

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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Title: How Procedural Justice During Corporate Downsizing Can Reduce Negative Psychological Impacts by Reducing Survivor Guilt

Abstract approved: _____

In this study I investigated the relationships between how organizations handled layoffs and how the feelings of survivor guilt in individuals who were not laid off. I also examined the relationships between feelings of survivor guilt and affective commitment, organizational citizenship behaviors, and turnover intentions. Finally, I examined the role of survivor guilt as a possible mediating variable between how organizations handled layoffs and affective commitment, organizational citizenship behaviors, and turnover intentions. I found that the perception of fairness and clarity in how the layoffs were inversely related to feelings of survivor guilt. I also found feelings of survivor guilt were inversely related to affective commitment and positively related to turnover intentions. Finally, survivor guilt was found to partially mediate the relationships between perceived fairness and clarity of a layoff and affective commitment and turnover intentions. This study has implications for the reason organizations should be concerned about their layoff procedures and how they might improve their layoff procedures.

Keywords: survivor guilt, layoffs, procedural justice, affective commitment

HOW PROCEDURAL JUSTICE DURING
CORPORATE DOWNSIZING CAN REDUCE
NEGATIVE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACTS
BY REDUCING SURVIVOR GUILT

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Survivor guilt is a term used to describe the feelings of individuals who have lived through a horrific event in which other individuals died. These surviving individuals have a feeling of not deserving to live or regretting their own survival because others around them did not survive (Piorkowski, 1983). The concept of survival guilt initially emerged in studying survivors of the Holocaust (e.g., Garwood, 1996). Later, mental health care professionals working with veterans of the Vietnam war, who had difficulty adjusting to civilian life indicated that survival guilt often played a key role. For example, in a 1991 study by Hendin and Haas of 100 Vietnam veterans suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), nineteen of whom had attempted suicide, it was found that survivor guilt was the number one explanatory factor behind the PTSD and PTSD put the veterans at risk for suicide. They concluded that “greater clinical attention to the role of guilt in the evaluation and treatment of suicidal veterans with PTSD” was needed (p. 586). By the 1980s, researchers were using the term for survivors of a major event, such as gay men who did not contract AIDS (Feld, 2005) and others. Organizational researchers have adopted this concept to explore the psychological well being of the survivors of organizational layoffs.

Beginning in the late 1980s, many American businesses began to adopt layoffs as an acceptable business strategy. During the recession of the early 1990s, this practice became widespread. Greenwald (1992) reported on this trend in a *Time* magazine article titled, “The Great American Layoffs,” and the *Economist* had an article the same year

titled, “Pink-slip productivity.” In the ensuing twenty years, many researchers have examined the damaging effects of downsizing and layoffs on organizations’ financial performance (e.g., De Meuse, Bergmann, Vanderheiden, & Roraff, 2004; Mentzer, 1996). Mentzer (1996) found no consistent relationship between past profit and propensity to downsize, nor was there any consistent relationship between extent of downsizing and future profit (p. 237). De Meuse, Bergmann, Vanderheiden, and Roraff (2004) found that not only did downsizing not improve profit margin, return on assets, return on equity, asset efficiency, and market-to-book ratios in Fortune 100 companies, but the companies that downsized experienced lower performance following the decision for several years. Also, at the employee level, employees often experience layoffs as a violation of their psychological contract because the employer has created a negative work environment where employees feel insecure about their jobs (De Meuse & Tornow, 1990; Morrison & Robinson, 1997; Rousseau, 1995).

In spite of the negative consequences of employee layoffs, many American businesses continue to rely on downsizing as an effective strategy, especially during difficult economic times, such as the recent recession. The purpose of my study is to examine the quality of business downsizing decisions. I want to examine whether the companies that layoff their employees in ways that demonstrate greater procedural justice experience fewer negative psychological consequences, such as reduced organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behaviors, and intent to remain with the organization with the surviving employees. Another purpose of this study is to explore the role of survivor guilt as a mediating variable between layoff decisions and negative psychological consequences.

Survivor Guilt in Business Organizations

In organizational settings, the term “survivor guilt” applies to the feelings of individuals who have survived a layoff but feel like they were not as deserving of surviving as those who were laid off. In such settings, because layoffs have been found to greatly impact survivors, a 21st century term has emerged for survivor guilt, “survivor syndrome” (Drzensky & Heinz, 2013). One reason for changing the word “guilt” to “syndrome” is that the emotions felt by survivors can be complex, and guilt is just one part of the equation. As Wood (2009) phrased it:

The almost inevitable "survivors' syndrome" that results gives rise to four clearly defined stages: relief ("thank God it's not me"); guilt ("did I really deserve to keep my job?"); envy ("that's a huge severance settlement, I wish I'd left"); and, lastly, resentment ("I'm sick of doing all this extra work for the same pay - this company has gone down the pan"). (p.16)

In several companies in Hong Kong, it was found that many layoff survivors, regardless of how the layoffs were conducted, felt anxious and insecure about their positions: “I don’t have any job security in this company. I just do my work day by day. I don’t know how long I can stay here,” and “We are still quite anxious because we are afraid of losing the job... We have to handle new products after this redundancy, but I think I can manage them” (Chan, 2013, p. 41).

In addition to psychological health, layoff survivors typically deal with their feelings of guilt in ways that are unproductive to the organization (Spaniel, 1995). Author David Noer indicated that layoff survivors usually engage in behaviors such as avoided risk-taking, lower-productivity, and an unquenchable thirst for information (Spaniel,

1995). Noer indicates that survivors need to take on a new responsibility, make a lateral job move, or become involved in a job enrichment program to cope with these negative emotions. Noer challenges these individuals to make these moves themselves if the organization does not initiate the process for them (Spaniel, 1995). This feeling is the opposite of what Noer found many layoff survivors having; the constant nagging idea of “hey, I could be next.”

In addition to unproductive work behaviors, layoff survivors can feel an overwhelming sense of guilt that affects their personal lives, as many layoff survivors also witness their own family and friends being laid off (Naasel, 2009). Naasel interviewed a worker for a company who laid off 700 workers from her department, including many of her friends and her own sister. She reported: “I feel guilty for not being able to share what they’re going through...It’s disheartening to tell my big sister, ‘If you want to come home for the holidays, I can put the money in your account’” (Naasel, 2009). In addition to her guilt of not being able to share feelings of guilt with her friends, she said any successes, including raises and promotions, could not be shared with her closest friends since many of them were laid off from the same company or were unemployed from other layoffs.

Though these illustrations of survivor guilt are gathered from interviews and non-empirical research, these themes can be found in a broader study of interpersonal guilt (O’Connor et al., 1997). For example, in a study that explored new ways to measure guilt, survivor guilt was measured by using questions such as “I conceal or minimize my success; I am uncomfortable talking about my achievements in social situations; and I often find myself doing what someone else wants me to do rather than doing what I

enjoy” (O’Connor et al., pp. 79-80). Though used in a clinical setting, these questions can be used for the organizational setting.

Procedural Justice in Downsizing Decisions

Procedural justice is a concept that organizational psychologists are primarily concerned with during the layoff process, specifically how the layoffs were conducted and represented by the organization. As van Dierendonck and Jacobs (2012) describe:

Procedural fairness reflects the fairness of the procedures used to implement the downsizing. For procedural fairness, consistency regarding people and time is essential, as are aspects such as a lack of bias, the possibility to correct wrong decisions, and the opportunity provide information during the decision-making process. (p. 98)

Since procedural justice is measured based on individuals’ perceptions of the layoff process rather than an objective measure of fairness, this factor is likely to influence survivors’ reactions to how the organization managed the layoff process (Brockner, 1990). However, researchers such as Brockner et al. (1986) and Brockner (1990) have given the field of organizational psychology basic criteria that allows us to operationalize fairness of a layoff. Since fairness is something that is based more on perception, it is difficult to ascertain what exactly makes a layoff “fair.” Brocker provides four issues that might be considered by individuals who are going through a layoff at their organization:

- 1) Did the organization provide ample forewarning to those who would be laid off? It is advised to give considerable (at least 60 days) notice.

- 2) What basis or input, such as seniority or merit, did the organization use to decide which employees would be laid off vs. chosen to remain? Not only might survivors disagree about what constitutes the fairest input, but they also might question whether the method used was a valid representation of that input.
- 3) To what extent did management explain why the layoffs were necessary? Recent research has shown that employee's perceptions of procedural justice are significantly influenced by the accounts that management provides to explain its actions. Particularly galling to employees are those important managerial actions that are not accompanied by adequate accounts. Therefore, if survivors are not told by management why the layoffs occurred, they may be more apt to view the process as fair.
- 4) Did the organization attempt to provide for, or take care of, the layoff victims? Organizations vary considerably in the extent to which they try to help terminated employees get through an often difficult period in their lives. More specifically, laid-off workers may receive varying degrees of severance pay, outplacement counseling, and help in finding a job elsewhere in the organization (Brockner, 1990, pp. 96).

Brockner (1990) reduces these four criteria down to two categories of employee perception of unfairness: did the organizations provide a clear explanation for why the layoffs occur, and did the organization attempt to take care of the laid off individuals. These categories were chosen in this study by Brockner to operationalize unfairness during a layoff.

Brockner (1990) hypothesized employees whose co-workers were within their scope of justice, that is, the belief that considerations of fairness apply to the other, would react negatively when they believed their organization conducted the layoff in an unfair manner. In a field study, Brockner found support for his hypothesis; perceived organizational fairness played a substantial part of determining the attitude of the layoff survivors' attitudes of the layoff if there were victims within their scope of justice. Brockner surveyed nearly 600 workers from a retail organization who had survived a layoff in their company.

To define a layoff survivor, Brockner (1990) indicated that since the company closed a number of stores in the previous year, all of the current employees were layoff survivors. Brockner examined how close the survivors were to the layoff victims and how fair the layoff was perceived to be, both in communication and in reasoning for deciding who was to be laid off. Brockner examined the caring behaviors exhibited by the organization towards the layoff victims.

By utilizing a multiple regression, Brockner (1990) found the interaction between the scope of justice, the explanation and the scope of justice, and the perceived caretaking behaviors to be significant ($p < .05$). Though this study was found to be significant, it is important to note that the independent variable was not controlled, so Brockner cited a previous study in which a laboratory setting was utilized to gather data.

This study was conducted by Brockner et al. (1986). It investigated the effects of random and non-random layoffs on survivors. Unlike other studies mentioned, however, Brockner, et al. wanted to determine what effect justice had on layoff survivor's feelings of guilt rather than just organizational commitment. Brockner et al. referenced two tenets

of equity theory to explain how a layoff survivor may react negatively to a co-workers layoff: 1) positive inequity arouses guilt, and 2) positive inequity motivates individuals to redress this guilt through behavioral or psychological means (Brockner et al., 1986).

To test this hypothesis, Brockner et al. (1986) conducted a laboratory study using college undergraduate students and one confederate. This confederate was “laid off” during a short break in the middle of a task in which the students were promised a reward once the task was completed. In one condition, the confederate was seemingly laid off randomly, and in the other condition, the confederate was laid off for their supposed poor job performance.

Brockner et al. (1986) found support consistent with the hypothesis; those individuals who survived a “random” layoff reported higher levels of survivor guilt ($p < .05$). However, it was found that those individuals who survived a random layoff almost doubled their productivity over individuals who survived a merit layoff, which was measured by lines proofread during the task ($p < .05$). The reason these findings are important to the study of layoff survivors is that this study had controlled independent variables, whereas a field setting does not, such as that found in Brocker, 1990. However, the significance found in both field and laboratory settings allows for implications in both research and practice (Brockner, 1990).

The first major category of procedural justice found by Brockner, 1990, can be validated by several articles, including Mansour-Cole and Scott, (1998); De-Witt, Trevino, and Mollica (1998); and Brockner, (1994). A look into how procedural justice is viewed when companies merge is provided by Gopinath and Becker (2000). Mansour-Cole and Scott (1998) conducted a longitudinal study where employees of a research and

development department of a company survived layoffs twice in a 39 month period. Mansour-Cole and Scott discovered the perceived fairness of layoffs was highly correlated to the perception of procedural fairness. The source of the announcement, such as a boss or through rumors, was correlated 0.98. In other words, the more legitimate the source was perceived to be, such as a boss informing workers of a layoff, the more fair the layoff was to be perceived. The legitimacy of the reason for why the layoff was occurring was found to be correlated 0.31 to the perception of procedural fairness (Mansour-Cole & Scott, 1998).

Gopinath and Becker (2000) provide another example of how fairness of layoffs affects perceptions of trust. They conducted a study that examined the effects procedural justice on survivors of a divestiture event in a company. Two hypotheses of interest have not been found in previous literature: procedural justice and helpful communications of the layoff process will lead to higher levels of trust and organizational commitment in the new company ownership post-divestiture (Gopinath & Becker, 2000).

Gopinath and Becker (2000) studied a large chemical company that initiated a divestiture of one branch conducted three rounds of layoffs during the study period. The findings of the study supported the authors' hypotheses. When perceptions of procedural justice were high, there were higher levels of trust in the new ownership and higher levels of commitment post-divestiture (Gopinath & Becker, 2000). Layoff communication was found to be moderately correlated to commitment, 0.37; communication was correlated highly to the perception of justice in the layoffs, 0.38; and the overall justice of the divestiture was strongly correlated to layoff communication, 0.43 (Gopinath & Becker, 2000).

Gopinath and Becker (2000) found results consistent with their hypothesis. This indicates that organizations must be as transparent and fair as possible during the entire process of the layoff to ensure that survivors will have a reduced negative reaction. Brockner et al. (1994) indicates that the most important process to enact during the layoff process is to ensure that the layoff victims are cared for after the news of the elimination of their position. For example, Brockner et al. recommends severance packages and outplacement counseling. Providing a concrete reason for the layoffs in this study played an integral part in providing a sense of fairness to the layoff survivors, much like the recommended framework mentioned by Brockner (1990).

Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment can be defined as having three components: (a) a person's strong belief in and an acceptance of the organization's goals, (b) a person's willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization, and (c) a person's definite desire to maintain membership (Randall, 1987). Though organizational commitment has been studied for quite some time, the modern day literature of organizational commitment divides the concept into three separate groups of commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1990).

Meyer and Allen (1990) hypothesized that organizational commitment reflected three distinct psychological states. Meyer and Allen argued that organizational commitment is directly related to turnover. Since individuals who are committed to an organization are less likely to exit the organization, it should be possible to develop individual measures of commitment to determine the level of an individual's organizational commitment. In this classic study written in 1990, Meyer and Allen found,

across two different studies, there existed three different types of organizational commitment with specific antecedents of these facets of organizational commitment that were observable through survey instruments.

The first subset of organizational commitment found was affective commitment, which is the feeling of commitment to an organization because an individual wants to. It has been found that antecedents to this type of commitment can fall into four categories: personal characteristics, job characteristics, work experiences, and structural characteristics (Meyer & Allen, 1990). Meyer and Allen (1987) indicated, however, that the strongest evidence has been provided for work experience antecedents, most notably those experiences that fulfill employees' psychological needs to feel comfortable within the organization.

The second subset of organizational commitment found in Meyer and Allen's (1990) framework was continuance commitment, in which employees stay with an organization because they need to stay. Antecedents of this can be considered a cost-benefit analysis of sorts; in which employees will recognize and investigate the amount of alternatives they have available or unavailable to them during that specific period of time. Since continuance commitment satisfies a physiological need rather than a psychological need, this measure of commitment does not measure the psychological motives that affective and normative commitment measure.

The last category of organizational commitment is normative commitment, defined as employees staying with an organization because they feel they ought to do so (Meyer & Allen, 1990). This area of commitment sees its antecedents fall into a social psychological and sociological category, in which individuals are influenced by societal

norms of the organization. For example, if a person works for an organization that has a social norm of expected commitment, that individual is less likely to leave the organization.

Since Meyer and Allen (1990) wrote about their findings, several articles have been published that analyzed and assessed this three-component model of organizational commitment (Hackett, Bycio, & Hausdor, 1994; Irving, Coleman, & Cooper, 1997). To feel comfortable assessing individuals' organizational commitment using Meyer and Allen's (1990) framework, it is important to determine whether or not the scales have been tested in other populations across larger samples. Hackett, Bycio, and Hausdorff (1994) found that while there were some errors found in some of Meyer and Allen's (1990) questions regarding organizational commitment, such as differences between the commitment determined in cross-sectional studies compared to longitudinal studies, these authors still found that affective, normative, and continuance commitment still existed as subsets of organizational commitment.

While this experiment was conducted on a much larger scale, where 2,301 nurses were questioned about several facets of organizational commitment, Hackett, Bycio, and Hausdorff (1994) found that even though continuance commitment can be further divided into two sub-categories, continuance commitment when there are low external alternatives and continuance commitment when there requires a high personal sacrifice when leaving the organization, the three component model of organizational commitment hypothesized by Meyer and Allen (1990) is still supported by this analysis.

Though the original experiment conducted by Meyer and Allen in 1990 examined several jobs, a 1997 study conducted by Irving, Coleman, and Cooper examined

employees' organizational commitment across multiple jobs in a government setting to determine if Meyer and Allen's (1990) three component model of organizational commitment could be generalized across several occupations, not the three that were examined in Meyer and Allen's (1990) experiment and the one occupation in Hackett, Bycio, and Hausdorf's (1994) study. Irving, Coleman, and Cooper (1997) interviewed workers who held occupations divided into five different categories: executives, air traffic controllers, other technical, radio operators, and clerical. Though these five categories were created, there were over half a dozen job titles in total (Irving, Coleman, & Cooper, 1997).

After administering surveys and analyzing the data, Irving, Coleman, and Cooper (1997) found confirmation for Meyer and Allen's (1990) framework for a three-component model of organizational commitment. It is interesting that Irving, Coleman and Cooper's (1997) study found higher error in a few of the questions, much like Hackett, Bycio, and Hausdorf's (1994) study. Nevertheless, it is important to state that both studies have found support for Meyer and Allen's (1990) original framework of a three component model of organizational commitment.

Organizational Commitment and Layoffs

Organizational commitment has been a focus of layoff literature, specifically focusing on individuals who still have jobs after a company has enacted a mass layoff; the layoff survivors (Brockner et al., 2004). Though layoffs are an unfortunate part of the organizational world, there is a lack of consistent evidence that downsizing organizations leads to improved financial performance (van Dierendonck & Jacobs, 2012). Many researchers have found that the process of the layoffs itself can cause a change in

organizational commitment in layoff survivors. (Brockner et al., 2004; Grunberg et al., 2000; van Dierendonck & Jacobs, 2012;). Thus, to get a full scope of how a layoff can affect those who have survived the layoff, it is important to determine the relationship between procedural and distributive justice and the organizational commitment of those survivors.

A 2012 meta-analysis conducted by van Dierendonck and Jacobs investigated the relationship between procedural justice and organizational commitment in layoff survivors. By gathering data from 39 years of research, the authors found that procedural justice had a significant relationship with organizational commitment. These authors found a correlation of 0.44 between perceptions of procedural fairness and organizational commitment (van Dierendonck & Jacobs, 2012). Procedural justice had a much more prominent role in influencing affective commitment than distributive justice (0.44 and 0.39, respectively). Much like the previous research that examined the important role procedural justice plays in the reactions of layoff survivors, organizational commitment is affected in the same way.

In this meta-analysis, (van Dierendonck and Jacobs, 2012) the specific facet of organizational commitment addressed is affective commitment, the subset of commitment in which workers stay with the company because they want to. Further implications of this research lie within management's communication of layoffs. Previously cited authors have provided framework for communicating layoffs, which includes ample forewarning and reasoning for a layoff. This meta-analysis provides even more reasoning and justification for doing so.

Another issue that must be examined in regards to the interaction of layoffs and organizational commitment is how highly committed individuals are affected after a perceived unfair layoff. Brockner, Tyler, and Cooper-Schneider (1992) explored how the commitment levels of highly committed individuals changed based on how fair the layoff was perceived to be. Individuals who had high levels of organizational commitment were generally beneficial to the organization, however under layoff conditions, such levels of prior commitment may sow the seeds of reduced commitment (Brockner, Tyler, & Cooper-Schneider, 1992).

Drawing from literature discussing psychological contracts and procedural justice, Brockner, Tyler, & Cooper-Schneider (1992) hypothesized these individuals who were highly committed would experience a significant decline in their organizational commitment if they themselves were treated unfairly or if the process by which the organization laid people off was perceived to be unfair. In other words, if the process was perceived as unfair, regardless of who was laid off, these highly committed individuals would have much lower level of commitment.

Consistent with these hypotheses, the Brockner, Tyler, and Cooper-Schneider (1992) found that individuals who were highly committed to an organization before a layoff saw a decline in their organizational commitment if the layoff was perceived to be low in fairness, whereas those who perceived the layoff to be high in fairness showed favorable reactions to the layoffs. These correlations reported by the authors were both significant ($p < .01$) (Brockner, Tyler, & Cooper-Schneider, 1992).

Organizational Citizenship Behaviors

Organizational citizenship behaviors, or OCBs, can be defined as a concept that represents individual behavior that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and in the aggregate promotes the efficient and effective functioning of the organization (Organ, 1988). In essence, OCBs can be described as extra-role behaviors employees exhibit for reasons other than they are required to by their job. While OCBs have been largely examined in correlation with job satisfaction (Williams & Anderson, 1991), researchers have examined how organizational commitment, specifically affective commitment, correlates to OCBs (Organ & Ryan, 1995; Williams & Anderson, 1991).

Although a field experiment conducted by Williams and Anderson (1991) found that affective commitment did not significantly correlate to the prevalence of OCBs, a meta-analysis conducted by Organ and Ryan (1995) found that organizational commitment does correlate to OCBs as well other measures such as job satisfaction, perceived fairness and leadership support.

OCBs have been examined during the course of a layoff to determine if procedural justice does have any effect on workers OCBs who have been told they would be laid off within a period of 60 days. A study conducted by Bies, Martin, and Brockner (1993) analyzed the effect of procedural justice on organizational citizenship behaviors of employees who were given advanced notice of layoffs. The authors hypothesized that individuals who were given advanced notice of their layoffs, at least 60 days, would produce varying levels of organizational citizenship behaviors based on their own perceptions of the process of the layoffs. These employees were asked several questions

about organizational citizenship behaviors to determine the rate of organizational citizenship behaviors.

By conducting a field study in a large manufacturing firm in the Southern United States, Bies, Martin, and Brockner (1993) concluded the process of the layoff did have a significant relationship with organizational citizenship behaviors. The implications found from this research, though lending itself mainly to organizational citizenship behaviors, does allow for a deeper understanding of the importance of the process of layoffs. Bies, Martin, and Brockner found that the most important processes in a layoff, as viewed by the employees, were the adequacy of the reasons for the layoffs and the interpersonal treatment they receive during the layoffs relative to the structural characteristics, as in voice and appeal.

Turnover Intentions

Turnover intentions, defined as how likely an employee wants to leave their current job, are a growing field of organizational psychology (Tayfur, Karapinar, & Camgoz, 2013). These authors investigated how procedural justice and distributive justice affected turnover intentions based on how a company treated their employees during day-to-day operations. Though this wasn't conducted in a company that was conducting layoffs, the concepts still can be used in the present study.

By administering a survey that used a 4-item questionnaire to assess turnover intention, Tayfur, Karapinar, and Camgoz (2013) found that procedural justice and distributive justice held moderately strong correlations to turnover intentions, -0.42 and -0.29, respectively. As mentioned earlier, these correlations were found in a setting in which layoffs were not being conducted, but the concepts and measures can be used in a

company that is enacting layoffs to determine if there is a stronger correlation between these two variables.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are based on a model of survivor guilt that appears in Figure 1.

Hypothesis 1a. Survivor guilt will be positively correlated with the percentage of the workforce that has been laid off. In other words, the higher the percentage laid off, the greater the survivor guilt of those left.

Hypothesis 1b. Survivor guilt will be negatively correlated with the quality of the explanations given for the layoffs. In other words, the more the explanations make sense to the layoff survivors, the less their survivor guilt will be.

Hypothesis 1c. Survivor guilt will be negatively correlated with how well the laid off employees were properly cared for by the organization after the layoff. In other words, the better the laid off employees were cared for by the organization, the less the survivor guilt of the layoff survivors will be.

By analyzing studies conducted by Brockner et al., (1986) and DeWitt and Mollica (1998), we see that individuals who were survivors of a seemingly random layoff displayed more signs of survivor guilt than layoff survivors who had the reasons for the layoffs explained to them. It was also found that companies who provided severance packages and adequate reasons for providing those severance packages to the laid off saw less guilt in the layoff survivors.

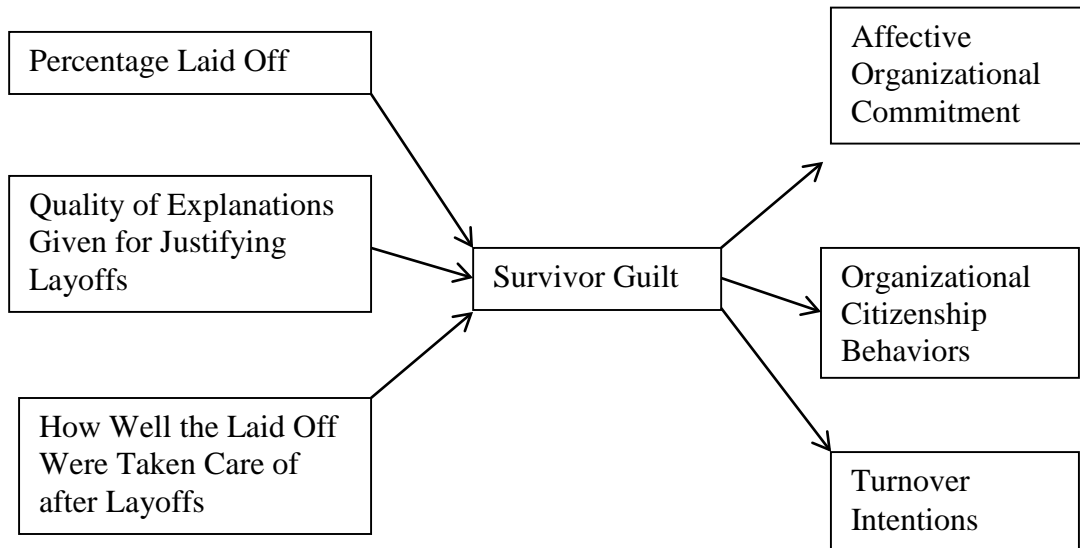


Figure 1. Survivor Guilt as a Mediator of the Relationships between Layoff Variables and Their Negative Consequences

There is a hole in the literature that links the number of individuals laid off in an organization to survivor guilt. Since other layoff conditions have been linked to a prevalence of survivor guilt, I hypothesize that the number of individuals laid off in an organization will be positively correlated to survivor guilt.

Hypothesis 2. Affective organizational commitment will be negatively correlated with the survivor guilt of the employees left after a layoff.

Van Dierendonck and Jacob's (2012) meta-analysis showed support for affective organizational commitment's correlation to procedural justice. Therefore, if procedural justice affects survivor guilt, there will be a correlation between affective commitment and survivor guilt.

Hypothesis 3. Organizational citizenship behaviors will be negatively correlated with the survivor guilt of the employees left after a layoff.

DeWitt and Mollica's (1998) experiment investigated the effects of random layoffs on survivor guilt and found when a layoff survivor perceived the layoff to be unfair, their productivity declined, along with their opinion of their supervisor. If this is generalizable to a field study, survivor guilt will be negatively correlated to organizational citizenship behaviors.

Hypothesis 4. Turnover intentions will be positively correlated with the survivor guilt of the employees left after a layoff.

As mentioned earlier, the gap in literature that links turnover intentions in an organization after layoffs to survivor guilt indicates a need to explore the link between these two variables needs to be investigated. Since literature has been found that links

survivor guilt with other affective variables, I hypothesize that turnover intentions will be positively correlated to survivor guilt.

Hypothesis 5. The relationships between the three antecedents of survivor guilt (percentage laid off, quality of explanations for the layoffs, and how well the laid off were cared for) and the three consequences of survivor guilt (affective organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behaviors, and turnover intentions) will be mediated by survivor guilt. In other words, survivor guilt may help to explain stronger correlations between the three consequences of layoffs and the three antecedents of layoffs.

By analyzing the research that examines how the three antecedents correlate to survivor guilt and how survivor guilt correlates to the three consequences of unfair layoffs, I can test if survivor guilt mediates the correlations between the antecedents and consequences.

CHAPTER 2

METHOD

Participants

There were 127 participants in this study. In response to the question, “What percentage of your company’s workforce has been laid off in the last five years?” 42.5% replied 0% (no layoffs), 52% had responses from 1% to 70%, and 5.5% did not respond to this question. Thus, 70 participants responded that they had been through layoffs. These 70 participants were used to test the main hypotheses. The other participants were used in some of my exploratory analyses. Of the participants whose companies had experienced layoffs, the mean percentage of the employees let go was 6%, with a standard deviation of 12%. These participants worked in companies that ranged in size from one employee to 400,000 employees, with a mean of 8,691 employees at each organization.

In an effort to keep my survey short and as non-intrusive as possible, I did not collect demographic data in regards to sex, age, and race. Rather, the demographic data that was collected asked what the size of an individual’s company was, how common layoffs were, and what percentage of workers have been laid off in the last five years (see Appendix A). However, because this sample was a convenient sample (family, friends, and former co-workers recruited the participants), it is likely that the study participants were similar to the recruiters. The recruiters’ ages ranged from 24 to 63, were white, lived in the Midwest, the East Coast, and the West Coast, and worked in a variety of industries, including healthcare, retail, insurance, and education.

Measurements

The quality of the explanations for the layoff(s). The perception of the quality of the explanations was collected from the layoff survivors. This was obtained by asking participants how clear they felt the reason was for the company laying off workers and how fair they felt the process was for choosing those who were laid off. I conducted a pilot study to determine if this variable could be captured by asking two questions: how the individual would rate the organization's reason for the layoffs and how the individual would rate the fairness of the layoff. Ten individuals who survived a layoff in the last year provided feedback and indicated these were appropriate questions that captured what I was trying to measure. In the present study, the alpha coefficient for these two questions was 0.84 (see questions 5 and 6 in Appendix B for these two questions).

Caring behaviors for those laid off. For this variable, I asked participants if they were aware of any caring behaviors offered by the company to those laid off, such as re-training, a severance package, or finding a new job (see Appendix A for these behaviors). This checklist of offerings was derived from Brockner (1990). The number of caring behaviors exhibited by a company was tallied as a "caring score." I conducted a pilot study to determine if the questionnaire captured what I was intending to measure. The pilot study was administered to 10 individuals who had survived a layoff in the last year. These subject matter experts provided feedback on this list and did not recommend any other caring behaviors exhibited by their organization. These 10 individuals were not used in the main sample used to test my hypotheses.

For the caring behaviors, the participants were asked to respond to all behaviors that apply. Thus, each caring behavior was its own dichotomous variable (1 if it is done,

0 if it is not). Companies that provided more caring behaviors received a higher score (see question 7 in Appendix B for these behaviors).

How the layoffs were communicated. I asked the participants how they were told about the layoffs. Participants were given a list of options from which to choose. The participants were asked to choose all options that applied, thus, each communication channel acted as its own dichotomous variable (1 if it was used, 0 if it was not). Each communication channel was treated as a separate variable. The communication channels I explored were email, face-to-face contact, through the grapevine, one-on-one, through a letter, or in a group meeting (see question 4 in Appendix B for these communication methods).

Affective organizational commitment. To measure affective organizational commitment, the items from Meyer, Allen, and Smith's (1993) Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) that measure affective organizational commitment were used (see Appendix C). A sample item is, "I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization." The scale has six items with a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). In the development of the Affective Commitment Scale with nursing students, Meyer, Allen and Smith found the internal consistency to be 0.87 when measured at time one and 0.85 when measured at time two. In the present study, the alpha coefficient for the questions selected from Meyer, Allen, and Smith was 0.87.

Organizational citizenship behaviors. Organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB) were measured by eight items adapted from Lambert, Hogan, and Griffin's (2008) study (see Appendix D). An example of a question in this construct is, "I frequently

volunteer to do things without being asked.” The items were scored with a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Based on Lambert, Hogan, and Griffin’s 2008 study, this scale has a Cronbach’s alpha value of .80. In the present study, the alpha coefficient was analyzed to assess for reliability. I found an alpha value of 0.77.

Turnover intention. The turnover intention measure came from Colarelli’s (1984) Intent to Quit Scale. One question is worded as such, “I am planning to search for a new job during the next 12 months.” The scale has three items with a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) (see Appendix E). The internal consistency of it was 0.82 in the Saks (2006) study. In the present study, the internal consistency was 0.89, using coefficient alpha to determine reliability.

Survivor guilt. Survivor guilt was measured with a scale created by this author based on a measure of interpersonal guilt developed by O’Connor et al. (1997). Though the scale was based on an existing scale of survivor guilt, it is important to note that the questions were not able to transfer into a business discipline. Questions from O’Connor et al.’s scale included items such as “I am unhappy around depressed people,” and “It makes me very uncomfortable to receive better treatment than the people I am with.”

Though these items capture survivor guilt, they are not specific to a layoff condition. I took the essence of these questions and re-worded them to fit a business setting. Though this allowed me to capture layoff survivor guilt, it did not have any previous reliability or validity. To combat this, I conducted a pilot study of my survivor guilt questionnaire. The instrument was piloted by the same ten people who piloted the demographic scales of fairness and caring behaviors. These subject matter experts felt

that the eight questions used to capture survivor guilt were sufficient. One subject matter expert did express that s/he felt a feeling of uncertainty regarding his/her own job, even though more layoffs were not being considered. This individual stated that he/she felt a lost sense of control in keeping his/her job. Thus, a question based on the research of Armstrong-Sassen (2005) was added: “There is nothing I can do to prevent being laid off in the future” (see Appendix F).

Since I developed this scale and it had not been used in a previous study, internal consistency was important to determine. By using Cronbach’s alpha, internal consistency was found to be 0.73, an acceptable measure of internal consistency (Cronbach, 1951).

Procedure

Before collecting any data, IRB approval was obtained to ensure all the ethical requirements were met (see Appendix G). I created an electronic version of the survey on SurveyMonkey.com. Participants received a copy of my cover letter (see Appendix H), which outlined their informed consent and had a survey link. The web link contained the complete survey with all the instruments that were described in the method section. Participants were asked to read the cover letter and decide whether they would like to participate in the research. If they agreed to do so, they simply clicked on the web link to answer the survey questions. During the survey, if any of the participants did not want to answer a specific question, they could skip to the next one, or if any of the participants did not want to continue to answer the survey questions, they could stop right away. The survey was anonymous and they did not need to provide any of their personal information. Once they completed the survey, the results were immediately sent back to the data base and saved on SurveyMonkey.

As mentioned in the Participants section, I contacted 25 individuals to serve as participant recruiters and participants. To qualify as a recruiter, the individual needed to have survived a layoff in the last five years and he or she needed to know me (family, friends, and former co-workers). I contacted these 25 individuals by email and I first asked them to complete the instrument through a survey administering website, [surveymonkey.com](https://www.surveymonkey.com). The link to the survey was included in the email. Individuals were then asked to forward the email, with the link included, to any co-workers who had also survived layoffs and would be interested in taking the survey. It was also noted to the participants that if they did not know of five others who have survived a layoff, they could forward it to people who have not experienced a layoff. They were told the data were to be used for exploratory purposes only. The original sample of 25 contacted individuals snowballed into a total participant field of 127 respondents to the survey. The data was kept in a secure location and will be destroyed after three years. In the meantime, only the summary results have been shared.

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

Main Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1a stated that the percentage of individuals laid off would have a positive relationship with the amount of survivor guilt reported by the participants. This hypothesis was not supported ($r(70) = .16, p > .05$). Though there was a positive relationship between the percentage of individuals laid off and the amount of survivor guilt reported, the correlation was not enough to show statistical significance.

Hypothesis 1b predicted there would be a negative correlation between the quality of the explanation given for the layoff and the amount of survivor guilt reported by the respondents. The result supported my hypothesis ($r(70) = -0.45, p < .01$).

Hypothesis 1c stated that the better the individuals who were who were laid off were taken care of the less the amount of survivor guilt would be. In other words, I expected a negative correlation between these two variables. Interestingly, I found a positive correlation instead ($r(70) = .27, p < .05$). Though the result was statistically significant, Hypothesis 1c was not supported. The finding indicates that the less caring behaviors exhibited by a company, the less survivor guilt will be felt by the workers.

My second hypothesis was that affective organizational commitment would be negatively correlated with survivor guilt. In other words, the more survivor guilt felt by the layoff survivors, the less affective organizational commitment would be reported by the participants. This hypothesis was supported ($r(70) = -0.27, p < .05$).

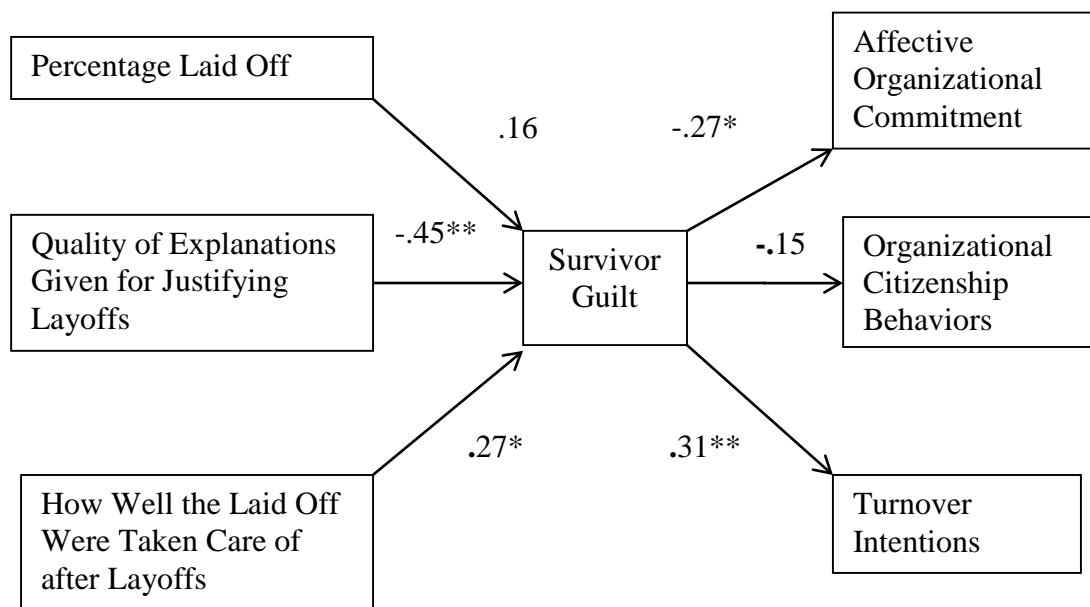
My third hypothesis stated that organizational citizenship behaviors would be negatively correlated with survivor guilt. In other words, the more survivor guilt felt by

layoff survivors, the less organizational citizenship behaviors they would report to have exhibited. The result, though negatively correlated, did not reach statistical significance and, therefore, did not support the hypothesis ($r(69) = -0.15, p > .05$).

My fourth hypothesis predicted that turnover intentions would be positively correlated with survivor guilt. In other words, if survivor guilt was reported to be high, those participants would report higher turnover intentions. The result ($r(68) = .31, p < .01$) supported my hypothesis.

The results from my first four hypotheses are depicted in Figure 2. Of the three predicted antecedents of survivor guilt (percentage of coworkers laid off, quality of explanations, and caring behaviors), only quality of explanations was significant in the expected direction. Of the three predicted consequences of survivor guilt (affective organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behavior, and turnover intention), only organizational citizenship behavior was not significantly related.

My fifth hypothesis predicted that survivor guilt would act as an intervening variable between the three predicted antecedents and the three predicted consequences of survivor guilt. Because it was the only antecedent that was related to survivor guilt in the expected direction, I focused on the relationships that quality of explanation had with affective organizational commitment and turnover intention, the two consequences that were significantly related to survivor guilt.



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

Figure 2. Correlations between the Variables

I first examined the correlation between the quality of the explanation to those laid off and the affective organizational commitment of those remaining and it was statistically significant ($r(70) = .30, p < .05$). Then I calculated the partial correlation between the quality of the explanation and affective organizational commitment, while controlling for survivor guilt, and it was not significant ($r(68) = .16, p > .05$). This drop from .30 to .16 suggests that survivor guilt somewhat served as an intervening variable between the quality of the explanation and affective organizational commitment.

Next, I examined the correlation between the quality of the explanation to those laid off and the turnover intentions of those remaining and it was statistically significant ($r(70) = -0.29, p < .05$). Then I calculated the partial correlation between the quality of the explanation and the turnover intentions, while controlling for survivor guilt, and it was not significant ($r(68) = -0.18, p > .05$). This drop from -0.29 to -0.18 suggests that survivor guilt somewhat served as an intervening variable between the quality of the explanation and turnover intentions.

Exploratory Analyses

Since a sample of non-layoff survivors responded to the survey as well, exploratory analyses were conducted to determine if there were significant differences in the levels of affective organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behaviors, and the turnover intentions between layoff survivors and those who had not survived a layoff. T-tests were conducted for the three psychological consequences to check for significance.

Differences between layoff survivors and non-layoff survivors. Exploratory analysis was conducted to determine if there was a difference between the psychological constructs of affective commitment, organizational citizenship behaviors, and turnover intentions.

While those employees who had survived a layoff reported lower affective commitment ($M = 4.27$) than those who did not ($M = 4.73$), these findings were not significant ($t(110) = 1.67, p > .05$).

Interestingly, organizational citizenship behaviors were reported to be higher in layoff survivors ($M = 5.71$) than in those employees who did not survive a layoff ($M = 5.60$). However, this difference was not statistically significant ($t(109) = -0.72, p > .05$).

Measuring turnover intentions, however, did yield a significant difference. Those who survived a layoff reported higher turnover intentions ($M = 3.77$) than those who did not survive a layoff ($M = 2.62$). This difference was significant ($t(110) = -3.09, p < .01$). These statistics are expressed and can be seen in Table 1.

Layoff communication methods. Further exploratory analyses were conducted to determine which methods of communicating the layoffs had the most impact on both aspects of communication quality (clarity and fairness) and possible consequences (affective commitment, organizational citizenship behaviors, and turnover intentions) of survivor guilt. T-tests were utilized to determine significance amongst layoff survivors. These results can be summarized in Table 2.

The layoff survivors who were provided with a face to face notification of the layoff perceived the layoff to be significantly fairer ($M = 3.25$) than those who did not receive a face to face notification of the layoff ($M = 2.49$) ($t(63) = -3.44, p < .01$).

Table 1

Layoff Survivors Versus Individuals Who did not Survive a Layoff

Construct Measured	<i>t</i>	df	<i>p</i> (2-tailed)
Affective Commitment	1.669	110	0.098
Organizational Citizenship Behaviors	-0.719	109	0.474
Turnover Intentions	-3.094	110	0.003

Table 2

Impact of Each Layoff Communication Method

Construct Measured	<i>t</i>	df	<i>p</i> (2-tailed)
Face to Face			
Survivor Guilt	2.18	61	0.033
Commitment	-1.49	61	0.141
OCB	-0.85	60	0.394
Turnover Intentions	0.16	60	0.869
Clarity of Reason	-2.95	62	0.004
Layoff Fairness	-3.44	63	0.001
Email			
Survivor Guilt	-3.64	61	0.001
Commitment	3.09	61	0.003
OCB	0.09	60	0.926
Turnover Intentions	-2.88	60	0.005
Clarity of Reason	0.95	62	0.346
Layoff Fairness	0.93	63	0.355
Group Meeting			
Survivor Guilt	-0.16	61	0.871
Commitment	1.08	61	0.281
OCB	0.45	60	0.654
Turnover Intentions	-0.58	60	0.564
Clarity of Reason	2.02	62	0.048
Layoff Fairness	0.71	63	0.480
Grapevine			
Survivor Guilt	-1.15	61	0.253
Commitment	0.69	61	0.495
OCB	-0.03	60	0.973
Turnover Intentions	-0.37	60	0.710
Clarity of Reason	1.57	62	0.122
Layoff Fairness	0.99	63	0.322

Relatedly, those who were given face to face notification reported higher message clarity ($M = 3.29$) than those who did not ($M = 2.58$) ($t(62) = -2.95, p < .01$). In addition to how the layoff were perceived, there was a significantly lower amount of survivor guilt reported when the layoff notifications were conducted face to face ($M = 3.32$) than when they were not ($M = 3.87$) ($t(61) = -2.18, p < .05$). No significant differences were found for affective organizational commitment ($t(61) = -1.49, p > .05$), organizational citizenship behavior ($t(60) = -0.86, p > .05$), or turnover intentions ($t(60) = 0.17, p > .05$).

An email sent to the employees of the company indicated negative impacts on the layoff survivors. For example, those who received an email reported significantly higher turnover intentions ($M = 4.92$) than those who did not receive an email ($M = 3.33$) ($t(60) = -2.89, p < .01$). Additionally, survivor guilt was significantly higher in those who received an email ($M = 4.34$) than those who did not ($M = 3.41$) ($t(61) = -3.64, p < .01$). Affective commitment was also significantly lower in those who received an email ($M = 3.43$) than those who did not ($M = 4.59$) ($t(61) = 3.10, p < .01$). No significant differences were found for organizational citizenship behaviors ($t(60) = 0.09, p > .05$), the clarity of the layoff ($t(62) = 0.95, p > .05$), or the perceived fairness of the layoff ($t(63) = 0.93, p > .05$).

Layoff survivors who were informed about the layoff in group meetings perceived the layoff reason to be significantly lower in clarity ($M = 2.40$) than those who did not attend a group meeting ($M = 2.98$) ($t(62) = 2.02, p < .05$). No significant differences were found in survivor guilt ($t(61) = -0.16, p > .05$), affective organizational commitment ($t(61) = 1.09, p > .05$), organizational citizenship behaviors ($t(60) = 0.45, p > .05$), turnover intentions ($t(60) = -0.58, p > .05$), and perceived fairness ($t(63) = 0.71, p > .05$).

Layoff survivors who were informed about the layoff through the grapevine did not differ from those who did not hear through the grapevine on any of the variables: clarity ($t(62) = 1.57, p > .05$), fairness ($t(63) = 0.99, p > .05$), survivor guilt ($t(61) = -1.15, p > .05$), affective organizational commitment ($t(61) = 0.50, p > .05$), organizational citizenship behavior ($t(60) = -0.03, p > .05$), or turnover intentions ($t(60) = -0.37, p > .05$).

Few companies employed the one-on-one method ($N = 7$) and/or the letter method ($N = 3$). Subsequently, there was insufficient statistical power for exploring the impact of these two methods. No significant differences were found for these two methods.

Frequencies of communication methods, layoffs, and caring behaviors.

Frequency analysis was conducted to determine the most common layoff communication methods, the frequency of caring behaviors, and how common layoffs were amongst the participants.

The most common method of communicating the layoff was in some face-to-face format ($N = 24$), followed by email ($N = 17$), a group meeting ($N = 16$), through the grapevine ($N = 13$). Less common methods reported were one-on-one ($N = 7$) and by letter ($N = 3$). Two individuals responded to the “other” response’ their responses were “never laid off” and “seen it on the television first.”

Analyzing the caring behaviors offered to those who were laid off, the most common was an alternate position in the company ($N = 24$), a severance package ($N = 22$), no caring behaviors ($N = 14$), and callbacks when thing improved ($N = 11$). The lesser exhibited caring behaviors were help finding a new job ($N = 10$), resume building

($N = 7$), and retraining ($N = 5$). One participant replied to the “other” response and filled in “reference letter.”

Lastly, analysis was conducted over the size and the commonality of layoffs in the participants’ organization. Thirty-nine participants replied that layoffs in their industry happen infrequently, 24 replied that they happen frequently; two replied that they happen all of the time, and one indicated that layoff never happened in his or her industry.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

This study investigated the relationships between survivor guilt and three antecedents of survivor guilt: the percentage of the workforce that was laid off, the fairness of the choices for those who were laid off and the clarity of the reasons given for the layoff, and how well the layoff survivors were cared for. It also investigated the relationships between survivor guilt and three psychological consequences of survivor guilt: affective organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs), and turnover intentions. These relationships and the role survivor guilt play in the relationships between the antecedents and consequential constructs are discussed in the following sections.

Antecedents to Survivor Guilt

By analyzing the results of hypotheses one through three, we can determine that the antecedent that had the strongest relationship with survivor guilt was the perception of fairness of deciding who was to be laid off and the quality of the explanation for laying off employees. This is consistent with literature that describes the relationship between procedural justice and layoffs such as Brockner (1990), De-Witt and Mollica (1998), Brockner (1994), and Gopinath and Becker (2000). These authors have found results that indicate that those survivors who survived a seemingly random layoff will have reported a higher amount of survivor guilt. Additionally, Mansour-Cole and Scott (1998) found that the legitimacy of the reasons for a layoff provided to layoff survivors correlated significantly to the perception of procedural justice.

Exploratory analysis indicated what method employed yielded fairer layoffs. When a layoff was communicated face to face, the layoff was perceived to be fairer and clearer than those who did not receive a face to face notification. This might be because employees may have been able to ask questions or felt that a face to face interaction was more personable, as found in Mansour-Cole and Scott (1998). In addition to the findings mentioned in regards to procedural justice, Mansour-Cole and Scott found that the legitimacy of the source was significantly related to the perception of procedural fairness. In other words, the more personable the notification of the layoff, the higher it was perceived to be conducted fairly. This method of communication also netted in lower survivor guilt. Exploratory analysis also indicated what method employed yielded less fair layoffs. An email was perhaps the most detrimental to layoff survivors. There was a significantly higher amount of turnover intentions and survivor guilt for those informed via email than for those who did not receive an email notifying them about the layoffs. This can be explained by the low amount of impersonal communication used in this method. Even when a non-business relationship, such as a romantic relationship is severed, researchers have found that impersonal communication, such as emails or text messages feels inappropriate to the individual (Gershon, 2008; Gershon, 2010).

One interesting finding in examining the antecedents of survivor guilt was that the opposite-from-hypothesized relationship observed in the caring behaviors for those who were laid off. The results of this study found a significant positive relationship between caretaking behaviors and survivor guilt of layoff survivors. My hypothesis predicted that these two variables would be negatively related, based on literature from Brockner (1990). Perhaps the companies that engaged in more caretaking activities appeared guilty

to the survivors. In other words, a survivor might reason, “Look how hard my company is working to make it up to those laid off. Those in charge must feel guilty. I feel guilty too.” This finding may relate to how I measured caretaking behaviors. Instead of measuring quality of caretaking, I measured quantity of how caretaking, the number of different things a company was doing. Perhaps the quality of the caretaking behaviors should be assessed, as the perception of high quality communication played a significant role in predicting less survivor guilt in this study. Perhaps it is not a good idea to offer too many things, but rather to do a good job at the few things you do offer to those laid off.

Determining a Survivor Guilt Scale

It is important to note that while affective organizational commitment, OCBs, and turnover intentions had previously tested and developed scales to measure the respective constructs, finding a survivor guilt scale was difficult. While Brockner et al. (1986) reported a link between random layoffs and survivor guilt in a laboratory setting, the authors only measured survivor guilt by a Likert scale that contained feelings present during a second task after a confederate was laid off, such as “frustrated,” “anxious,” “glad,” “angry,” and “guilty.” While they captured feelings, they did not capture behaviors participants could report, such as working harder or discussing the layoff around other survivors, and they did not capture beliefs that participants could report, such as success meaning less after the layoff.

I developed a work related survivor guilt scale based on material written by O’Connor et al. (1997) who focused on the guilt of war survivors and Armstrong-Stassen (2005) who studied survivors of work layoffs. Perhaps my scale can be used to determine survivor guilt in business settings in future research.

Consequences of Survivor Guilt

Two consequences of survivor guilt were found to be significant and supported my hypotheses: affective organizational commitment was significantly negatively related to survivor guilt and turnover intentions were significantly positively related to survivor guilt. Affective commitment has been found to be significantly related to procedural justice in layoffs (van Dierendonck & Jacobs, 2012). Since my results found significance between procedural justice and survivor guilt, it would make sense, according to my model, that survivor guilt be related to affective commitment.

Though finding research on the link between turnover intentions and layoffs was difficult to find, it is important to highlight the link between turnover intentions and survivor guilt. Results from this study found a significant relationship between turnover intentions and survivor guilt after a layoff. In Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter, and Ng's 2001 meta-analysis of organizational justice research, they found that procedural justice was not only related to organizational commitment ($r = .57$), but also to withdrawal behaviors ($r = -0.46$) such as turnover intentions. While previous findings of an inverse justice-turnover relationship leaves out survivor guilt, my study provides a possible explanatory link between justice and turnover, at least in the context of layoffs.

OCBs were correlated positively with survivor guilt. This relationship was not statistically significant and was opposite from my hypothesis. There were two studies with conflicting viewpoints that explored the relationship between layoffs and OCBs. Bies, Martin, and Brockner (1993) found that OCBs decreased after a layoff occurred that was perceived to be unfair in a manufacturing firm, whereas Brockner (1990) found that OCBs increased in the form of productivity in a laboratory setting. Of course, neither of

these studies examined the role played by survivor guilt. Perhaps the employees experiencing more survivor guilt also experience more fear of losing their jobs. While their affective commitment to the company may suffer, they may at the same time work harder to make themselves indispensable to their employer by going the extra mile. Williams and Anderson (1991) reported results that can support this claim. This interpretation of the data and the results published by Williams and Anderson (1991) is somewhat supported by my finding that those individuals who did not survive a layoff actually reported a lower rate of OCBs than those who did survive a layoff. This suggests that those who have survived a layoff must feel a sense of having to work harder than before, therefore these survivors believe that they are contributing more to the organization than before because they have to.

Survivor Guilt as a Mediating Variable

Perhaps the most interesting part of this study was the determination that survivor guilt may act as a mediating variable between the antecedents of survivor guilt and the consequences of survivor guilt. While studies such as Brockner (1990) found a correlation between random layoffs and feelings of survivor guilt, the mediating role survivor guilt might play between layoff perceptions and work attitudes, such as Brockner, Grover, and Blonder (1988) has not been examined. Results indicated that when the explanatory power of survivor guilt was removed between affective commitment and how fair the layoff was perceived, the significance between these two variables (perceived fairness of the layoff and affective commitment) was no longer statistically significant. This indicates that while there is a significant relationship between perceived fairness and affective organizational commitment, the relationship is

only significant when survivor guilt is accounted for. The same results were found for the relationship between perceived fairness of a layoff and turnover intentions. Thus, when organizations conduct layoffs, they must be mindful of how they communicate the layoff to employees, as it may affect not only a single construct, such as affective organizational commitment or turnover intentions, but rather the complicated construct survivor guilt, which will in turn affect multiple psychological feelings of workers.

Implications

There are several practical implications that can be used from this study. First, when a business conducts a layoff, the most important aspect that needs to be taken into account is how the layoff is communicated and how it is decided who is laid off and who stays. The most effective way of communicating this was found to be in a face to face format. Gopinath and Becker (2000) found that layoff communication was strongly correlated to justice perceptions, supporting these findings. Those individuals who received a face to face notification of a layoff felt the organization's message was clear, the reason for laying off individuals was fair, and these layoff survivors reported a lower amount of survivor guilt. In other words, when a layoff is communicated face to face, individuals will perceive the organization to be acting fairly and the layoff survivors will feel less guilty, and therefore more likely to have a higher level of affective commitment. A meta analysis conducted by van Dierendonck and Jacobs (2012) found perceptions of fairness were correlated to organizational commitment, therefore supporting these findings. Additionally, effort needs to be put towards showing that layoff survivors are valued in an organization, therefore, stopping the bleeding of decreasing affective organizational commitment that was seen in this study. Additionally, an organization must

be frank with layoff survivors and inform them of more impending layoffs or if their job is insecure. Turnover intentions were found to be highly significant in this study, therefore, the role of survivor guilt is very prevalent in the desire of layoff survivors to stay with an organization or not.

I have occasionally used romantic relationships as an analogy in this study to help the reader relate to the emotional impact of layoffs, as most human beings have experienced the pain of a breakup, even for the person initiating the breakup, or the pain of mistreating one's partner. Much has been written in the clinical psychology literature about the power of forgiveness therapy (American Psychological Association, 2006).

Howes (2009) points out four critical elements necessary for alleviating guilt:

1. Express the emotion. Whatever the crime or injustice or violation, the forgiver needs to fully express how it made her feel. ... Are you expunging *all* the feelings? Probably not, but enough to allow you to focus on the other areas.
2. Understand why. Our brain will continue to search for some explanation until it's satisfied. ... Maybe we won't agree with the rationale, but we need some schema that explains why the act took place.
3. Rebuild safety. The forgiver needs to feel a reasonable amount of assurance the act won't recur. To a reasonable amount, of course, because we are never 100% safe.
4. Let go. This very difficult step is a decision. Letting go is making a promise to not hold a grudge. ... In addition, letting go is making a promise to yourself that you'll stop dwelling/replaying/ruminating/perseverating on the injustice. If letting

go feels impossible, it's probably because A, B or C weren't sufficiently completed. (p. 1)

By examining themes in forgiveness therapy, we can translate them into applicable organizational situations. The organizational implications of this advice are:

1. Invite employees to talk about it. Management needs to ask its employees how they are feeling after the layoff, perhaps in team meetings. People need to vent and get it off their chests.

2. Management needs to explain the reasons for the layoff. The results of this study found that both affective commitment and turnover intentions are observed to be negatively impacted when a layoff is perceived to be unfair and reasons are not clearly communicated.

3. Discuss the future. Employees need to be reassured that layoffs are a last resort, that employees are valued. Employees do not need to be told that they should just be lucky they have a job and that they are expendable. Management must also be honest about the possibility of layoffs in the future.

Theoretical implications include moving forward with a scale that assesses survivor guilt. The scale developed in this study was found to be internally consistent, though it was not as high a level of those scales for affective organizational commitment, OCBs, and turnover intentions. However, the fact that internal consistency satisfied levels laid out by Cronbach (1951) is encouraging for a scale used for the first time.

It should be noted that while caring behaviors were significantly related, they were related opposite to what was expected and found by previous research. This indicates that more research needs to be conducted to determine what exactly drives a

caring behavior to be related to survivor guilt. Perhaps the quality of caring behaviors must be scrutinized to determine if that has an effect on survivor guilt.

Limitations

This study is not without its limitations. For example, the sample used was a convenient sample, with most respondents living in the Midwest. Since this was used a sample, it would be interesting to determine if these results could be replicated throughout multiple regions of the United States, as well as what these results would look like in other parts of the world, specifically in Japan, where society is more collectivistic rather than individualistic, like here in the United States.

Also, in the interest of confidentiality, most demographic information was used to determine organization size. Therefore, the age, sex, and years at a job were not analyzed for significant differences, or if there was enough variance in those groups to determine bias.

Since the amount of participants that responded to my survey who had experienced layoffs was small ($N = 70$), this provides an additional limitation to this study. Though this sample did provide significant results, other studies cited throughout this paper have included sample sizes of 147, 218, and 314 (Bies, Martin, & Brockner, 1993; Brockner et al., 1994; Gopinath & Becker, 2000). Therefore, the present study, should it be replicated, should be conducted with a larger sample size.

It was mentioned in the present study that the coefficient alpha for the survivor guilt scale was 0.73, an acceptable reliability coefficient determined by Cronbach (1951). However, the scales used for affective organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behaviors, and turnover intentions used in this study all reported reliability

coefficients of 0.80 or higher. Therefore, while 0.73 is acceptable, it did not meet the level of statistical rigor observed by the other scales used in this study. Therefore, the survivor guilt scale used in this study was not as reliable as other scales, therefore, limiting the certainty that the survivor guilt scale accurately measured what it was intended to measure.

Since this study was conducted through the internet there existed a limitation of not being able to fully determine who was taking the survey, where they worked, lived, or how they found out about the survey. Being web-driven, the lack of ability to answer questions or clarify any misunderstanding participants may have had could have affected the final results of this study.

Finally, because this was a correlational design, I was unable to reach any causal conclusions about the relationships between the variables, although I did make some speculative causal inferences in the Implications section.

Directions for Future Research

Though this study had its limitations, there is some research that can be conducted in the future to further investigate the findings and address the limitations of this study. One major finding from this study was the opposite-from-predicted relationship observed in the link between caring behaviors and survivor guilt. While past research found that caring behaviors for the layoff victims led to less survivor guilt (Brockner et al., 1994), this study found a significant correlation in the opposite direction. In other words, the more caring behaviors exhibited by an organization, the more survivor guilt was reported by the layoff survivors. Future research should examine the perception of the quality of the caring behaviors. This study focused on the perception of fairness of layoffs, thus,

future research should focus on the perception of the caring behaviors exhibited by an organization.

Secondly, since a scale of survivor guilt was developed by this author, it should be tested in a larger setting, much like the affective commitment scale developed by Meyer and Allen (1990). These authors conducted a study that had a sample size of 253, whereas this study only examined the internal consistency of a survivor guilt scale with 73 participants.

Lastly, an interesting observation in organizational citizenship behaviors lends itself to future research. In this sample, layoff survivors reported higher organizational citizenship behaviors than those individuals who did not undergo a layoff. Future research should determine why layoff survivors report a higher amount of organizational citizenship behaviors, even though layoff survivors' turnover intentions are high and their affective commitment is lower.

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Appendix A
Demographic Questionnaire

For the following questions, please select the appropriate response:

1. Approximately how many employees are employed at your company?

Employees

2. How common are layoffs at in your industry?

Never Happen Infrequently Happen Frequently Happen All the Time

3. In the last 5 years, what percentage of the employees of your company has been laid off?

%

Appendix B

Fairness, Clarity and Caring Behaviors Instrument

4. How was the layoff communicated to you?
- Face to face
 - Email
 - Letter
 - One-on-one
 - Group Meeting
 - Through the grapevine
 - Other _____
5. How would you rate the clarity of the organization's reason for conducting the layoff?
- Very unclear Unclear Clear Very Clear
6. How would you rate the fairness of your organization's choice of who was laid off?
- Very unfair Unfair Fair Very Fair
7. What types of options were offered to those laid off by your organization? (Check all that apply)
- None
 - Re-training
 - Alternate Position in the Company
 - Severance Package
 - Resume Building
 - Help Finding a New Job
 - Call backs promised when this improved
 - Other (please explain):
 - I don't know

Appendix C

Instrument for Determining Affective Organizational Commitment

Instructions: Please indicate the extent to which you either agree or disagree with the following statements by circling the appropriate response.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
8. I would be very happy to spend my rest of my career with this organization.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. I do not feel a strong sense of "belonging" to my organization. (Reverse Scored)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. I do not feel "emotionally attached" to this organization. (Reverse Scored)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. I do not feel like "part of the family" at my organization. (Reverse Scored)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. The organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix D

Instrument for Determining Organizational Citizenship Behaviors

Directions: Please indicate the degree to which you disagree or agree with the following statements by circling the appropriate number between 1 and 6 for each statement.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
14. I frequently volunteer to do things without being asked.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. I often take time away from my job to help others with their work without asking for a reward.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. Sometimes I will coast during part of the workday when there is little work to do rather than trying to find new work. (Reverse Scored)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17. If possible, I take extra unauthorized breaks. (Reverse Scored)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. I put forth a great deal of effort at work.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19. I often try to help fellow employees so they will become more productive.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20. When possible, I take longer lunches or breaks than allowed. (Reverse Scored)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
21. I often help others at work who have a heavy workload without being asked to do so.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix E

Instrument for Determining Turnover Intentions

Instructions: Please indicate the extent to which you either agree or disagree with the following statements by circling the appropriate response.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
22. I frequently think of quitting my job at this organization.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
23. I am planning to search for a new job during the next 12 months.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
24. If I have my own way, I will not be working for this organization one year from now.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix F

Instrument for Determining Survivor Guilt

Instructions: Please indicate the extent to which you either agree or disagree with the following statements by circling the appropriate response.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
25. The fact that I was not laid off and my co-workers were makes me feel uncomfortable.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
26. I am uncomfortable discussing the layoff around those who survived.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
27. I did not deserve to keep my job, while others were laid off.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
28. I feel guilty about keeping my job when I think about the hardships of those who were laid off.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
29. I don't worry about those who were laid off from my company. (Reverse Scored)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
30. I have felt obligated to work harder since my company's layoff occurred.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
31. Success at my job means less to me since the layoff occurred.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
32. I feel that those who were laid off deserved it. (Reverse Scored)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
33. There is nothing I can do to prevent being laid off in the future.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix G

IRB Approval to Conduct Research on Human Subjects

**EMPORIA STATE
UNIVERSITY**
GRADUATE SCHOOL AND
DISTANCE EDUCATION

Research and Grants Center
Campus Box 4443
1 Kellogg Hall
Emporia, Kansas 66881-2443
Phone: 316-838-1211
Fax: 316-838-1246
www.emporia.edu/research

June 12, 2014

Ian Cummings
810 S Lindberg Circle
Wichita, KS 67207

Dear Mr. Cummings:

Your application for approval to use human subjects has been reviewed. I am pleased to inform you that your application was approved and you may begin your research as outlined in your application materials. Please reference the protocol number below when corresponding about this research study.

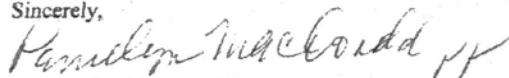
Title:	How Procedural Justice in Corporate Downsizing Can Reduce Negative Psychological Impacts by Reducing Survivor Guilt
Protocol ID Number:	14092
Type of Review:	Expedited
Time Period:	05/01/2014--04/30/2015

If it is necessary to conduct research with subjects past this expiration date, it will be necessary to submit a request for a time extension. If the time period is longer than one year, you must submit an annual update. If there are any modifications to the original approved protocol, such as changes in survey instruments, changes in procedures, or changes to possible risks to subjects, you must submit a request for approval for modifications. The above requests should be submitted on the form Request for Time Extension, Annual Update, or Modification to Research Protocol. This form is available at www.emporia.edu/research/irb.html.

Requests for extensions should be submitted at least 30 days before the expiration date. Annual updates should be submitted within 30 days after each 12-month period. Modifications should be submitted as soon as it becomes evident that changes have occurred or will need to be made.

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board, I wish you success with your research project. If I can help you in any way, do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Dr. Pamela MacDonald
Chair, Institutional Review Board

pf

cc: Dr. George Yancey

Appendix H:
Informed Consent

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

The Department of Psychology at Emporia State University supports the practice of protection for human subjects participating in research and related activities. The following information is provided so that you can decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. You should be aware that even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time, and that if you do withdraw from the study, you will not be subjected to reprimand or any other form of reproach. Likewise, if you choose not to participate, you will not be subjected to reprimand or any other form of reproach.

This study is being conducted to determine how companies may conduct layoffs in order to ensure the survivors of the layoff (those who have kept their jobs) do not have suffer from any negative psychological impacts from the layoff. This should not provide you with any discomfort or other forms of danger or risk. The benefits of this study include providing recommendations to companies who are forced to conduct layoffs. These companies can take these recommendations and put them into practice to make sure those who keep their jobs after the layoffs do not suffer psychological impacts that prevent them from doing their job well. If you have any further questions, feel free to contact the researcher at icumming@g.emporia.edu.

"I have read the above statement and have been fully advised of the procedures to be used in this project. I have been given sufficient opportunity to ask any questions I had concerning the procedures and possible risks involved. I understand the potential risks involved and I assume them voluntarily. I likewise understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time without being subjected to reproach."

Subject

Date

Parent or Guardian (if subject is a minor)

Date

I, Ian Cummings, hereby submit this thesis to Emporia State University as partial fulfillment of the requirements for an advanced degree. I agree that the Library of the University may make it available for use in accordance with its regulations governing materials of this type. I further agree that quoting, photocopying, or other reproduction of this document is allowed for private study, scholarship (including teaching) and research purposes of a nonprofit nature. No copying which involves potential financial gain will be allowed without written permission of the author. I also agree to permit the Graduate School at Emporia State University to digitize and place this thesis in the ESU institutional repository.

Signature of Author

Date

How Procedural Justice During Corporate
Downsizing Can Reduce Negative Psychological
Impacts by Reducing Survivor Guilt
Title of Thesis

Signature of Graduate Office Staff Member

Date Received