unlike fearful survivors, obliging survivors view the downsizing as less threatening, with less potential for personal harm. Fearful survivors believe that the downsizing is inimical to their interests and that nothing can be done about it, whereas obliging survivors believe that the downsizing is basically benign and are willing to go along with what is expected of them, because doing so is not expected to lead to harm. Consequently, obliging survivors are constructive, yet passive, in their responses (see Figure 1).

The obliging archetype is consistent with the "accommodating" quadrant of Thomas's (1976) typology and the "loyal" quadrant of the EVLN framework (Farrell, 1983). We prefer the label "obliging" to "loyal," because loyalty often has been portrayed in the management literature as active or self-directed support (Withey & Cooper,

1989). We conceptualize such active loyalty as more consistent with the hopeful response, which we describe below. The obliging response might be more appropriately considered "blind" loyalty (Graham, 1986).

Whereas fearful survivors might be labeled the "walking wounded," obliging survivors could be called "faithful followers." Emotionally, obliging survivors are not highly aroused and are likely to feel calm, relief, or even gratitude because they do not feel personally threatened by the downsizing. Cognitively, these survivors are likely to be committed and loyal to the organization, in spite of the problems it may be experiencing. Behaviorally, instead of withdrawing from the organization or procrastinating—as is the case for fearful survivors—obliging survivors tend to respond to a downsizing by following orders obediently. Because they believe they have few personal resources for coping with the downsizing, these survivors are apt to wait willingly for conditions to improve and to stick with the job through good times and bad (Robinson, 1992; Rusbult et al., 1988).

Although they cooperate in implementing the downsizing, obliging survivors are largely compliant and accommodating, accepting the goals and objectives given to them by management (Rusbult et al., 1988). These survivors do not aggressively seek out new courses of action but, instead, stick to familiar ways of doing their work.

#### **The Cynical Response: "Carping Critics"**

Unlike the obliging survivors we discuss above, cynical survivors believe that they have the personal resources to cope with the downsizing. Like fearful survivors, cynical survivors feel personally threatened that they can be harmed by the downsizing. Thus, they are active and destructive in their response (see Figure 1). The cynical response corresponds to the "competing" quadrant in Thomas's (1976) model and the "destruction" response to dissatisfaction in Robinson's typology (1992).

An appropriate label for these survivors might be "carping critics." Emotionally, these survivors are highly aroused and are likely to feel anger, disgust, and resentment, because they see significant potential for personal harm. This survivor archetype is cognitively manifested by

a sense of moral outrage (Bies, 1987), cynicism, or the perception of a blatant violation of the psychological contract (Rousseau, 1995). Because they believe that they have the personal resources to cope with the downsizing, cynical survivors' behavioral response is proactive—more so than the fearful or obliging survivors described above.

Cynical survivors have a voice, but that voice tends to be destructive; they militate against the downsizing process rather than support it. They may challenge or "badmouth" management during the downsizing (Cameron, Freeman, & Mishra, 1993) and, at the extreme, may engage in acts of vandalism, retaliation, or sabotage (Kets de Vries & Balazs, 1997; Robinson, 1992). In sum, the cynical response includes survivors who question or even interfere with the downsizing process, rather than cooperate with management to implement the downsizing.

#### **The Hopeful Response: "Active Advocates"**

The hopeful response is the opposite of the fearful response; survivors in this quadrant believe they have the resources to cope with and do not feel threatened by the downsizing. Thus, hopeful survivors are both active and constructive (see Figure 1). The hopeful archetype shares the constructive orientation of the obliging archetype (i.e., these survivors are not particularly threatened by the potential for harm from the downsizing) and the active orientation of the cynical archetype (i.e., the survivors believe that they can actively cope with the downsizing). This archetype is consistent with the "collaboration" quadrant of Thomas's (1976) framework and the "voice" quadrant of both the EVLN framework (Farrell, 1983) and Robinson's (1992) typology of responses to dissatisfaction.

An appropriate label for these survivors might be "active advocates." Because they do not feel particularly threatened, this archetype is manifested emotionally in survivors by excitement about the future and hope that things will get better with time. Cognitively, because hopeful survivors believe they have the resources to effectively cope with the downsizing, they tend to be optimistic about the outcome of it (Smith et al., 1996). They experience a sense of ownership in helping to enhance the performance of the organization (O'Neill & Lenn, 1995; Robinson, 1992).

Behaviorally, this quadrant reflects active and constructive efforts of survivors to improve conditions by discussing problems or taking actions to solve them (Rusbult et al., 1988). Rather than just following orders, as is the case with obliging survivors, hopeful survivors are not afraid to take risks or to develop novel ways to improve things. Such hopeful responses have been documented in the downsizing literature as good citizenship behaviors (Bies et al., 1993) and job involvement (Brockner et al., 1988). In contrast to cynical survivors, who fight against the downsizing, hopeful survivors support the organization and find ways to fulfill the objectives of the downsizing effort.

### Discussion of the Archetypes

Although we categorize survivor responses into these four archetypes, their actual responses may fall anywhere along the two underlying dimensions; this means that survivors may exhibit hybrid responses in coping with the downsizing mandate. For example, individuals may exemplify aspects of both the cynical and hopeful responses by being strongly critical of the organization's downsizing efforts—but in a constructive manner. Indeed, if the organization's efforts are misguided, a rebellious critic may be just what the organization needs. These critics are clearly constructive, for they have the organization's long-term interests at heart; however, top management may initially view their efforts as destructive to their own well-laid plans for implementing the downsizing. Such hopeful critics have enough faith in the organization to believe that their disobedient efforts will lead to positive change.

Although the two underlying dimensions are conceptually distinct, we do not view them as mutually exclusive in practice. Thus, we might expect more survivor responses to fall in the "on-diagonal" archetypes (i.e., fearful or hopeful) than in the "off-diagonal" archetypes. The off-diagonal responses are, nevertheless, important areas for study. For example, the cynical response may have an important effect on the organization, particularly when it is manifested in such behaviors as employee violence. In contrast, obliging survivors, who work with top management to implement the downsizing as mandated, may be necessary to get the organization back on its feet after the tumult of down-

sizing. Thus, although the off-diagonal responses may be less frequent, they may still have important effects on organizational activities.

In addition, we suggest that survivors may shift from one quadrant into another throughout the downsizing process—that is, survivor responses are dynamic. Employees may progress (see Beehr & Gupta's, 1978, progression theory) from responses that require little cost or energy to more costly or demanding responses (Robinson, 1992). In other words, employees progress from less to more intense responses as dissatisfaction persists (Rusbult et al., 1988).

In our framework individuals who initially exhibit a fearful response may become more obliging because of management's use of fair procedures for selecting layoff victims. Similarly, obliging survivors may become more hopeful if management enriches survivors' jobs as the downsizing is being implemented. Such shifts might be part of a virtuous cycle when employees become more active and constructive through the downsizing.

In contrast, survivors also can become more passive and destructive over time, if the downsizing is implemented differently. A destructive shift from a hopeful to a cynical response may take place if management reneges on promises or allocates workloads inequitably. A vicious cycle can take place if these cynical survivor responses are met with further management actions deemed undesirable by survivors.

In the following section we draw on the Lazarus stress theory to develop a theoretical framework that articulates some of the key factors that may influence which survivor responses are most likely to occur in a downsizing situation.

### A STRESS-BASED FRAMEWORK OF SURVIVORS' RESPONSES

We ground our framework in Lazarus's stress theory,<sup>1</sup> where stress is conceptualized as a process in which environmental stressors are mediated by cognitive appraisal, which, in turn, leads to individual coping responses (Folkman, Lazarus, Gruen, & DeLongis, 1986; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Cognitive appraisal is the pro-

<sup>1</sup> We thank an anonymous reviewer for this helpful suggestion.

cess of evaluating or "categorizing an encounter, and its various facets, with respect to its significance for well-being" (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984: 31). According to Lazarus, there are two types of cognitive appraisal: primary and secondary. Through primary appraisal, individuals evaluate the potential threat of the stressor. Through secondary appraisal, individuals evaluate their own resources and capability for coping with the stressor. Both appraisals, in turn, influence a wide range of coping responses, which refer to individuals' emotional and behavioral efforts to deal with the stressful encounter (Folkman et al., 1986). In summary, which coping responses occur will depend on how the individual appraises the environmental stressor (Lazarus, 1993).

We utilize Lazarus's theory of stress to explain survivor responses to downsizing for a number of reasons. First, downsizing reflects a potentially stressful encounter for survivors (Brockner et al., 1988), stemming, in part, from its inherent ambiguity (Sutton, 1987). Harm or "an irrevocable loss" (Lazarus, 1993: 5) may be one view survivors have of downsizing, for they may have lost valued coworkers or been subjected to pay cuts to preserve their own jobs. Threat or "anticipation of harm that has not yet taken place" (Lazarus, 1993: 5) may be an alternative view, for survivors may fear that they could lose their own jobs in the future (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984), that fewer promotional opportunities will be available as hierarchies are flattened (Sutton & D'Aunno, 1989), or that smaller pay raises may become the norm as cost cutting is emphasized (Brockner, Grover, O'Malley, Reed, & Glynn, 1993). Moreover, survivors may anticipate workload increases since fewer people are available to do the required work (Sutton, 1990). Challenge or "an opportunity for growth, mastery or gain" (Folkman, 1984: 840) is another way in which survivors may view downsizing; they may learn new skills as they take over the responsibilities of the downsized victims.

The Lazarus theory of stress is also relevant because it posits that how individuals respond to a stressful situation will depend on how they construe or appraise it. Thus, primary and secondary appraisal processes can be used to help predict under what conditions we might expect the different archetypes in our typology of survivor responses. According to our typology, when survivors appraise downsizing as threat-

ening or harmful (i.e., primary appraisal), they are likely to respond less constructively. When survivors believe they can effectively cope with the downsizing (i.e., secondary appraisal), they are likely to respond more actively.

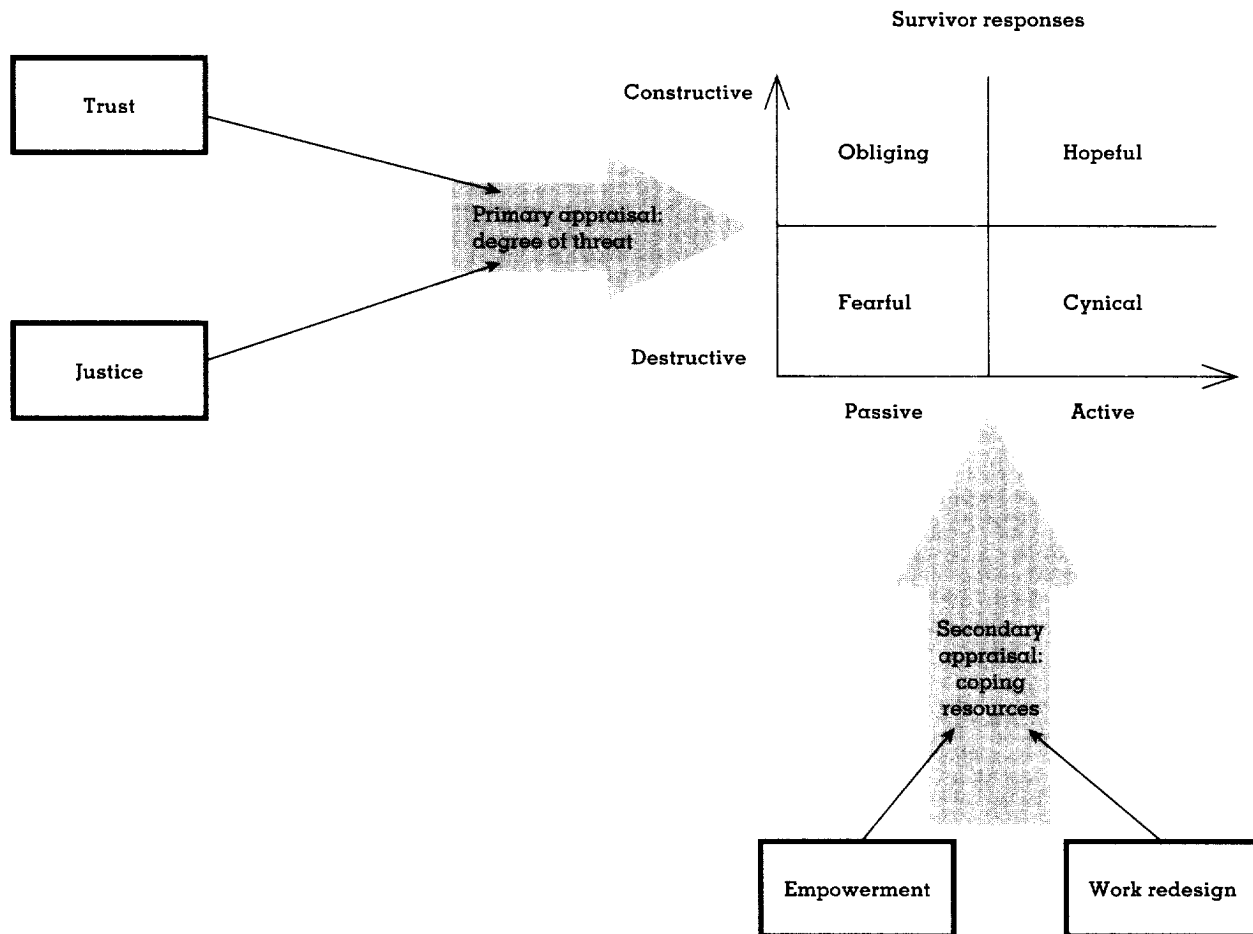
In our theoretical framework we identify what we believe are the key factors influencing survivors' primary and secondary appraisals of downsizing. We suggest that trust in management and justice in the implementation process reduce perceptions of threat stemming from the downsizing and, thus, facilitate more constructive survivor responses. We also suggest that empowerment and work redesign play important buffering roles, serving as antidotes to enhance survivors' sense that they can cope with the downsizing, thus facilitating more active survivor responses. We illustrate the theoretical framework in Figure 2.

### Factors Shaping Primary Appraisal and Survivor Responses

In this section we describe two factors that shape the primary appraisal process by reducing the evaluation of the threat inherent in the downsizing. First, trust in top management minimizes the categorization of threat by helping survivors to understand and believe in management's intentions and expected behavior. Second, the perceived justness of the downsizing implementation reduces the degree to which the downsizing is evaluated as threatening by reducing the ambiguity of the expected outcome from the encounter (cf., Folkman, 1984). Because trust in management and a perceived just implementation of downsizing both work to reduce the appraised threat inherent in downsizing, we argue that they will lead to more constructive survivor responses.

**Trust in top management.** Granovetter (1985) and Lewis and Weigert (1985) define trust as a willingness to be vulnerable to others, based on the prior belief that those others are trustworthy (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995; Mishra, 1996; Sitkin & Roth, 1993). Being vulnerable means that a significant potential for loss exists for an individual (Deutsch, 1973; Luhmann, 1979; Zand, 1972). In a downsizing context, this willingness to be vulnerable may be manifested in high-performing survivors who remain with the organization, even though they could get good jobs elsewhere. It also may be manifested by a

**FIGURE 2**  
Theoretical Framework of Survivor Responses to Downsizing



belief in top management's assurances that downsizing will improve competitive advantage, despite initial evidence indicating the contrary. Survivors might make significant purchases (perhaps buying a house) after a promise that no additional layoffs will occur, only to have those promises broken and their jobs lost (*New York Times*, 1996).

Scholars have documented several key dimensions of trustworthiness, including a concern for others' interests, competence, openness, and reliability (Hart & Saunders, 1997; Mayer et al., 1995; Mishra, 1996). Each dimension additively contributes to a party's trustworthiness. We use these dimensions to explain the logic for why trust may lead to less threatening primary appraisals. A belief that management is *concerned* about the best interests of survivors leads to less threatening

appraisals, because survivors believe that top management is acting not only in its own interests. Survivors who believe that management is *competent* may also appraise the downsizing as less threatening because they view top management as capable of enhancing the organization's competitive position. Survivors who believe that top management is *reliable* may also be less threatened, because they believe that top managers will keep their promises. Finally, survivors who believe that top management is being *open* and honest about what is happening (O'Neill & Lenn, 1995) may be less threatened because uncertainty is reduced. Nevertheless, the fact that trust may be violated in each of these instances (i.e., management may be self-interested, lack the skills to lead the organization through the restructuring, break its promises, or withhold

important information) reflects the vulnerability of trust.

Because trust facilitates less threatening appraisals of the downsizing, it is likely to foster more constructive survivor responses. In general, trust allows individuals to cooperate with others because it minimizes the threat of malfeasance (Fukuyama, 1995; Golembiewski & McConkie, 1975). More specifically, a belief that top management is concerned about the interests of employees enhances constructive responses, because survivors presumably are willing to further their own interests. When top managers are reliable in keeping promises and open in sharing information, they reduce uncertainty and ambiguity for survivors. Lower ambiguity and uncertainty allow individuals to work together more easily to deal with a stressful encounter (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). A belief that top management is competent may also lead to constructive responses, because survivors feel comfortable supporting top management's vision of the future. For these reasons higher levels of trust prior to the downsizing are likely to lead to constructive survivor responses during the downsizing process.

*Proposition 1a. Survivors who trust top management prior to downsizing will be likely to exhibit constructive (i.e., hopeful or obliging) responses.*

As defined previously, trust is a dynamic construct reflecting an individual's beliefs about person-environment relationships. Thus, we suggest that the subsequent levels of trust that evolve during downsizing also will affect survivor responses. For example, a survivor may forego an interview with another company and cooperate during implementation of the downsizing following the promise of no further layoffs. If another layoff is announced, initial levels of trust may erode, even if the survivor is not affected immediately. In contrast, a survivor who initially has low levels of trust in top management may find the downsizing implemented in a way that enhances his or her trust in management (e.g., top management keeps it promises or shares sensitive information). Thus, because initial levels of trust may change during the course of the downsizing, we suggest that subsequent levels of trust also may have an influence on survivor responses.

*Proposition 1b. Survivors who trust top management during the implementation of the downsizing will be likely to exhibit constructive (i.e., hopeful or obliging) responses.*

**Justice.** Brockner and his colleagues have produced a significant body of research showing that perceptions of justice or fairness have a strong influence on survivors' responses to a downsizing activity (e.g., Brockner, Tyler, & Cooper-Schneider, 1992; Brockner, Wiesenfeld, Reed, Grover, & Martin, 1993). Three different elements of justice have been identified: (1) distributive, (2) procedural, and (3) interactional (Brockner & Siegel, 1996). In the following paragraphs we explain how each element of justice may mitigate the threat of downsizing in the primary appraisal process and, in turn, facilitate more constructive survivor responses.

*Distributive justice.* Distributive justice reflects the fairness of the *outcomes* resulting from the downsizing (Brockner & Greenberg, 1990). In prior research on distributive justice, authors have focused on how survivors perceive the outcomes for *victims* (e.g., adequacy of outplacement assistance and severance pay; Brockner, DeWitt, Grover, & Reed, 1990; Brockner et al., 1994; Rousseau & Anton, 1988). Because survivors identify with victims, often viewing them as valued friends or colleagues (Brockner et al., 1987; Brockner et al., 1994), perceptions of distributive justice will influence the survivors' appraisal of the downsizing. If victims receive generous benefits, survivors can be expected to appraise the downsizing as less threatening, because they anticipate that they will receive similar benefits should they lose their own jobs.

A second element of distributive justice, which scholars have given less attention, is the extent to which the burden of the downsizing is shared across levels of the organizational hierarchy. For example, in one organization executives received significant performance bonuses at the same time that lower-level employees were laid off with minimal severance packages (Dial & Murphy, 1995). We suggest that resource allocations favoring top management at the expense of survivors or victims will result in more threatening appraisals; in such cases survivors are likely to believe that the allocation of scarce resources has been unfair and that they will

suffer disproportionately (Brockner & Greenberg, 1990).

Because distributive justice facilitates less threatening appraisals, we suggest that it will lead to more constructive survivor responses. Thus, if survivors believe that the victims of the downsizing receive fair outcomes, they will be less likely to consider top management as adversarial—rather, as helpful in easing the transition for victims—and will respond more constructively. Furthermore, if the burdens shouldered by downsizing survivors are distributed fairly (e.g., across-the-board pay cuts or budget reductions based on equality or need), survivors will feel less need to defend scarce resources and will be more likely to work constructively with management in implementing the downsizing. Sharing the burden across levels of the hierarchy creates the perception that everyone is “in this together,” thus reducing defensiveness and increasing survivors’ constructive behavior.

*Proposition 2. Survivors who appraise the downsizing as distributively just will be likely to exhibit constructive (i.e., hopeful or obliging) responses.*

*Procedural justice.* Procedural justice reflects the fairness of the processes used to implement the downsizing (Brockner & Greenberg, 1990). It has typically been operationalized in terms of the decision rule to determine who is laid off and in terms of the amount of advance notice provided to victims (Brockner, Tyler, & Cooper-Schneider, 1992; Brockner et al., 1994). A decision rule based on merit (where poorer-performing employees or those with less potential are laid off first) contributes to perceptions of procedural fairness (Brockner, 1988). In order to be perceived as fair, management should ground merit-based decision rules in a well-established performance management system and should link them to the future mission of the organization (Lind & Tyler, 1988). When the decision rule is based on merit, a survivor is more likely to appraise the downsizing as predictable and, hence, less threatening; therefore, in such cases we expect survivors to respond more constructively. In contrast, when survivors perceive the decision rule to be politically based or random, they are less likely to see the implementation as fair and more likely to retaliate against the injustice of the system.

*Advance notice*—another component of procedural justice (Brockner et al., 1994; Kozlowski et al., 1993)—allows individuals to respond constructively, because the probability of an unexpected downsizing has been minimized. Rather than feeling incapacitated by anxiety about future downsizings, with assurances of advance notice, survivors can lower their defenses because they will be given adequate time to prepare for downsizings in the future. Thus, advance notice can reduce assessments of threat (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984: 95), thereby increasing constructive survivor responses.

*Proposition 3. Survivors who appraise the downsizing as procedurally just will be likely to exhibit constructive (i.e., hopeful and obliging) responses.*

*Interactional justice.* Recent formulations of interactional justice focus on at least three types of social accounts—or verbal strategies—used to minimize the apparent severity of the encounter (Bies, 1987; Brockner & Greenberg, 1990; Tyler & Bies, 1990): (1) causal accounts that focus on credible mitigating circumstances for the downsizing (e.g., “We had to lay off workers because of an economic recession that was beyond our control”), (2) ideological accounts that link the downsizing to a vision of the organization’s future (e.g., “Laying off workers will help improve our company’s competitive advantage in the future”), and (3) penitential accounts that focus on the interpersonal treatment of those who are affected by the downsizing (e.g., “We are really sorry to have had to resort to layoffs”). Researchers have shown that offering explanations of why the unpopular events must happen ameliorates negative reactions and promotes the belief that the decision makers’ acts were fair and the result of good judgment (Bies, 1987).

Regarding the first type of social account, survivors may consider the rationale for the downsizing as justifiable when it addresses the mitigating circumstances in the external environment, rather than the enrichment of shareholders or top management (Brockner & Greenberg, 1990; Brockner et al., 1994; Kleinfeld, 1996). Survivors are less likely to be threatened if they can clearly understand how external factors necessitated the downsizing, because those external factors may eliminate “a worst-case reading of a harmdoer’s intentions” (Bies, 1987: 303). Perceptions of intentionality can magnify the

perception of injustice and, thus, increase the assessment of threat, which, in turn, decreases the probability of constructive survivor responses.

Regarding the second type of social account, communicating a clear vision of how the downsizing will benefit all stakeholders also reduces the threatening nature of the downsizing, because survivors can see hope for the future. This type of social account reframes the act of downsizing by placing it in a broader context that will legitimate the action (e.g., "We have to take this drastic action now because it will help our organization to thrive in the future;" Bies, 1987). When survivors have hope in the future of the organization, they will be more likely to respond constructively because they can understand how the downsizing can enhance competitive advantage.

Regarding the third type of social account, if survivors are treated humanely and with dignity, it is likely that they will respond constructively, because they feel valued and appreciated by the organization. This type of account commonly involves an apology and a public expression of remorse (Bies, 1987). In contrast, if survivors are ignored or blamed for the downsizing, it is likely that they will be threatened by the downsizing. Thus, they will be likely to respond destructively, because they feel violated by the treatment of top management.

*Proposition 4. Survivors who appraise the downsizing as interactionally just will be likely to exhibit constructive (i.e., hopeful and obliging) responses.*

Prior research suggests that trust and justice may not only have independent effects but may also have joint effects on survivor responses. Brockner and his colleagues have found that procedural and interactional justice may engender higher levels of trust over time (Brockner & Siegel, 1996; Brockner et al., in press). In addition, trust may interact with different dimensions of justice to stimulate even higher levels of constructive survivor responses. For example, researchers have shown that the degree of trust interacts with distributive justice to influence how survivors respond to downsizing (Brockner & Siegel, 1996; Brockner et al., in press). Because these joint effects have been developed in prior work, we do not offer specific propositions for them, but we caution that they should be mod-

eled in empirical tests of the theoretical framework.

### Factors Shaping Secondary Appraisal and Survivor Responses

Through secondary appraisal, individuals evaluate what, if anything, can be done to overcome or prevent harm. Beliefs about the kinds of resources available to the individual to cope with the downsizing influence the secondary appraisal process and will lead to more active survivor responses. In this section we describe two factors—(1) personal beliefs about empowerment in the work role and (2) work redesign—that we suggest will enhance survivors' evaluations that they can cope with the downsizing and that will, in turn, lead to more active survivor responses.

**Empowerment.** "Appraisals of personal control are a key part of secondary appraisal . . . they refer to the person's judgment or belief about the possibilities for control in a specific encounter" (Folkman, 1984: 842). Layoffs are likely to threaten survivors' sense of control; therefore, factors that affect a sense of control before and during downsizing are likely to be important in mitigating the helplessness often experienced by survivors during downsizing (Brockner, 1988). Empowerment reflects a personal sense of control in the workplace as manifested in four beliefs about the person-work environment relationship: (1) meaning, (2) competence, (3) self-determination, and (4) impact (Spreitzer, 1995; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990).

*Meaning* reflects a sense of purpose or personal connection about work. *Competence* indicates that individuals believe they have the skills and abilities necessary to perform their work well. This sense of competence is consistent with Bandura's (1989) notion of efficacy expectancy (i.e., the conviction that people can successfully execute behaviors required to produce outcomes). *Self-determination* reflects a sense of freedom about how individuals do their own work. *Impact* describes a belief that individuals can influence the system in which they are embedded, which is consistent with Bandura's (1989) notion of outcome expectancy.

Unlike more popular conceptions of empowerment, this definition does not imply an alignment with the vision of the organization. Thus, it is possible for empowered employees not to be

aligned with the vision of the organization and, instead, to work to further their self-interests. These are the "loose cannons" that organizations fear will result from empowerment. In addition, this definition conceptualizes empowerment as residing within the survivor, rather than in a set of management practices; thus, it reflects a set of beliefs about personal control in the work environment.

The four dimensions we describe above help to explain why empowerment should influence secondary appraisal. The more survivors believe they have a sense of meaning, the more they can rely on their own sense of purpose and direction in coping with the ambiguity inherent in the downsizing. Second, the more survivors believe that they have the competence necessary to perform well in the changing environment, the more they see themselves as having the personal resources to cope with the changes in work associated with the downsizing. Third, the more survivors have a sense of self-determination, the more they see themselves as having choices about or control over how to cope with the downsizing. Fourth, the more survivors believe that they can have an impact on the downsizing implementation, the more likely they will believe they have the personal power to cope with outcomes associated with the downsizing. Thus, each of the four dimensions should enhance survivors' sense of personal control in the secondary appraisal process.

We suggest that such empowered survivors will be more likely to become active participants in implementing the downsizing, rather than passive recipients of a top management mandate. "People fear and tend to avoid . . . situations they believe exceed their skills whereas they get involved in activities and behave assuredly when they judge themselves capable to handling situations that would otherwise be intimidating" (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984: 70). Without having some sense of control over a stressful situation, individuals will withdraw into an utter state of helplessness (Greenberger & Strasser, 1986). Indeed, those who believe that they have less control over their work environment—as measured by their influence over work content, deadlines, and the people they work with in accomplishing assignments—exhibit greater stress, as measured by coronary heart disease symptoms (Marmot, Bosma, Hemingway, Brunner, & Stanfeld, 1997). When empow-

ered, however, employees do not feel as though they are mere "cogs" in a machine but more active shapers of the organization (Bell & Staw, 1989).

Self-determination and impact can add certainty to a context of ambiguity and facilitate less rigid or mechanistic survivor responses (Sutton & D'Aunno, 1989; Sutton & Kahn, 1987). Individuals who believe that they can influence the organization will be more likely to proactively respond to a stressful event, because they feel a greater sense of personal control (Greenberger & Strasser, 1986; Greenberger, Strasser, & Lee, 1988). Likewise, researchers using the EVLN framework have found that sufficient personal control contributes to more proactive responses to dissatisfaction (Withey & Cooper, 1989).

The competence dimension of empowerment should also facilitate more active survivor responses. Weick (1988) argues that individuals who believe they have "capacity" ("competence," in our empowerment terminology) will be less defensive and will see more opportunities to deal with a stressor. These competence beliefs also expand individuals' responses for dealing with stressful events (Weick, 1988). Feelings of competence provide the self-confidence (Bandura, 1989) required to take risks, try new things, and be innovative (Spreitzer, 1995). Competence also affects individuals' willingness to persist in the face of obstacles and adverse experiences (Bandura, 1989).

Finally, the meaning dimension of empowerment should also facilitate more active survivor responses. Survivors who have a strong personal connection to work should want to cope with the downsizing because their work is meaningful. Such survivors will be more likely to take an active role in the downsizing, because they are guided by their own purpose and direction.

Thus, we argue that the four dimensions of empowerment should help survivors feel more in control, should help them to cope with the demands of the downsizing, and, hence, should increase their propensity to respond more actively. Given that our definition of empowerment does not imply an alignment with the vision of the organization, these active responses can be either constructive or destructive (which one will depend on the primary appraisal process).

*Proposition 5a. Survivors who feel empowered prior to the downsizing will be likely to exhibit active (i.e., hopeful or cynical) responses.*

Empowerment is not a personality disposition; rather, it is a dynamic construct that reflects individual beliefs about person-environment relationships. Thus, we suggest that prior levels of empowerment will influence survivor responses and that subsequent levels of empowerment occurring during the implementation of the downsizing will also have an effect on survivor responses. We expect a survivor's empowerment to evolve over time, as prior empowerment is either reinforced or eroded during the course of the downsizing. For example, if management centralizes all decision-making authority, survivors are likely to feel less self-determination and impact and, thus, decreased empowerment as the downsizing is implemented. In contrast, if management provides opportunities for the training of survivors to take over the tasks of their former coworkers, survivors are likely to feel more competent and, thus, more empowered as the downsizing is implemented.

*Proposition 5b. Survivors who feel empowered during the implementation of the downsizing will be likely to exhibit active (i.e., hopeful or cynical) responses.*

**Work redesign.** The Lazarus theory of stress also suggests that situational factors will influence the secondary appraisal process because they help individuals understand what kinds of job-related resources are available for coping with a stressful situation (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). We suggest that the extent to which the design of survivors' work has been changed in conjunction with the downsizing (Brockner & Wiesenfeld, 1993) will influence the secondary appraisal process and survivor responses.

Job design changes that enhance the intrinsic quality of the survivors' work (Brockner, Grover, Reed, & Dewitt, 1992) are likely to help survivors to feel more able to cope with the downsizing and, thus, increase the likelihood of more active responses. If the intrinsic quality of work has increased or remained constant as a result of the downsizing, survivors can focus their attention on coping with the downsizing, rather than being distracted with how they can return the

design of their work to previous levels of intrinsic quality (Brockner, Wiesenfeld, Reed, Grover, & Martin, 1993).

We focus on two elements of intrinsic job quality relevant to a downsizing context: (1) job variety and (2) job autonomy (Hackman & Oldham, 1980). First, as a result of the downsizing, survivors may be asked to take on the responsibilities of their former coworkers, thereby increasing the perceived variety of their work (Brockner, Wiesenfeld, Reed, Grover, & Martin, 1993). Survivors may consider the use or development of these additional skills as resources that can be used to help them cope with the downsizing. These newly developed skills and abilities may reduce survivors' sense of job insecurity, thus facilitating assessments of coping ability. Hackman and Oldham (1980) have shown that more job variety can increase individual motivation about the job and, in turn, facilitate more flexibility and initiative—qualities consistent with active survivor responses.

Second, a survivor's job autonomy may increase if a concerted effort is made to drive down decision-making authority in conjunction with the downsizing. Some downsizings reduce the number of layers of management, resulting in more decision-making discretion for survivors. When survivors have more autonomy in decision making and more choice over how to do their work, they are likely to feel more in control during the downsizing and better able to cope. Some limited research suggests that if efforts to downsize go beyond layoffs to include work redesign that grants greater authority to lower-echelon employees, survivors see more potential to effectively cope with the downsizing (Cameron et al., 1991, 1993; Kets de Vries & Balazs, 1997), facilitating a more active role in the downsizing process. Thus, we suggest that work redesign that is focused on increasing job variety and autonomy will influence secondary appraisal by enhancing the set of personal resources to cope with the downsizing, in turn facilitating more active survivor responses.

The relationship between these two elements of work redesign and survivor responses is not unidimensional, as was the case in the earlier propositions. Work redesign changes that enhance job variety and autonomy may also capture some elements of distributive justice, because they reflect the type of work survivors end

up with (i.e., an outcome). If survivors believe that the intrinsic quality of their jobs has decreased, they are likely to feel threatened by the downsizing (Brockner, Wiesenfeld, Reed, Grover, & Martin, 1993) and to respond less constructively. However, if survivors believe that the intrinsic quality of their jobs has improved as a result of the downsizing, the inherent threat of the downsizing is likely to be reduced (Brockner, Wiesenfeld, Reed, Grover, & Martin, 1993), and, as we describe in Proposition 2, we can expect more constructive survivor responses.<sup>2</sup> Thus, work redesign changes that are focused on job variety and autonomy are likely to enhance both active and constructive (i.e., hopeful) survivor responses.

*Proposition 6a. Changes in the design of work during the downsizing that increase job variety and autonomy will increase the likelihood of hopeful survivor responses.*

However, some changes in the design of work (e.g., role overload and reduced job autonomy) may reduce survivor beliefs that they can cope with the downsizing. Survivors may experience role overload as they struggle to complete the work formerly assigned to the victims of the downsizing (Cameron et al., 1993; Cascio, 1993; Kozlowski et al., 1993). If these new tasks require skills and competencies that survivors have not been trained for, they may be less confident in their ability to cope with the downsizing. This is not atypical, since top management rarely conducts systemic analyses of tasks and personnel before downsizing (Cameron et al., 1993). To the extent that work demands exceed survivors' physical resources (e.g., stamina) or psychological resources (e.g., skills), survivors are likely to appraise their coping resources as limited (Folkman, 1984: 842). Believing that they have fewer resources for coping, when they experience role overload, survivors are likely to respond more passively because of their limited coping ability.

In addition, as leaders seek to reduce their own uncertainty by centralizing decision making, survivors may experience greater restrictions and controls over their decision making (Sutton & D'Aunno, 1989). Mechanistic shifts in

the design of work and reduced job autonomy are common in the aftermath of workforce reductions (Sutton, 1990). Through reduced autonomy, survivors may see themselves as having less discretion over how best to cope with the downsizing. We expect reduced job autonomy, because it reduces the discretion of survivors and their perceptions of personal control, to lead to more passive survivor responses. When survivors believe that all decisions are being made at higher levels of the organization, they will have less initiative in responding to the downsizing, because they believe they can have limited influence.

We believe that work redesign also may capture some elements of distributive justice. When survivors feel overworked, and when their autonomy is reduced, they are likely to feel that the outcomes (the content of their work) they have received from the downsizing are unfair, as compared to before the downsizing. As we describe in Proposition 2, survivors who believe that the implementation of the downsizing is distributively unfair are likely to respond destructively, because they feel threatened by the downsizing and feel the need to protect what outcomes they still have (Sutton, 1990). Thus, work redesign changes that reflect work overload and reduced job autonomy are likely to increase both passive and destructive (i.e., fearful) survivor responses.

*Proposition 6b. Changes in the design of work during the downsizing that increase role overload and reduce job autonomy will enhance the likelihood of fearful survivor responses.*

With the exception of the work redesign proposition, our propositions regarding the predictors of survivor responses are delineated in terms of the two dimensions of our typology: (1) constructive/destructive and (2) active/passive. This is not to say that, for some survivors, trust and justice can also affect assessments of coping ability and that, for others, empowerment can also affect assessments of threat. However, our aim is to create a parsimonious theoretical framework, where the focus is on the most dominant predictors of specific survivor responses. Thus, except for work redesign, we focus all propositions on unidimensional relationships with the primary or secondary appraisal process.

<sup>2</sup> We thank a reviewer for this helpful distinction.

In order to predict a *specific* archetypal response, one must examine the combined effects of the different constructs in our framework. For example, we propose that trust and justice facilitate constructive responses and that empowerment and work redesign facilitate active responses. Thus, we would expect the most hopeful responses to occur with high levels of trust and justice, coupled with high levels of empowerment and work redesign. However, if either trust or justice erodes during the downsizing process, survivor responses are likely to become less constructive in nature; consequently, there may be an increase in cynical responses. Similarly, if either empowerment or work redesign decreases during the implementation of the downsizing, survivor responses are likely to become more passive; as a result, there may be an increase in obliging responses. Finally, if either trust or justice declines and there is a decrease in empowerment or work redesign, survivor responses are likely to be more fearful. Consequently, the joint effects of the four constructs in our framework must be considered to predict a specific archetypal response.

## DISCUSSION OF THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### Contributions

Our typology of survivor responses to downsizing contributes to the management literature in several ways. First, the four contrasting archetypes of survivor responses make sense of the varied and sometimes contradictory survivor responses we find in prior research. The typology explains how survivor responses can be organized along two underlying dimensions (constructive/destructive and active/passive). In contrast to Farrell, our typology focuses on *internal* responses; it delineates the responses of survivors who choose to remain part of the organization rather than those who choose to exit. Our typology also describes how survivor responses may evolve during the course of downsizing. Thus, we conceptualize survivor responses as dynamic; they are shaped by the implementation process of the downsizing.

Our typology also contributes to the refinement of the EVLN framework. According to previous empirical work, the "voice" element of the EVLN framework has the lowest internal consis-

tency of any of the quadrants (Withey & Cooper, 1989). One explanation for this is that voice may be a complex category that includes several components. We divide voice into two archetypes: cynical and hopeful. Both are high on the active dimensions; however, cynical survivors are destructive, whereas hopeful survivors are constructive. In prior work scholars assumed that a voice response to dissatisfaction was aligned with the goals and objective of the organization, but we have distinguished constructive from destructive manifestations of voice. Thus, we believe we have provided greater conceptual clarity to the voice element of the EVLN framework.

Our stress-based theoretical framework contributes to the management literature in other ways. Kets de Vries and Balazs argue that current research "pays insufficient attention to the cognitive and emotional effects of downsizing on the individual . . . it has not gone into sufficient depth to deconstruct the psychological dynamics that are set in motion by the process of downsizing" (1997: 18). Although some work on organizational stress has been embedded in prior research on downsizing (e.g., Brockner et al., 1987; Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984), our framework is among the first to apply the extensive body of research on stress by Lazarus and his colleagues to the context of downsizing (see also Brockner & Wiesenfeld, 1993, and Shaw & Barrett-Power, 1997). In our framework we suggest that even though prior attitudes and beliefs shape survivor responses to downsizing, the process by which the downsizing is implemented is also crucial. In this way our framework builds on the substantial body of research on the influence that fairness and justice have on survivor responses; it provides an initial explanation for how individual beliefs, such as trust and empowerment, and situational factors, such as work redesign, also shape survivor responses, thus providing avenues other than justice for future research on survivor responses to downsizing.

Our article contributes as well to the literature on trust, for we have focused on the potential of trust to explain individuals' reactions to threatening and ambiguous change in organizations. Few researchers, until recently, have focused on the role that trust plays in downsizing, despite the ubiquity of references to trust in popular accounts of downsizing. Our framework illus-

trates how trust can buffer survivors from the threatening aspects of change inherent in downsizing. Without trust, employees are likely to feel threatened by downsizing, leading to resistance and retaliation, rather than the constructive cooperation that is necessary to facilitate deep change (Quinn, 1996). Trust is instrumental in overcoming resistance to change, for it shapes how individuals interpret the implementation process (Kotter & Schlesinger, 1979). If they have trust, survivors are willing to give managers the benefit of the doubt that they are, indeed, doing what is right for the company and its employees. If they do not have trust, survivors are likely to believe that management is misguided—putting its own interests ahead of those of the company and its employees.

We also contribute to the literature on trust by examining the joint effects of trust and empowerment. Trust shapes assessments of the degree of threat inherent in downsizing, whereas empowerment shapes assessments of the capacity to cope with the inherent threat. In conjunction with the situational factors, an understanding of both trust and empowerment is necessary for predicting survivor responses. High levels of trust and empowerment increase the likelihood of hopeful survivors. Because they do not appraise the downsizing as threatening, and because they believe they have the capability to cope, these survivors are likely to work constructively and actively to implement the downsizing. In contrast, low levels of both trust and empowerment increase the likelihood of fearful survivors. Because these survivors are threatened by the downsizing, and because they believe they will not be able to cope, they are likely to respond passively but destructively.

But trust and empowerment may not always move in the same direction. High levels of trust in top management, coupled with little empowerment, are likely to result in blind loyalty, and passive accommodation may result (i.e., the obliging response). High levels of trust can create feelings of security (Golembiewski & McConkie, 1975; Luhmann, 1979); if these are combined with low empowerment, they may reduce survivor motivation. Indeed, with restricted response repertoires stemming from low empowerment (Weick, 1988), a highly trusting but disempowered survivor's reaction may be simply to attend to dominant cues from superiors or

to emit well-learned behaviors (cf. Staw, Sandelands, & Dutton, 1981).

In contrast, an empowered survivor with little trust is likely to respond cynically. Because this empowered survivor has a wide response repertoire but lacks trust in management, he or she may choose to take action *against* the organization (cf., Bies & Tripp, 1996). When trust is lacking, employees are more likely to develop paranoid cognitions (Fenigstein & Vanable, 1992; Kramer, 1996) that are consistent with the cynical response. The origins of such cynicism may be a perceived violation of the psychological contract (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994; Rousseau, 1995). The combination of deteriorating trust in management and increased monitoring on the part of the survivor for further violations is a perfect recipe for the cynical response.

#### Directions for Future Research

We suggest here some areas for future theoretical development and empirical research. Folkman (1984) and Oakland and Ostell (1996) emphasize the need to separate coping responses from assessments of coping effectiveness, because different coping strategies may be effective in different situations. Therefore, researchers should begin to identify the conditions under which each survivor response will be most effective and for whom.

Regarding *organizational* effectiveness, the hopeful response appears to be effective, because survivors act as partners in implementing the downsizing. However, if the organization's downsizing plans are misguided, a cynical response also may be effective. Indeed, a rebellious critic may be just the person to tell top management that its downsizing plan will damage competitive advantage (Wysocki, 1995). If top management has an established track record in managing downsizing efforts, and if employees have low skills, then obliging survivors may involve the least risk for the organization. Thus, under different circumstances, the hopeful, cynical, and obliging survivor responses may be effective for the organization. It is not clear, however, when the fearful response might be effective from an organizational perspective.

Similarly, researchers should begin to assess the effectiveness of the different survivor responses for *individuals*. The hopeful response

appears to be effective from an individual career perspective, because the survivor takes an active and constructive role in implementing the downsizing. However, hopeful survivors who exert a great deal of effort to help the organization may experience burnout over time and even exit the organization if management is not vigilant in identifying signs of excessive stress. As Brockner, Tyler, and Cooper-Schneider (1992) have found, individuals who are the most supportive can be the most damaged by a downsizing if they are not treated fairly.

Under other circumstances, a fearful response may provide some psychological protection for the survivor and facilitate coping. For 60-year-old employees who know they have few job alternatives and know they will eventually be laid off, a fearful response, where they can begin to psychologically withdraw from the situation, may be an effective response for their mental health (cf. Folkman, 1984). This disassociation can protect survivors against the pain of downsizing (Kets de Vries & Balazs, 1997).

The cynical response may have mixed effects for survivors, for it can help survivors feel better in the short run by allowing them to let off steam, but it may derail the survivor's career in the future. The obliging response may result in survivors passively responding to the wishes of management and failing to take initiative on their own. Such survivor responses increase the susceptibility for conformity and groupthink. Following these ideas, researchers could expand the theoretical framework to address and empirically examine the individual effectiveness outcomes of the survivor response typology.

Researchers also may help to identify both the dynamics and sufficiency of trust within threatening or rapidly changing organizational contexts. Scholars commonly believe that although trust takes much time to build, it is fragile and can be lost easily through violated obligations (Morrison & Robinson, 1997; Robinson, 1997). The resiliency of trust within organizations can, however, be examined through longitudinal designs that take place during such volatile circumstances as downsizing. Downsizing provides an excellent context in which to evaluate whether trust must deteriorate or whether it can be sustained or even enhanced during significant organizational change; it also can be used to evaluate the efficacy of organizational interventions in preserving trust.

Whether trust is limited in its capacity or is a sufficient condition for reducing uncertainty and providing constructive responses to threat (Barber, 1983; Luhmann, 1979) can also be tested by examining the influence of trust on survivors' responses in concert with assessments of justice, empowerment, and changes in the design of work. We believe that this is a potentially fruitful area for research on trust, given its salience in recent accounts of rapid and often-threatening organizational change (Davidow & Malone, 1992; Handy, 1995; Labich, 1996).

Researchers also could address the effect that personality dispositions have on survivor responses. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) suggest that generalized beliefs (or personality traits) also affect primary and secondary appraisal. We focus on specific beliefs, such as trust and empowerment, rather than personality traits, because such beliefs are more malleable to the influence of the organization. Nevertheless, personality traits may be important moderating variables for the relationships specified in our framework. For example, Brockner, Davy, and Carter (1985) and Brockner, Grover, O'Malley, Reed, and Glynn (1993) have found self-esteem to be an important moderator on survivor responses to downsizing. Moreover, Kets de Vries and Balazs (1997) suggest that hardiness can mitigate the stressful aspects of downsizing and can result in more proactive and constructive survivor responses.

In the future, theorists might also address the effect of demographic variables on survivor responses. Typically, these variables have been included as control variables, but they have received limited theoretical development. For example, older workers may have concerns about age discrimination and reduced alternative employment and, thus, may be more likely to respond fearfully. In contrast, if older workers have the safety net of a pending early retirement package, they may respond obligingly. Organizational tenure may also matter. The longer the tenure an individual has with an organization, the more likely he or she will have acquired organization-specific training, socialization, vested retirement funds, and comfortable work arrangements (such things as convenient housing and commutes, friends at work, and so on; Rusbult et al., 1988). Thus, survivors with longer tenures are likely to be more attached to the firm and may respond constructively. Future theoret-

ical work can be used to examine the effects of other relevant demographic influences on our archetypal responses.

Our theoretical framework suggests one primary implication for the design of empirical research: in order to test the specified propositions, longitudinal data must be collected. Brockner (1988) has called for more longitudinal and process-oriented research on survivor responses to downsizing. The Lazarus theory of stress is relational, in that the person and environment are viewed as being in a dynamic relationship over time. Researchers can best capture the dynamic nature of the downsizing process through longitudinal data collection methods. Data on the trust and empowerment of survivors should be collected prior to the downsizing announcement. Data on survivors' perceptions of justice and job redesign, as well as subsequent levels of trust and empowerment, should be collected as the downsizing is being implemented. Finally, data on survivors' responses (i.e., the four archetypes) should be collected following the downsizing. Optimally, data on survivor responses should be collected at additional points in time, as the downsizing progresses, in order for researchers to be able to assess the evolution of survivor responses.

Longitudinal designs will enable researchers to assess the sequence of events contributing to downsizing outcomes. Such data are necessary as well for assessing causality. However, collecting longitudinal data presents a formidable challenge for researchers, because it requires that they enter the firm prior to the downsizing announcement. Many organizations, by necessity, keep their strategic plans secret prior to announcing a downsizing, making it extremely difficult to identify a study site before an announcement is made. A further challenge is that many organizations are cautious about allowing researchers access to employees when those employees are facing stressful or emotional times (Sutton & Schurman, 1988).

### Implications for Practice

Given the record numbers of organizations turning to downsizing in today's business environment, a framework is needed to guide managerial practice. Our theoretical framework suggests a number of strategies for managers to

implement during a downsizing that may evoke more hopeful survivor responses.

First, the framework emphasizes the importance of building trust and creating empowerment both before and during the downsizing. Trust and empowerment can buffer against the threat inherent in a downsizing initiative, but these can only be built over time through enduring and genuine interactions with management (Mayer et al., 1995; Mishra, 1996). However, trust and empowerment often are eroded during downsizing efforts (Hodgetts, 1996). Trust may erode because survivors believe that top management is withholding information or is not acting in the best interests of the entire organization (Noer, 1993; O'Neill & Lenn, 1995). Survivors' sense of empowerment also may erode during downsizing, as job security becomes more tenuous and survivors come to see themselves more as independent contractors than valued members of the firm. Empowerment may erode further as management takes on more control, which is typical during a crisis situation (D'Aunno & Sutton, 1989; O'Neill & Lenn, 1995; Staw et al., 1981). The irony, then, is that downsizing may destroy the trust and empowerment that are necessary to make or keep the organization competitive in the future.

Second, the framework suggests other implementation tactics—beyond trust and empowerment. Facilitating perceptions of fairness is critical for influencing the hoped for, but often elusive, outcomes of downsizing. Researchers have shown that if the downsizing is not implemented fairly, employees who are more committed will actually respond to the downsizing in more dysfunctional ways than employees who are less committed (Brockner, Tyler, & Cooper-Schneider, 1992). Thus, organizations may antagonize the employees who have the most to offer during a downsizing. In addition, enriching survivors' jobs in implementing the downsizing mandate through work redesign also helps to achieve more active survivor responses. Such enrichment helps employees to believe they can better cope with the downsizing.

Thus, our framework provides guidance to managers who anticipate future organizational downsizing. Although the way in which the downsizing is implemented does make a difference, our framework highlights the importance of good long-term managerial relationships with employees, beginning long before an an-

nouncement to downsize. In this way effective downsizing is not a short-term fix but, rather, a long-term investment in the human resources of the organization.

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