

ORGANIZATIONAL DOWNSIZING AND THE AFTERMATH: SURVIVORS'
PERCEPTIONS OF THE IMPACT ON ORGANIZATIONAL
COMMITMENT AND PERSONAL PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT IN THE CONTEXT
OF SCHOOLS

by

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DEDICATION

For my family Brenda, Ashley and Monica; your steadfast support made this possible.

For my close friend-D' Angela Green- who gave me unwavering support and stood in the gap and pointed me to the rainbow during the many storms encountered on this journey towards a Ph. D.

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ABSTRACT

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of a reduction in force in the aftermath on the personnel that remain with the organization also known as survivors' commitment and personal professional development in an educational organization.

Research Method

A qualitative method using a case study approach was used. The multiple embedded case was three public school districts in the Southwest region. Participants were teachers, counselors, instructional coaches and campus administrators. Semi-structured interviews, researcher's journal and data from school board public documents were used. Lichtman's (2006) three C's of data analysis (codes, categories, and concepts) were used on all data sets and were triangulated to strengthen validity.

Findings

The findings suggest that in the aftermath of a reduction in force (RIF) survivors' commitment to the school declines, their commitment to pursue personal professional development opportunities increases and their emotional and psychological attitudes are negatively impacted. The results of this study strongly support a call to action from human resources professional and educational leaders to address the needs of survivors and provide the resources to minimize the negative impact on the workplace and employee morale.

Implication for Research and Practice

Recommendation for human resources professionals and educational leaders to provide support services and organizational learning opportunities to decrease the negative consequences of organizational downsizing on those who remain with the schools. Recommendation for further research into the negative impact of reduction in force on survivors' commitment and personal professional development to minimize the unintended consequences and positively impact student learning and academic achievement.

I. INTRODUCTION

Be happy you have a job! This is the sentiment that is commonly associated with survivors of organizational downsizing. I would say the term happy is ambiguous. Within the context of an unstable political firestorm, this is where my story begins. As a former educator within a large and diverse school district with more than 6 years teaching experience, I became a survivor of organizational downsizing. The school district was given a mandate by the state to trim the school's budget by at least 10% which translated to billions of dollars. I was not expecting to be downsized but I was not entirely sure given the chaotic and unpredictable intricacies of downsizing plans. There was no formal communication protocol that was established by administration and this created the breeding ground for unsubstantiated rumors. I was informed by one of my peers that educators were being pulled out of the classroom during the lesson and told their positions would be terminated. They were then expected to return to finish the lesson with a smile on their face after balling their eyes out from receiving the devastating news. Of course this caused anxiety for other educators. I was also told by a peer that there would be an email sent out on a particular day and if you did not receive that email then you were safe. I had a personal day that particular day but when I returned I did not receive the termination email. So at that point, I was expected by the administration to be grateful to have a job and go on with business as usual and teach the students. Yes, I was grateful to have a job but to the detriment of what?

This situation took a toll on the researchers' emotional well-being. However, this became fuel to sincerely contemplate the researchers' career planning and professional development competencies and how organizational downsizing played a role in

remaining with the organization. The researcher had highly marketable credentials and transferable skills. As a result of this organizational downsizing, the researcher became interested in how this disorienting event impacted her career, personal professional development and commitment within the organization.

Statement of the Problem

The problem of concern in this study is the impact on survivors' organizational commitment and personal professional development after organizational downsizing has occurred in the context of an educational organization. Studies focusing on survivors within the midst of organizational downsizing have been conducted in a corporate setting, however there is a lack of studies that examine how downsizing impacts survivors' organizational commitment and their commitment to personal professional development in the context of schools. As a survivor of organizational downsizing in the business industry as well as in a public school, the researcher was drawn to the study the impact on survivors' commitment and personal professional development. Survivors' stories have not been told with the breadth of understanding they deserve. The case study approach seeks to remedy this gap. Although the impact of organizational downsizing on survivors' emotional, attitudinal and physiological well-being has been studied in the corporate arena, to the contrary this phenomenon has been understudied in the context of educational organizations more specifically schools. The goal of this study was to examine some of the unintended consequences of organizational downsizing in an educational organization setting. Additionally, the researcher's goal was to gain in-depth insight into the challenges faced by survivors in regard to continued personal professional development, commitment and emotional and psychological attitudes in the aftermath of

a reduction in force.

General Methodology

What is your story as a survivor of organizational downsizing? How has organizational downsizing impacted survivors' organizational commitment and personal professional development in the workplace? Questions like these warrant further exploration in the context of a qualitative study. Creswell (2013) suggests that this methodology is necessary "to study a group or population, identify variables that cannot be easily measured, or hear silenced voices" (p. 48) and to establish a "complex, detailed understanding of the issue" (p. 48). In an effort "to empower individuals to share their stories, hear their voices, and minimize the power relationships" (Creswell, 2013, p. 48), qualitative research was appropriate for this study. The landscape of organizations has and continues to undergo restructuring and change. Change is inevitable given the instability of the market and technological, economic and political shifts in the environment. In regards to the corporate organizations, Teare and Monk (2002) advocate that given the nature of management, there has been "organizational de-layering" (p. 334) and as a result the pursuit of a leaner, efficient, flexible and global organization has fueled many change initiatives. Creswell (2013) proposes that in order to "explain the mechanisms or linkages in causal theories or models" (p. 48) qualitative research is appropriate. The researcher explored survivorship within the context of organizational downsizing in three public school districts. The literature revealed a limited focus on survivors and their narratives which has often been silenced. The researcher embraced the complexity of their unique stories and brought a face to the impact of downsizing on the survivors' organizational commitment, personal professional development and emotional

and psychological attitudes in the workplace.

Specific Approach

In an effort to capture in-depth insight and understanding into the survivors' narrative in the context of an organizational setting as opposed to an ethnographic approach which seeks to discern shared behavior and language, the researcher chose the case study approach (Creswell, 2013). This qualitative approach often referred to as a "within-site" (p. 97) study, seeks to investigate and explore a real -life, contemporary case that consists of detailed data collection involving multiple sources of information including semi-structured interviews, researcher's journal, documents and artifacts resulting in a case description and case themes (Creswell, 2013). Furthermore, this multiple, embedded case study design focused on the survivors and presented a unique situation with detailed description which is comparative to narrative research.

Ontological Beliefs

Creswell (2013) proposes that "multiple realities are constructed through our lived experiences and interactions with others" (p. 36). For this study, the researcher focused on the organizational context of schools for the case study to better understand the survivors' reality of the organizational downsizing and its impact on organizational commitment, personal professional development and emotional well-being in the aftermath of a reduction in force (RIF).

Epistemological Beliefs

"Reality is co-constructed between the researcher and the researched and shaped by individual experience" (Creswell, 2013, p. 36). The researcher was aware of her personal, cultural, and historical experiences which included prior experiences as a

survivor of organizational downsizing, her perspective as a female-minority researcher, the historical underpinnings of self-efficacy and her personal professional development. The researcher addressed the question of *how did my interpretation shape my research lens and form the research case study*. (Creswell, 2013). The researcher “interpreted” (p. 25) the nine survivors’ perceptions of the impact of the RIF on their commitment, personal professional development and emotional and psychological attitudes in the aftermath from the data collected from semi-structured interviews using the case study methodology. The researcher recognized her biases and experiences as a survivor of a RIF in one of the school districts studied. She made every effort to remain neutral and interpret survivors’ narratives through the lens of social constructivism to co-construct meaning of the transitory event of organizational downsizing.

Axiological Beliefs

Creswell (2013) proposes that “individual values are honored, and are negotiated among individuals” (p. 36). The researcher acknowledged her own experiences as a survivor of organizational downsizing and the associated negative and positive meaning attributed to layoffs. As a former educator in a large sized school district, the researcher was a survivor of a reduction in force. The legislature mandated all districts cut their budgets by a certain percentage. The researcher’s district decided to make significant cuts to staff personnel. The researcher was employed for six years and did not anticipate her position to be cut because of advanced degrees and STEM certification credentials. The organizational culture was extremely volatile because no one knew exactly how many or what positions would be cut. As a result, the learning culture was negatively impacted and this downsizing event significantly contributed to strained working relationships

among colleagues by breeding mistrust among survivors. The communication protocol for the layoff implementation included terminating teachers in the middle of classroom teaching. One affected teacher returned to her classroom crying and had to continue to teach the lesson plan for that day. The researcher was also a survivor in a corporate organization downsizing. The company was acquired by a much larger conglomerate, and the announcement for the reduction in force was disseminated through secondary sources. The researcher was not included in the terminated employees and her position was safe. The sentiment vividly expressed by campus administrators was *to be happy to have a job*. The researcher was grateful to have her job but this situation exposed some embedded beliefs and feelings and she asked herself, “if they treated the laid off teachers like this then what does that mean for her as a survivor?” Moreover, this event negatively impacted the learning culture by promoting a sense of instability and increased feelings of anxiety and distress. As a constructivist researcher, how did she make meaning of this situation? The researcher believed that focus needed to be on the survivors of organizational downsizing. In spite of this chaotic and transitory event survivors are expected to carry out the organizational objectives with less key personnel and little attention given to their emotional and psychological needs and personal professional development opportunities in the aftermath.

Methodological Beliefs

This qualitative approach “uses inductive methods of emergent ideas through consensus obtained through methods such as interviewing, observing, and analysis of texts” (Creswell, 2013, p. 36). By analyzing varied school board public documents, an in-depth understanding was the expected outcome similar to phenomenological and

grounded theory studies in which individuals articulate their own “reality” or meaning of their lived experiences to construct a more global and diverse orientation.

Research Questions

Using the social constructivism framework, the goal of this study is to explore the impact of organizational downsizing on survivors’ organizational commitment and personal professional development in the aftermath. Additionally, the researcher identified best practices to address organizational downsizing among survivors from a professional development perspective. The researcher conducted a literature review on organizational change that specifically examined survivorship of downsizing. Research was guided by four questions:

- 1) How have the survivors’ emotional and psychological attitudes been impacted in the aftermath of organizational downsizing?
- 2) How has the survivors’ commitment to personal professional development been impacted after organizational downsizing has occurred?
- 3) In what ways does organizational downsizing impact the survivors’ commitment to the school after downsizing has occurred?
- 4) What is the nature of survivors’ commitment to personal professional development and organizational commitment in the aftermath of organizational downsizing?

The “unit of analysis” (Creswell, 2013, p. 104) was nine cases and consisted of a detailed cross-case analysis. Key terms focused on the research questions and was searched in academic, scholarly and peer reviewed databases such as ERIC and Education Source.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this case study was to understand the specific issue of the impact of organizational downsizing on survivors' organizational commitment and personal professional development in the aftermath. The researcher collected and documented the narratives of nine survivors and analyzed a diverse set of qualitative data. This analysis included an examination and description of the case site. Additional data included nine semi-structured interviews, researcher's journal and public school documents to develop a deeper understanding of emerging themes or underlying issues of organizational downsizing and its impact on survivors' commitment, personal professional development and emotional and psychological attitudes. The focus of this study was to investigate the potential impact on survivors' emotional and psychological well-being, organizational commitment and personal professional development. Study findings contributed to the body of literature in the field of human resources development, organizational learning and educational leadership. Due to differing contextual views of the nine cases, generalization was not the focus of the outcome of this case study.

Researcher's Background

The researcher brought a unique background to this case study. Her experiences included professional accomplishments in both business and education. She is the president and founder of TaylorMade Careers, which is a full service human capital solutions company offering tailored services from organizational development consulting to career management, transition and outplacement solutions to individuals and organizations. As a leader in career management and organizational development, she has a professional education center with a reputation for integrity, innovation and excellence

in client services. This education center provides information technology training and industry certifications, business solutions, corporate and workforce training. Her company has been recognized for its success in delivering quality educational programs tailored to meet the needs of entrepreneurs. She has developed client service methodologies, workshop instructional design, human performance solutions and provided human resources assessment, human resources policy and procedures implementation and career management. Additional roles include senior level work experience in human capital management. She is an award winner in both academic and entrepreneurial fields. She has remained at the forefront of career development trends and entrepreneurial finance by identifying sources of innovation, leadership consulting, career management development and human capital solutions. Most recently, she was named 2013 Woman's Chamber of Commerce Blazing Star Award recipient at the 23rd Annual Money and Power Conference Business woman of the Year & Blazing Star Awards. The Blazing Star Awards honor women on the success fast track who are blazing their own unique paths to professional achievement and who support the economic advancement of women. In education, she is a former educator in K-12 and adjunct professor in the College of Business at a prominent University focused on teaching management and leadership, marketing and human resource management to adult learners. She earned two MBA degrees in Human Resources Management and Finance, respectively from the Michael J. Coles School of Business program in Georgia in which this program has been nationally recognized by BusinessWeek and Success Magazine in Entrepreneurship. Her sincere and unrelenting interest was embedded in this study. More importantly, the aftermath of organizational downsizing in the context of educational organizations was

the focus of this case study.

Definition of Terms

This section of the study provided the context and clarified the meaning of terms that were used throughout the study:

Organizational downsizing: The reduction in the labor force that impacts many components of employees' lives such as working conditions, increased workload, and role redefinition due to the loss of valued colleagues (DePater, Klehe, Van Vianen, & Zikic, 2011).

Downsizing plan: A program that includes any redirection, or refocusing of the organization which results in a reduced work force within one or more work teams (Martikainen, 2004).

Survivors: Individuals that remain with the company after organizational downsizing has occurred and are often responsible for implementing the future goals of the organization (Martikainen, 2004). *In the context of this study *survivors* was in reference to personnel that remains with the school/district i.e. teachers, counselors and administrators

Career adaptability: Future oriented career behaviors focused at coping with external and internal career demands that help individuals become independent to self-manage their careers (DePater et al., 2011).

Career planning: A long term outlook on determining one's career path (DePater et al., 2011).

Survivors' guilt: Sympathy for a laid off victim rather than a sense of relief for having survived downsizing (Kim, 2003).

Layoff Survivors' syndrome: The social and psychological impact of downsizing on survivors (Kim, 2003).

Job insecurity: An individual's subjective perception and interpretation of the current workplace landscape (DePater et al., 2011).

Organizational restructuring: A period of time in which organizational structures are fluid and unstable with implications for business goals, daily operations and social processes including employee reactions (Baba et al., 1995).

Organizational/Workplace learning: "Is understood to involve not just human change but interconnections of humans and their actions with rules, tools, and texts, cultural, and material environments [...] as expanding human possibilities for flexible and creative action in contexts of work" (Fenwick, 2008, p. 18).

Organizational Commitment: "An employee's intentions to contribute their high degree of performance, and demonstrate loyalty to their organization's goals" (Yeh, 2014, p. 94).

Career Development: "A process of acquiring different career roles [...] the interactive progression of internal career identity formation and the growth of external career significance" (Hoekstra, 2011, p. 159).

Educational Organizations: *In the context of this study organization was in reference to public schools and or the three school districts studied.

Summary

This chapter outlines the rationale for exploring the narratives of survivors' organizational commitment and personal professional development after organizational downsizing has occurred in the context of schools. It provides the researcher's connection

to the research topic at the personal and professional levels. The researcher's motivation to embark on this study was discussed. Additionally, it provides a description of the statement of problem as related to organizational downsizing and its impact on survivors in relevant literature. Next, the researcher presented research questions guiding the study and the purpose of the study. The researcher captured the emotional and attitudinal perceptions of survivors on the impact of the reduction in force on their commitment, personal professional development and emotional and psychological well-being in an educational organization. The focus of this study was to examine how survivors attribute meaning of this disorienting event to their commitment, personal professional development and emotional well-being in the aftermath. The next section of the document, chapter two, explored relevant literature in order to provide context to the study. The goal was to briefly review literature on the overarching topic of organizational change, downsizing then more specific reduction in force in schools, survivors' layoff syndrome and organizational commitment and personal professional development.

II. REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

Organizational downsizing in the context of schools is relatively recent phenomenon and therefore the literature on RIF's in schools is limited. Consequently, there was an emphasis on the literature on corporate downsizing in this chapter. The literature on organizational downsizing was used to provide an overall perspective within the business context but was applicable to schools because the underlying issues of survivorship such as layoff survivor syndrome, increased workload and disruption of cultural norms are present in the aftermath of both corporations and public schools. The purpose of this literature review is to examine the topic of organizational downsizing and its impact on survivors' organizational commitment, personal career development and emotional and psychological attitudes in the workplace. In the context of corporations, most research on layoffs has focused on the underlying causes and the impact on individuals that were laid off rather than on those who remain with the organization, the survivors. Their adoption of the change initiative will significantly impact the organization's effectiveness (Brockner, 1992). Many of the negative consequences of organizational downsizing has ramifications on the learning culture in public schools. Thus, the context of this study was organizational downsizing in public schools and the impact on survivors. Most of the literature on organizational downsizing has focused on corporations and their efforts to remain competitive and evolve with market and technological demand. In regard to public schools, reduction in force (RIF) has recently come to the forefront because of federal and state mandated budget cuts and other political factors. Historically, many corporations and employees have been affected by the new approach to organizational management referred to as downsizing (Appelbaum,

Delage, Gault and Labib, 1997). Corporations have implemented downsizing to solve business challenges. However, most recently downsizing has been implemented in public schools in response to legislative mandated budget cuts. Marks (2006) asserts that organizational change is challenging for organizational leaders and even more problematic for employees in the aftermath. He contends that although organizations in the 1990's used downsizing in response to external and internal forces, profits and productivity did not significantly improve. Survivors are negatively impacted by such measures in the aftermath. The significance of this study was to understand the specific issue of this impact within the context of public schools. The researcher collected and analyzed a diverse set of qualitative data to develop a deeper understanding of the underlying issues related to survivors' organizational commitment, personal professional development and emotional and psychological attitudes in the aftermath. The four research questions were:

- 1) How have the survivors' emotional and psychological attitudes been impacted in the aftermath of organizational downsizing?
- 2) How has the survivors' commitment to personal career development been impacted after organizational downsizing has occurred?
- 3) In what ways does organizational downsizing impact the survivors' organizational commitment after downsizing has occurred?
- 4) What is the nature of survivors' personal career development and organizational commitment in the aftermath of organizational downsizing?

First, the literature review covered common reasons for organizational downsizing. Next, the researcher discussed survivors or those who remain with the

educational organization after downsizing and layoff survivor syndrome commonly associated with this population. Findings related to survivors' organizational commitment personal professional development and adaptability was be discussed. The goal of this study was to contribute best practices for human resource professionals and educational leaders that implement downsizing to provide support, resources, and personal professional development opportunities to minimize the negative consequences of downsizing on survivors. The researcher wanted to gain in-depth insight into the nature of survivors' organizational commitment and personal professional development in the context of educational organizations in the aftermath of organizational downsizing. The researcher found articles from the ERIC database using descriptors and key words such as "organizational change," "RIFs in public schools," "organizational downsizing," "teacher professional development", "teacher layoffs" and "layoff survivor syndrome." Commonalities and differences between authors, major themes and perceived gaps in the body of literature were examined. The researcher's literature review methodology was not bounded by specific years but rather by relevant studies categorized by themes. The researcher collected articles using a funnel approach. For example, the articles that she found that discussed the overarching or general topic of organizational change was grouped in that section of the literature. Another example, the articles with the specific theme of personal professional development that addressed the research questions were then collected, analyzed and integrated with other related relevant literature in the appropriate section of the literature review (see Appendix A). Literature that discussed organizational downsizing in corporations was highlighted to address the cross pollination of this phenomena in public schools. Reduction in force in schools as well as

teacher professional learning and development were covered.

Organizational Change

De Pater, Klehe, Van Vianen and Zikic (2011) contend that the idea of a new employee remaining with an organization until retirement is a rare occurrence given these times of organizational transition. As a result, “technological advances, global competition, state deregulations and changing market conditions foster frequent organizational restructurings and downsizing” (p. 217) in corporations. Many corporate organizations provide transitional support for downsized employees such as outplacement services, career development and technology training to facilitate new career opportunities. However, less comprehensive support mechanisms are given to survivors or the employees that remain intact with the organization. Most recent, public schools have implemented staff layoffs in an effort to respond to the economic and acrimonious political environment. Similarly, corporations enact downsizing in an effort to promote growth and efficiency for systems and to remain competitive given the technological evolution (DePater et al., 2011). In the context of organizational change, Marks’ (2006) research distinguishes between the terms “transition” and “change.” He defines change as “the continuous adjustments that organizations make to address matters like the increasing customer demands and technological changes” whereas... transitions are referred to as discontinuous and involves existing practices and routines that must be abandoned and new ones discovered and developed” (p. 386). This author suggests that adapting to transition is more psychologically perplexing than adapting to change because survivors are hesitant to embrace new strategies and routines. Furthermore, Marks (2006) contends that there is an opportunity for organization renewal in the

aftermath of corporate downsizing. These benefits include the flexibility to replace outdated or no longer viable organizational structures and embrace new innovations in technology and dispose of behaviors that are misaligned with market trends to adopt new “post transition” (p. 386) realities. In regard to public schools, there are potential benefits as well. Teachers and staff that remain with the organization can realign their focus and engage in peer to peer learning, design more effective instructional practices and reallocate resources that benefit students and improve student learning. Mark (2006) highlights three key factors related to resistance to downsizing in the context of both corporations and public schools. These include: (a) self-imposed sense of urgency to cut cost abruptly instead of incrementally while ignoring the emotional toll on survivors or the impact on the organizational culture and learning environment, (b) a fear of workplace violence, retribution and sabotage, and (c) perception of failure that leads management to minimize the unintended negative consequences of the event and therefore delay the implementation of a comprehensive communication plan for change initiative (Marks, 2006). Corporations as well as schools should address the emotional trauma experienced by survivors including guilt, fear and anxiety. McConnell (2000) contends that the human factor is consistently overlooked and given minimal attention in organizational downsizing. Most organizations often fail “to encourage the development of the needed culture of operational excellence” (p. 10). As a result, human resource (HR) professionals must address survivors’ needs to facilitate change as well as increase personal professional development opportunities to improve organizational and teacher effectiveness.

The literature revealed that in order to positively impact change, human resources must redefine their role from a traditional administrative top-down approach to a more proactive facilitator for change (Eric Flamholtz, 1995). Flamholtz's (1995) study on organizational change and successful navigation examined two organizational effectiveness models including the Pyramid of Organizational Development and an organizational life cycle that acknowledged seven stages of organizational growth. The goal of the study was to examine best strategies for managing organizational transformations more effectively and increase overall organizational efficiency. In the context of corporate downsizing, human resources professionals are on the frontlines of implementing downsizing initiatives in partnership with outplacement firms or other third party assistance. In contrast, traditionally public schools do not employ third party outplacement firms to assist in the downsizing process. They often bear the brunt of the backlash, discontent and resistance by survivors. As a result, the risk of negative consequences are greater and support systems should be provided to minimize the impact. Human resources must reassess their position and transition to a more collaborative, strategic and employee centered approach to facilitate adoption. Additionally, educational leaders for schools should design innovative and relevant training curriculum, provide peer to peer learning and personal professional development opportunities to improve organizational commitment and minimize the emotional toll on survivors. Flamholtz (1995) asserts that this will require a more holistic approach to organizational development that address all the key aspects of organizational success that embrace both human behavior and peripheral factors.

Downsizing

Harel, Nagy, Negrin and Tzafrir (2006) define downsizing in the context of corporations “as the systematic reduction of a workforce through a set of activities by which organizations aim to improve efficiency and performance” (p. 125). They further states that this change initiative “tends to be more reactive and defensive when a company faces financial difficulties” (p. 125). According to Kowske, Lundby and Rasch, 2009, p.56, “layoffs have a significant effect on the optimization and utilization of the organization’s workforce.” Similarly, Harel et al. (2006) advocate that the “process of workforce reduction and dismissals is problematic and involves painful issues” (p. 126). The literature revealed diverse reasons why organizations experience downsizing. Many corporate organizations initiate downsizing in an effort to promote operational efficiencies and effectiveness, to eliminate duplication of services and systems in the case of a merger or acquisition and to become financially disciplined. As related to RIFs in schools, the main reason for layoffs include federal and state mandated budget cuts and other monetary factors. In contrast there are benefits of organizational downsizing in both corporations and educational organizations that include continuous learning opportunities, collaboration and team learning, collective vision of the organization, improving quality of product or systems, establishing new capabilities, reexamining past failures, implementing best practices, reducing cost and optimizing efficiency (Alonderienè & Pundzienè, 2008; Boyce, 2003; DellaNeve, 2007; McConnell, 2000; Roland, 2011). Additionally, Kim (2003) states the justification most corporations downsize:

Restructuring has been widely legitimated by internal organizations, the government, the press, and companies themselves as a hard but necessary strategy to ensure firm survival and the national economy in general. Under this logic, thousands of workers have either been laid off or are at risk of being laid off. (p. 460)

Consequently this author provides insight into the justification as to why most corporations as well as schools use downsizing as an approach to organizational transition.

Reasons for Downsizing

In the context of corporate downsizing most prevailing research has focused on the laid off employee, or victim; some negative consequences that have been associated with downsizing were “family disintegration, collapse of social networks, and the decline of victims’ physical and mental health among other negative side effects” (Kim, 2003, p. 450). Similarly, in the context of schools little attention is given to survivors in the aftermath. Conversely, advocates of “liberal economics” (p. 450) claim that downsizing as a change strategy must be a viable decision in order “to rationalize the economy and to create more efficient and transparent companies” (p. 450). Foley and Smith (1999) suggest that smaller organizations provide greater opportunities for individual contribution and recognition. Some organizations downsize for compliance with legal requirements and industry mandated policies. Furthermore, Harel et al. (2006) propose corporate organizations that undergo “financial losses and cash flow difficulties are more likely to engage in downsizing” (p. 125). They also note that downsizing is only one alternative organizations might undertake to realign financial resources such as labor

costs to improve productivity. Likewise, DeYoung and Mirabal (2005) suggest that corporate organizations downsize as a “response to mergers and acquisitions; revenue loss or loss of market share through technological and industrial change; the execution of new organizational structures; and social pressure attributed to the philosophy that smaller is better” (p. 39). Roth and Shook (2011) suggest that downsizing is a common method used by corporate organizations to achieve short term goals by eliminating redundant job positions in an effort to implement best practices and reduce personnel cost. Likewise in the context of schools layoffs have recently come to the forefront as a reluctant alternative strategy in response to the federal and state budget cuts to decrease labor cost.

Downsizing Characteristics

Littler and Innes (2004) contend there is “no theoretically agreed way to define ‘downsizing’ ” however these authors define it as “planned workforce reduction” (p. 1167). Similarly, Roth and Shook (2011) assert that when downsizing occurs “the foundation of the organization and artifacts and rituals are transformed” (p. 149). Kowske et al. (2009) characterize downsizing in the context of corporate downsizing, whether planned or unplanned, as a concerted effort on behalf of the organization to improve efficiency, achieve performance goals and ultimately reduce costs to improve their fiscal position. In regard to corporate layoffs it is standard that economic restructuring requires unproductive firms to downsize to make them competitive in the global market by the elimination of positions to facilitate cost reduction and increase profits through improved productivity and efficiency (Kim, 2003).

Rusaw (2004) discusses the negative impact of corporate downsizing. He contends that if organizational structures that define roles and responsibilities are ambiguous as a result of downsizing, deviant competition over scarce human resources, political and economic interests and negative work relationships could emerge. “The confusion and strife left in the wake of downsizing may evoke results other than what were expected” (p. 490). Furthermore, there are negative unintended consequences in the context of both corporations and public schools. This author asserts that downsizing has eroded human capital and has stifled and impeded the progress of organizational change. He contends that the disorientation and negative emotions present in the aftermath often produces results contrary to the expected outcome of improved productivity and efficiency. Additionally, the capacity of organizations and individual to cultivate a culture of organizational learning and professional development opportunities are negatively impacted (Rusaw, 2004).

Although there is research related to survivors of corporate downsizing, the literature reveals the lack of studies that focus on the survivors of downsizing and their organizational commitment to personal professional development in the context of schools. The scope of this study focused on the survivors in the aftermath of downsizing. Kim’s (2003) study asserts that in regard to survivors’ mental health pre- and post-downsizing the findings suggests the more positive perceptions survivors had of leadership and human resources practitioners the less impact downsizing contributed to their negative emotional well-being. Furthermore, he suggests that the emotional health of survivors is strongly correlated with trust, self-efficacy and job satisfaction. Moreover,

most survivors experience the demise of informal social networks among peers (Kim, 2003).

The Survivors

In the context of corporate as well as school layoffs, Kowske et al. (2009) contend that survivors “are often demoralized-left as walking wounded... in which they are often blindsided by the extrication of their friends and colleagues, the remaining employees question their own security” (p. 49). Survivors of organizational restructuring often harbor feelings of resentment and display high levels of anxiety. Ciancio (2000) asserts that “employees and managers who survive organizational downsizing often have emotional responses that thwart the organization’s attempt to renew itself” (p. 43). Furthermore, Marks (2006) suggests that “studies show that, in the aftermath of transitions involving layoffs, survivors’ attitudes in areas including job satisfaction, job involvement, organizational commitment, and intention to remain with the organization become more negative” (p. 385). Bordia et al. (2005) analyzed levels of job uncertainty, personal control, emotional exhaustion and job satisfaction over three stages of the downsizing process. A key finding was that the stage of downsizing significantly affected the mediating role of personal control in the relationship between job uncertainty and employee adjustment (Bordia et al., 2005). The results of this study revealed that job uncertainty in the pre-phase of downsizing and throughout the process provokes anxiety among survivors because they lose a sense of personal control which may reduce organizational commitment to such personal investment such as professional development. Amundson et al.’s study (2004) examined the phenomena of certain attributes and characteristics that were present among survivors of workforce reduction.

These characteristics included: higher levels of stress, decreased motivation, increased workloads, and negative emotional demonstrations of fear, decreased self-efficacy and diminished organizational commitment. The literature supports my aforementioned survivor narrative. Roth and Shook (2011) assert that:

Employees who retained their jobs were expected to be respectfully sad and distraught on behalf of those involuntarily released. However, after the downsizing was completed they were expected to return to normal productivity standards. (p. 141)

Additionally, David Noer (1995) supports this in that he suggests most of the focus is directed to providing transitional resources to the downsized and less attention is given to the survivors “who have the task of revitalizing the organization” (p. 30).

Manuel London (1996) contends that given the expectancy of survivors to carry the workload after downsizing, organizations need to acknowledge their continued reliance on survivors’ professional development training and provide opportunities to gain those skills. He also suggests that to improve organizational commitment among survivors firms must assess employees’ competencies and provide professional development programs that support the new vision of the organization. These claims can also be applied to the context of public school RIFs in that support for personal professional development opportunities are needed to minimize the negative consequences. Marks (2006) assert that survivors often exhibit “a lack of direction in prioritizing work, risk avoidance, and increases in role ambiguity, political behavior, and work team dysfunction” (p. 385). Survivors in both corporations and public schools layoffs have negative reactions to downsizing which may lead to biologically based behavioral

changes such as layoff survivor syndrome.

Layoff Survivor Syndrome

Ciancio (2000) contends that survivors' emotional health is negatively impacted in both contexts of corporate and schools downsizing. Given these adverse circumstances, they are expected to suppress negative emotions for continued employment in which this deflection continues to build and contribute to pervading dysfunction in the workplace. Additionally, survivors become "prisoners of work" (p. 44) as their emotional dilemma is minimized or ignored. Kim (2003) asserts that:

Western researchers have begun to research relatively recently the socio-psychological impacts on workers after downsizing through empirical surveys and systematic analysis. However, layoffs and the layoff syndrome cannot be regarded as a unique phenomenon present only in advanced capitalist societies. It has steadily become a ubiquitous phenomenon despite differing historical contexts that caused it to arise. (p. 450)

Additionally, this author supports the phenomenon of the applicability of multiple contexts such as public schools and corporations in which downsizing occurs and the permeating effects of layoff survivor syndrome on survivors' emotional well-being.

Ciancio (2000) asserts that survivors' syndrome begins with the deconstruction of the psychological contract. Some assumptions made on behalf of the survivors include trust, loyalty, fairness, respect and promotional or advancement opportunities. When those are broken, negative behavioral characteristics begin to emerge. Similarly, Noer (1995) explains how survivors cope with their repressed internal feelings by exhibiting "neither personally healthy nor organizationally productive" and "layoff survivor

sickness is probably the primary reason that downsizing has seldom resulted in increased productivity” (p. 30). He further suggests providing interventions that increase self-esteem and a sense of control to combat these systems. Personal professional development opportunities would help alleviate the negative impact of downsizing and increase self-efficacy by assisting survivors by investing in their competency development. Foley and Smith (1999) discuss some of these characteristics of survivors’ syndrome exhibited after downsizing. These emotions and behaviors include “fear, insecurity, uncertainty, frustration, resentment, anger, sadness, depression, guilt, betrayal, and distrust” (p. 362). Similarly, Ciancio (2000) confers additional adverse feelings such as anger and betrayal, demoralization and depression, cynicism, resentment, decreased creativity and lower productivity. Kim (2003) further defines “survivors’ syndrome” as the social and psychological impact of downsizing on the remaining employees (p. 450). Foley and Smith (1999) assert that denial is the greatest defense experienced by some survivors and emphasize the importance to actively engage in the identification of these negative experiences and share them with their peers in the organization to reduce the negative impact on the learning culture and improve organizational effectiveness. They also suggest that these reactions are usually present after the initial stages of downsizing and represent a “normal set of responses to an inherently traumatic situation” (p. 362). Furthermore, their assertions apply to both the context of corporate downsizing as well as public schools. They advocate that it is important to acknowledge and validate survivors’ perceptions of the downsizing initiative because if human resources professionals and educational leaders do not address the emotional impact of downsizing, survivors are then at risk to develop more pervasive traits of survivor syndrome (Foley & Smith, 1999).

These authors contend that counseling interventions should be employed after the initial layoff announcement to minimize the negative impact on survivors to mitigate negative feelings before they develop into more chronic survivor syndrome. The literature on survivors' emotional health reveals that these interventions should be implemented to diminish the erosion on the learning culture and workplace (Foley & Smith, 1999). Similarly, Marks (2006) suggests that "layoff survivor sickness has been well documented, with symptoms ranging from job insecurity and feelings of unfairness to depression, fatigue, and reduced motivation" (p. 385). Foley and Smith (1999) assert that to help combat this syndrome interventions should be conducted in a group setting. The reason identified was that this created a safe space for survivors in a supportive environment to discuss the emotional upheaval experienced before, during and after downsizing. Given this format, survivors realized shared experiences and coping strategies among their peers in addition to "positive reframing" (p. 355) of the downsizing event. Furthermore, research indicates that survivors often experienced guilt for remaining with the company and express sympathy and compassion for their former colleague. As a result, survivors' organizational commitment is diluted and is counterproductive to the organizations' initial goal of downsizing which is to improve organizational productivity and effectiveness in the context of corporate downsizing but can also apply to public schools in which student achievement is at stake (Kim, 2003). In addition, factors such as team conflict and dynamics, job autonomy and other socio demographics such as gender, age, income levels, education and race should be considered when evaluating the affect and influence organizational downsizing has on survivors' emotional mental health (Kim, 2003). Corporate organizations as well as

public schools need to address the emotional impact of downsizing on survivors in order to minimize the unintended consequences on organizational effectiveness, employee morale, student learning and academic achievement.

Similarly, Gandolfi (2009) asserts that survivors exhibit symptoms of layoff survivors' syndrome. They often experience feelings of resentment and apathy in the aftermath of downsizing. Consequently, this can lead to decreased levels of morale, employee engagement, organizational commitment and organizational productivity. He suggests human resource professionals can increase survivors' organizational commitment by implementing a strategic comprehensive downsizing plan that includes a communication protocol, support systems and most importantly, personal professional development opportunities to lessen the negative impact of downsizing. His claim can also apply to context of public school RIFs in that survivors exhibit negative feelings, decreased organizational commitment and decline in morale. Baruch and Hind (1999) suggest best practices to minimize the effects of layoff survivor syndrome by executing the downsizing process in a fair, equitable and transparent way to encourage employee participation in the decision- making process and collaborate with survivors to identify practical solutions to identified problems during all phases of organizational downsizing. Consequently, if not addressed the residual effect on survivors' job insecurity can continue to facilitate emotional exhaustion in the aftermath of downsizing (Bordia et al., 2005). Similarly, DeYoung and Mirabal (2005) assert:

Survivor syndrome involves a narrow set of self-absorbed and risk-averse behaviors that can threaten the organization's survival [...] additionally, the emotional aftereffects in what is referred to as survivor syndrome include a workforce that

exhibits fear, anger, frustration, anxiety and mistrust. Those employees who survive the downsizing intervention must assess how their personal values and beliefs align with that of the newly structured organization. (p. 40)

Furthermore, in regard to corporate downsizing as well as RIF's in public schools, these authors contend that to the extent in which an organization is concerned with financial management does correlate and can greatly influence how an organization chooses to implement downsizing in an effort to positively improve their financial and budgetary position (DeYoung & Mirabal, 2005). Therefore, it is critical for human resource practitioners and educational leaders to acknowledge the destabilized construct of downsizing. They should empower survivors by providing support services and personal professional development opportunities to increase their organizational commitment, self-efficacy and facilitate positive emotional health to improve organizational effectiveness and student learning.

Organizational Commitment

DeYoung and Mirabal (2005) significantly contributed to the literature on organizational commitment. These authors conducted a study in the context of corporate downsizing but can be applied to public schools as it relates to organizational commitment among survivors. This study was from the perspective of leaders that implement organizational downsizing as a strategic intervention and its impact on organizational commitment. The findings suggest that organizational commitment was influenced by three factors: acceptance of the organizational values and mission, willingness to expend effort to their jobs on behalf of the organization and a desire to remain in the organization. Additionally, a lack of commitment from leadership to include

intervention efforts results in negative influence on financial achievement and reputation for social equity (DeYoung & Mirabal, 2005).

Correspondingly, as it relates to organizational commitment, Linda Larkey and Calvin Morrill (1995) assert those who are committed are seen as reliable and productive and are more likely to achieve organizational goals as compared to those employees that are less committed. These authors acknowledge the gap in literature on organizational commitment in the context of corporate as well as public school downsizing. Larkey and Morrill (1995) state that “the received scholarly wisdom on organizational commitment by itself is inadequate for conceptualizing and empirically studying commitment under conditions of organizational and environmental volatility” (p. 194). As a result, they pioneered an empirical study that contrasted the traditional paradigm of organizational commitment studied in time of organizational stability to the more relevant literature on organizational commitment in the aftermath of organizational downsizing (Larkey & Morrill, 1995) Furthermore, they contend that traditional literature on organizational commitment is “worth interpreting for application in times of stability, but may be less useful for understanding commitment during organizational upheaval” (p. 196). Additionally, their study examined how survivors’ personal understanding of radical organizational change can mediate cognitive, affective, and behavioral expressions of organizational commitment (Larkey & Morrill, 1995). Moreover, the challenges survivors face in “maintaining stable and internally consistent symbol systems and identities, particular during times of radical change” (p. 197). Likewise, Oscar Grusky (1966) defines organizational commitment as “the nature of the relationship of the member to the system as a whole” (p. 489). He conducted a quantitative study on the correlation

between career mobility and organizational commitment. In regard to corporate downsizing, the findings of this study suggest that upward career mobility may be considered a positive influencer to increase organizational commitment because it provides rewards for the employee that seeks career advancement (Grusky, 1966). Recognizing the importance of reward systems, career advancement, workplace learning and personal professional development opportunities, the findings of this report suggest a need to further examine personal professional development in the context of educational organizations in the aftermath of downsizing to increase survivors' organizational commitment.

Similarly, Keith Martikainen (2004) conducted research on organizational downsizing as it related to corporations but is applicable in the public school setting. The findings of his study suggests that production may actually increase within an organization directly after the layoff announcement due to the initial relief felt by survivors for continued employment but subsequently diminishes in the aftermath. This may be contributed to what the author termed the Hawthorne effect. This phenomena can be described as the intense focus by survivors which previously embedded in the norms of the organization. Nevertheless, this initial positive emotion is later replaced with fear, anger and anxiety about future restructuring measures (Martikainen, 2004).

Consequently, in regards to personal professional development in the aftermath of corporate and public school RIFs, survivors need to pursue "retraining" (p. 148) to develop new competencies in their new work teams to increase retention, marketability, and organizational commitment(Feldman, 1996). To facilitate research on corporate downsizing, Amundson et al. (2004) explored survivors' reactions to organization

restructuring. Their study consisted of 31 semi-structured interviews of survivors from diverse organizations. The critical incident method was used and focused on the negative and positive incidents within six months of the completion of the downsizing initiative. The results of their survey revealed that out of more than 102 incidents, 75 were negative. They found that consequences and mitigating factors of organizational commitment among survivors emerged as a result of organizational downsizing. These characteristics include increased anxiety about future downsizing initiatives and potential job loss, change in interpersonal relationships with former colleagues, negative attitudes toward the organization itself and the financial impact on their families. Furthermore, the literature reveals that “downsizing can have a profound impact on how employees see the workplace and in turn, their commitment to stay or their intention to quit” (Kowske et al, 2009, p. 56). Likewise Ciancio (2000) discusses a common misconception among leadership during corporate downsizing but is applicable in public schools as it relates to organizational commitment among survivors. He argues that management assumes survivors will comply with their new work roles. However, survivors often exhibit passive aggressive resistance behaviors that are contrary to organizational goals in order to compensate for the adverse, unstable and chaotic work environment commonly associated in the aftermath of organizational downsizing.

Increased Workload for Survivors

De Pater et al. (2011) suggest that organizational downsizing contributes to increased workload for survivors. This chaotic change event significantly contributes to brain drain in those highly valuable skills and competencies lost as a result of being laid off. The increased workload weighs heavily on survivors’ emotional capacity. Rusaw

(2004) cautions that layoffs reduce job positions but has not decreased workload for survivors. Likewise, Feldman (1996) suggests that survivors are expected to take on the increased workload with ongoing projects once handled by laid off co-workers. It is during downsizing that he argues that the competencies of negotiation and coaching are appreciated. He asserts that developing personal professional development skills help improve organizational effectiveness and increase organizational commitment. Therefore, organizations need to focus on providing personal professional development and retraining opportunities to facilitate change. Kowske et al. (2009) advocate that in the context of downsizing organizations should explore job share opportunities to improve efficiency, increase self-efficacy and decrease workload. By doing so survivors may have greater confidence in the future of the organization and increase their organizational commitment. The organization may have the intended goal of reducing labor costs but the work still remains despite the downsizing. Survivors often have to perform tasks that were previously completed by several people or teams. Roth and Shook (2011) assert that downsizing “breaks up the social fabric of the organization by eliminating many of the long term relationships that employees have established [...] and causes workload stress” (p. 147). Consequently, survivors may not possess the required competencies or training to complete the new job role efficiently and effectively. As a result, there is increased stress and survivors’ mental health is negatively impacted (Kim, 2003). Survivors often respond negatively to the increased workload, experience greater job insecurity and often exhibit symptoms of survivor syndrome or a significant decline in mental health often caused by the emotional trauma of downsizing (Kim, 2003; Rusaw, 2004).

New Work Roles and Relationship in New Organization

During organizational downsizing survivors often find themselves in new work roles given the changing landscape. Survivors experience job mobility and significant constraints in which they interpret as detrimental to their personal professional development (Baba et al., 1995; Martikainen, 2004). As a result of downsizing, a new organization emerges. Baruch and Hind's (1999) study examined the nature of the new relationship and the effects of survivor syndrome on organizational effectiveness. These authors argue that "this involves a shift away from paternalistic and benevolent secure employment, towards an emphasis on continuous responsibility for self- development on the part of the employee" (p. 295). Baba et al. (1995) assert that the literature on downsizing from a career development perspective is inadequate and as a result they vigorously sought to remedy this deficiency. They studied organizational change from an "anthropological" (p. 302) approach. This can be defined as the changing structure of an organization undergoing an evolution into a new organization and the inherent career platform associated with the new firm. Baba et al.'s study (1995) introduced the concept of organizational status which is defined as "the position or rank of one organization relative to another" (p. 304) and the influence on career path selection. The purpose of their study in the context of corporate downsizing was to examine career path development with the emphasis on both the organizational process and organizational status. This study provided insight into the outcomes of the organizational renewal processes (Baba et al., 1995). The findings revealed a four step acquisition model for organizational redesign for service related industries which include "an environmental shift followed by a reorganization, managerial decision making, employee interpretations,

and community consensus on organizational status” (p. 322). They noted that with the implementation of such a change model, the ambiguity and uncertainty often associated with organizational change decreased significantly. In addition, this study helped to address the gap in the literature on highly focused internal labor companies such as General Motors and the concept of organizational status. These results highlight the important characteristics of organizational change. During periods of organizational restructuring, career structures are unstable and organizational productivity is negatively impacted. Survivors’ “social processes” (p. 323) are disrupted by the emotional trauma about future RIFs and experience a disturbance in their psychological psyche (Baba et al., 1995).

Survivors form a new relationship with the organization in the aftermath of organizational downsizing. For example, Van Buren suggests (as cited in Rusaw, 2004), “individuals develop and negotiate rewards in exchange for skills, abilities, and work results through a psychological contract” (p. 488). Amundson et al. (2004) conducted a study that suggests an unintended consequence of workforce reduction is that survivors’ experienced a sense of violation of a perceived “psychological contract” held with the organization (p. 257). Even though this contract was not explicit, the significance of this inherent paradigm was critical to understanding the survivors’ adaptation to the new relationship within the organization as the result of downsizing initiatives.

Amundson et al.’s (2004) study implies that this contract is based on the employee’s belief that the working relationship includes an explicit guarantee of employment. Consequently, when this “contract” was perceived to be fragmented by organizational downsizing, resentment and other negative emotions were fostered and

impacted organizational productivity and organizational commitment. Likewise, Foley and Smith (1999) suggest that if this psychological contract between employer and employee is realigned or violated, increased economic pressures, greater competition and organizations' desire to remain technologically relevant, employees can no longer expect continued employment simply because they maintained high performance standards. In the same way, Baruch and Hind (1999) reiterate the concept of "psychological contracts" where there is not an explicit contract but "a commitment on the part of the organization to provide the employees with training and development, in order to develop a 'portable portfolio' of skills" (p. 299). These authors assert that the "new psychological contracts are those in which the employing organization is simply another stakeholder in an individual's career development" (p. 300).

Amundson et al.'s (2004) study suggest that in an effort to facilitate stability in the midst of change, organizations should make sure they provide the opportunity for survivors to grieve the loss of the relationship of the downsized co-worker and achieve a sense of closure. Survivors desire fair and equitable treatment and dignity as a human being in the aftermath. If not, resentment and anger toward the organization will be a negative consequence. Empirical research on the topic of survivors of organizational downsizing revealed that honest and transparent communication before, during and after the downsizing process is a primary concern among survivors.

Similarly, DeYoung and Mirabal (2005) discussed the relationship between decreased organizational performance and the psychological contract in the aftermath of downsizing. The correlation is compelling in that if this inferred contract or relationship is misrepresented or disrupted in any way then "this infringement of the implied

psychological contract negatively affects behavior, attitude, and ultimately, performance and productivity” (p. 42). Furthermore, the findings suggest there should be at best acknowledgement that the psychological contracts that inherently exist between the organization and employees must be cultivated. Downsizing must be implemented as a rational and legitimate business strategy in response to the changing environment (DeYoung & Mirabal, 2005). The recognition of this implied agreement will assist HR professionals in addressing the underlying issues of survivors’ resistance and lack of organizational commitment in the aftermath of downsizing.

New Organizational Vision Adoption

Rogers (1962) discusses the concept of “opinion leadership” (p. 209) within a new organization in the context of corporate downsizing and can be applied to RIFs in public schools. New organizational norms, misaligned culture and new management may emerge in the aftermath of organizational downsizing. Opinion leaders provide human resource professionals the best strategy to gain survivors’ adoption of the new organization in the aftermath. Roger (1962) describes these leaders as either passive or active individuals who are influential in approving or disapproving new ideas. Additionally in the aftermath of downsizing, leadership competencies such as emotional intelligence and conflict management facilitated by leaders play an integral role to determine the success of the employee’s adoption of the proposed change (Alonderienė & Pundzienė, 2008). Effective leadership skills that are vital to survivors’ adoption include the ability to effectively communicate the vision, to empower others to act on the vision, to organize and establish a change coalition or team that share the vision, to examine the

market and the ability to deal with ambiguity (Alonderienė & Pundzienė, 2008; Rey, 2010).

In the context of corporate and educational organizations, recent research on organizational change emphasizes that within an ambiguous learning environment, individuals are more likely to emulate the behaviors of the leader. This assists in the adoption of the change initiative in an effort to comply and evade negative consequences rather than adoption for intrinsic motivational reasons (Bercovitz & Feldman, 2008). Bercovitz and Feldman's study (2008) emphasizes that individual adoption of the new change initiative may be either substantive or symbolic. The purpose of the study was to examine the factors influencing the adoption of an organizational initiative at the individual level, within an intra-organizational framework (Bercovitz & Feldman, 2008). The findings suggest that greater adaptation to the change initiative would more likely be achieved if individuals observed their peers modeling and engaging in the new organizational systems or structures. The influence of the organizational social processes and the critical reflection about the process should be considered when organizations implement a strategic change initiative. By incorporating a more "bottom- up" (p. 86) approach to organizational change and understanding organization heterogeneity, survivors can, to a greater extent accept and embrace change with less anxiety (Allen, 2003; Bercovitz & Feldman, 2008). Furthermore, this study provided strong empirical data for facilitating organizational change. The findings revealed that an individual's propensity to participate or adopt a new initiative is somewhat fermented in the idea that he or she is influenced by both social learning prior to pre- employment with the organization and relevant peer behavior aligned with the "intra-organizational dynamics"

(p. 70) present in facilitating organizational change (Bercovitz & Feldman, 2008). More specifically, survivors' prior experiences with organizational downsizing and their position in the hierarchy of the organizational structure may greatly influence survivors' adoption to embrace change and increase commitment (Bercovitz & Feldman, 2008). Moreover, Marks' (2006) study on workplace recovery asserts that to increase adoption among survivors, leadership should recognize the loss of their former colleagues and sense of normalcy. Leaders should address the four elements of workplace recovery including empathy, energy, engagement and enforcement to increase organizational commitment, survivors' engagement and organizational effectiveness.

Survivor Engagement

Kowske et al. (2009) define employee engagement as the “ extent to which employees are motivated to contribute to organizational success, and are willing to apply discretionary effort to accomplishing tasks important to the achievement of organizational goals” (p. 50). These authors conducted a quantitative study that utilized statistical regression analysis to examine employee engagement in the context of downsizing. The findings suggest that after a layoff had occurred, “disengaged employees were 2.5 times more likely than engaged employees to consider leaving their organization in the next 12 months” (p. 50). As a result, organizations need to increase survivors' engagement to facilitate retention and improve organizational effectiveness. Personal professional development opportunities provide a sense of engagement in which survivors feel a sense of empowerment if they see the organization invested in them and their future within the new organization. Kowske et al.'s (2009) study revealed that confidence and security as well as career advancement ranked one and two respectively

as important to survivors' engagement within the organization. The findings suggest in the context of RIFs in corporations and schools that when leadership provides personal professional development opportunities and relevant instructional design aligned with work outcomes survivors intrinsic motivation and engagement are increased (Kowske et al., 2009).

Organizational Learning

Tara Fenwick (2008) claims that the environment of workplace learning has evolved by stating:

The nature and organization of work has changed so rapidly in the past decade with the effects of globalization that learning has become a lightning rod, attracting all sorts of new attention outside educational debates. All the emphasis on the so-called knowledge economy has created demand for innovation-people learning to be creative and entrepreneurial –as a way to stay competitive. New technologies and environments have fundamentally changed what and how people learn in work. (p. 18)

Rusaw (2004) explored human resources development (HRD) as it related to organizational learning in the context of downsizing. He noted that an unintended consequence of downsizing is the negative effect on HRD functions such as the survivors' learning and personal professional development. He defined human resources development "is a holistic process of constructing and acting upon knowledge from individual, interpersonal, organizational, and environmental contexts" (Rusaw, 2004, p. 485). Similarly, London (1996) asserts that adults generally learn best when they engage in multiple learning methodologies such as modeling, presentation, participation and

application. In regards to personal professional development Knowles suggests (as cited in Rusaw, 2004) increasing an individual's capacity for learning through formal skills development programs or informal avenues. These programs "are usually context-based and reflective of the particular needs and interests of individuals" (Rusaw, 2004, p. 486). For example, on the job training opportunities help support organizational resources used to identify, define, and adapt to changing organizational and environmental conditions. Conversely, if organizations' decrease "either human or organizational resources result in an overall decline in a system's ability to adapt and to survive changes" (Rusaw, 2004, p. 483) which often leads to decreased organizational effectiveness and organizational commitment among survivors.

First, Rusaw (2004) discusses the characteristics of learning among individuals. Learning may be "intentional, or planned and structured around specific objectives or it may be incidental" and usually it is focused on "the learners' needs and interests or situational characteristics" (p. 485). Second, the author examines learning at the organizational level. Learning at this level is defined as "the ability of an organization to gather, interpret, and apply information from environments to permit continuous, proactive, and efficient adaptation to changing needs and resources" (p. 485).

In the context of public school and corporate downsizing, organizations lose key personnel and intellectual capital as a consequential outcome of downsizing. Rusaw (2004) asserts that downsized key personnel such as mentors and coaches are often the casualty of organizational change and negatively affect organizational learning. He contends that such persons engage organizational learning by providing opportunities for continuous learning, promoting inquiry and dialogue and encouraging collaboration and

involvement (Rusaw, 2004). In addition, this author suggests that downsizing impedes organizational learning at the structural, functional, and environmental levels. The loss of intellectual capital can significantly impact the “human capital knowledge” (p. 489) that is needed for survivors’ participation in the development of long-term change strategies that benefit the overall organization (Rusaw, 2004).

Personal Career Development

A modest focus is given to the negative impact on survivors’ organizational commitment to workplace learning and professional development, hence the significance of the researcher’s study. Feldman (1996), a leading researcher on career development within the context of downsizing states that:

It is not unusual to see organizations cut training budgets by 25% across all units rather than critically evaluating the different types of training provided, the different levels of training provided, the differing economies of scale or reconfiguring programs across units more economically [...] thus, career development efforts have to be refocused on generating opportunities for employees to learn new skills and abilities in a variety of positions (e.g., via lateral moves, temporary assignments, or job rotation) and not rely solely on motivating workers through hopes of promotions. (p. 158)

This author asserts that as a result of such drastic measures little attention has focused on personal career development in the context of downsizing but rather on organizational growth. Furthermore, he argues that it is within these chaotic times when “the greatest shift in career strategy is needed within the context of downsizing is in terms of maintaining technical excellence” (p. 153). Likewise, Feldman (1996) discusses

the new paradigm in career development in downsizing organizations. He contends that as a result of corporate downsizing, training and career development programs are significantly cut although these programs are key to organizational learning (Feldman, 1996).

Baba et al. (1995) claim that “when company reorganizations and downsizings occur, turmoil tends to reverberate throughout the firm’s operations, including its policies and procedures related to personnel management” (p. 302). Organizational support in the form of new training and professional development for a survivors’ new role and emotional reinforcement is crucial in the success of organizational restructuring (Admundson et al, 2004; Allen, 2003; Bell & Bell, 2005). The literature suggests stakeholders such as human resources professionals and educational leaders that implement downsizing embrace a more collaborative management style with regard to addressing both the technical and pedagogical needs of the adult learner which are critical to an organizations success (Admundson et al, 2004; Allen, 2003; Bell & Bell, 2005). In addition, Gandolfi (2006) suggests human resources professionals should take a more proactive approach to career development after downsizing to improve successful planning and execution of downsizing. Similarly, Kowske et al. (2009) support this approach in that leadership should clearly communicate survivors’ career path growth plan and invest in training and development programs to increase their engagement and organizational commitment. Likewise, Joel Brockner (1992) echoes this assertion he contends organizations should assist survivors to clarify their personal values, learning competencies and further develop marketable skills to increase organizational commitment. Likewise, Feldman (1996) suggests that organizations need to develop a

systematic plan to manage survivors' careers with diminished resources for employee professional development and limited career advancement opportunities.

De Pater et al. (2011) conducted a landmark study of employees' behavior during organizational restructuring and downsizing from a career perspective. These authors suggest that career transition for survivors is often a result of organizational change. They define career adaptability as peoples' free agency to take responsibility for their careers. Additionally, they asserted that limited empirical research exist that examine the link between career adaptability, organizational commitment and loyalty among survivors. In the context of career transition, these authors examined the key role redundancy, job insecurity and low career satisfaction as related to employees' career adaptive response to career exploration and planning. Career planning in the midst of downsizing is critical to improving organizational effectiveness. The importance is twofold in that first, survivors seek more challenging work opportunities and personal professional development, and second, the organization seeks to match career path selection, to salvage and increase morale to improve effectiveness and productivity in the aftermath of downsizing. If career path analysis is not achieved the results could be counterproductive to positive organizational change initiatives (Baba et al., 1995; De Pater et al., 2011).

Gandolfi (2009) asserts there is a lack of studies that focus on organizational effectiveness and self-efficacy of survivor. He acknowledges the gap in research that addresses training and development during downsizing and proposes further empirical research studies to bridge this gap. Similarly, London (1996) advocates that:

The continued viability of the firm often rests on the competence of employees to meet today's job demands and prepare for organizational changes. These

organizations must assess employees' skills, direct them into needed training, increase their experience by placing them in different jobs, and encourage them to demonstrate new ways of adding value to the firm. (p. 69)

This author emphasizes that organizations need to create the space for enhancing survivors' training competencies and personal career development if the organization is to survive in the new organizational structure and embrace new cultural norms often formed as a result of organizational downsizing.

Harel et al.'s (2006) study on job counseling and retraining as it relates to downsized employees further revealed the influence of such interventions on survivors as well. They suggest that these programs should be adopted and implemented by organizations in transition, downsizing and during economic hardships. Counseling programs significantly contribute to creating the positive learning culture for personal development opportunities, increases survivors' engagement and minimize the negative consequences of downsizing. This landmark study indicates on the organizational level, career development programs "can enhance human resource utilization, decrease perception of psychological contract breach, and minimize internal strains and organizational conflict" (p. 139). They suggest most of the psychological turmoil associated with organizational crisis can be minimized with the implementation of such intervention programs.

Blum and Spell's (2000) pivotal study on career development in the aftermath of downsizing supports the need for additional qualitative studies on this topic. This particular study focused on two perspectives. First, organizational career paths as an efficient response to organizational restructuring. Second, career paths as a means by

which organizations seek to control their employees. The findings suggest that external labor market indicators as well as the organizational learning structure contribute to personal career development (Blum & Spell, 2000). Additionally, these authors contend organizational downsizing negatively impacts career development opportunities for survivors by impeding skill development. Organizations both corporate and public schools should acknowledge this deficiency and design, develop and support career planning. Realizing this, Feldman (1996) encourages HR professionals and educational leaders in charge of career development activities to actively engage survivors and allocate dedicated resources toward career development programs to improve survivors' organizational commitment.

Organizational Effectiveness

In order for an organization to achieve and sustain organizational effectiveness, the organization needs to expend energy and targeted resources to maximize employees' task efficiency, commitment and sustain intrinsic motivation to improve organizational performance (Kataria, Garg, & Rastogi, 2013). Kataria et al. (2013) suggest that when organizations recognize the psychological contract and provide career development opportunities from a holistic perspective, this breeds conditions for survivors to thrive and increases organizational commitment. This study contributes to the literature on organizational effectiveness by linking employee engagement and the psychological variable with improved organizational performance. De Pater et al.'s (2011) study provides best practices for career development in the midst of organizational downsizing. Such practices for key decision makers include "increasing transparency, predictability, and employee voice" (p. 226). However, there were limitations to this study. The results

failed to account for the various characteristics of organizational downsizing such as the delivery, scope of the change initiative and supervisor traits in different types of work arrangements (De Pater et al., 2011). Moreover, this study was instrumental in addressing survivors' commitment to career development in the context of organizational downsizing. More specifically, this study examined how survivors utilized career adaptability as a "coping mechanism" (p. 227) in organizational change. Additionally, Rusaw (2004) suggests that organizations need to "supplement training and educating employees with a wide range of incentives, such as career mobility opportunities, job enrichment, and participatory decision making to improve both individual and institutional capacities" (p. 495). The recent literature suggests that organizational effectiveness can be increased by facilitating trust to minimize resistance and the negative impact on survivors' emotional health such as stress, guilt, fear and anxiety (Kim, 2003). Further research is warranted to study the adverse effects of downsizing on organizational productivity given the gap in literature. Even though the scope of organizational change is rather extensive, the literature reveals that there is evidence that job satisfaction and organizational commitment declines as a result of downsizing. This indicates that the decline in productivity is an unintended consequence (Kim, 2003). In the context of corporate downsizing as well as educational organizations, Kowske et al. (2009) assert that organizations can increase their overall effectiveness by cultivating trust and confidence among survivors. This can be accomplished through transparent and clear communication as to why the layoffs occurred and the potential benefit of downsizing in achieving the organizations strategic mission of improved future and organizational success (Kowske et al., 2009). Similarly, DeYoung and Mirabal (2005) suggest that

considerable planning must take place before, during and after to increase organizational efficiency to promote competitive advantage. The downsizing implementation should take all reasonable steps to minimize the potential negative impact on productivity and workforce behavior.

In the context of organizational downsizing, organizational effectiveness can be increased through sustained efforts of leadership to minimize adverse effects of change. This can be achieved through increasing survivors' engagement by reducing stress related to increased workload. In addition, leaders should provide personal professional opportunities to increase survivors training competencies to improve job performance. These efforts will create a sense of renewed trust, loyalty and increase organizational commitment in the aftermath of downsizing (DeYoung & Mirabal, 2005).

Reduction-in-Force in Public Schools

In the context of public schools there is a gap in literature related to educational change (Duke & Hochbein, 2008). The teaching profession has been considered a *stable* field. Jacobson (2011) contends that:

Teaching is not the safe career bet that it once was. The thinking used to be: New students will always be entering the public schools, and older teachers will always be retiring, so new teachers will always be needed. But teaching jobs aren't secure enough to stand up to the "Great Recession," as this drawn-out downturn has been called [...] Across the country, teacher layoffs have become a common occurrence. (p. 17)

Historically, schools have been insulated from the external consequences of mandated budget cuts. Asher and Shapiro's (1990) study on rationality and staff

retrenchment in times of budgetary crisis, was groundbreaking in that leaders were faced with making decisions regarding layoffs with limited guidance and experience needed to carry out a reduction in force in schools effectively and efficiently. These authors contend that there is pressure on educational leaders under diminished resources to make rational decisions related to survivors' interest in self-preservation in the aftermath of downsizing (Asher & Shapiro, 1990). Furthermore, these authors assert that given the unpredictable and unstable nature of organizational downsizing by definition decision making from educational leaders in the aftermath cannot be rational.

Emerging research on reduction – in force in schools has challenged the notion of teaching as a *safe* and *established* profession. Given the recent mandated budget cuts at the federal and state levels, layoffs in schools have become a reality for most districts. Goldhaber and Theobald (2011) landmark quantitative study on teacher workforce in a reduction in force found that there is a gap in research that examine the negative consequences of teacher layoffs. However they assert recently there is an emergence of research on the implications of organizational downsizing in the context of schools (Goldhaber & Theobald, 2011). In regards to personal professional development, this is noteworthy because the authors' study support the need for additional certifications and advanced degrees to decrease the odds of becoming laid off. They contend that:

On average, teachers with a master's degree or an endorsement in a subject area with teacher shortages are about 0.6 percentage points less likely to receive a RIF notice. Conversely, teachers with endorsement in health, physical education, or the arts are far more likely to receive a layoff notice. (p. 82)

Furthermore, the findings suggest that school districts have strategically retained teachers who have multiple, hard-to-fill core area certifications which provide flexibility in teaching assignments. Moreover, this study revealed that *seniority* was the primary criteria used in determining teacher dismissals. They assert that until recently school districts have not been faced with teacher layoffs and are rethinking strategies in implementing organizational downsizing initiatives. The findings of their study suggest that it is sensible for schools to rethink the use of seniority or “last one in first one out” policies. Although schools use seniority due to the simplicity and transparency, consequently this has contributed to the negative work environment in the aftermath. Research makes it hard to argue that use of seniority is in the best interest of student learning and achievement (Goldhaber & Theobald, 2011).

Furthermore in regards to seniority these authors assert that seniority plays a large factor in layoff decisions. In the 75 largest school districts this criteria accounts for over 70 percent in determining teacher dismissal (Goldhaber & Theobald, 2011).

As related to teacher effectiveness, Goldhaber and Theobald (2011) contend that teachers who received layoff notices were considered five percent less effective on average than the teacher who did not receive a notice. Those teachers who received termination notices were entry level. The literature revealed that on average effectiveness improves substantially over the first few years of a teachers’ career. Consequently, these authors suggest that a teacher’s endorsement area affects the likelihood of being laid off more than seniority. For example, the probability that a first year special education teacher receives a termination notice is 6.2 percent less as compared with 17 percent for a first year health/PE teacher. Additionally, the estimated probability of a veteran teacher

with more seniority receiving a termination notice is less with each endorsement obtained (Goldhaber & Theobald, 2011).

Likewise, Ward (1984) contends that decisions made about RIF's are often in response to national and regional trends as well as budget issues. These reductions consist of administrative, instructional and non-instructional personnel. Teachers provide direct services on the front lines and are often the first to be downsized. He asserts that RIF's in public schools have long range implications in regards to school politics and community support (Ward, 1984). In regards to the legality of RIFs he contends:

The controlling law is often state statute, although, in many cases, state board of education rules and regulations, collective bargaining agreements, and local board policies contain pertinent provisions [...] the legal environment for RIFs varies state by state. (p. 181)

Additionally, he asserts that educational leaders should approach RIF's with a broader vision and understanding of the political ramifications and potential negative consequences of downsizing on public schools (Ward, 1984). Moreover, in an effort to minimize the negative impact of RIFs on schools educational leaders should implement comprehensive financial management strategies and alternative cost savings plan to eliminate the need to cut student programs and downsize employees (Ward, 1984). This author contends that layoffs must be a last resort and those in charge of implementing layoffs should involve all stakeholders because of the lasting negative impact on the learning environment and workplace. Consequently, school administrators must be adaptable to the changing adverse political climate and adapt to shifts in enrollment and decline in revenue to minimize the negative impact on student learning and academic

achievement (Ward, 1984). This author highlights the origin of the term reduction in force (RIFs) in schools. The use of this term was relatively unknown centuries ago. He suggests that historically the most pressing issues faced by public schools were finding enough classroom space and high -quality teachers. Most recently, there has been a paradigm shift in which schools are faced with reduced resources, the consequences of adverse educational policies and the lack of administrative support. The unintended costs that negatively impact school are student learning and teacher quality (Ward, 1984). Hence, this author contends that RIF's have political consequences and leads to additional problems. Notwithstanding, RIF's require strategic planning and long range vision from educational leaders to achieve balance in the face of change (Ward, 1984).

Teacher Layoffs

Public school teachers have traditionally viewed their positions as secure as compared to other occupations (Root, Root, & Sundin, 2007). In the context of corporations, recession and restructuring are primarily the causal factors impacting organizational change and job loss. In contrast, public schools have other factors that negatively impact teachers and other school personnel. These alternatives include charter schools, home schooling and a significant reduction in funding. As a result, school districts have downsized teachers, closed schools and embraced job sharing to cope (Root et al., 2007). Most importantly, Root et.al (2007) contend that although there is no national data that shows the impact of job loss as compared to others in the same predicament, it is evident that teachers have human capital. Furthermore, these authors advocate that there is a lack of empirical studies on the topic of teacher downsizing and its impact on professional development, thus the significance of this study. They contend

that recent layoffs in public schools have reflected current economic trends and what appears to be educational organizations are following the lead of the private sector in initiating downsizing to cope with budget cuts and other financial market indicators (Root et al., 2007) As a result, school budgets and basic public services have been significantly cut due to diminishing tax revenue (Giroux, 2010).

Recently, given the RIF's or reduction-in-force that occurred in various school districts in the Southwest region during 2010-2011 and across the nation, the topic of downsizing as it relates to the impact on teachers has migrated to the forefront of teacher education literature. "Rather than focusing on fine-tuning pedagogical skills or embracing 21st century innovation, the issues of budget lines and reduction-in-force ramifications have garnered greater attention" (Sterrett & Bond, p. 53, 2012). Consequently, in times of financial upheaval and a politically acrimonious environment, public schools funds for new technology, instructional materials and salaries are significantly reduced. As a result, teachers have shifted their focus to personal professional development in an effort to minimize the negative impact of downsizing (Sterrett & Imig, 2011). Additionally, most school districts are labor intensive and therefore allocate over half of their school budgets to teacher's salaries. This has led to substantial teacher layoffs with future resources expected to continue to decline and the federal government is unlikely to stop steeper staff cuts (Goldhaber & Theobald, 2011).

Concurrently "teachers have been laid off from work in unprecedented numbers in the past few years as a result of the economic crisis that has been felt at the federal, state, and local levels" (Sterrett and Bond, 2012). As a result, teacher professional development is becoming more critical in providing teachers with the tools to meet and exceed

students' needs and help them succeed within the extraordinary and high-anxiety environment of state assessments that are prevalent in today's educational landscape.

Furthermore, Sterrett and Bond (2012) advocate that:

Today's teachers and principals are facing the highest accountability measures in the history of education while also grappling the fallout of the worst economy since the Great Depression [...] As educators, we must move beyond the "tough choices" that confront us, make continued growth a priority for students and faculty, and preserve learning opportunities in this shifting climate. (p. 52)

Goldhaber and Theobald (2011) assert that the literature reveals that teacher quality is the most influential factor in student achievement. These authors conducted a recent study on RIF's in Washington State public schools by using a sample of 1,717 who were laid off in 2008-2009 and 407 teachers who were downsized in 2009-2010. The findings suggest that within the context of seniority-based vs. effectiveness-based system, student achievement and decreased professional development opportunities are a casualty of organizational downsizing (Goldhaber & Theobald, 2011). In support of increased professional development for survivors, Sterrett and Bond (2012) assert that within the current environment of diminished resources teachers must cultivate their peer relationships, preserve professional growth and communicate the brevity of the challenges. Furthermore in the aftermath of organizational downsizing, principals and teacher leaders should focus on high impact areas that directly influence student success that aligned with the school's mission for school improvement to diminish the negative consequences. They suggest authentic professional development opportunities that include partnerships with universities to develop teachers (Sterrett & Bond, 2012).

Teacher Professional Development

In the context of teacher layoffs, Phelan (1983) contends school districts and leadership should “promote instructional supervision as a cornerstone of effective teaching [...] this means that money and time must be set aside for evaluators to develop their observational skills and for teachers to improve their pedagogical talents” (p. 198). Similarly, McGee and Petrie (2012) assert that “professional development for teachers is recognized as a key vehicle through which to improve teaching and, in turn, to improve student achievement” (p. 59). Within the literature of teacher education, professional development for teachers has been studied. However, within the context of organizational downsizing this topic and its complexities has not been a major focus of recent research, thus the need for this case study. Beatrice Avalos (2010) categorizes workplace learning as the overarching term for professional development that is facilitated either formally or informally; and internally by school personnel grounded in situated learning theory and the schools’ historical culture norms. She defines transformative professional development as how teachers learn and the integration of past experiences that transforms their beliefs and practices that is embedded within the school learning culture. Furthermore, Avalos (2010) asserts that the foundation of teacher professional development is about engaging how the teacher learns and then transforming their learning into best practices to promote and facilitate students’ growth. She contends that:

Teacher professional learning requires cognitive and emotional involvement of teachers individually and collectively, the capacity and willingness to examine where each one stands in terms of convictions and beliefs and the perusal and

enactment of appropriate alternatives for improvement or change. (Avalos, 2010, p. 10)

Consequently effective teacher professional development programs should include critically reflective components, self-assessment opportunities, courses and workshops aligned with teacher's needs and competencies. Additionally, other professional development should include more participatory action such as collaboration in curriculum development, the dissemination of assessment data to benefit targeted intervention strategies and sharing of best practices for instructional methodologies among peers (Avalos, 2010, McGee, & Petrie, 2012). Avalos (2010) advocates the need for further research in teacher professional development to design programs that align with the educational needs of their students. The study addressed the importance of reflexivity in professional development programs. The findings suggest that reflexivity is an important contributing factor in professional development programs because it provides the foundation for teachers to engage in analysis of their inherent biases, beliefs and feelings of self-efficacy.

Freeman (1989) contends that "training and development are two basic educating strategies that share the same purpose: achieving change in what the teacher does and why they differ in the means they adopt to teaching competence "(p. 41). Career development as related to the teaching profession has been understudied often due to the organizational structure that exists in most school environments. Teachers are usually given a salary step that indicates the year of teaching experience earned rather than a promotion as a result of career advancement for teacher effectiveness. Freeman (1989) further posits the purpose of teacher professional development is to facilitate awareness

of their own self-efficacy and confidence to influence student participation as a result of their internal monitoring system. This system consists of teachers' attitude toward self-analysis of their inherent biases.

Recent literature in the context of schools has emerged in regard to teacher leadership and career advancement opportunities similar to corporations. Teacher leadership can be established through informal channels without designated authority over peers such as a coach. Conversely, leadership can emerge formally with such ranks as department chair and curriculum lead (Kinsella, et.al 2010). Furthermore, research suggests that “there is a growing literature exploring alternatives to a one-size-fits-all approach to better differentiate PD for teachers who have different levels of experience and expertise” (p. 85). Consequently, Lin & Yin (2013) contend there is a distinction between teacher training programs and teacher professional development. Teacher training is formal training delivered by universities or other education institutions that is based on a customary teaching schedule, syllabus and often includes evaluation and an assessment module as compared to teacher development which focuses on a more comprehensive model that encompasses the human component and less formal strategies. The literature revealed that teacher professional development is intrinsically motivated and seeks to clarify and facilitate self-reflection on teachers' instructional purpose and practices (Freeman, 1989, Lin & Yin, 2013). Conversely training prepares pre-service teachers and is implemented through formal channels such as course programs resulting in certification. Training is conducted by external entities and are solution-oriented rather than self-directed (Freeman, 1989, Lin & Yin, 2013).

Freeman (1989) asserts in regards to teacher effectiveness training is based on the assumption teachers will improve proficiency as a result of mastering of a set of skills. Training focuses on a sequence of strategic steps for a specific outcomes within a specified period of time. More specifically, according to Lin and Yin (2013) teacher professional development “teacher development starts with teachers’ existing knowledge and personal teaching experience...and depends on the teachers who make their own decision on what, how and where they need to know and learn” (p. 2113). Additionally, professional development is job-embedded and is focused on teachers’ internal motivation to achieve clarity with a student-focused perspective (Devries, Jansen, & Van de Grift, 2012). The literature revealed that when teachers are invested in student achievement and learner-oriented, they are more likely to participate in continuous professional development, collaborate among peers and engage in self-reflection practices (DeVries et.al, 2012). As a result, professional development programs should address the teachers’ learning style, subject content and self-efficacy within the context of schools’ cultural norms to effectively contribute to teachers’ competencies. In the context of this case study, the researcher focused on teachers’ professional development as a learning construct for personal growth in the aftermath of layoffs in three school districts in the Southwest region that had experienced RIF during 2010-2011. As supported by the literature, teacher professional development play a vital role in school improvement and educational reform as teachers engage in self- reflection to improve effectiveness, quality and positively impact student achievement (Lin & Yin, 2013, McGee & Petrie, 2012).

Cogshall et al. (2012) discuss the emergence of job dedicated professional learning currently used in most public schools. This approach facilitates teacher

engagement and is more relevant to teacher effectiveness. These authors contend that, “job-embedded professional learning is more likely to be learner centered, knowledge centered, community centered, and assessment centered than other forms of professional development” (p. 4). To facilitate best practices in teacher methodologies:

Teachers need to learn how to analyze and reflect on their students’ learning and the changes they may need to make to improve the impact of their instruction.

Continuous professional learning should be connected to specific challenges teachers experience in their classroom and intentionally integrated into the workday and relationships of educators. (Coggshall et al., 2012, p. 5)

Furthermore these authors contend that the use of entrenched professional learning refines teachers’ understanding of the content to positively influence student comprehension and learning (Coggshall et al., 2012). Emerging research suggests that teachers learn best by collaborating with other peers. The teaching profession is known as an isolated position with teachers often spending the entire day in their classrooms. This workplace environment does not promote alliance among peers. The emergence of professional learning communities aim to bridge this gap. In an effort to promote a sense of community and teamwork among teachers, Coggshall et al. (2012) contend as adult learners, when teachers collaborate and engage in peer to peer learning their experiences are meaningful and positively impact student learning and achievement. As related to teacher evaluation reform, the integration of these types of professional development significantly improves teacher retention, motivation and organizational commitment. In regard to professional learning communities, Doolittle et al.’s (2006) study examined professional learning communities for school leadership in educational change and its

impact on teacher professional development. They assert:

One contemporary strategy for reform, professional learning communities, encourages aspiring school leaders to develop sufficient leadership expertise to support effective classroom instruction while, at the same time, facilitating individual and complex organizational transformation across numerous stakeholders constituencies. (p. 10)

Posit in social constructivism in which learning is co-constructed between the teacher and student, the findings of Doolittle et al.' (2006) study revealed that in order for the professional learning community model to be effective schools must provide support such as organizational structure, school policies and teacher contracts that facilitate transformational learning. Furthermore, these authors contend that at the core of professional learning is the central tenets of social constructivism. Understanding that cultivating relationships and open communication are the foundation of a learning community; Embracing student voices in the learning process are both key to constructivist theory (Doolittle et al., 2006). Likewise, Lunenburg (2010) contends that the core philosophy of professional learning communities is to engage all stakeholders to collaborate to improve teacher effectiveness and positively impact student learning. Most importantly, this case study focused on professional development in the aftermath of a RIF in the context of schools. Professional learning communities are critical to ensuring teachers have the opportunities to not only collaborate and build communal engagement, but share best practices and effective instructional strategies to ultimately improve student learning and academic achievement.

Synthesis of the Literature

The review of the literature focused on organizational downsizing in the context of corporations as well as in public schools. The literature discussed an overall message and call for action from human resources and educational leaders to provide support services to survivors of a reduction in force to minimize the negative consequences related to their organizational commitment, personal professional development and emotional and psychological well-being. Moreover, the various authors and theorists discussed major issues of organizational downsizing starting with the overall concept of organizational change. Next, covering the negative consequences such as survivor layoff syndrome, decline in organizational commitment and employee morale as well as increase in teacher's commitment to professional learning.

Summary

This literature review identifies a gap in studies that focus on personal professional development solely in the aftermath of organizational downsizing in the context of schools. The literature on organizational change suggests that inquiry and dialogue, creating the open space for sharing information, developing positive interpersonal relationships, implementation of action learning and integrating institutional changes in the organizational structures, systems, and culture is critical to ensuring successful organizational restructuring or change within organizations (Allen, 2003; Amundson et al, 2004; Berovitz & Feldman, 2008; Boyce, 2003; McKay, 2011; McConnell, 2000; Roland, 2011).

This chapter outlined a review of literature relevant to the study. The next section, the methodology, discusses the methods used for data collection procedures and data analysis.

III. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Creswell (2007) contends that qualitative research should include “the voices of participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, and a complex description and interpretation of the problem” (p. 27) and should assert a call to action. He asserts that a key tenet of qualitative research is to examine the problem and gather insight from participants to address the issues. Qualitative research is fluid and therefore may change during the phase of data collection. Data collection includes using a protocol for gathering data. Creswell (2007) affirms that listening is key to conducting a productive interview and the research questions strongly contribute to rich findings. The researchers’ rationale for using qualitative research was derived from a need to explore the impact of organizational downsizing on survivors’ commitment, personal professional development and emotional and psychological attitudes in the aftermath. She wanted to capture the narratives of survivors in the context of schools and “hear silenced voices” (p. 40).

In the context of organizing codes into concepts, the researchers’ initial thoughts are quite superficial and reorganizing and rewriting often leads to more meaningful findings with rich details (Lichtman, 2009). This author invites the researcher to explore the data in terms of the participants’ unique experiences and embrace contradictory ideas on the topic. Creswell (2007) further emphasizes that qualitative research is applicable “when we want to empower individuals to share their stories, hear their voices, and minimize the power relationships” (p. 40). The researcher investigated the issue of organizational downsizing and its impact on survivors’ organizational commitment, personal professional development and emotional well-being in the context of schools.



Figure 1. Research design of case study

The goal of research design and data collection was to gain survivors' perspectives on the impact of organizational downsizing in the aftermath and significantly contribute to the literature on HRD and educational leadership.

As stated in the previous Chapters, the four research questions guiding the case study included:

- 1) How have the survivors' emotional and psychological attitudes been impacted in the aftermath of organizational downsizing?
- 2) How has the survivors' commitment to personal career development been impacted after organizational downsizing has occurred?
- 3) In what ways does organizational downsizing impact the survivors' organizational commitment after downsizing has occurred?
- 4) What is the nature of survivors' commitment to personal career development and organizational commitment in the aftermath of organizational downsizing?

Researcher's Perspective

In this section of the case study the researcher intended to define her positionality as a qualitative researcher as well as her contributions in implementing the case study. She acknowledged her biases that included her former role as a survivor and the negative emotions associated with these experiences. In addition, she addressed the question, *how might this cloud my perspective or judgment on my participants?* She acknowledged her perceptions on organizational downsizing as a survivor may negatively or positively affect the results of the case study. Lincoln (2010) contends that “paradigms and metaphysics do matter. They matter because they tell us something important about researcher standpoint. They tell us something about the researcher’s proposed relationship to the Other (s)” (p. 7). As a result, the researcher was “explicit about preconceptions, power relations in the field, the nature of researcher/respondent interaction [...] their underlying epistemology” (Gibbs, 2008 p. 92). Similarly, Creswell (2013) discusses reflexivity in the context of the researchers’ consciousness of inherent or explicit biases, values, culture and experiences that he or she brings to the phenomenon being studied. Additionally, how these past experiences shape the researchers’ interpretations of the findings and conclusion of the study. Likewise, Lincoln (2010) cautions qualitative researchers that when they fail to acknowledge “the premises, assumptions, and paradigmatic bases of our work clear, or worse yet, pretend we have no premises, assumptions, or paradigmatic bases” (p. 7) we not only do a disservice to ourselves but to the work and participants.

This study engaged participants in dialogue to passionately express their perceptions of the impact and emotional toll the RIF had on their organizational

commitment and personal professional development in the aftermath. The researcher recognized her biases going into data collection and made every effort to remain neutral while conducting interviews. She chose this case study because her intent was to capture in-depth insight into the impact of organizational downsizing on those who remained with the organization.

Using the social constructivism theory paradigm meant framing data collection through the co-construction of meaning with survivors. This lens viewed the reality of survivors' perceptions and the meaning associated with the disorienting and tumultuous experiences of organizational downsizing which was evident in the findings. Going into the study the researcher was aware that there could be some parts of survivors' narrative that was clouded by her biases and was consequently interpreted in the findings. This meant she as the researcher was at the center of knowledge and her experiences as a survivor was in the periphery.

Through the social constructivist lens the researcher wanted to make sense of the impact of organizational downsizing in the historical, social and cultural context of survivors' narratives as they constructed meaning of the disorienting event of organizational change (Collin & Young, 2004). Aligned with the tenets of social constructivism, the researcher learned from prior to conducting this case study that she must acknowledge how her experiences and biases shaped her interpretations of survivors' perceptions and consequently the findings. To mitigate this the researcher actively sought additional literature analysis opportunities to address her assumptions, beliefs and practices to facilitate neutrality. From this study she recognized the residual effects present in the learning culture and workplace to advocate for survivors voices as

they valiantly continued to educate students in spite of facing adverse circumstances in the aftermath of organizational downsizing.

As a veteran human resources professional and award winning entrepreneur, the researcher brought her diverse background in corporate career development and professional services in addition to secondary and post-secondary educational academic appointments. More importantly, as a former survivor of organizational downsizing, her story was relevant to the case study. The researcher brought her perspective as a compassionate human being that had experienced similar negative consequences and emotional upheaval as other survivors' but with the determination to see the glass half full and use the opportunity for personal growth. The researcher was aware that her experience as a survivor could color her perspective in data collection, analysis and interpretation. She made a valiant effort to recognize her biases, withhold judgment and remain neutral as possible. She was fully invested in the study as illustrated with her personal survivor account that appears in Chapter I. As the President and Founder of TaylorMade Careers, a career management and organizational development firm, she has a professional interest in the findings and emerging themes in this case study. This study will help her continue to guide organizations through transitions with focused support systems and resources for survivors to continue to pursue workplace learning and professional development opportunities.

Lastly, the researcher sought to add new knowledge to the field of human resources, organizational learning and educational leadership as well as to preserve the ethical integrity of the study. The researcher ensured the case study participants were aware that confidentiality was highly regarded. She built trust and created the space for

survivors to voice their authentic emotions without fear of retaliation from their current employers.

Theoretical Framework

The epistemological stance for this qualitative study draws on the theoretical framework of social constructivism. Cohen, Duberley and Mallon (2004) define social constructivism as “the notion of the social world, not as a fixed or objective entity, external to individuals and impacting on them in a deterministic way, but as constructed by individuals through their social practices” (p. 409). From a constructivist lens careers are not stagnant or constraining but rather fluid as the participant co-construct knowledge from within as he or she moves through time and space (Cohen et al., 2004).

Collin and Young (2004) assert that the social constructivism theoretical framework is “concerned with how the world comes to be endowed with meaning, and how these meanings are reproduced, negotiated and transformed through social practice” (p. 411). The emergence of social constructivism with the context of professional development is significant as HRD leaders seek to sync their approaches to the reality of the individual’s work context (Collin & Young, 2004). They contend:

Meaning is constructed in a social, historical, and cultural context, through action and discourse in which we form relationships and community. These features allow us to address how career is constructed, to be critically aware of the process of career in its historical and cultural context, and to use career practice to inform career theory and research. (p. 378)

Furthermore, these authors emphasize that meaning is co-constructed through social processes and interaction within a historical and cultural context. This framework

acknowledges how social factors influence interpretations on how the social and psychological world is constructed by relational practices (Collin & Young, 2004).

Using this framework within the context of personal professional development, the researcher focused on the survivors' reality of organizational downsizing. Larkey and Morrill's (1995) study suggest that "enormous structural power differences exist between organizations and actors as they construct their relationships" (p. 198). In the context of social constructivist framework, this study examined organizational commitment and how survivors made meaning of relationships. This analysis posits between multiple identities of self and transformative organizations in the aftermath of downsizing (Larkey & Morrill, 1995). The social constructivism paradigm was applicable to this case study because this framework seeks to understand survivors' perceptions and interpretation of their world and plight in the aftermath of downsizing. Moreover, survivors develop personal meaning of their experiences, in this case their interpretation of the downsizing event as it relates to their organizational commitment, personal professional development and emotional and psychological attitudes in the context of schools. Creswell (2013) suggests that these meanings are often subjected and negotiated socially and historically through interaction with others. The researcher sought to develop a "pattern of meaning" (p. 25) among survivors from the case study. Additionally, Creswell (2013) contends that social constructivism focuses on the specific contexts in which people work in order to understand participants' historical and cultural environment. For this case study, the researcher sought to understand from an adult educators' perspective the issues of workplace learning and as (Fenwick, 2008) describes the recent focus on practice-based learning processes in the aftermath of organizational downsizing. The researcher explored

the new cultural norms as a result of organizational downsizing and what the disorienting experience of change meant to survivors as it related to their organizational commitment, personal professional development and emotional well-being.

The Study

Setting

The context of the study was comprised of nine cases within three school districts that had undergone a reduction in force during the school years 2010-2011. The three school districts consisted of one urban metropolitan and two suburban districts. The school districts were chosen due to researchers' desire to capture the essence of a recent downsizing. The headline of the organizational downsizing situation in the *local region based journal in 2011* read *School Districts Approve Staff Layoff*. This article announced that School District A and C would be losing school staff as a result of state mandated budget cuts. An excerpt of the newspaper headlines read:

State lawmakers are expected to slash up to \$7.8 billion in education funding to help balance an estimated \$27 billion budget shortfall for the next two years, forcing school districts across the state to cut their budgets [...] School District A faces losing up to \$61 million of its \$345 million 2011–12 budget, and School District C anticipates dealing with an up to \$20 million reduction to its \$150 million 2011–12 budget. (Unidentified news article, 2011)

Sequence of Events

This cross- case study examined the RIF that occurred in three school districts during 2010-2011. The multiple cases included nine case study participants that were embedded in the RIF event that occurred within the three districts. Another part of the

article stated that:

The School District A school board voted to lay off 242 employees during a meeting April 11, and officials say more staff cuts are to come.

The employees—all on probationary contracts—including classroom teachers, counselors, nurses, librarians and administrators. The district has not released the number of employees eliminated in each category. (Unidentified news article, 2011)

The document went on to describe the significant impact the RIF had on increased workloads, cuts in student programs and instruction:

While no *School District C* librarians or nurses were cut due to budget reasons, officials still eliminated nearly 140 jobs: 78 teaching positions, 20 central administration employees and 40 campus-level employees. The *superintendent official* said that although many of the teaching positions were reduced through attrition, some were eliminated through layoffs. (Unidentified news article, 2011)

The school official continued to demonstrate their efforts to reach out and include all stakeholders to forge a positive resolution amongst such adverse transitory conditions:

For the past four months, school officials have gathered input through several budget forums and committee meetings, resulting in a final list of proposed budget cuts. According to the list, the district will save money by increasing class sizes, outsourcing custodial staff, reducing School District C 's contribution to employee health insurance by \$28 per month, reducing middle school and high school fine arts and athletics budgets, and increasing average daily attendance.

In all, the list includes about \$19.73 million in savings. (Unidentified news article, 2011)

In the one urban district the headlines read as *Bracing for Impact of School District B layoffs* (news article, May 2011). An excerpt from the document:

School District B plans to let go nearly 800 teachers and staff to help reduce its roughly \$94 million budget shortfall, its board voted March 28. School Superintendent official said it's impossible to balance the district's budget without laying off people, given that personnel account for more than 85 percent of operating costs.

Most school districts are labor intensive and therefore allocate over half of their school budgets to teacher's salaries. This has led to substantial teacher layoffs with future resources expected to continue to decline and the federal government is unlikely to stop steeper staff cuts (Goldhaber & Theobald, 2011). "Few would argue that cuts of some magnitude must be made [...] how such a massive reduction in force — comparable to any recent large corporate layoff — will affect the local workforce and economy (Unidentified news article, 2011). The district official for School District B passionately recognized the emotional toll on the employees as result of the RIF:

The human toll is not lost on district administrators. As we make these difficult decisions, we realize that there are names, faces and careers behind these positions, and that makes this process gut-wrenching. Our human resources office pledges to work diligently with each employee whose position is eliminated.

(School District Official, May 6, 2011)

Aligned with the communication of school official in the three districts in which

the layoff occurred, the nine cases revealed the impact of the RIF. The mandatory federal and state mandated budget cuts led to the downsizing event in the three school districts studied. Roth and Shook (2011) suggest culture is impacted significantly as a result of downsizing. These authors describe culture “is not the name of the event but rather the breaking or destroying of cultural artifacts and broken human links which cause the culture to change” (p. 143).

The cross-case study seeks to understand the impact of downsizing on survivors’ commitment, personal professional development and the emotional and psychological attitudes across nine case studies. The chart below displays the conceptual framework for the case study.

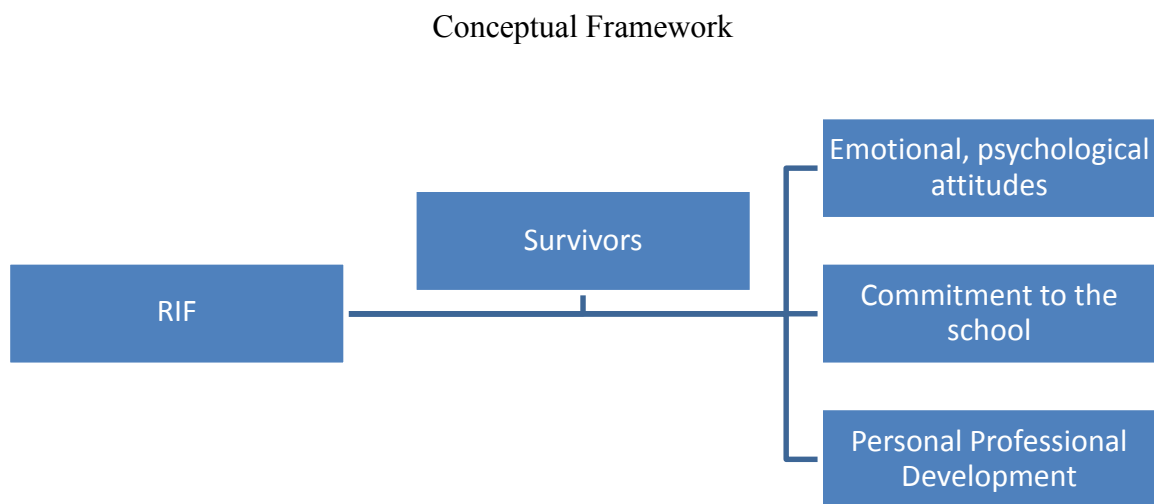


Figure 2. Conceptual framework guiding the design of case study.

Sampling Procedures and Participants

Purposeful sampling was the most appropriate sampling procedure in order to highlight diverse perspectives on survivorship within the context of organizational downsizing within the context of schools. Creswell (2013) contends that participants, specific type of selected sampling strategy and sample size should be considered as key

tenets of purposeful sampling. Unlike culture or criterion sampling often used in ethnographic studies to collect samples, maximum variation as a sampling strategy in the case study was most applicable to capture multiple descriptions and perspectives about the cases (Creswell, 2013). The survivors interviewed were diverse and held various positions in the school district. Participants included three teachers, two instructional coaches, two counselors and two assistant principals. There were eight women and one male participant. In regard to race study participants included three African-American, two Hispanic and four White survivors. All participants were married with the exception of one that was single. Participants included nine survivors that were diverse and present during the RIF that occurred in the school year 2010-2011. This diversity yielded rich data that included five primary and eleven sub- themes that reflected the survivors' perceptions of the impact of the RIF on their commitment, personal professional development and emotional well-being. The chart below displays survivors' demographics.

Case Study Participants

Participant	Position	Experience Level	Gender	Marital Status	Race
Sarah	Counselor	Mid-level	Female	Married	African-American
Lisa	Instructional Coach	Veteran	Female	Married	White
Melissa	Assistant Principal	Veteran	Female	Married	African-American
Carly	Instructional Coach	Veteran	Female	Married	White
Susan	Teacher	Veteran	Female	Single	African American
Sean	Assistant Principal	Veteran	Male	Married	White
Skylar	Teacher	Mid-level	Female	Married	Hispanic
Joyce	Counselor	Mid-level	Female	Married	Hispanic
Sophia	Teacher	Entry-level	Female	Married	White

Figure 3. Case study participant's summary of characteristics.

Recruitment

The researcher implemented various recruitment strategies to solicit case study participation. To facilitate recruitment, snowball sampling (Creswell, 2013) or the “tell me who you know” approach was used. As a former certified educator and survivor of a RIF, the researcher had access to the specific schools as well as the survivors. The participants included teachers, counselors, instructional coaches and administrators. The researcher solicited participants by the creating, designing and distributing dissertation study marketing flyers. The researcher offered incentives to participants that consented.

These incentives included their choice of a Starbucks or Cinemark gift cards for those who met the established criteria of being present during the RIF within the identified school districts during 2010- 2011 and a survivor or currently employed with the school or school district. The researcher posted up flyers at the nearby campus in the student lounge and contacted via email professors at that campus and the other main campus to ask them to post and announce the dissertation study flyer to students in their classrooms. The researcher contacted friends, former colleagues and personal contacts via email and phone in the three school districts. After she emailed or called the professors and potential participants the researcher confirmed the receipt of the flyers. There was one participant that the researcher set up and began an interview and the participant was disqualified because she was a first year teacher to the teaching profession and therefore she was not present during the RIF in 2010-2011. Even though she currently works in the identified school districts she did not meet the other criterion so she did not qualify for this study. As a result of this incident, the researcher emphasized the required criteria to potential participants in that case participants must have been present and remain with the organization after the RIF occurred in 2010-2011. This was done in an effort to confirm participants' eligibility for the study by only interviewing survivors of the RIF or those who remained with the organization in any capacity. The researchers' goal of the cross-case study was to examine the impact and gain in-depth knowledge from the adult learners' perspective on the reduction in force (RIF) and the impact on survivors' organizational commitment, personal professional development and emotional health.

Data Collection Procedures

The case study included diverse types of data collection including the researcher's journal, documents and nine semi-structured interviews that were audio recorded and transcribed.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Interviewing was one of the researcher's key modes of data collection and engaged the participant in open-ended questions (see Appendix D). The nine interviews were up to one hour in length to facilitate in-depth analysis and semi-standardized to provide continuity and elicit rich discussions during the interview process. There were follow up questions ask during the interview as new data emerged based on survivors' narrative. This provided further in-depth details of the survivors' commitment to the school, personal professional development and their emotional well-being in the aftermath of downsizing. The researcher recorded participants' responses on telephone device to the interview questions and no identifiable monikers were used that revealed participants identity. The interviews were conducted mainly at the public library in a secluded study room to promote privacy and ensure confidentiality. The private study room has one door with no windows to protect the privacy of the participants. The interviews were transcribed by a reputable third-party transcription firm and accuracy was the upmost importance. To ensure reliability transcription checking was performed by reviewing them for accuracy. An informed consent form (see Appendix C) was given to case study participants before the study was conducted. The intent of the consent form was to inform participant's details of the cross- case study and confirm their agreement to willingly and fully participate with the option of withdrawing at any stage of the study.

To ensure greater privacy the researcher only identified the case study participants by pseudonyms. As for the presentation findings, full confidentiality was enforced. The researcher used voice memo recording and all memos were deleted after final dissertation study completion. The recordings of the interviews were used for transcription purposes only within the qualitative context to capture the survivors' perceptions of the downsizing event and the impact on personal professional development, organizational commitment and emotional and psychological attitudes in the aftermath. The voice recordings of the interviews were stored in a secure location and were disposed, shredded and erased after transcription had been performed and final dissertation study completion.

Researcher's Journal

This journal chronicled the researchers' experiences during the research project. She gained rich and detailed data and first-hand accounts of the significant impact the RIF had on survivors in the aftermath. The researcher recorded reflective thoughts about the research process, data collection and analysis. The researcher engaged in reflective moments on her observation of case participants and her journey as an emerging researcher and scholar. This experience of intense study shaped my future projects, publications and best practices gained from this research endeavor. Emerging patterns gathered from the interviews were analyzed to gain insight into my personal feelings, fears and thoughts related to the research journey.

Documents and Artifacts.

For the qualitative study, the researcher examined school board budget meeting documents from the three school districts in which the RIF occurred during 2010-2011. The researcher analyzed district records to substantiate the interview findings to

triangulate data. These documents included budgeted meeting transcripts, agenda and PowerPoint presentations about the impending RIF and the action taken in the designated timeframe. Bowen (2009) asserts that document analysis combines the tenets of content analysis and thematic analysis. The researcher incorporated both analysis methodologies to organize information from the documents into concepts related to her researcher questions. First, she skimmed the meeting minutes, agenda and PowerPoint presentation to gather an idea of the gravity of the reduction in force situation. Second, the researcher re-read the documents to examine the quantitative data presented in the documents. These document included a breakdown of how the impending RIF would impact teacher- to-student ratios and the amount of cuts to teachers and staff and the monetary impact this had on instructional resources and student services. Lastly, aligned with Bowen (2009) the researcher interpreted the data contained in the documents and coded the themes and concepts discussed in Chapter 4 and analyzed the documents to discover themes pertinent to the studied phenomenon of *survivorship* in the aftermath of organizational downsizing. These documents were used as a reference to enrich the case study by providing additional details to the nature of the RIFs process and the quantifiable data of the RIFs impact on student programs, instruction and personal professional development within the three school districts examined. These meeting minutes were available from the public domain.

Case Study Method

Creswell (2013) suggests that qualitative research is appropriate when the researcher wants to examine a “real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of

information” (p. 97). He suggests the case study approach is relevant “when the inquirer has clearly identifiable cases with boundaries and seeks to provide an in-depth understanding of the cases or a comparison of several cases” (p. 100). The individual cases of nine survivors were used “to illustrate an issue” (p. 102) and to assemble “a detailed description of the setting for the case” (p. 102). The findings section included a detailed description, emerging themes and trends upon completion of the data collection from the cross- case study. The nine cases were embedded in the context of a RIF that occurred in the three school districts examined. Yin (2012) asserts that:

By definition, the multiple cases provide a broader array of evidence than do single cases. Depending on how the multiple cases have been chose, the broadened array permits you to cover either the same issue more intensely or a wider range of issues. The result is a stronger case study. (p. 131)

The researcher conducted a multiple-embedded case study to gain diverse perspectives on the same event. Utilizing the theoretical framework of social constructivism, and realizing participants interpret their experiences even for the same event, this cross- case analysis approach was applicable. The chart below displays the case study research design.

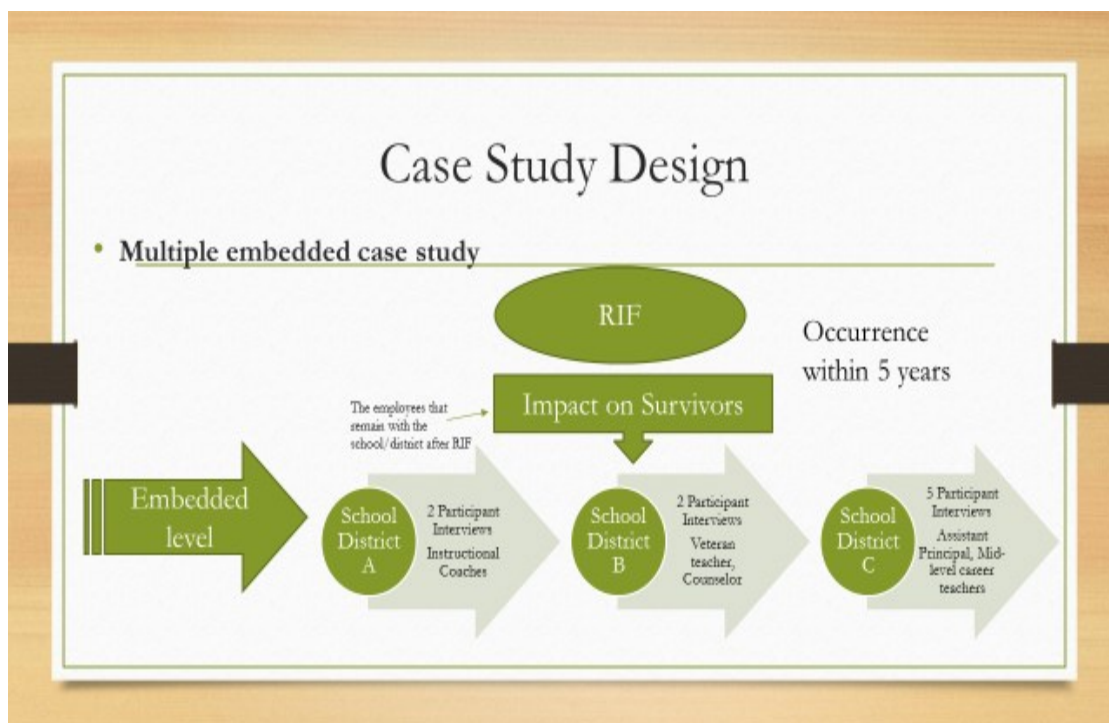


Figure 4. Case study design elements.

Data Analysis

Data analysis strategies consisted of “analyzing data through description of the case and themes of the cases as well as cross-case themes” (Creswell, 2013, p. 105). In analyzing the data, the researcher used the Lichtman’s (2009) three Cs approach by inputting raw data and then coding, categorizing, and identifying concepts in which the researcher transitioned from the raw data phase to constructing meaningful concepts. Lichtman’s (2006, p. 168) six step process for data analysis includes: Step (1) Initial coding, Step (2) Revising initial coding, Step (3) Developing an initial list of categories or central themes based on participant interviews, Step (4) Modifying initial list based on re-reading, Step (5) Revisiting categories and subcategories, Step (6) Categories into concepts or themes related to the research questions. Initial coding is suggested in data analysis in which the participants’ responses are made into “central idea of the responses”

(p. 198). Revision and modification are at the heart of this approach given the transitional nature of coding and data analysis. The researcher coded the raw data from the interview transcripts. She wrote codes in the left margin of the participants' transcripts in her dissertation study notebook. The researcher analyzed the codes to see which carried weight to be a category. She then grouped together the codes into categories based on data related to the phenomenon of survivorship (See Figure 5). These categories reflected participants' data gathered from the transcripts. The categories were grouped based on frequency, relevancy to the constructs of personal professional development, organizational commitment and emotional and psychological attitudes and survivorship. Then from the categories she moved to create concepts and themes. After "restructuring" (p. 95) the researcher put codes into categories that emerged into concepts. As a result, five primary and eleven sub-themes emerged as concepts.

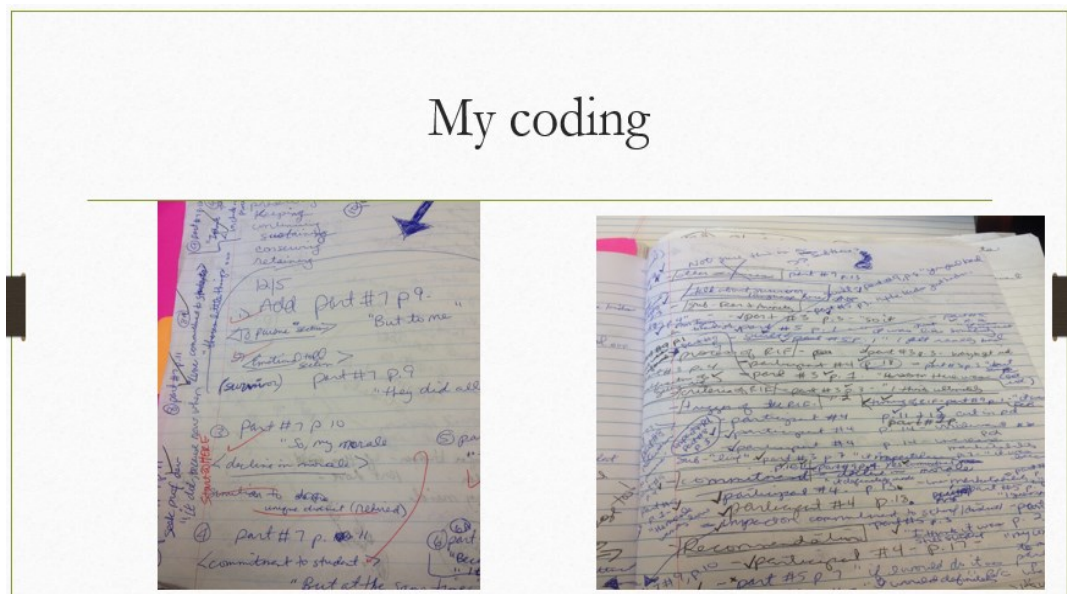


Figure 5. My coding example.

A key component of the analysis process was to identify concepts that reflected

the meaning supported by the data from the survivors' direct quotes from the semi-structured interviews. The researcher conducted a cross-case analysis to investigate similarities and differences across cases to facilitate an in-depth description of the case study.

Evaluation Methods

Gibbs (2008) asserts that the qualitative researcher "cannot claim to be an objective, authoritative, politically neutral observer standing outside and above the text of their research reports" (p. 91). To facilitate robust findings of the data triangulation was performed to engage multiple views on samples and data sets, research methodologies and theories (Gibbs, 2008). Examples included varied data collection methods such as nine semi-structured interviews, researcher's personal journal and documents. The researcher proceeded and recognized that this strategy did not guarantee a "single, valid and accurate interpretation of reality" (p. 94).

As a result of using a third-party transcription service, transcription checking was implemented in an effort to address accuracy. The researcher double checked transcripts that were completed by a third party firm against the audio recorded participant interviews. In addition, the researcher followed up with selected participants in an effort to accurately capture what was said. Participants had the opportunity to provide comments or any feedback that they deemed necessary for member checking purposes (Creswell, 2013). Triangulation was accomplished by comparing three different sources of data to validate the findings. These sources included first, nine semi -structured interviews with survivors of the RIF in the three school districts, second, document analysis of public document related to RIF's implementation and third, peer reviews by

having a trusted colleague review the transcripts for clarity (Roth & Shook, 2011).

Lichtman's (2009) three Cs approach was utilized. To address reliability, writing memos about the established codes and constantly rechecking these codes assisted the researcher in consistent coding (Gibbs, 2008). The figure below displays how data was triangulated.

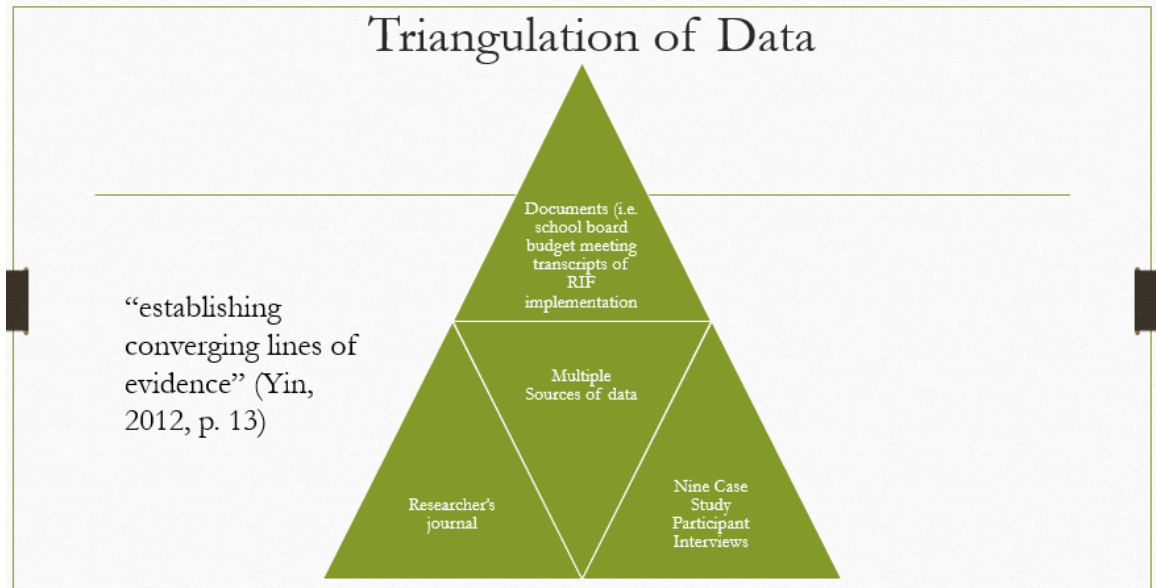


Figure 6. Triangulation of data

Trustworthiness

To establish credibility as discussed by Byers and Rodwell (1997) researchers should include research activities that increase the likelihood that credible findings will be produced. They advocate that by incorporating triangulation, member checks and peer debriefings that the probability of congruence between the participant's construction and reconstruction presented in the results chapter of the study is significantly increased (Byers & Rodwell, 1997). These authors discuss transferability within qualitative inquiry by claiming:

To be transferable, the case study must contain careful and extensive description

of the time, the place, the context, and the culture in which the hypotheses were found to be salient to allow a reader to determine if transfer of the findings to another known context is possible. (Byers & Rodwell, p. 117)

For this study, the case method will address transferability by providing in-depth descriptions of organizational downsizing in the context of schools as it related to survivors' organizational commitment, personal professional development and emotional and psychological attitudes in the aftermath.

The dependability of the data is critical in qualitative research. Byers and Rodwell (1997) contend that this evaluation method for data collection consist of two factors. First, "these data collection decisions and methodological shifts must be understandable and appropriated to constructivist assumptions" (p. 117). Second, "the use of triangulation and the creation of an audit trail for a dependability audit allow a dependability assessment [...] a finding of credibility through the audit also supports dependability because credible findings are dependent on good inquiry methods" (p. 117). Confirmability was documented in the audit trail in which "raw data, documentary evidence, interview summaries, data analysis, and methodological and reflexive journals" (p. 117) contribute to the overall quality of data management and the data analysis (Byers & Rodwell, 1997). These authors contends that:

Authenticity is uniquely derivative of the constructivist perspective and is attentive to the nature and quality of the research process rather than the research product. By focusing on the integrity and quality of the inquiry process, authenticity assesses fairness, ontological authenticity, educative authenticity, catalytic authenticity, and tactical authenticity. (p. 118)

To achieve trustworthiness and authenticity of the research study, the researcher addressed trustworthiness and authenticity within the framework of social constructivism.

Ethical Considerations

An informed consent (see Appendix C) was given to participants before any data collection was performed. This was done to ensure the case participants' safety and established a code of conduct for the research process. Participants had the right to withdraw at any time during the case study and their confidentiality was of substantial importance. Given the sensitivity of the content of the interviews as it related to survivorship, most data collection was performed at a public library in a private study room with no windows to ensure privacy. Confidentiality was extremely critical, and therefore, anonymity of transcription was implemented. The researcher created pseudonyms due to the high sensitive nature of the data collected from interviews and to protect privacy. All data collected remained confidential including presentation of findings and was not distributed to anyone outside of the researcher and the dissertation committee.

IV. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Upon completion of data analysis across nine participants, five primary themes and eleven sub-themes developed from the data. This qualitative study from a social constructivist lens allowed the researcher to better understand and gain insight into the residual effects and challenges of the RIF that occurred during the school year 2010-2011 in three school districts in the Southwest region. The organizational downsizing was a direct result of mandated federal and state budget cuts. The impact on the staffs' personal professional development of those who remained with the district was examined as well as the emotional, psychological and attitudinal factors that attributed to low morale within the school. The five primary themes with corresponding eleven sub-themes that emerged were (a) *Communication Protocol and Transparency to Bridge Theory and Implementation of the RIF* with two sub-themes including (i) *Process of the RIF* and (ii) *Criteria for RIF*; (b) *Loss of Key Personnel as a Result of the RIF* with three sub-themes (i) *RIF Impact on Instruction* (ii) *RIF Impact on Student Programs* and (iii) *RIF's Impact on Increased Workload*; (c) *Emotional Toll on those who remain with the school and school district as a result of the RIF and Its Impact on Their Psychological Well-Being* with two sub-themes including (i) *Emotions of Fear, Anxiety and Guilt* and (ii) *Personal Connection with Former Colleagues*; (d) *Impact of RIF on Personal Professional Development* with three sub-themes including (i) *Relevancy of Professional Development Opportunities* (ii) *Commitment to Increase Marketability for Future RIF* and (iii) *The Pursuit of Personal Professional Development Opportunities*; (e) *Impact of RIF on Commitment to School* with two sub-themes (i) *Decline in Morale* and (ii) *Increased Commitment to Students*.

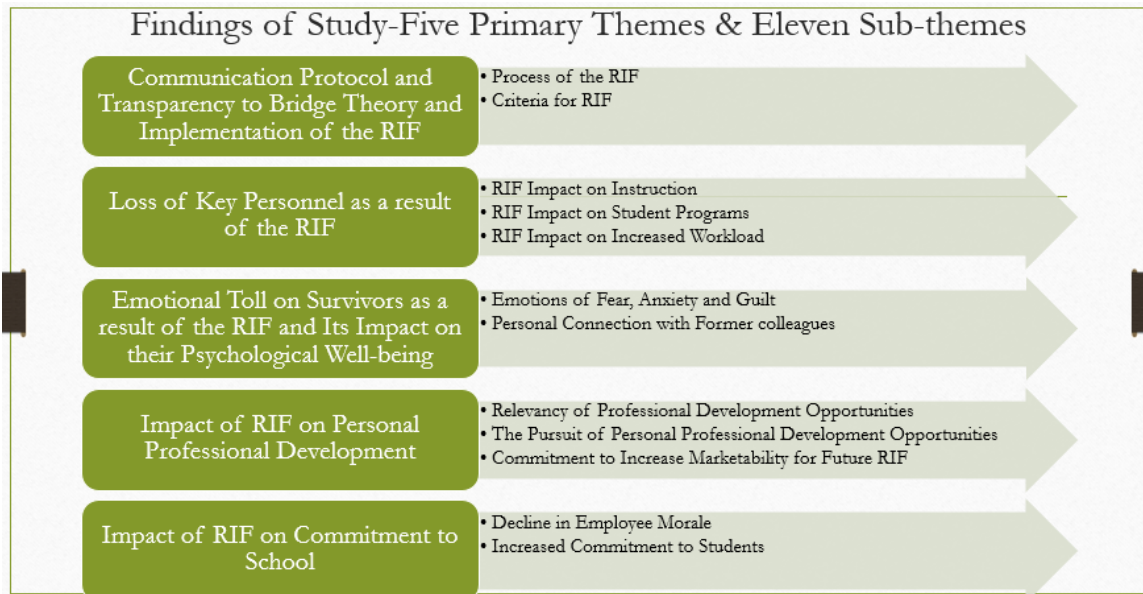


Figure 7. Study themes.

Communication Protocol and Transparency to Bridge Theory and Implementation of the Reduction in Force

The expectation of transparency in the communication protocol of the Reduction in Force process and implementation was a dominant theme that was highlighted across participant interviews. Participants expressed outright demand for honesty, respect and a voice in the decision making process. These survivors vehemently voiced their trepidation and distress with their perception that administration was using the opportunity of layoffs to arbitrarily *get rid* of employees that they did not particularly like or had a personal vendetta against that was not related to seniority or performance criteria. The two primary categories that emerged across interviews include the (a) *process of the RIF* and (b) *the criteria used in the RIF*. Participants emphasized these two categories as they articulated their stories and expressed the significant impact on their emotional well-being, psychological and personal professional development.

Process of the Reduction in Force

An appeal for action for greater thought and consideration for the implementation process of the RIF was paramount in various participant interviews. Participants extensively and passionately with demonstrative intense emotional cues, noted the lack of compassion on behalf of the administrators. Survivors noted the lack of clarity of the process and the adverse impact on their psychological well-being. This perception shaped participants desire to pursue personal professional development to increase the probability of not being on the *list* for future RIFs. As expressed by Sophia,

We were informed about a week before the layoffs that they would be happening. We'd kind of been hearing about them but we didn't know when they were coming. So, they officially happened, or had their dates set. They told us a week in advance," On this day, you'll be notified if." We didn't know how. Obviously it just caused a lot of stress on the campus, talking to your AP's and such. So it was just a real stressful time for everybody on campus and I think definitely the students felt that as well. It wasn't just an impact on the teachers, there was an impact on the students [...] the kids were just like, "What's going on?" They wouldn't tell them. I understand, but I think it would have been better because kids are smart. They can be apathetic. It was definitely for them it was rough and they didn't know why. Teachers were angry and they didn't know why. They'd see teachers crying and they don't know why.

In the same way, Skylar intensely described the rampant anecdotes that preceded the official announcement of the impending RIF.

Everyone started, the gossip, the rumors, but we hadn't heard anything officially. Then, one time I remember that our principal went to a meeting, and she came back, and she told us, this is happening. We don't know exactly, again, how it's going to affect us directly. But something's coming. Just so you all need to be aware.

Skylar provided explicit details that echoed similar participants in that same district. The distinct process of the RIF in School District C was that employees were laid off and then asked to reapply and undergo the complete hiring process. On the contrary, the two other districts in the study did not offer laid off employees the option to reapply once they were separated from the school as a result of being on the RIF list. Sophia explained the process,

Everyone that was on a probationary contract was going to have to resign, and then reapply for their job, to make it fair for everyone. They weren't just going to pick and choose which people they were going to keep. You were going to have to go through the process of either resigning, and if you didn't, you would be terminated. Then, you would have to reapply for your job. It kind of went back and forth about that as well. The way they explained it to us, was that if we were terminated, it would go on our record, whereas if we resigned, it wouldn't look as bad.

Sophia continued to discuss the outpouring of support from fellow survivors and former colleagues in the midst of unpleasant circumstances and administrator mistrust,

It's just like other teachers, even people, you'd just try to comfort them and look positive. Everyone tried to reach out to the people that they knew, 'Here, I heard

this job might be opening up'. Everyone would just try to be very supportive. I always feel like with that though people were very anti-administration because of that.

Additionally, Sophia expressed her plea to see greater emphasis on the appropriate time and location of the layoff announcement. She recommended equity and compassion to mitigate disruption for teachers and students and dispel rampant rumors that were not beneficial for the learning environment and workplace. Sophia discussed the horrid details of the emotional fallout of the RIF's implementation,

They told us during our conference periods. So for some people that had their first period conference, I know one teacher left that day. She told (admin) you have to get me a sub. I can't sit here [...] I had one period left so I gave (up) that period and then I was in shock though. I spent the rest of my day just talking to other people because you would talk. They've been in meeting and they were discussing the (RIF). In the end it kind of didn't matter what they talked about because really they either had their decisions of last one in, first one out. That kind of seemed like that's exactly how it played out [...] I did not appreciate how it was delivered on campus. I guess I wish it would've happened after school, maybe on a Friday or something so that you could go home. You could have some days. I didn't think it was professional at all to tell people during their conference periods when they would still be seeing kids, I mean I definitely had cried. I cried. You just look a little bit different. Your eyes are puffy and your kids are like, "Are you okay?" You can't talk about it. They don't really [...] I don't think it was handled well. I do appreciate the fact that they did it in February so that you could

try to find a job. It wasn't just June and then you only had the summer, but it actually gave you the opportunities.

Additionally, Sophia continued to discuss internal mayhem and the pivotal event that escalated mistrust among administrators and survivors.

I was worried because I had been the last one in. I remember asking him (principal) and he was like I can honestly tell you your name hasn't come up. So for the next day in comes the principal and I'm like you've got to be kidding me. That's really what I thought you have to be kidding me. Then it was like, 'okay what can you do?' I started crying, but again, the *timing* wasn't right.

Sophia was initially laid off but she was in the urban school district studied that required certain employees per the established criterion, seniority, to be terminated and then undergo the entire rehiring process to gain back their previous or a new position. Sophia decided to pursue additional professional development and received another certification. She was rehired and is currently teaching in her new core subject area. Her narrative valiantly highlights the need for intense focus on the implementation and communication protocol to lessen the disruption on teachers and students to improve success and facilitate positive outcomes despite this chaotic change event.

Additionally, Sophia discussed the timing and process of the RIF. She discussed how administrators carried out terminations of her peers. The layoff notices were delivered during teachers' conferences in the presence of students with the expectation to *carry on*, teach the lesson plan and conduct business as usual in the classroom despite being told in a matter of a second that they no longer had a job. Sophia's narrative connected to survivorship because her story provided insight into how administrators

implemented the layoffs negatively impacted survivors' morale and organizational commitment. The lack of compassion, respect and dignity in the termination process significantly contributed to the erosion of trust among survivors and consequently impacted the learning culture and work environment. Sophia's recollection of how administrators treated their lost colleagues had a residual effect on the implicit psychological contract which led to mistrust and emotional upheaval.

Similar to Sophia, Melissa related not only the desire for transparency of the process, but also a need to be more inclusive of all stakeholders, to improve the communication protocol and lessen the potential negative impact on the workplace and learning environment. Melissa's perception of the downsizing process highlights the need to focus intensely on establishing criteria that is fair and equitable. Skylar shared her perspective on the process. She advocated that the process be transparent and comprehensive.

At the campus level, it, the process, because it changed, on what the criteria will be, it caused a lot of anxiety. The principal was secretive in the process, and didn't let the other administrators know about the process, unless it involved teachers. Skylar was dismayed about the lack of transparency and mistrust toward the administrators that infiltrated the learning environment and negatively impacted employee morale and instructional delivery. Skylar emphasized the importance of buy-in from all stakeholders in the decision making process. She expressed her desire to see district leaders extend autonomy to campus administrators to allocate resources to mitigate the negative impact on student services and decide what is best for their particular campus. More specifically,

I think that they should have included us in the process of deciding which positions to do away with and how we could have restructured, to maybe not let go of so many people. Or to decide what things we felt were more important to hold onto. So for example I would not do to the librarian, what's being done to her. Again, the money we've gotten some funds back but they haven't been reallocated to relieve her of some of those duties. (Administrators) don't always have the best insight to our campus. There weren't any teachers involved in any of that decision-making process. I think that the teacher input would have been very valuable. If they had given us that opportunity, to just say, maybe we should try this, or let's try that. It was 'No, we're cutting these positions'. District-wide everybody cut the same. Maybe they should have said, 'okay, we have to cut this amount and then spread the monetary value amongst the campuses'. Then (the administrators) said 'this is how much you have to do without'. Then, we as a campus or maybe as a committee of representatives from each grade level could have discussed where we would cut those funds.

As a result of the RIF, some districts changed policies on criteria for future RIF and contract terms. In contrast to other participants in school district C regarding transparency of the process of the RIF, Lisa stated,

The reduction in force policy for the school board was re-written so that it does reflect the performance in your classroom. I have to commend the district because they were straightforward at the very beginning saying we are going to tell you the very worst scenario so that you know. Those teachers had three months, four months in the spring plus all summer to find employment. I do think that School A

has done what they can to make another RIF more equitable than it had been the first time where it was just straight seniority.

Criteria for Reduction in Force

The need for fair-mindedness and objectivity in determining who was laid off and on the RIF *list* in the implementation of the RIF was revealed as a sub-theme across the interviews of selected participants. Participants described how vital it is for administrators to acknowledge the many layers that are involved with implementing a potentially emotionally charged change initiative such as a RIF. The devastating impact of the RIF on employee morale as well as professional development should be considered. In addition, the fairness of the criteria used to implement the RIF should include accountability measures that discourage the proclivity for administrators to arbitrarily *get rid* of employees for personal reasons not related to established criteria or lack thereof as perceived by some interviewees. Melissa described her perception of an incident in which it seemed administrators arbitrarily imposed their personal will to terminate an employee,

That principal essentially let one person go one administrator which I personally think didn't have to have to happen, because she turned around a few months later and rehired another administrator. So I think that was a way for her to *get rid* of that person because she wasn't performing or doing well. So instead of keeping and growing her, she used a reduction in force as a way to get rid of her. A few months later she went back and hired an additional administrator when she could have easily called that person back. But she didn't.

Additionally, Melissa was a survivor in the urban school district (School District C) in which employees that were terminated had to reapply for the same position or other positions held open for laid off employees only. Melissa was not laid off but rather continued employment as an administrator. She discussed performance as another criterion in addition to seniority that was used for the RIF. She expressed the criterion of performance had a residual effect on her job as an evaluating administrator,

Teachers would receive a write-up or any type of feedback that they perceived to be negative against them, the number of rebuttals increased because they felt that their performance would then cause them to be placed on the RIF (list).

Performance was another criterion in addition to seniority on everyone. So whenever I would send a teacher feedback from a walk-through and it had some things for that teacher to work on, I saw an increase in the number of written rebuttals from teachers, being defensive and worried about what was going to be in their file for the fear of another reduction in force happening.

It is important to note that Melissa's perception differed from an ethical standpoint. She displayed a sense of internal conflict given her role as an evaluating administrator and using the opportunity of the RIF to *get rid* of teachers that were underperforming. She deemed removing ineffective teachers was appropriate. Melissa articulated in her *opinion* that it was difficult and almost impossible to remove non-performing teachers due to public education state laws and procedures. She communicated,

On performance, if it was a teacher who has had repeated conversations with his or her evaluator, and still did not improve, I mean, it's hard to say, if that was the way that it needed to happen and that's what happened. It's sometimes

challenging to get rid of a non-performing teacher. So that may have been an outlet to do that. While I'm not a proponent of people losing their jobs but people in education and leaders find it difficult to get rid of unproductive teachers. But I see it as a way of preventing that from happening to the hundreds of kids that they affect every year.

The researcher noted that this study was conducted where unions are not legally recognized and the legal process to remove teachers is arduous. Moreover, Melissa discussed the other criterion of seniority for the RIF which is based on *last one hired is the first one let go* concept. Accordingly, some participants discussed the underlying context of this criterion was based arbitrarily and does not take into consideration the *subjective* or other factors such as the teachers' *positive* impact on classroom management and intervention strategies focused to increase student success on state mandated tests. The *matter of fact* disposition of the seniority criterion was considered not comprehensive and lent to inequality. Even though performance was a criterion as well, some of first year teachers were considered by selected participants more impactful on students in terms of positive feedback from parents and other stakeholders as compared to some veteran teachers. Despite this notion, these particular factors may be immeasurable and misaligned with the current accountability standards in schools such as benchmark and standardized state exams. Melissa voiced feelings of anxiety,

There was an announcement of the state having to cut the school budget, school finance portion, so it trickled down to the districts and what were they going to do in order to save money. The district decided to go through a reduction in force which meant to lay off people. During that time the district sent information to

principals on how they should select those folks who would be asked to leave based on certain criteria. So it produced a lot of anxiety among the teaching staff as to who that would be, a lot of tension. The principal wasn't actually sure what was going to happen because it seems like the criteria and the timeline constantly changed producing more anxiety and fear in everybody of the unknown. I think ultimately that was the main criterion, seniority, *last hired is the first to go*.

In the same way, Lisa describes her initial reaction to the RIF's announcement and her immense feelings of euphoria when she found out there was a possibility of being on the RIF *list*. She was relatively new at the campus but held a leadership position as department chair and due to the RIF's criteria stipulations her position was deemed safe,

At first, I wasn't really concerned because I am math and I know they're going to have a high math quality teaching. So, I felt like I was ok. Then, I realized that it was going to be on pure seniority and I was pretty low on the totem pole and so I started looking at the qualifications that they gave us and I realized I was on the list. I have to tell you by the end of that meeting they were very clear that anyone who was a Department Chair or in a leadership position would be saved. So I knew by the end of the meeting that it was because I was the only department chair that would have met that particular clause because I was so new to the district.

Moreover, Lisa described explicit details with angst on her role as department chair in laying off peers,

All of my teachers were on that list. So not only had I mentored them during the summer, but then now I am telling them that you're on the list, you are going to

have to wait and see. I did appreciate the fact that the district was upfront and said this is what the list looks like. We haven't gotten resignations yet. We will let you know as resignations of the more experienced teacher come in. We'll let you have room and we'll tell you that your job is safe. Literally, from what I remember from that year is walking the halls every few days and saying, ok, you were number five; we've had two resignations so you have three people in front of you. So, it was like sitting on pins and needles.

Carly expressed a call for accountability in the RIF's process to discourage arbitrary decisions by administrators to simply *get rid* of teachers for personal reasons not substantiated by objective criterion such as seniority. This would assist in efforts to ensure transparency, equality and consistency in the process,

Before you let people know the fact that there will be a reduction in force, make sure that you have set up a system that is consistent, across the campuses, for how to tell teachers [...] It [the process] needs to be consistent, and applied evenly. Additionally, some of the cat-and-mouse games that people make to get around the rules, there need to be more checks on the administrators, to make sure that they're not only RIF people that they've targeted. If you want to make it so they can do that, then [you] change the rules. But if somebody breaks the rules, they need to be held accountable for that [...] but the idea that the leadership, for me, being ethical is important. The idea that there were people who broke the rules, technically, and no one called them on it, doesn't allow you to put a whole lot of trust and faith in the leadership.

In addition, Carly articulated frustration toward state legislators for not using the state's savings account to compensate for the lack of school funding sooner than they decided to use the funds to alleviate the number of layoffs and mitigate the impact of budget cuts on schools. This delay in action caused a high level of mistrust and provided more fuel to ignite some participants' belief of administrators using the RIF as an opportunity for personal and political agendas. Carly expressed, "that's the whole reason you put money aside. Then to kind of force people and I almost think that in some cases, they looked at it as a way to *get rid* of people that didn't want anymore." Overall, Carly's goal was to demand administrators that implement RIF's be held accountable and have a system of check and balances in place to ensure that transparency and equitable outcomes are achieved within the aftermath of downsizing.

Loss of Key Personnel as a Result of the RIF

Survivors provided profound insight into the significant impact of the RIF on instruction, student programs and increased workload. They expressed their frustration to on the lack of voice in the workplace in which they feel undervalued and unappreciated. Survivors expressed their perception of being seen as a disposable commodity but given to expectation to teach and train future generations to be world class citizens that positively impact and significantly contribute to society. These nine survivors' narratives emphasized the notion of *survival* of the fittest. Conversely, the sentiment of administration was that *be thankful you have a job* while ignoring the negative impact on the faculty that remains and more importantly the students.

RIF Impact on Instruction

The RIFs impact on instruction was a reoccurring theme echoed by most survivors. Whether it was the negative working environment that permeated the classroom and hallways because of lost peers or the disturbed psyche of being next on the *list* it was evident in the *new* culture. The negative impact on instruction was duly noted across participant interviews. For example, Melissa expressed the impact of the RIF in her role as an evaluating administrator responsible for teacher performance assessments,

It impacted my work in giving teachers feedback. Where they readily [teachers] accepted it [feedback] before when it was just a conversation. They [teachers] didn't feel threatened by it. I used the same language in the same way. They are [affected] by it [the RIF] now because they are afraid of being targeted, documented again and losing their jobs because performance was one of the criteria.

Likewise, Lisa was straightforward on the impact of the RIF on the role of Department Chair and adamantly expressed that "I know my instruction suffered. I know I wasn't doing as much collaboration. I know I wasn't student-centered, I was teacher-centered." Lisa's perception of her experiences in the aftermath shaped her *survivor* mentality,

I think it took time away from it [the learning culture]. Rather than being focused on instruction and on what the needs of the department were and talking to people about what in-services they could go to, it was how I can survive May. It was not long-term planning. It was get through May.

Lisa continued to express frustration on the impact of the RIF on instruction,

When this was going on and I was spending all of my conference period looking at professional units and figuring out who we could save and who we couldn't save, I know my instruction *suffered*. I know I wasn't doing as much collaboration. I know I wasn't student centered, I was teacher-centered.

Similarly, Susan provided insight into the impact of those teachers that were laid off on the classroom environment that included a spirit of disarray and instability for the students and negatively impacted instructional delivery. She stated,

Yes, it affected the school year because you did have teachers that were there one week and not there the next. I think that some of them were given the option of finishing the year and then not returning or taking an immediate leave of absence. I think that some of them may have taken that immediate leave of absence due to anger and feeling rejected. That meant that you had to have a sub in that classroom for the next couple of weeks or the next couple of months. That impacted the campus that I was at, at the time, because we had a lot of long term subs that had to come in.

Reflecting these same sentiments of the RIF and its negative impact on instruction while preserving professionalism, Carly expressed,

Yeah, it affected my work in the sense. In terms of how I responded [to the RIF] I did not, at all. Because for me professionalism is number one. I would say that to most of the colleagues around me professionalism is number one.

Furthermore, Sophia continued to express concern for teachers' capacity to deliver instruction in the aftermath of the RIF stated,

I think that the kids could feel that there was stuff going on that they didn't know about. They could tell that the teachers were more stressed out, upset or that there was more tension in the air in the building. I think [the RIF] did set a tone in the classrooms. I don't think they realized it because it continued into the next year, but the kids would ask, "What's going on? None of the teachers seem happy." I think this does effect instruction. Maybe it might just come down to how things are delivered.

Just as Sophia, Skylar fervently communicated with a tone of outright frustration for the lack of resources and the negative impact on instruction as result of the RIF.

We haven't had a bilingual interventionist for the last couple of years. It's been hard. Last year, what they did is they gave us an aid. But again, she doesn't have the background, the experience, the resources and the strategies to work with kids [...] a lot of the times, it's us teacher, having to take the time to train them. I might as well do it myself because I don't have time to teach you. It's really bad, but you just give the minimal things. There's been a lot of changes. Of course, we're all there, and we're trying to do what we can with the resources that we do have.

RIF Impact on Student Programs

Several survivors expressed in the interviews that the RIF had a negative impact on student programs while some conveyed no impact. Sean adamantly stated, "After somebody cuts your whole language program, I don't know how much work you're doing with your students at that point in time trying to learn another language program". He displayed a sense of frustration as he or she described the impact of the RIF on

student programs. Furthermore, Sean continued to voice concerns by stating, “I think for those teachers who got laid off the instruction went in the dumps. I think for other teachers it was a distraction. I think when we’re distracted as teachers we don’t do our best work.” He unrelentingly continued by stating, “I would say that it definitely impacted instruction. I don’t necessarily think it still impacts instruction, but you still have that whole trust issue and that’s something that campuses are still struggling with.” Similarly, Melissa also agreed with the impact, most negatively, on student programs as a result of the RIF. She stated, “of course, when you reduce the number of teachers, it reduces the number of opportunities that kids can have for groups and additional help”. Likewise, Carly articulated with a hint of cynicism the negative impact of the RIF on student programs,

It affected the students programs in that, there were some things that were provided before that we couldn’t provide, supposedly, anymore. However, they managed to keep some of it by having fees. So, if you’re going to be, perhaps, on the dance team. Instead of paying \$200, now you’re going to pay \$500. They always say that if a kid has financial need, they’ll find a way.

Skylar an elementary school teacher, resonated the RIF’s impact of the loss of personnel,

We used to have a GT teacher, who would pull the kids into activities with them. They gave that duty to the librarian. So, the librarian does GT. Then, to fill the gaps of not having computer lab every week, and not having an art rotation every week, what they did, is they do two days of PE, they do one day of music, thankfully they didn’t cut that position, but they thought about it.

Overall, these participants voiced concern for students which is often the missing part of the puzzle that is lost in the conversation on budget cuts and drastic reactionary measures such as the RIF that occurred as the context of this study.

RIF Impact on Increased Workload

A significant result of the interviews emphasized survivors' expression of the increased workload as a result of the RIF. It can be inferred that when you loss key personnel such as teachers that there are fewer faculty to work with students and that has a trickle-down effect. The sentiment articulated by some participants is someone still has to teach the students because they didn't go anywhere. State-mandated curriculum and learning objectives must be covered. The teachers that remain are faced with the realization they are the ones that have to do it. The number of students increased as a result of fewer teachers. Melissa expressed,

There came a time when teachers' attitudes started to shift because of the increase in workload and paperwork that comes with that. You could even pay a teacher to stay after school and tutor, when teachers would love to have the extra money.

They [teachers] did not want to do it [additional duties] because of the increase in paperwork, the increase of students, the larger class sizes and the demands.

Sarah, a counselor, highlighted the impact of the RIF on increased workload for staff and the negative consequences on students. She communicated,

Looking at the positions that they're cutting, I know some places, when I was a counselor, they decided to cut down to two counselors versus three counselors for middle schools. Main positions at other campuses down-sized for better reasoning for the district, but I felt like it kind of hurts the students. When you have only

two counselors at a middle school versus three then that means that your caseload is more and you are not able to help the students.

Furthermore, Sarah continued to express her feelings of dissatisfaction with the increased workload as a result of the RIF,

If they could lower our caseload, it would give us more time for us to really get to know our students. The chances of that are very slim. Because they are trying every which way not to add on anymore [staff] than they have too [...] my caseload is 468-470 students for high school. It is very hard.

In the same way, Skylar conveyed the ripple effect of the RIF on staff cuts and its contribution to increased workload. She gave unambiguous insight into the undue burden the layoffs had on survivors and the residual effect now evident in the learning environment,

Even now, to this day, it's really hard, because I see our librarian and I was hoping that this year, they would take away GT [gifted and talented] as one of her duties. It's a lot for her [the librarian] to do. She doesn't have the time to do much with the kids that she used to by far. She used to do activities with them, read a lot and teach them so many things. Now, I feel like she's always rushed because she's waiting for the next class. Even when we go check out the library is just not a relaxing calm place that it used to be. It's like "Oh gosh, we've got to hurry guys because the next class is coming in." Because of her duties she has so much to do. It's hard because it seems because she has to fill in the rotation. It used to be that we signed up for library time and then we went. Now the weeks that she's on the rotation schedule she has a lesson that she prepares for those 40 minutes with

them. But as far as us, the teacher, taking them in to do activities we can't do that anymore. She just looks really stressed and busy.

Furthermore, Skylar explicitly communicated the dire need for additional staff and the negative impact of the RIF had on increased workload for teachers and the lack of classroom resources. In addition, the lack of support from administrators was her target of frustration,

That's been hard just not having that help. I know that if I had an interventionist help me it would be very different. I wouldn't feel the load of all 14-19 kids on just me. In that sense I feel like there's not a lot of support [...] they bought us one class set but we are not allowed to write in it. We are not allowed to copy it either because of copyright [...] so you don't feel supported and that makes you feel discouraged to be there [...] so it has been really difficult not having the resources on hand because there was no money [...] a lot of teachers now are feeling that because of the lack of support, resources and personnel that we still need to meet the needs of the students. Sometimes they say if we still are afloat, it's because we work so hard. They know we won't do that [quit] because we care so much for the kids.

The insight these survivors expressed underscore the reality of increased accountability and workload on survivors in the aftermath of organizational downsizing. The responsibility of educating students and developing citizens that will contribute to society still lies in educators' and public schools' hands in partnership with parents. However, the voices of these stakeholders seem to be lost in the conversation on school budget cuts and educational reform.

Emotional Toll on Those who Remain with the School and School District as a Result of the RIF and Its Impact on Their Psychological Well-Being

Another dominant theme across interviews focused on the emotional toll on the survivors or those who remain with the school. The researcher used the term *survivors* because that is how some of the participants self-identified. For example, Joyce discussed the mindset of “survival” year to year. As a result of the RIF most school districts moved to short term contracts such as one year as opposed to three year term contracts. She stated,

I would take it not so much as like a day-to-day survival but more like a year-to-year. When contract time came around again, I was of course hoping to find that contract in my box and that I was able to sign. Once the contract was available to me, I signed off on it, I felt I was kind of safe at least for the upcoming year.

Similarly, Lisa echoed this same sentiment by expressing the change in strategic planning as an instructional coach. Her use of the language associated with survivorship was significant and further solidified the prevailing mindset present in the aftermath of the RIF. Lisa expressed,

I think it took time away from it. Ok, rather than being focused on instruction and on what the needs of the department were and talking to people about what inservices they could go to, it was how I can *survive* May. It was not long-term planning. It was get *through* May.

This revelation was significant because selected participants self-identified as *survivors* and highlighted the negative connotation associated with that. Survivors’ perceptions included self-interest versus student - centered and *survival* mentality resulting in

negative impact on instruction, student programs, emotional and psychological well-being and employee morale.

Emotions of Fear, Anxiety, and Guilt

In particular feelings of fear, anxiety and guilt emerged as a sub-theme within the context of the emotional toll the RIF had on the survivors or those who remained with the school or district. The prevailing perception of administrators as indicated by the language such as “be thankful you have a job” was used in the archival data of the school districts’ budget minutes and transcripts that specifically laid out the impact of the RIF quantitatively. Sophia was extremely detailed in the account of the emotional toll the RIF had on her mental state. Survivors’ expressed that anxiety was a major emotion present in the aftermath. Survivors in the urban school districts studied (School District C) that were downsized had the option to reapply for their lost jobs. They had to go through the entire hiring process again. This procedure in turn created more anxiety in addition to the inherent angst associated with transition. Sophia stated,

Am I going to have a job? Am I not going to have a job? [...] there was very heavy anxiety and worry because it is unknown. I was very emotional too. Just kind of on egg shells all the time. It was hard I think for everyone. I think they worried that if they did something bad and there were RIFs next year, that it could come back to them because then it wouldn’t just be last ones in, first ones out. They would have to start looking at other criteria. Just everyone was kind of on eggshells about everything. We better not get on the bad side of the administration. Personally, it was just tons of anxiety. I need to find a job. How am I going to pay my bills? It became very high stress but yet you have to try to

just stay positive especially for the kids.

She continued to express her feelings of worry,

I was just kind of nauseous a lot, that was just overwhelming [...] there was a loss of trust. I think a lot of that stemmed with the process too [...] I was worried because I had been the last one in. I started crying.

Likewise, Susan also expressed feelings of anguish of witnessing other colleagues lose their jobs as it played out on campus. She stated, “Some of them were crying and you could tell they had been crying. It was just like somebody had died. It was just like somebody died on campus.” Susan continued to express her angst as to the impact of the RIF on colleagues,

It was bittersweet because as I said you don’t want to see somebody lose their livelihood. There was a lot of crying. There were a lot of emotions but I was also thankful that I was not one of the ones that got cut.

Feelings of anxiety and uncertainty permeated Susan’s expressions and the learning environment. She questioned,

The kids just had a lot of questions. I guess they had the same questions I had. You know, Am I next? Are you next? Are you going to be here next week? Are you going to be here next year? So it just brought about a lot of questions [...] the whole time you don’t have a job I felt like I had an ulcer. I was just nauseous all day long. How am I going to pay my bills?” Well, at least I know I’m going to get paid through the summer.

Personal Connection with Former Colleagues

Another sub-theme that emerged from the data was survivors' guilt associated with lost peers in the aftermath of the RIF. Many participants expressed sadness, remorse and guilt for being a survivor and remaining with the school. They often echoed the sentiment of *why was it them and not me?* They acknowledged their former colleagues had a loss of income and felt an extenuating sense of concern for their well-being. Susan conveyed guilt associated with losing colleagues,

I felt really bad because some of the teachers that got laid off on my campus were teachers that had been teaching for a while and that was their livelihood [...] some of them were single moms and it was their only source of income and now it was just gone. Administrators would say to people that they would try to place them in another capacity at another campus or within the district, but that was not a guarantee.

Likewise, Susan articulated feelings of guilt for downsized colleagues,

You feel bad especially if they had a family that they're supporting. At the time I was single so at least I thought that, "Even if I can't get a job in this I could probably figure out something." I feel when you have the extra stress of having kids and a family to provide for I think this causes stress on you, the entire family, your husband or wife. You felt really bad for the entire situation. You felt bad for the kids that had some of the teachers that didn't want to teach once they found out [about the RIF].

Additionally, Joyce expressed her despondency for lost peers,

I obviously felt very sad for them and thought a lot about the fact a lot of them had families. This [job] was their income and I feel that it must have been really hard for those who had to lose their jobs. They did not know what to do next and this was a state problem in our field.

Likewise, Melissa, Susan and Skylar expressed their concerns for lost peers and the impact of the RIF on their lives. Melissa communicated,

It is people's livelihood and whereas some of them had a few months to prepare because it [the RIF] never happened in education. You don't expect it to happen. So, it's difficult for people to find something different within a few months of being let go.

Melissa, an evaluating administrator highlighted how fear infiltrated the performance evaluation process for teachers,

Whenever I would send a teacher feedback from a walk-through and it had some things for that teacher to work on, I saw an increase in the number of written rebuttals from teachers. They were being defensive and worried about what was going to be in their files. They were in fear of another reduction in force would happening.

She continued to discuss her apprehension and mistrust that bred fear in the workplace and negatively impacted her work,

It [the RIF] increased the number of conversations that I had with teachers and not in a productive way but in a way like they had to clear their names or do a rebuttal when it really wasn't necessary. The feedback was meant for growth but they saw

it as a way to be documented against even though I used the same language and I built a relationship with the teachers. It was because of the criteria from the RIF that made them more defensive in trying to protect their jobs [...] it [the RIF] built a layer of mistrust between the teachers and the administration [...] it [the RIF] caused a lot of nervousness among the teachers and who they could trust and who they couldn't trust [...] for those teachers who I had a really good relationship with it [the RIF] affected that in a way that they felt like they had to be a little more cautious about what they said and what they did.

Melissa echoed the emotional and psychological effects of layoffs of former colleagues on survivors,

Emotionally, it was just hard to see people who had been in the profession so long having it taken away from them. Psychologically, there's always the thought in the back of your head am I next. What does this mean for me? Should I start looking for another job just in case? It just leaves a lot of questions and anxiety.

Skylar described in vivid details the angst experienced by the loss of a close colleague. As a mother she empathized with lost peers and their plight and responsibility to provide for their families and the devastating impact of the RIF. Furthermore, she lamented on how this disorienting event had on devastated lost peers and reverberated shockwaves within the foundational core and psyche of survivors, which may have once had the perception that their job as a teacher was deemed *safe* and secured until retirement,

I feel really bad. I felt really bad because for example the art teacher at our campus his son went to school there at our school. You would always see them get there together and he had his whole room set up and he was so comfortable and he

was such a great art teacher. He had been doing it for so long. The kids loved him and they had a great relationship with him. The little boy was really happy. We didn't know if his son was still going to be allowed to come here because he was going to school there because his dad worked there. It was really sad to see him go and pack up all his stuff. He looked very, very sad. We were all sad that he was leaving [...] those teachers that lost their jobs it was hard to see. And potentially almost being one of them [the downsized] it was very difficult. It was a really difficult time.

The essential message that was communicated was the emotional impact and psychological well-being of being survivors in the aftermath of an RIF. Participants expressed intense emotional turmoil, mistrust and ultimate shock of their new role of being a survivor and the associated guilt for lost peers. These remnants pervaded the workplace and subsequent learning opportunities and contributed to an overall sense of self-survival orientation towards work and had a strong negative impact on students.

Impact of RIF on Personal Professional Development

The RIF was a pivotal event that impacted personal professional development for selected participants because prior to this chaotic change event they were not invested to the extent they currently are. This was a dominant theme that was emphasized across participant interviews. Survivors expressed this event was the trigger that motivated them to pursue personal professional development. This was the first time an RIF had been implemented in all three school districts, so participants were faced with circumstances that were not familiar. Many voiced their distress and the negative impact on their commitment or the lack thereof to the school but not toward students. All participants

maintained their professionalism and the reason they were involved in education was paramount. They remained dedicated to teaching students and the RIF did not impact their commitment to students but did however negatively impact their commitment to the school. Mistrust toward administration was prevalent and a self-survival mindset infiltrated the work environment as well as their learning orientation. Most participants' learning approach became more teacher-centered in an effort to do what it takes to stay off the *list* of future RIFs rather than focusing on intervention strategies or student-centered learning methodologies. This is a noteworthy finding in that survivors' reasoning to pursue personal professional development was externally motivated out of fear of losing their jobs rather than gain additional competencies to improve student learning.

Carly conferred frustration on how the budget cuts and eventual RIF negatively impacted professional development as an instructional coach,

So one of the biggest things was the state cut the funding for advance placement reimbursement. At School District A that's huge. Because the number of students that we have that make three or higher on an AP exam would generate School A \$47,000 a year. That money was what we used to send our teachers to AP and IB trainings. Once the RIF happened and we came back even though we were able to retain teachers that money the state no longer did the reimbursement. So now our teachers do not get to go to some of the trainings that I got to go to. So we have this new group of teachers who while they're teaching Pre-AP and AP they don't have the training. The district has tried to do Pre-AP conferences. But they're not attracting the kind of teachers to present that you could find if you were able to go

to an actual college board, week—long institute in the summer.

Carly continued to fervently express her disdain for administrations' take on budget reduction and the RIF's impact on professional development. Zealously, she shared her concern for the ability to do the job of coaching and the impact on teacher training and preparedness due to significant cuts in funding to attend professional development conferences and other work related trainings. She stated,

There is something of value about that. Our new teachers are not getting the kind of training. We don't have the funds to send them to it. I went to conferences and trainings away even during the school year and I know the value of that [...] this past year our department budget got cut tremendously. They just took the money from us. Getting together for professional development was like begging, pleading, stealing and borrowing.

Similarly, Joyce shared her concern of not being able to attend professional development conferences due to lack of funding as a result of the RIF and its negative impact on instructional delivery. She stated,

Since I wasn't able to attend the family consumer sciences conference and that is where I really got to learn some more specific instructional strategies to my certification to what I was teaching. So without being able to attend that conference anymore, I didn't feel like I was as up to date on the latest trends or strategies that I could implement in the classroom.

The essential message that some survivors not the majority conveyed was that the lack of professional development could in the long run result in the phenomenon of *teacher inadequacy*. Conversely, the majority of participants did acknowledge that the lack of

professional development opportunities did not only result in a significant negative impact on instruction, teacher preparedness and development, but negatively impacted student programs and services as well as the learning culture. Moreover, the RIF triggered an increase in motivation to pursue professional development and increase marketability for in the event of future RIF's. On the contrary, Sophia provided specific details from the perspective that professional development opportunities in School District C were not significantly impacted as a result of the RIF,

I feel like the campus I am on now does a lot more PD on the campus vision where my previous school district did not. I really feel there is a larger push for whole-school vision making sure people are on the same page. They've always had good professional development opportunities for your subject area, strategies and instructional strategies. I always felt that professional development has always been pushed whether it comes from Region D letting us know or other workshops being offered in and around the state.

Relevancy of Professional Development Opportunities

Carly expressed frustration and cynical view on misaligned and irrelevant current professional development with current and emerging pedagogical approaches of professional development within the context of downsizing, misappropriation of school funding and the negative impact on students. She stated,

It does make me more critical, though, when I see money being misspent. When I see professional development being reduced to rinky-dinky things, they are really dog-and-pony show, and are flash and trash, and don't have any real understanding in how to push kids to the next level. I've taught the best of the

best. I put kids to Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Stanford, you name it. I know where kids can go if they're given the tools and the capacity to go there. Not that has to be the only end result. But at the same time if you get so lost in just one little piece of the puzzle you fail to see the bigger picture. Professional learning is always going to take place if you really are committed to learning.

Likewise, Melissa expressed her aversion to the relevancy of current professional learning approaches and the lack of perceived value and the culture of compliance often ingrained in teachers and staff,

The district tried to do some assistant principal training which was ridiculous. The principal's professional development was actually in the form of meetings and being introduced to the latest research or the latest trend and fad in running schools. It wasn't quality PD in my last year as an administrator. I am compliant and I will do what people ask me to do. But I went to one professional development meeting and said I would never go back to another one ever again because of the quality of it. It was the school district's solution to have internal folks to deliver professional development which is fine because you don't necessarily have to be an administrator to design administrator development. You can be knowledgeable about the field. But when you don't even have someone who can pull together a professional development it's pretty sad. So, the quality was not of any value to me.

Melissa spoke about how professional development was internally delivered by administrators that attended PD conferences and reported back their best practices. This was the mode of delivery before the RIF occurred. In contrast, Skylar was less averse

toward the quality of the professional development offered by the district. Admittedly, she acknowledged that integrating professional learning communities (PLC)'s was relatively a more effective approach to professional development that increased relevancy by being more aligned with core curriculum. Professional Learning Communities emerged after the RIF in all three school districts studied. These collaborative communities provide the open space for teachers to engage in dialogue to exchange ideas and best practices on various topics such as classroom management and intervention strategies. In addition, colleagues collaborate on best practices for instructional methodologies and infusing technology in the classroom to enhance learning and facilitate student success. A detailed description of the inner workings as well as a rationale for the utilization of such collaborations were provided,

They're really good about trainings throughout the school year. They also have trainings during the summer. They do really, really well at [trainings]. During the school year, *since that happened*, they have started professional learning communities. It usually relates to your content and you can sign up for any one. If you teach writing they have a professional learner committee for writing. You meet about six times a year. All the teachers from the district with a facilitator collaborate with teachers from other campuses that are also teaching the same level and content area that you are. They have those for writing, social studies, science, math and reading. That is really good throughout the year. It is teachers all talking, conversing, learning from each other, acquiring ideas and they bring presenters and it's just to collaborate and have discussions.

In the same way, Lisa expressed a call to action for greater transparency and the need for peer- to- peer professional development to improve practice and facilitate honest communication. This will improve the relationship between administration and teachers that remain with the school in the event for future RIF's in spite of inherent contentious legal consequences,

I think if we're more honest about our practice, if we have teachers going in and observing other teachers and really being honest about what I can do to improve my practice then there are no surprises. I am grateful for that conversation. I have a 32 year career here because I had a principal who cared enough to be honest with me. I think we are in this age of litigation that principals are afraid to be honest with teachers because they don't want a grievance if God forbid we do not renew a contract. They are entitled to hearing and we don't want it to get personal and we don't want to bring lawyers in. I think we have lost that honesty because of contracts and stuff like that. If we're going to RIF again based on the practice in the classroom we have got to be more honest with teachers.

This is a noteworthy finding in that Lisa addressed the lack of honest, constructive feedback given to teachers due to fear of legal reprise and the role of misconstrued feedback in evaluative performance assessments in the aftermath of a RIF. Lisa continued to reverberate enthusiastically the perception of high quality professional development provided by one of the suburban school districts studied (School District A),

I think this district is one of the best districts I have worked with and this is probably my fifth district. I think they've done a very good job of doing PD in – house. Sending instructional coaches or curriculum specialists to expensive

professional developments and then we're the ones who turn it around for the district [...] they had sent us there and we were really excited about what we could bring to the table as far as that was concerned. School A has always had the mindset of we're going to do what we need to do to bring the very best cutting edge education and researched based education to our students.

Nevertheless, Skylar hesitated and supported several survivors' perspective on the lack of funding for external professional development as a result of the RIF and subsequent budget cuts for out of town professional conferences. She stated, "The only thing they don't let you really go because there are no funds to go out to conferences or any travel. They don't usually ever pay for that." Susan suggested a similar approach to improve professional development and make it more efficient and relevant. Her strategy was to implement a more coaching or peer-to-peer style in program delivery,

Maybe if we reached outside the district and I know that's probably not feasible.

Due to monetary issues and the fact that you may have to pay a little bit extra for somebody who's not in district, but reaching out to other districts, having another district's point of view and let them lead the professional development and vice versa. Teacher to teacher is good but just having teachers from our own district, maybe another teachers' perspective may have a strategy that you could bring into your classroom. I am all for teacher to teacher, just maybe from different districts.

Some participants had a negative disposition toward current professional development in that it was not relevant to their current subject area and simply was another duty to be *checked off* along with other teaching work activities required by the state. The relevancy of professional development for teachers is vital to achieve the desired outcome of

greater comprehensive competencies to improve instructional methodologies and strategies that improve student learning and facilitate academic success.

The Pursuit of Personal Professional Development Opportunities

The need to pursue professional development as a result of the RIF was a sub-theme that emerged across all participant interviews. Curiously many participants did not originally see professional development as a way to increase their marketability as an integral part of their career plan. However, in the aftermath of the RIF they had an epiphany in which they realized they needed to invest in professional learning as a means to not be on the *list* for future RIF. They wanted to ensure they would increase their chances of mobility in the workplace by gaining additional training and certifications. The context in which this cognitive reasoning was enveloped was the emotional turmoil these participants experienced upon the initial tremor of the layoff announcement. To the astonishment of Skylar, the RIF served as the jolt to the pursuit of personal professional development and contributed to the paradigm shift. It seemed for most participants that this was to combat the tremors felt in the psyche of survivors in that the teaching profession is *safe* or insulated from such a chaotic event as a RIF or that the remnants of the state budget ongoing dialogue would come so close to home,

I was finishing my second or third year of teaching and I thought that I had this degree and I thought this job was safe. It was an eye-opener and that maybe it was not. At that point I had thought about going back for my Master's at one point or another. But at that time I was focusing on settling into my new job and into motherhood. That's when I decided to go back to school for my Master's degree [...] I am going to need something else to fall back on because you just don't

know.

This was a significant finding that addressed the research question as to *what was the RIF's impact on survivors' commitment to personal professional development*. Before the RIF all participants were complacent with the status quo in their own learning because they held to the mindset that their careers were deemed *safe*. The data suggests that all of the survivors interviewed were not self-motivated to improve their learning but rather externally motivated to gain additional training and certifications to increase their marketability in finding another job or keeping their current position in the event of a future RIF. Additionally, the findings revealed after the RIF their commitment to professional development increased as a way to stay ahead in the event of a future RIF. Skylar continued to reflect on the evolution of self-awareness to a more future and communal orientation towards advocacy as a result of the traumatic events that unfolded. This influenced the decision to pursue personal professional development. For this survivor, the impact of the RIF resonated in the interview as the term *survivor* was used to self-identify and describe the emotional and psychological attitude,

To me personally that [the RIF] makes me want to become an administrator even more. I am glad that I am seeing this [the RIF] happening and I feel it makes me aware. So that hopefully one day when I do have my certification then I can make these decisions [in regards to future RIF's implementation] or at least advocate for those students. It [the RIF] brings that feeling in me to want to advocate for them [the students] one day [...] they [administrators] did all those budget cuts and we started seeing all these personnel and resources taken away and just things working differently. There's nothing we can do. We're just trying to *survive*.

We're trying to do what we can. That was the mindset *survival*. We can't be asking for anything and we can't be saying why don't we have this? We were just *thankful we had a job*. Now that slowly some of that funding has come back I feel that they're not putting it necessarily where it should go. Because now they've [administrators] have seen that we can *survive* on this [limited resources]. They gave the stipends back but they never gave us back our reading interventionist. That has been really hard because I am a reading teacher.

This finding was significant because it addressed the research question as to *what is the nature of the relationship between the survivors' commitment to personal professional development and individual schools in the aftermath*. Her narrative highlights the dominant compliance environment of public schools and the relationship to advocacy for increased professional development and resources to combat the negative residual effects of the RIF. Skylar expressed her desire to self-advocate for her personal professional development without fear of being fired in the event of future RIF's or retaliation from administrators. Skylar continued to expound on her rationale on pursuing professional development opportunities focused on increasing competencies related to district wide initiatives and leadership rather than socially- oriented committees as result of the RIF,

It [the RIF] did have [an impact] because now when I do things at school I feel like you have an option. You can go to the hospitality committee and plan baby showers or I can be in the campus improvement committee and really get involved in what's going on. I always opt now for those committees. I was in the district improvement committee for two years. Since then I was on the campus improvement committee because I don't want to do just the getting by stuff. I

want to learn more and do more.

This was a noteworthy finding because it addressed survivors' commitment to professional growth in the aftermath of the RIF. Skylar continued to self-advocate for not only professional learning but she discussed her transformed mindset to become engaged in leadership roles that positively promote servant leadership. Her narrative reveals the positive, although unintentional effect on teachers' motivation to improve learning and elevate to more impactful decision making roles. Sophia echoed,

I think really it came down to me that it [the RIF] made you really realize the importance of trying to do things for yourself because in the whole loyalty aspect in the end you're just a number that can be replaced and there are always teachers out there needing jobs. There's always going to be someone to be able to fill in. If you have opportunities take them and be loyal to yourself. Don't try to be loyal to a campus because in the end that campus may not be loyal back.

Sophia continued to share valiant demonstrative insight into motivation to pursue professional development and the role the RIF played. She stated,

That you have to kind of realize that until they have to make those hard decisions you're not thinking about that [...] I think for the first three weeks it was hard. It was hard to be motivated. It was hard to go in and be happy all the time. I think for me when you start to get a little hopeful when I found out what the possibility of the other job opening up. That gives you new life and something to strive for. I think initially though I thought "What am I working for?" "Do they even want me on this campus? You never got a real reason.

Sophia continued to emphasize the importance to remain engaged in learning and committed as a person on the RIF *list*. She was in the pool of candidates to be rehired as that was the process of the RIF in the urban school district studied (School District C). She stated,

What they did tell us was the jobs that opened up had to be filled by the RIF's teachers on campus. They closed the application system so they could only hire from the RIF candidates [...] I am not going to not do my job because I still wanted to work on the campus. I am just going to keep working and keep working hard and show that I am still dedicated. It was hard though because you have three and a half more months to teach and where is your motivation? It knocks you and the entire campus down too because they can feel the pressure. What happens if this happens again next year? It [the RIF] added additional stress to the entire campus. [...] you're stressed and still had to find motivation to show up every day.

This findings addressed two research questions as to *what impact did the RIF have on survivors' commitment to the school and the impact on their emotional and psychological attitudes in the aftermath*. Sophia was initially laid off but reapplied for another position. She pursued personal professional development and attained additional training and received another certification in a different core area. She expressed her increased commitment to the school but at the same time she was externally motivated to continue to work hard to reduce that chances of her being on the list again in the event of a future RIF. Her narrative addressed the lasting effect of the RIF on survivors' motivation, commitment and emotional well-being. Sophia discussed her motivation, fear and anxiety

associated with the possibility of future RIF, “What happens if this happens again next year?” She continued, “I still had to find motivation to show up every day because you thought, “I am probably not coming back here next year and will I be able to get rehired? Sophia noted that some teachers’ commitment did diminish in the aftermath and she questioned their motivation to organizational commitment after the layoff announcement was delivered. All participants demonstrated the lasting effect and the negative impact on student learning. The majority of survivors expressed that the RIF was a major factor that motivated them to pursue personal professional development opportunities. Overall, Sophia’s goal was to develop those competencies that would increase her marketability in the event another RIF.

Commitment to Increase Marketability in the Event of a Future RIFs

The desire to pursue personal professional development opportunities to increase marketability emerged as a sub-theme. This resulted in a targeted effort to not be on *the list* in the event of another RIF. Survivors described how important it was given the occurrence of the RIF to pursue certifications as a way to *shore up* and invest in marketable skills and competencies for other opportunities should the need arise. This was a notable finding that addressed the research question related to the impact of the RIF on survivors’ commitment to personal professional development. Most survivors were extrinsically motivated to pursue additional training and development to reduce the probability of being on the list in the event of future RIF’s rather than to improve their teaching and instructional practices. Additionally, it seemed gaining additional competencies was a strategy used by them to decrease anxiety often associated with change, increase their preparedness and insulate the initial shock of the layoff

announcement. Sophia who was initially laid off then rehired at a different campus in another core subject area but in same district described her motivation to invest in professional development,

Well, I continued to go out and get more certifications because I knew I wanted to teach English eventually. I continued to go to English meetings [...] I wanted to be able to [know] especially at that point if I had to go do an interview somewhere. I needed to be able to know what I was talking about. For me I really felt [the RIF] motivated me really push especially towards the area that I wanted. [...] I still wanted to learn but then I didn't stop there. I was like, "All right what can I learn? What do I need to know? So I did research. They obviously provided professional development for me. I felt like you have your year of professional development and I went to two or three PD in the first six weeks. PD really helped too. I think though it [the RIF] motivated you to one, focus on yourself and where you wanted to grow. Two, focus on the job that I had and growing in that. I spent my own time still doing my development to know about English.

Sophia's narrative highlights a significant finding that addressed how the RIF motivated her to pursue additional learning sooner rather than later. The RIF was a major factor that accelerated her desire to increase learning and development, "for me I really felt that [the RIF] motivated me to push towards the area that I wanted". Similar to Sophia, Susan shared her perception on commitment to pursue professional development in the midst of change to increase her marketability in the event of another RIF,

In a sense you want to make sure that you stay on top of our game because the more training you have the more experience you have. It seems the less likely you would be the one to lose your job.

This finding is significant because it speaks to the role motivation whether intrinsic or extrinsic plays in survivors' pursuit of personal professional development. In the context of this study, rather than survivors discussing their motivation to pursue additional training to improve student learning they were self-motivated to increase their chances of not being on *the list* in the event of future RIF's and not losing their jobs. Similarly, Skylar conferred the paradigm shift to increased self-advocacy and the pursuit of personal professional development opportunities spurred by the harrowing effects that were internalized as a result of the RIF. She expressed the transformation in her orientation to think more *professionally* in terms of *marketability*,

I had been teaching first grade for four years and I had no intention of changing to another grade level or anything. I didn't ask to be changed. Over last summer before the school year my principal emailed me and she told me that the third grade dual language teacher was leaving and she offered the position to me, if I wanted it. I had just started my Master's program and at that time I probably would have said no because I would have to learn PD for a whole new grade level and that would be difficult. But now that I am thinking professionally about that [my career] it's going to be beneficial for me, as an administrator to be in a star grade. I felt that if there was another budget cut I would be more *marketable* if I had taught a different grade level. I accepted it which was great because I love teaching third grade. I do feel more prepared now. My *thinking* has changed. I feel

that the more that I can do and learn, the better it will be. I will be more prepared if [the RIF] would ever happen again.

A noteworthy finding was how these survivors changed positions within the school or district in the aftermath of the RIF. Of the nine participants, three elevated their positions after the RIF occurred and gained additional training. Two moved laterally with positions outside the realm of classroom teaching. Many of them indicated that the RIF had a direct impact on their motivation to pursue additional professional development opportunities to increase marketability in the event of another RIF.

In regard to organizational commitment, Skylar makes a compelling point for the evidentiary transformational shift in the cognitive reasoning of survivors. Namely, before the RIF professional development was considered irrelevant, extraneous and an afterthought or not that necessary or important by some participants. However, after the RIF commitment to gaining additional professional competencies to increase marketability in the event of another RIF and to advance career goals was paramount across interviews. Additionally, a significant finding the data revealed was related to survivors' commitment to personal professional as a result of the RIF. Survivors increased their commitment to improve learning for their own benefit and not necessarily to increase their learning to improve student learning. These reasons highlight the importance of studying the impact of organizational change initiatives such as RIFs in the context of schools.

Impact of RIF on Commitment to School

Participants shared insight into the psyche from the moment of the initial announcement of the layoffs. Many were astonished for RIF had never happened before

in their school district. They assumed either consciously or unconsciously that the teaching career was deemed *safe*. Furthermore, the initial shock pervaded their emotional well-being as well as their commitment to the school. Many felt there existed an unspoken loyalty toward teachers because they after all were educating the next generation of leaders and contributors to society. However, the RIF absolutely sent shockwaves through the workplace and transformed their perspective on the perceived *broken* relationship with administrators which bred distrust and disparagement. Sophia was devastated and shaken to the core and exhibited clear signs of emotional upheaval in the interview even several years later after the RIF. She stated,

The commitment to the school I'm at currently teaching, I'm completely committed. We talk about loyalty a lot of times. I think after that [the RIF] you have to take the opportunity if you have one and take care of yourself first because they'll get rid of you in a second if they need to. You're just a number to them. So they're not going to be loyal back. If you have opportunities don't put all your eggs in the one basket because you're just trying to be loyal. Try to put yourself first. I really feel that was something that needed to be done. Some people had a hard time because they wanted to be loyal too. It's hard because you want to be loyal to the kids but the administration and the district will just toss you aside if they need too. It is just because of the numbers strictly. You need to get rid of five or you need to get rid of ten and this is why. I do think that made it hard to stay super committed to that district at the time.

Similarly, Melissa communicated perspective on the RIF's impact on her commitment to the school,

I don't necessarily think that my commitment to the school or school district has changed. One of the criterion that were set out I think were appropriate because it was by seniority and if you're not performing then you've got to go. If you were the last to be hired it's unfortunate but the people who have been there and doing a good job I don't think it would necessarily be fair. I mean, it's not fair to anybody but I think that based on that criterion it was okay. I am a loyal person and I understand the decision that the district made was because of what was created at the state level. As far as the campus and how decisions were made it didn't change. As far as my loyalty and my purpose for working with kids that didn't change just because of the criterion that was set. Using seniority was appropriate and it wasn't arbitrary but some principals made it arbitrary to get rid of people and that wasn't right.

Melissa provided an interesting viewpoint from an administrator as compared to the teachers' angle which might be expected. Survivors that were teachers did not necessarily agree with seniority being the criteria for the RIF but this administrator which was charged with implementing layoffs did not see it that way. Melissa took a more global perspective for the greater good of the schools vision and mission and the best use of resources while upholding loyalty to student learning and academic achievement. It was noted that what if the teachers they kept were ineffective? Moreover, she conceded that some administrators did use this opportunity to *get rid of people* for personal reasons beyond the set criteria while teachers, as she stated, "Still walking around and talking about it. They were blaming the principal for getting rid of that person." Likewise, Sophia continued to voice a call for greater transparency from administrators for the reduction-

in-force process. She stated,

I feel it depends on how things are handled on your campus. I feel if they would've been more open about things then it could've been better because they [the administrators] were transparent with everything happening. I feel the campuses where that [less transparency] was happening you still stay committed because you trusted them. When that trust is lost because there wasn't transparency they're [the administrators] going to throw you under the bus every time if they have to. They don't care as long as they have a job.

Sophia provided insight into the idiosyncrasies of the aforementioned *broken* relationship between leadership and survivors that contributed to the demise of employee morale and lower organizational commitment in the aftermath.

Decline in Morale

Carly provided explicit details with a dismissive disposition during the interview as evident by the statement. She discussed the evolution of her feelings of skepticism associated with the RIF and its impact on employee morale. She stated,

It [the RIF] definitely made my morale decline. My overall feelings declined. My sense of loyalty definitely eroded. It [the RIF] also made me realize that at the end of the day as much as you think people do care they really don't. That sounds really negative but you could work and work and work. You can even watch people who retired it seemed like what used to be a big event got reduced to just the feeling of "oh, good, you're retiring" that means one salary less that we have to pay. So for me personally I just really have a sense of cynicism. It's hard to

avoid. Not that I stay stuck in that place but I would be dishonest if I didn't say that there was definitely a sense of cynicism there.

Most survivors' expressions reflected their cynicism in regards to the negative impact the RIF had on their morale and attitude of disloyalty toward administrators. Likewise, Carly provided a raw and unedited perspective as to the impact of the RIF on employee morale. Sophia echoed this sentiment about the RIF, "it definitely caused some stress...the moral was very low on the entire campus". Even though Sophia expressed emotionally charged verbiage and her disdain it was recognized that School District C did provide resources to assist in the transition of downsized employees and for those survivors that exercised their option to be rehired. These resources included teacher job fairs and reimbursement for additional certifications. In the same way, Skylar described in explicit details the negative impact of the RIF on morale and her commitment to not only to stay with the school but contemplating exiting the teaching profession,

My morale at that point was very low. I finished off the school year and I had a lot of mixed emotions. I even thought maybe I need to do something else and not even teach. Not even by choice but what if I can't get a teaching job? I am lucky because I have been able to teach in the town where I live. But I thought what if I have to travel AB to look for work? [...] even after my principal said, "okay I am going to submit for your to be rehired" we had to still wait. I didn't really trust fully. I thought okay when they approve me at the board meeting then I'll be happy. Because up until that point I still felt like anything could go wrong. So, having all of that was very hard for me to just completely focus in my classroom [...] if they don't put the resources there teachers are going to get burned out.

There's going to be a lack of commitment, to the kids, to the instruction and just to the profession itself. It's going to be I am here to earn a paycheck. It's not going to be whole heartedly and I have everything that I need to do what they're asking me to do. So I am going to put my whole self into it which is how it should be.

The core message these survivors conveyed were the residual effects of the RIF can not only result in a decline in morale and lower commitment , but can eventually result in a phenomenon of *survivorship*, which can erode the foundation of those employees that remain with the school and negatively impact the workplace.

Increased Commitment to Students

Despite the level of commitment to the schools plummeting among selected participants and the negative state of employee morale in the aftermath of the RIF, most survivors expressed their increased commitment to educating the students. This was a notable sub-theme that emerged from the interviews. Susan stated intensively with erected posture,

My commitment to my school has never changed because I'm committed to the students. It's all about the students whether I am here or not they need to get what they need to get in order to be successful [...] we teach because we care it's not like we can just walk away from the classroom and not think about what is to become of our students.

All survivors interviewed persistently communicated concern for the impact of the RIF on students and the unintended negative consequences on student learning. Susan made recommendations to mitigate that negative impact and ease the transition for students,

I said there's no easy way to let somebody go but don't let them work the entire day. Give them some notice especially as teachers they want to say goodbye to their kids and they want to make sure that things are in place for the person coming in and for their students [...] I think it (the teachers' orientation) was still student-centered. But it was in the back of your mind, "Could I be next? Are they going to lay anybody else off?" But at the same time you have a job to do and you don't want to get fired by being distracted by other things and not handling your business and teaching what you're supposed to be teaching in the classroom.

Carly voiced the same thought in upholding professionalism in the midst of adverse circumstances and supporting colleagues through this time. In addition, the responsibility of leadership to act as role models for change by resembling fortitude and stability,

Yeah it affected my work in the sense that I wanted to move out [of the classroom] and couldn't. That was in my heart. In terms of the RIF and how I responded in the classroom it didn't impact me at all because for me professionalism is number one. Most of the colleagues around me professionalism is number one. I think that's something that people don't always see, nor reward. As much as we may melt down on the inside when it comes time to be with the kids to do what's right that comes first. It's real hard to stand in front of a class and not be professional. They're [the students] expecting something from you and I think the same would go for a campus leader. You can't stand in front of your classroom and not do your job. You've got to find a way to push through and say, "We're going to get through this. It's going to be rough this may have to happen." But at the same time you've got to give people answers and you've got to give

people a sense of normalcy even in chaos.

Likewise, Skylar expressed emphatically and undoubtedly upheld her commitment to student despite the inherent, overt challenges and increased workload as a result of the RIF as demonstrated by relentless dedication and willingness to put in the extra time,

This last year it was really hard for me. We're departmentalized to where I only do reading, writing, and social studies for two classes. In one class, I had many kids who needed help, maybe eight. Then, in this class I had another eight or nine. The second semester I was tutoring between 14 and 19 kids twice a week in the afternoon from 3:00 to 4:00 [...] I had all these kids that I had to tutor. It was really, really, really hard. But they knew once we got there they were there and they were tired. But in this hour I need you to give me all you've got. So, I did it because I felt the pressure of the test [...] for them [students] I did what I felt I needed to do to prepare them so that they could be successful [...] Thankfully out of 41 kids I only had three who didn't pass the test [...] but it wasn't under the most ideal conditions. Honestly if I have to do that every year I am going to get burned out really fast.

Similarly, Skylar emphasized the importance of remaining committed to students in spite of the adverse and contentious circumstances and residue of the RIF,

At the same time I felt much more connected to my students because a part of me felt, What if this is it?" What if this is my last group that I am going to be able to teach? I may have to go and look for another job once the school year ends. So, in that sense I appreciated it [my job] that much more [...] I feel that I am a very committed teacher and not just a teacher but to the entire education system.

Skylar highlights benevolent programs implemented as an outcome of a more student-centered approach to service,

There are little things that we've done to even to build community. I had a friend who did the coats, jackets, lost and found everywhere. We actually started a program to where we got coats to the kids. These were things that I probably before might not have taken the initiative to do but now I do. Last year we did the children gifting program. What we did is we had parents donate gifts and we gave them to 50 families on our campus. Just building community and doing activities like that. I probably was just more comfortable before and wouldn't have thought about doing this.

She proceeded to describe emphatically the moment transformation ensued in the aftermath of the RIF. This focal point provided fuel and motivation to not only invest in additional training but this ignited a new mindset for self-advocacy and acted as a buffer to lessen the emotional and psychological well-being effects as a result of the RIF,

That is why I want to be an administrator because I feel that I can make the change. It was an eye opener for certain. I was in a settling in stage at that point and I was comfortable because I just had my third child. I was settling into my new job, new home and into parenthood. I was in a very comfortable place. It [the RIF] made me get up and say, "It's not over yet." I wondered, "If that [the RIF] hadn't happened if I would have had this sense of urgency? I might have stayed there and been comfortable and retired from teaching. It was in the back of my mind to get my Master's but there was no sense of urgency. I might have not done

it. I feel that everything that happened with the budget cuts it [the RIF] was that push.

The essential message that these survivor narratives revealed complacency with the status quo before the RIF but afterwards there was a sense of urgency to pursue professional development to increase their marketability in the event of a future RIF. Despite what survivors dealt with in terms of the emotional and tumultuous situation in the aftermath of the RIF, they retained their integrity and remained steadfast in their jobs to educate students even though that task at times seemed quite insurmountable.

Summary

These nine survivors provided insight into the greatest challenge in implementing a change initiative such as a RIF. The survivors' voice, the often missing piece in the ongoing discussion on school budget reduction initiatives within the context of organizational change, is often silent. This may be due to a compliant-oriented culture ingrained in the educational environment from some participants' perspective. The goal of this study was to provide the safe space to invite dialogue on their behalf to facilitate success for students, faculty, and stakeholders and lessen the inherent emotional and psychological impact of the structural shift of RIF. The impact on professional learning within the aftermath of downsizing has not been studied extensively but the residual effects of the RIF that occurred in this study are still present and reverberate with survivors or those who remain with the school. The RIF that occurred within these three school districts had a significant impact on professional development, commitment and the emotional and psychological well-being of survivors. This emotional turmoil and

transformative paradigm shift are present and continue to permeate the work culture of participants across interviews.

Participants in the study were employees that remained with the school or school district. Survivors discussed the process of the RIF and the impact on their pursuit of personal professional development and commitment to the school. All survivors interviewed passionately articulated the effect of the RIF on their emotional and psychological health.

The prevailing message that emerged across survivor interviews was the call for transparency through the process of the RIF, more specifically, the communication protocol throughout the implementation of the RIF. Many survivors expressed their dissatisfaction with the criterion of seniority used for the RIF. They deemed the utility of this criterion as unfair and unintentionally dismissed colleagues they considered great teachers due to the fact they were *last one in* so therefore the *first to go* based on seniority. This created the opportunity for administrators to *get rid* of teachers and staff arbitrarily and not based on objective criteria. All nine participants called for administrators of the RIF to recognize the residual effects on survivors' emotional well-being as well as instruction, student programs and their increased workload. These survivors expressed their disdain for student unintentionally being in the cross hairs of the RIF. As educators for the future generation, many participants had genuine concern over the impact of the RIF on the learning environment. In addition, survivors explicitly detailed their anxiety of the residual effects on student academic success due to lack of resources, funding for student programs and shift in focus from student- oriented learning activities to teacher orientated *survivor* tactics. All nine survivors expressed intense

negative emotions regarding peers that were laid off as a result of the RIF. Most participants acknowledged fear, anxiety and guilt as powerful emotions that bred distrust and cynicism within the workplace.

Overall, most participants self-identified as *survivors*, possessed a *survivor mentality*, and articulated a decline in morale and lower commitment to the school. On the other hand, a noteworthy theme that emerged was an increased commitment to students in the aftermath of the RIF. All nine survivors vigorously defended their professionalism in the midst of adverse circumstances and retained an intense loyalty to their students.

Additionally, many survivors shared their perceptions on the relevancy of professional development in the school districts studied. Some participants expressed the conundrums of the past approaches to professional development such as irrelevant and boring trainings that are not aligned with teachers' core subject and competencies. Moreover, survivors suggested more effective and innovative strategies to professional learning. These recommendations included peer-to-peer learning and professional learning communities. This approach provided the space for interactive dialogue and hands on opportunities for teachers to collaborate either cross- interdisciplinary or within their own subject on innovative approaches to instructional methodologies, best practices and integrating emerging technology in the classroom. PLC's would increase teacher retention and contribute to increased alignment and relevancy of professional development.

Many participants shared their perceptions of a pivotal moment in which there was a paradigm shift from being comfortable to how the system worked by the state

requirement professional development hours to self-advocacy. As a result of the RIF, these survivors increased their commitment to investing in personal professional development such as relevant core curriculum training, additional degree attainment and certifications. This reactive approach acted as a buffer to the effects of the RIF by increasing their marketability in an event of another RIF and to decrease the possibility of being on the downsizing *list*. This *survivor* mentality permeated the work environment across participant interviews. This mindset significantly contributed to their increased investment in professional development as well as lower commitment toward the school. The preverbal tremor of the initial announcement of the RIF also contributed to lower commitment because this was the first time many participants had seen the administrators put in the position to make the hard decisions and their potential consequences. Survivors felt betrayed by the administration which contributed to a decline in morale and as a result their commitment to their school was diminished. However, their commitment to the students remained intact and increased as well as their commitment to improve their plight, marketability and position in the event of another RIF.

Overall, these survivors unanimously believed that their ultimate devotion was to their students. This conviction was overwhelmingly the most significant outcome across interviews. Despite the adverse circumstances as a result of the RIF, they remained steadfast and resolute in educating students. In spite of dealing internally with the emotional turmoil and negative psychological effects of the RIF, externally they had to remain strong for their students. Participants saw students as the unintentional casualty of organizational downsizing and ultimately wanted to be the role model students deserved: valiant in adversity.

V. DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

One purpose of this chapter is to provide a brief review of the research study. Another goal of the chapter is to discuss how the findings presented in the previous chapter relate and align with the existing theory and research literature presented in chapter two of the study. The emphasis will be on the five dominant themes that emerged from the study. These themes will be aligned with what the existing literature in the field states about the research topic of this case study. The topic of the case study focuses on the impact of the RIF in three school districts, and how it affected commitment to the school and personal professional development for those who remain with the school/district. At present literature on the impact of organizational downsizing on faculty and staff who remain (*survivors*), within the context of schools, is limited, particularly as it applies to commitment to the school, and personal professional development.

Guiding research questions for the study were (a) How have the survivors' emotional and psychological attitudes been impacted in the aftermath of a RIF? (b) How has the survivors' commitment to personal professional development been impacted after a RIF has occurred? (c) In what ways does a RIF impact the survivors' organizational commitment to their school/district after downsizing has occurred? (d) What is the nature of the relationship between the survivors' commitment to personal professional development and individual schools in the aftermath of a RIF? This chapter will also discuss recommendations for future practice and research related to the case study, as well as my consideration as the researcher.

Brief Overview of the Study

This section provides a brief summary of the case study's first three chapters including the introduction to the study, literature review, and methodology. It presents the key elements of these chapters, revealing how the case study was organized and performed. This section also provides a brief synopsis of the essentials of these three chapters and highlights key details in an effort to present a comprehensive perspective of the case study.

Overview of the Introduction to the Study

During the researcher's tenure as a certified educator and survivor in a large and diverse school district, she was reminded of the residual effects of the RIF that occurred and its impact on employee morale. The researcher observed former colleagues emotionally distraught as well as tremendous levels of anxiety displayed by her peers who remained. The remnants of anger, mistrust and utter betrayal reverberated through hallways, classrooms, and ultimately trickled down to negatively impact student learning. This qualitative study was an attempt to gain in-depth insight into the impact of the RIF on survivors' commitment to the school and their professional development in the midst of this chaotic event.

The purpose of this cross-case study was to understand the specific issue of the impact of organizational downsizing on survivors' organizational commitment and personal professional development in the aftermath. The researcher collected and documented the narratives, and analyzed a diverse set of qualitative data. This analysis included an examination and description of the case study site. Additional data included nine semi-structured interviews, the researcher's journal, documents, and artifacts to

develop a deeper understanding of the five emerging themes or underlying issues of organizational downsizing, or RIF, and its impact on those who remained with the school. This study was based on the social constructivist paradigm. It focused on the personal stories of nine survivors of the layoffs that occurred in 2010-2011 with the aim of gaining an in-depth perspective as to the impact of the RIF on professional development and commitment to the school in the aftermath. This case study required participants to discuss their perceptions and their thoughts of the RIF process and its impact on students, the survivor's guilt due to lost peers, and ultimately their personal career journey and personal professional development.

The research questions were designed to gather in-depth survivors' perceptions on the impact felt from the RIF as it related to their emotional well-being, commitment, and personal professional development. The guiding research questions were: (a) How have the survivors' emotional and psychological attitudes been impacted in the aftermath of a RIF? (b) How has the survivors' commitment to personal professional development been impacted after the RIF has occurred? (c) In what ways does an RIF impact the survivors' organizational commitment to their school/district after downsizing has occurred? (d) What is the nature of the relationship between the survivors' commitment to personal professional development and individual schools in the aftermath of an RIF?

The significance of this case study was that limited research has been conducted on the residual effect of chaotic change initiatives such as RIF and the impact on survivors or those who remain with the organization in terms of their commitment to the school and to their personal professional development after the RIF has occurred. Studies focusing on the survivors in the aftermath have been conducted in the context of

corporate organizations but few have focused on survivors in the context of schools. The gap in literature highlights the importance of further research to examine the impact of organizational downsizing on survivors' commitment to their school and personal professional development in the context of educational organizations. This cross-case study was performed to expand the body of literature in the field of human resource development, educational leadership, organizational change, and workplace learning. Due to differing contextual views of the nine cases, generalization is not the focus of the outcome for this study.

In regard to delimitations, the focus of the study is on the impact of the RIF in three school settings including two suburban and one urban school district. Therefore other school districts, such as rural locales, even though they may have similar experiences, were not included. The researcher's past experiences as an educator and a survivor of a RIF led to concentration on these three school districts in the Southwest region. A limitation of this case study was that some of the participants' ability to accurately recall key details from their recollections on how the RIF emotionally impacted their well-being, commitment to the school and personal professional development could have been skewed due to inherent distortions and repressed memories as a result of their traumatic experiences as a survivor.

Overview of the Literature Review

There is a significant gap in literature dedicated to studying the impact of RIFs in the context of schools on survivors' commitment to the school and personal professional development in the aftermath. Even though there are studies on the impact on survivors or those who remain with an organization in terms of survivors' guilt and other factors

such as increased workload and decreased employee morale in the aftermath of RIFs within corporations, these studies have not explored personal professional development and organizational commitment with the context of schools. Most organizations implement a change initiative in an effort to promote growth, improve efficiency, and/or to remain competitive given current technological, economic, and political environments (DePater et al., 2011). As it relates to schools, federal and state mandated budget cuts are often at the core of cost reduction measures such as a RIF. Brockner (1992) discusses how “most of the research on layoffs has studied their underlying causes or their effects on the individuals who lost their jobs” (p. 10). However, “it is the reactions of the employees who remain or survivors that will dictate the organization’s effectiveness’ (p. 10). Studying the impact on survivor’s professional development and commitment to the school in the aftermath of a RIF is merited.

The profession of teaching has been considered stable and insulated from external organizational forces such as stock market indexes and other economic indicators related to business. Recently, this profession has become vulnerable to these forces. “Compared to some displaced workers, public school teachers have traditionally viewed their positions as secure, with stable employment” (Root, Root, & Sundin, 2007, p. 483).

Public schools are taking the lead from corporations on how they deal with transitions as a result of organizational downsizing. The current landscape in school reflects the shifts in the economy and the rise in job security (Root et al., 2007).

These authors contend, “while recession and restructuring are largely the causal factors impacting organizational change and job loss for many U.S. workers” (Root, et. al, p. 488) public schools have other factors that negatively impact teachers and other school

personnel. Additionally, with increased alternatives to public school such as charter schools, home schooling, and with a significant reduction in public school funding some school districts have responded by downsizing teachers and staff, resorting to school closures, and have engaged in job sharing programs to facilitate transition (Root et al., 2007). Most importantly, according to Root et.al (2007) while there is no national statistical data showing the impact of job loss and the emotional toll on public schools, teachers possess human capital that is essential to the effective operation of public schools. Furthermore, these authors advocate there is a lack of empirical studies on the topic of teacher downsizing and its impact on professional development and commitment, thus the significance of the study.

Giroux (2010) contends states are dealing with declining tax revenue and are forced to cut basic public services. As a result, school budgets have become a major casualty. Recently, given the RIF that occurred in various school districts in the Southwest region during 2010-2011 and across the nation, the topic of organizational downsizing as it relates to the impact on teachers has migrated to the forefront of teacher education literature. “Rather than focusing on fine-tuning pedagogical skills or embracing 21st century innovation, the issues of budget lines and reduction-in-force ramifications have garnered greater attention” (Sterrett & Bond, p. 53, 2012). Consequently, in times of financial upheaval and a politically acrimonious environment, Sterrett and Imig (2011) claim:

In many school districts, pay raises have been frozen, funds for supplies have dwindled, and monies for new technologies and building upgrades have dried up, leaving the impression that support for education has taken a step back [...] as a

result for teachers it is imperative to focus on growing as professionals. (p. 69-71)

Additionally, most school districts are labor-intensive and therefore allocate a substantial amount of their budgets to teachers' salaries. As a result of federal and state mandated budget cuts, there has been a record number of teacher layoffs. Further, the federal government is less likely to mitigate these reductions as they have done in the past with legislation from the 2010 federal Education Jobs Act (Goldhaber & Theobald, 2011; Sterrett & Bond, 2012). Consequently, teacher professional development is becoming more critical in providing teachers with tools to meet and exceed students' needs and help them succeed within the extraordinary and high- anxiety environment of state assessments, that is prevalent in today's educational landscape.

There is a need within the teacher education literature to examine teachers' professional development and commitment to schools, in the aftermath of a RIF. This study focused on the impact of the recent RIF in three school districts. The researcher considered 10 applicable areas represented in the literature. These areas are (a) organizational change, (b) downsizing, (c) the survivors, (d) layoff survivor syndrome, (e) organizational commitment, (f) organizational learning, (g) personal career development, (h) organizational effectiveness, (i) teacher layoffs, and (j) teacher professional development. In the end, there is a need to recognize the residual impact of RIFs on teacher professional development and commitment to the school in the aftermath, and its lingering effect on the moral and student learning. As Kowske et al. (2009) suggest, devoting significant resources toward teacher professional development opportunities and "communicating a clear path for their growth and tangible investment in training and development" (p. 54) may increase survivors' engagement and facilitate

organizational *commitment*. Additionally, Devries et al. (2012) contend when teachers are invested in student achievement and are learner-oriented, they are more likely to participate in continuous professional development, collaborate among peers, and engage in self-reflection behavior.

Overview of Methods

The researcher utilized the case study method for this qualitative study in an attempt to gain an in-depth insight into the impact of the RIF that occurred in the three school districts studied on survivors' commitment to the school and their personal professional development in the aftermath of organizational downsizing. Her goal was to gain an understanding of the survivors' perceptions of the RIF and its impact. Creswell (2013) suggests qualitative research is appropriate when the researcher wants to examine a "real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information" (p. 97). He suggests the case study approach is relevant "when the inquirer has clearly identifiable cases with boundaries, and seeks to provide an in-depth understanding of the cases or a comparison of several cases" (p.100). In this qualitative study, the researcher used open-ended semi-structured interviews and analysis of documents such as the school board meeting notes on the budgetary initiative of the pending RIF. These data sources assisted in detailed examination of survivors' perceptions of the impact on commitment and personal professional development. A case study design was appropriate for this study because it provided the framework for an in-depth analysis of survivors' narratives.

The field site for research was three school districts located in the Southwest region. These schools were appropriate for this study because the RIF occurred in 2010-

2011 within these school districts. The survivors interviewed were diverse and held various positions. Participants included three teachers, two instructional coaches, two counselors, and two assistant principals. There were eight women and one male participant. In regard to race, study participants included three African-American, two Hispanic, and four White survivors. Additionally, eight were married, and one was single. The researcher utilized purposeful sampling to recruit participants in an effort to obtain the most expressive data from the participants. The sample included a group of nine ethnically diverse school personnel, mid-range to veterans with tenure, who remained with the school and school district. Selecting these participants enabled the researcher to conduct a thorough, in-depth case study. Given the time lapse of four years between the RIF and conducting these interviews, the fervent expressions articulated by survivors indicated the remnants of this chaotic event were still evident. The outpouring of their honest, uninhibited and vexed emotions significantly contributed to the validity of the study.

Analysis of documents consisted of school board budgetary agenda minutes that outlined the process and financial cost of implementing the RIF, semi-structured qualitative interviewing, and the researcher's journal were the three primary data collection methods used. Interview questions were organized with regard to the past RIF's event, its present impact, and the survivors' future perspective on it, in an effort to gain in-depth understanding into the impact of these layoffs on their emotional and psychological attitudes, work, personal professional development, and commitment to the school and district in the aftermath of organizational downsizing. The interview focused on participants' personal interpretations of the impact of the layoffs on their emotional

well-being and the impact on their work, commitment, and professional development. There were nine interview questions that facilitated conversations about how survivors felt about former colleagues who lost their jobs and the emotional impact that played on their emotional state. In addition, the interview questions probed into how the process was handled, the criteria of seniority used, and collecting future recommendations for future RIFs. The second method of data collection was analysis of documents in the form of school board committee budget meeting minutes. In regard to how these documents were utilized in the data collection process, the researcher analyzed the vast amount of data that included PowerPoint presentations and Excel budget spreadsheets of the financial impact of lost personnel on current staff, increased workload, and student programs. These documents also contained detailed information about the layoff process, criteria used, and the budgetary impact of the proposed cuts in staff, student programs, student services, professional development, and other school resources as a result of the RIF.

As the researcher began the process of data analysis, she developed a coding system from the interview transcriptions, field notes, and documents. She developed what Creswell (2013) refers to as a “pattern of meaning” (p. 25) from the data. Creswell (2013) suggests these meanings are often subjected and negotiated socially and historically through interaction with others. Furthermore, the theoretical framework used for this study was social constructivism. Creswell (2013) suggests this framework focuses on the specific contexts in which people work in order to understand the historical and cultural environment of the participants. The researcher utilized the analysis process of Lichtman’s (2009) three Cs. Lichtman (2013) recommends inputting raw data and then

coding, categorizing, and identifying concepts in which the researcher transitions from the raw data phase to constructing meaningful concepts. This approach is represented in Figure 8 below.

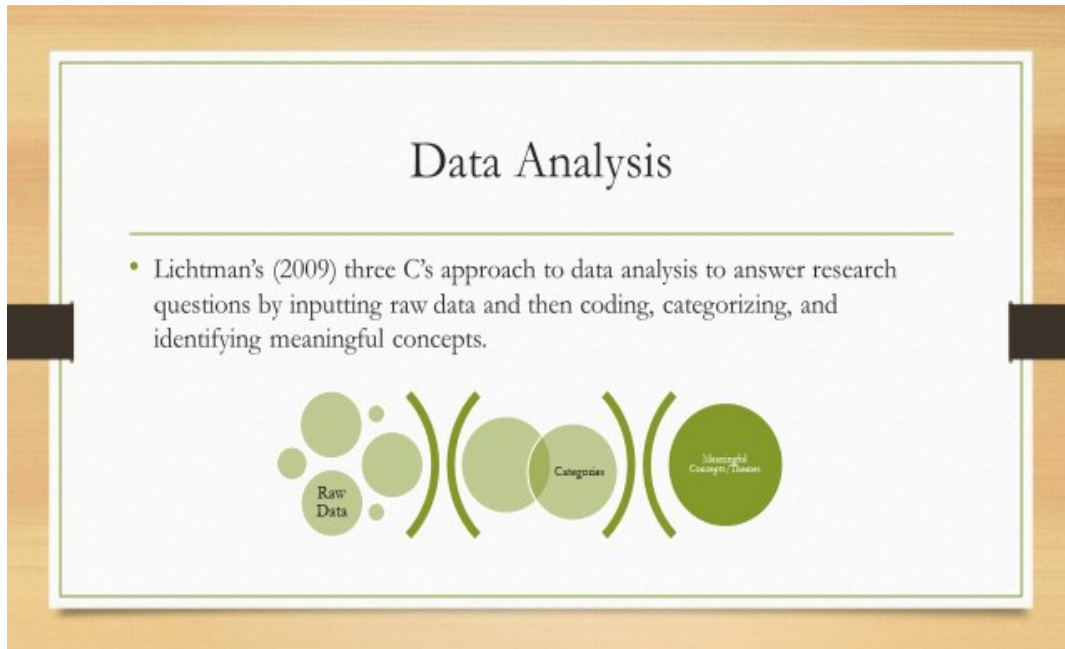


Figure 8. Data analysis process.

The researcher obtained informed consent agreements from the participants as a requirement of the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) to ensure the ethical nature of the qualitative case study. The researcher informed the participants any information gathered in the interview would be held in the strictest confidence and assured them a pseudonym would be used to insure confidentiality in presentations or final write-up of the study. In an effort to maintain the strictest confidentiality and sensitivity of the data, the researcher secured the transcripts from the participants in a locked file cabinet. In regard to the trustworthy nature of the qualitative case study, the components of credibility, transferability, dependability, and triangulation were applied to the case study. Specifically, triangulation was accomplished by using three methods of

data collection that included qualitative interviews, school board budgetary meeting minutes documents, and the researcher's journal.

Discussion of Study Findings

The five primary themes that emerged were (a) Communication Protocol and Transparency to Bridge Theory and Implementation of the RIF with two sub-themes including (i) Process of the RIF and (ii) Criteria for RIF; (b) Loss of Key Personnel as a Result of the RIF with three sub-themes (i) RIF Impact on Instruction (ii) RIF Impact on Student Programs and (iii) RIF's Impact on Increased Workload; (c) Emotional Toll on those who remain with the school and school district as a result of the RIF and Its Impact on Their Psychological Well-Being with two sub-themes including (i) Emotions of Fear, Anxiety and Guilt and (ii) Personal Connection with Former Colleagues; (d) Impact of RIF on Personal Professional Development with three sub-themes including (i) Relevancy of Professional Development Opportunities (ii) The Pursuit of Personal Professional Development Opportunities (iii) Commitment to Increase Marketability for Future RIF and (e) Impact of RIF on Commitment to School with two sub-themes (i) Decline in Morale and (ii) Increased Commitment to Students. Overall, the in-depth knowledge gained through these nine cases was the emotional toll, decreased commitment to the school and increased desire to improve personal professional development to enhance their marketability in the event of future RIFs, on those who remain with the school or survivors in which many participants self-identified in the aftermath of the RIF.

Theme One: Communication Protocol and Transparency to Bridge Theory and Implementation of the RIF

Findings from the nine case studies suggested participants expressly demanded a call to action for greater transparency in implementing the RIF and using criteria that are fair, unprejudiced, and non-arbitrary as a means to dismiss personnel. The participants wanted more inclusive criteria that weighed important factors not related to seniority, such as teacher performance, teacher effectiveness in the classroom, and the teacher's impact on student learning, student leadership, and academic success.

Process of reduction in force. Several participants expressed their anxiety about how the RIF's process was carried out and the lack of transparency and clarity. Goldhaber and Theobald (2011) contend in most school districts, in regard to teacher layoff policies, "last in, first out provisions make seniority the determining factor in which teachers are laid off" (p. 89). Although according to Moore (1978), the use of seniority as a criteria is more transparent. Schools need to find alternative criteria for RIFs and modify the seniority system. This will facilitate best practices for teacher layoffs that minimize the erosion of quality education. Survivors noted the lack of compassion from administrators in providing adequate notice of the impending layoff announcement. For example, Sophia stated, "we were informed about a week before the layoffs that they would be happening. We'd kind of been hearing about them but we didn't know when they were coming." Likewise, Skylar intensely described the rampant whispers that preceded the official announcement of the impending RIF. "Everyone started the gossip, the rumors but we hadn't heard anything officially. Then one time I remember that our principal went to a meeting and she came back and she told us this is happening." Sophia continued to

passionately express her view on how administrators demonstrated a lack of concern when they told those who were being laid off they no longer had a job, in the middle of class, while some were told during their conference periods. This action contributed to a lack of trust in administrators that was expressed in all cases. Sophia expressed her dissatisfaction with the process and suggested better processes to mitigate disruption for teachers and students as well as dispel rampant rumors that are not beneficial for the learning environment and workplace. “I didn’t think it was professional at all to tell people during their conference periods when they would still be seeing kids, I definitely cried. I cried.” These findings emphasize the negative situations experienced by laid off employees and the impact on survivors’ emotional and psychological attitudes and morale in the aftermath of a RIF. These insights are an important contribution to the limited literature in education related to RIF’s.

Criteria of reduction in force. For most of the participants in the case study, the use of seniority or “last one in first one out” criteria gave the opportunity for administrators to “get rid” of people they disliked, or dismiss rivals for reasons other than the established criteria. A negative consequence of the use of this criterion was the unintended loss of highly quality talented teachers only because they were the last hired. Survivors’ perception of mistrust toward administrators aligned with Amundson et al. (2004), who found those employees who remain with the organization after downsizing often have negative emotional demonstrations of fear, decreased self-efficacy, and diminished organizational commitment. Moore (1978) inquires about the use of seniority as a criterion in organizational downsizing. He probed, “do you have persuasive evidence that teachers with high seniority provide a higher quality of professional service

than do those with lesser seniority?” (p. 330). Lisa described her angst associated with possibly being on the RIF’s seniority list, “I realized that it [the RIF] was going to be based on pure seniority and I was pretty low on the totem pole [...] I realized I was on the list.” McNary’s (1943) seminal research contends that until educational leaders who are charged with implementing RIFs expend a valiant effort to bring a “failing teacher up to acceptable standards, we are in no way justified in thinking of dismissal. Any other course may result in tragic waste.” (p. 146). Furthermore, McNary (1943) reiterates, the “importance of checking the processes by which we have arrived at a decision to dismiss a teacher” (p. 146) when considering some adverse policies as seniority and teacher tenure. VanSciver (1990) discusses how change is difficult for most schools due to educators desire to maintain the status quo and the relative “archaic school calendar or an ineffective instructional approach.” (p. 318). He contends administrators’ hesitancy to fully embrace teacher dismissals, given the legal historical ramifications to void term contracts, further solidifies this *status quo* mindset. As the findings of this case study revealed, the RIF gave administrators a rare opportunity to layoff certain employees they deemed ineffective, below proficiency in performance, or for personal reasons which may not have otherwise been permitted under current staff reduction policies. Young and Gehring (1975) contend, “teachers may not be treated arbitrarily or capriciously...just what rights must be accorded teachers?” (p. 52). Goldhaber and Theobald (2011) conducted a seniority- based vs. effectiveness -based layoff policy teacher workforce study and confirmed seniority plays a major role in teacher layoffs in public schools, “likely in part because collective bargaining agreements ordinarily require that the teachers last hired are the first to be fired” (p. 79). These authors contend if school

districts adopt policies that allow them to lay off teachers for a criterion other than seniority such as teacher effectiveness, as suggested by some cases, they could layoff fewer staff, increase the overall teacher self-efficacy, and achieve the desired budgetary savings with less negative repercussions (Goldhaber & Theobald, 2011). Moreover, these authors assert:

To achieve a targeted budget reduction, school districts need to lay off a greater number of junior teachers than senior teachers [as junior teachers have lower salaries], meaning that a seniority-based layoff policy will cause class sizes to rise more than they would under an alternative arrangement [...] the most senior teachers may not be the most effective teachers. With a seniority- based layoff policy, school systems may be forced to cut some of their most promising new talent rather than dismiss more senior teachers, who may not be terribly effective in raising student achievement [...] strict adherence to seniority would require at least some districts to lay off teachers in subject areas with teacher shortages, such as math and special education [...] in many districts, schools with high proportions of at-risk students tend to employ the most first- and second- year teachers. Under a seniority based layoff policy, these schools stand to lose the largest share of their teachers. (Goldhaber & Theobald, 2011, p. 80)

They also assert more districts are undergoing a paradigm shift and reevaluating seniority policies even though these policies seem to be clear, straightforward, and transparent. Such measures may not be beneficial to students' academic success (Goldhaber & Theobald, 2011).

Additionally, VanSciver (1990) discusses the challenges and quandary of using other criteria such as teacher performance instead of seniority. These authors contend:

Finding the time to understand these assessment instruments and to use them effectively is not always an administrator's top priority. This is ironic, for schools exist first and foremost to educate or children. Allowing other concerns to intrude on the effectiveness of that mission seems counterproductive. (p. 319)

Consistent with these authors, most survivors said some teachers were laid off regardless of the core subject they taught because the dismissals were strictly based on seniority. The findings aligned with current literature on public school layoff policies and the use of seniority as a criterion for staff reduction initiatives in most districts.

Theme Two: Loss of Key Personnel

The residual effects such as increased workload, negative impact on student programs, instruction, and the emotional toll were prevalent among survivors even five years later, after the initial shock of the layoff announcement. Survivors passionately expressed the negative impact of the loss of colleagues as a result of the RIF and the toll it had on their work in terms of an increased workload and the residual effect on student learning. The majority of the nine survivors interviewed believed the RIF negatively impacted student learning, employee morale, and the learning environment. This was a significant finding that is currently not documented in the educational literature. Although public schools work with students and are not profit driven, this finding can be viewed as similar to the loss of profit in organizational RIF's. Goldhaber and Theobald (2011) suggest emerging research confirms teacher quality is the most significant factor affecting student achievement. Therefore greater focus should be given to teacher dismissal

policies and procedures considering the profound impact on student learning. The findings revealed the mindset of survivors. Most participants self-identified as *survivors* and voiced the impact the RIF had on the availability of instructional resources and professional development opportunities. The data revealed most survivors described the increased workload of having to take on additional students as a result of lost personnel and working with less classroom resources.

Reduction in force impact on instruction. Lisa candidly expressed *survivors'* *mentality* and the impact on instruction as a result of the RIF,

I think it took time away from it [instruction]. Rather than being focused on instruction, what were the needs of the department and talking to colleagues about what in-services they could go to, it was how can I *survive* May? It was not long-term planning. It was get *through* May.

Susan described the impact of lost personnel, “Yes, it affected the school year because you did have teachers that were there one week and not there the next.” Sophia voiced the impact on the student’s learning environment, “they could tell that the teachers were more stressed out, were upset or that there was more tension in the air in the building.”

Rusaw (2004) contends downsizing impedes organizational learning at the structural, functional, and environmental levels. The loss of intellectual capital can significantly impact the “human capital knowledge” (p. 489) that is needed to support the organizations’ mission to student learning and academic success.

Reduction in student programs. The literature on the impact of RIFs on school resources and instruction aligns with these cases. Ward (1984) states:

Education is a labor intensive industry and the quantity and quality of services depend on the ability to maintain appropriate levels and quality of staff.

Wholesale cuts in staff can lower both the amount and quality of service, cause loss of political support, and, as a result, trigger additional funding cuts. This can lead to a perpetual downward spiral which will ultimately destroy the institution. (p. 186)

Moreover, Kowske et al (2009) contend that survivors' mentality exist as a consequence of the RIF:

Although still employed, the survivors of reductions in force are often demoralized-left as walking wounded [...] blindsided by the extrication of their friends and colleagues, the remaining employees question their own security. (p. 49)

A decline in survivors' commitment to the organization, job satisfaction, and employee engagement often are the negative results of layoffs and significantly impact the organization.

Reduction-in-force impact on increased workload. Skylar voiced her frustration about increased workload, the lack of resources, and the negative impact on instruction,

We haven't had a bilingual interventionist for the last couple of years. It's been hard. Last year what they did is they gave us an aid. But again she doesn't have the background, the experience, the resources and the strategies to work with kids.

Consistent with prior research, most survivors echoed this sentiment. Rusaw (2004) contends, "although downsizing has eliminated numbers of skilled personnel it has not

decreased workloads” (p. 487). Douvanis, Nixon, and Packard (2010) further describe the disruption of RIFs on the learning environment:

The need to consistently re-train new teachers and reaffirm school improvement goals and strategies creates a distraction and drain of resources. Professional development, collegiality, curriculum planning, scheduling, loss of experience, disruption to program planning and evaluation, and class size represent a sampling of disruption created by excessive teacher turnover. (p. 47)

Furthermore, these authors contend “the dichotomy and paradox for school principals’ centers around the necessity of teacher quality, yet the reality is that each contract non-renewal adds to an already challenged personnel cycle” (p. 47).

Overall, these survivors revealed their personal frustrations associated with not only the residual effects of the RIF on their work and negative consequences on student learning, but with the lack of support received by administration to remedy this despairing abyss expressed by these survivors.

Theme Three: Emotional Toll on Those Who Remain With the School and School District as a Result of the RIF and Its Impact on Their Psychological Well-Being

Participants communicated the angst associated with their experience as a survivor in the aftermath of the RIF. Amundson et al.’s study (2004) found certain attributes or characteristics were present among survivors of workforce reduction. These characteristics include higher levels of stress, decreased motivation, increased workloads, decreased self-efficacy, negative emotions such as fear, guilt, and diminished organizational commitment. Consistent with this literature, the findings revealed survivors’ perplexed thoughts of the impact of the RIF. Sophia discussed her high levels

of stress, decline in organizational commitment and fear of being *on the list* for future RIF's. She expressed, "I was just kind of nauseous a lot, that [the RIF] was just overwhelming". She continued to express her anxiety about continued employment, "Am I going to have a job? There was very heavy anxiety and worry because of the unknown." Survivors voiced their trepidation about future RIF's. It was noteworthy that most case participants self-identified as *survivors*. They discussed their survivor's mentality and how this impacted their teaching and learning approach as teacher-centered or self-orientated rather than student-centered. The literature aligns well with this data in that survivors are impacted negatively by the remnants of a RIF. Roth and Shook (2011) contend that survivors of a RIF were admonished "to be respectfully sad and distraught" for those terminated peers but then were "expected to return to normal productivity standards" (p. 141). Consistent with Roth and Shook (2011), survivors were individually notified of their dismissal during the middle of class or their conference periods with the expectation of conducting business as usual despite being given this devastating news. Sophia recalled the incident in which a colleague was let go, "I know one teacher left that day. She told (administrators) you have to get me a substitute because I can't sit here." Sophia discussed the unspoken expectation from administrators to continue to perform their jobs and teach students including that particular day regardless of the RIF's announcement and the subsequent emotional turmoil experienced by these survivors. She stated, "I did not appreciate how it was delivered on campus. I didn't think it was professional at all to tell people during their conference periods when they would still be seeing kids, I mean I definitely had cried." This finding aligns with Noer (1995) in that survivors were negatively impacted emotionally by the RIF but were expected to perform

their job with ambiguity and limited guidance from leadership. Furthermore, the data aligned with Noer (1995) in that survivors were expected to take up the work responsibilities of lost peers and the increased workload and this significantly contributed to a decline in employee morale. Melissa expressed as a result of the RIF, “there came a time when teachers’ attitudes started to shift because of the increased workload and paperwork that comes with that.” She continued expressing the negative impact on teachers’ organizational commitment, “they do not want to do it because of the increase in paperwork, increase in students, larger class sizes and the demands.” Moreover, Noer (1995) contends most of transitional support resources are targeted toward those who have been laid off rather on survivors and their needs. Survivors are often charged with the “task of revitalizing the organization” (p. 30) with limited resources and guidance. Consistent with Marks (2006), the findings suggest survivors often display “a lack of direction in prioritizing work, risk avoidance, and increases in role ambiguity, political behavior, and work team dysfunction” (p. 385). Survivors tend to have negative reactions to downsizing which may lead to biological and behavioral changes which are often referred to as layoff survivor syndrome. Moore (1978) discusses the irrationality of leaders’ decision-making capabilities in the context of teacher layoffs. He contends assumptions made about teacher retrenchment by those who implement organizational downsizing are fallible when leaders presume all decisions are rational and therefore the process itself will be rational. Furthermore, he asserts survival strategies are not particularly rational given the adverse circumstances and perceived duress associated with layoffs (Moore, 1978). Sophia’s expression was consistent with Moore (1978) when she discussed the irrationality of the process of the pending RIF as administrators laid off

faculty and staff. She stated, they “were informed about a week before the layoffs that they would be happening, we’d kind of been hearing about them (the layoffs) but we didn’t know when they were coming.” Sophia’s perception of the implementation of the RIF was irrational given administrators carried the notification of terminations out during the day in the middle of teacher’s conference periods with no regard to the consequences and negative impact on student learning and employee morale. Likewise, findings from the case study support Moore (1978) rational model assumptions. Skylar discussed her perception of the irrational decision-making of administrators to not include teachers as vested stakeholders in the RIF’s process. She stated, “whereas, they (administrators) don’t always have the best insight to our campus. There were not any teachers involved in any of the decision-making process. I think that teachers’ input would have been very valuable.” Survivors echoed this sentiment for administrators as to their rationale of implementing the RIF. How and when did they choose to implement the RIF? How did they determine which positions to cut with regard to campus needs? The RIF’s announcement occurred during teachers’ conference, during class and in the middle of the week. The findings suggest these decisions negatively impacted survivors’ organizational commitment, their emotional state, and morale.

Moreover, Kim (2003) defines “survivors’ syndrome” as the social and psychological impact of downsizing on the remaining employees (p. 450). *Layoff survivor syndrome* is the “pervasive dysfunctional emotions in survivors that build when survivors must suppress them to continued employment [...] their emotional plight is mostly ignored or minimized and they become prisoners of work” (Ciancio, 2000, p. 44). Ciancio (2000) contends survivors’ syndrome begins with the violation of an unspoken

psychological contract between the survivor and organization. Some assumptions made by employees include a relationship of trust, loyalty, fairness, respect, and advancement opportunities. Aligned with Ciancio (2000), the findings suggest the breakdown of the implicit psychological contract contributes to the demise of trust in administrators. Carly called for accountability and consistency from leadership. She expressed her feelings on how the RIF should have been implemented, “the process needs to be consistent across the campuses as to how to inform teachers.” She continued in regards to the RIF process and psychological contract, “the idea that there were people who broke the rules technically and no one called them on it, doesn’t allow you to put a whole lot of trust and faith in the leadership.” When these values are dishonored, negative behavioral traits begin to emerge within the work culture.

Emotions of fear, anxiety and guilt. Noer (1995) asserts many survivors repress their internal feeling by exhibiting “neither personally healthy nor organizationally productive” (p. 30) behavior if these feeling are not addressed appropriately. Foley and Smith (1999) highlight some of the negative emotions displayed by survivors including “fear, insecurity, uncertainty, frustration, resentment, anger, sadness, depression, guilt, betrayal, and distrust” (p. 362). Consistent with this literature, the findings suggest survivors displayed negative emotions such as physical anguish and anxiety in the aftermath. Susan voiced guilt over lost peers, “some of them were crying and you could tell they had been crying. It was just like somebody had died. It was just like somebody died on campus.” This participant continued expressing physical reactions to the impending announcement of the RIF, “I felt like I had an ulcer. I was just nauseous all day long. I was just like, how am I going to pay my bills?” Similarly, Ciancio (2000)

confirms these emotions and adds betrayal, demoralization, cynicism, decreased creativity, and lower productivity. Aligned with Marks' (2006) assertion that survivors exhibited symptoms of layoff survivor sickness in the aftermath of a RIF, these negative emotions include feelings of fatigue, depression, injustice, job insecurity and a decline in motivation. Sophia described her physical reaction to the layoff announcement, "I was nauseous a lot it was just overwhelming, I started crying." Consistent with Scharffe (1983) survivors expressed guilt and the perceived financial burden on lost peers. Sophia shared, "you feel bad especially if they had a family that they're supporting. I feel when you have the extra stress of having kids and a family to provide for I think this causes stress on you, the entire family, your husband, or wife. You felt really bad for the entire situation." Similarly, Joyce's perception on the negative impact on the community and extreme guilt she felt in the aftermath align with the literature. She articulated, "I obviously felt very sad for them and thought a lot about the fact they had families. This [job] was their income. I feel that it must have been really hard for those who had to lose their jobs. They did not know what to do next when this was a state problem in our field." Scharffe (1983) contends:

Layoff is a dirty word. It signifies personal and financial tragedy for its victims; it drains school budgets through unemployment costs; it demoralizes the entire school staff and casts a shadow over a community. (p. 61)

Likewise, aligned with Kim's (2003) assertion that survivors often experience guilt about remaining with the organization and lost colleagues, Melissa articulated her emotional state and psychological effects of the layoffs of her former colleagues, "Emotionally, it was just hard to see people who had been in the profession so long having it taken away

from them.” Psychologically, there’s always the thought in the back of your head, “am I next? What does this mean for me? Should I start looking for another job just in case? It just leaves a lot of questions and anxiety.” Consequently, if schools continue to ignore or minimize the effects of layoff survivor syndrome on the learning cultures, then “survivors’ residual job uncertainty can continue to affect emotional exhaustion in the aftermath of downsizing” (Bordia et al., 2005, p. 488). DeYoung and Mirabal (2005) suggest that survivor syndrome involves a “narrow set of self-absorbed and risk-averse behaviors that can threaten the organizations’ survival and the emotional aftereffects include fear, anger, frustration, anxiety, and mistrust” (p. 40). Aligned with the literature Sophia expressed her extreme anxiety and mistrust,

Am I going to have a job? Am I not going to have a job? [...] there was very heavy anxiety and worry because it is unknown. I was a very emotional too. Like just kind of on egg shells all the time [...] how am I going to pay my bills? It became very high stress but yet you have to try to just stay positive especially for the kids [...] I was just kind of nauseous a lot, that was just overwhelming [...] there was a loss of trust. I think a lot of that stemmed with the process too [...] I was worried because I had been the last one in. I started crying.

These survivors’ narratives highlight the emotional, psychological, and physiological responses often experienced by survivors in the aftermath of layoffs, which align well with DeYoung and Mirabal (2005). Moreover, their narratives describe the emotional dissonance of the symptoms of layoff survivor syndrome and its consequences if left untreated or inadequately addressed. The residual effects on the learning environment could be detrimental to student achievement and teacher effectiveness.

Personal connection with former colleagues. Participants communicated their beloved relationships forged with former colleagues and the negative impact of their dismissals on survivors' emotional well-being and attitudes. Susan conveyed her profound sadness and guilt associated with losing peers,

I felt really bad because like I said some of the teachers that got laid off on my campus were teachers that had been teaching for a while and that was their livelihood [...] some of them were single moms and it was their only source of income and now it was just gone.

She highlights the emotional toll on survivors even though prevalent thinking of external stakeholders such as the school district specifically outlined in public documents from school board meeting minutes on the impending RIF, explicitly suggest that survivors should “*be thankful to have a job.*”

Susan continued to express her conflicting emotions as to the impact of the RIF on lost colleagues,

It was bittersweet because like I said you don't want to see somebody lose their livelihood and there was a lot of crying. There was a lot of emotions, but I was also *thankful* that I was not one of the ones that got cut.

Likewise, Skylar described in vivid details the angst she experienced by the loss of a close colleague,

I feel really bad. I felt really bad because of the loss of the music teacher. I am sorry the art teacher at our campus his son went to school there at our school. You would always see them get there together and he had his whole room set up and he was so comfortable. He was such a great art teacher. He had been doing it for

so long. The kids loved him and they had a great relationship with him. The little boy too was really happy. We didn't know if his son was still going to be allowed to come here because he was going there because his dad worked there. So it was really sad to see him go and see him packing up all his stuff. He looked very, very sad. We were all sad that he was leaving.

She continued, "For those teachers that lost their jobs it was hard. It was hard to see. And potentially almost being one of them it was very difficult as well. It was just a really difficult time." Skylar's account of her feelings of debilitating guilt and intense anxiety highlight what the literature presents about the shattering and devastating consequences of downsizing and feelings of despair and guilt over laid off peers. Roth and Shook (2011) assert downsizing "breaks up the social fabric of the organization by eliminating many of the long term relationships that employees have established [...] and caused workload stress" (p. 147) Moreover, Admundson et al.'s (2004) study suggests organizations should provide the opportunity for survivors to grieve the loss of the relationship of the downsized co-worker and allow them to achieve a sense of closure. The literature argues the learning culture can be improved by cultivating trust and promoting positive mental health to facilitate decreased survivors' resistance and negative feelings associated with transition such stress, guilt, fear, and anxiety (Kim, 2003). The findings align with Kim's (2003) conclusions as these in-depth interviews of survivors candidly illustrate their profound guilt associated with losing treasured relationships as a result of the RIF and the major impact on their continued work, professional development and commitment to the school.

Melissa frankly discussed apprehension and mistrust that bred fear in the workplace and negatively impacted her work as an evaluating administrator,

It [the RIF] increased the number of conversations that I had with teachers and not in a productive way but in a way like they had to clear their names or do a rebuttal when it really wasn't necessary. The feedback was meant for growth but they saw it as a way to be documented against even though I used the same language and I built a relationship with the teachers. It was because of the criteria from the RIF that made them more defensive in trying to protect their jobs [...] it [the RIF] built a layer of mistrust between the teachers and the administration [...] it [the RIF] caused a lot of nervousness among the teachers and who they could trust and who they couldn't trust [...] for those teachers who I had a really good relationship with it [the RIF] affected that in a way that they felt like they had to be a little more cautious about what they said and what they did.

Foley and Smith (1999) contend denial is the greatest defense experienced by survivors and emphasize the importance of survivors to actively engage in identifying their negative experiences and sharing them with their peers to reduce the negative impact on the learning culture and improve morale. These authors' assertion of denial contradicts the findings. Denial was not the primary defense mechanism exhibited by the current study's participants. Most survivors were indeed defensive but the core emotion was a sense of betrayal which bred mistrust and continues to permeate the current learning environment. The findings are more aligned with VanSciver (1990) in which he claims:

If and when a decision is reached to terminate the contract of a teacher, an immediate reversal of roles takes place. The teacher becomes assertive and the

administrator, defensive. The administrator will find that, despite hours of work, pounds of documentation, and a commitment to create an effective school, her or she is now the one on trial [...] as a result of pressure from teacher unions and restrictive negotiated agreements, the process that will lead to termination becomes so complicated and lengthy that it nearly guarantees failure to any administrator who dares to initiate it. (p. 319)

The findings of the cases suggest the working relationship between the administration and survivors was significantly altered, becoming more combative and defensive.

However, most survivors were in shock of the RIF, not in denial, and were keenly aware of the situation at hand. This cognizance significantly impacted their desire to invest in personal professional development opportunities to *shore up*, gain skills, and pursue additional certifications to increase marketability and diminish the negative emotional and psychological impact in the event of future RIFs. These cases expand the literature, but also contrast with the notion that survivors' primary response in the aftermath of a RIF is denial, but rather an acknowledgement of the levy of the adverse situation which leads to mistrust that erodes the morale and cultural foundation of loyalty.

Theme Four: Impact of RIF on Personal Professional Development

In regard to the impact of the RIF on professional development, findings emerged in three categories which included (a) relevancy of Professional Development Opportunities (b) the Pursuit of Personal Professional Development Opportunities (c) commitment to Increase Marketability in the event of a Future RIF. Most survivor interviews revealed the initial shock of the announcement of the RIF and the reverberating emotional trauma responses. Consequently, a paradigm shift was evident.

All survivors interviewed expressed a renewed desire to pursue professional development opportunities to increase their marketability and remain *off the list* if faced with another RIF.

Relevancy of professional development opportunities. In regard to professional development in the aftermath of a RIF, the current body of literature is limited with regard to the impact of RIF's on this area so the findings from these cases are significant contributions to the body of literature. Brady (2009) contends "professional development is often linked to notions of effective teaching or the development of more effective teaching" (p. 338). Ellis et al.'s (2012) study on teacher turnover suggests that the impact of RIF on teacher dismissals and the cost associated with layoffs is rarely captured in most school budgets. These authors state:

In the absence of standardized models and methods, turnover costs remain buried in discreet line items of district budgets and are practically invisible at the school level. As a result, decisions regarding resource allocation, teacher recruitment, professional development [PD], teacher retention efforts, and workforce restructuring-all factors that contribute to turnover costs-are made without accounting for the true costs that teacher turnover imposes on districts and schools. (p. 104)

Ellis et al. (2012) assert much of the "turnover costs remained hidden in the unrecorded time principals and teachers spent managing teacher separations and additions within their schools" (p. 106) in regard to the allocation of resources related to the implementation of RIF. Additionally, these authors highlight previous studies on teacher turnover indicate:

The costs associated with teacher turnover are not easy to identify in budget line items but are embedded in multiple line items within the budgets of different district offices and schools [...] estimates of administrator and teacher time spent to fill vacancies or develop new teachers, were rarely recorded [...] teacher turnover costs were substantial and had the potential to drain limited school resources away from education programs. (p. 106)

Recognizing this discrepancy, Brady (2009) proposes better allocation of resources and highlights the characteristics of an effective professional development model and its significant impact on teacher learning:

Rather than an individual teacher engaged in the lonely task of directing their own development, such communities can provide space for the individual teacher to direct their own development while having around them opportunities to be supported and challenged by their peers and the research and expertise of other educators and professionals. (p. 338)

In the context of RIFs, Brady's (2009) professional development model that includes the integration of professional learning communities is increasingly more important to implement during adverse circumstances associated with organizational downsizing. The findings aligned with Brady's (2009) and Moore's (1978) assertion that when teachers receive support and professional development to update their knowledge and skills for impending changes in their job positions there is less disruption in the workplace culture. Carly's perception of irrelevant professional development supports the literature of Phelan (1983) contending targeted and relevant resources must be allocated to develop and improve survivors' pedagogical talents. Carly suggested opportunities should include

relevant professional development that focused on increasing student learning and bridging the achievement gap. She expressed her perception and frustration with current professional development in her school district,

It does make me more critical, though, when I see money being misspent. When I see professional development being reduced to rinky-dinky things, they are really dog-and-pony show, flash and trash, and don't have any real understanding in how to push kids to the next level. I've taught the best of the best. I put kids to Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Stanford, you name it. I know where kids can go, if they're given the tools and the capacity to go there. Not that has to be the only end result. But, at the same time, if you get so lost in just one little piece of the puzzle, you fail to see the bigger picture. Professional learning is always going to take place, if you really are committed to learning and learning itself.

She continued to sturdily affirm the need for relevant professional development opportunities that will increase teacher effectiveness and in turn improve student learning. Manuel London (1996) suggests given the expectancy of survivors to carry the increased workload after downsizing has occurred, there needs to be continued professional development opportunities to support additional job responsibilities. It is important that schools invest in relevant professional development to increase survivors' commitment, self-efficacy and facilitate positive emotional health to improve the learning culture. Day and Lujan (2010) advocate that education should place greater emphasis on forming effective, relevant and "collaborative professional cultures" (p. 10) to facilitate teacher effectiveness. Furthermore, Lunenburg (2010) put emphasis on the importance of school administrators to establish professional learning communities to:

Enhance its overall effectiveness, and promote student learning and success by developing the capacity of staff to function as a professional learning community. School leaders play a vital role in the creation of professional leaning communities. They begin by bringing stakeholders together to engage in a four-step process: creating a mission statement, developing a vision, developing value statement, and establishing goals. (p. 6)

The findings revealed survivors suggested peer-to-peer learning as a way to gain professional development by collaborating with peers to gain best practices and align curriculum. Moreover, Kim (2003) asserts the need for professional development in the face of a RIF. As a result of an increased workload, he contends it is important that survivors possess the required competencies and training to fulfill their job roles efficiently and effectively. Consequently, there is increased workplace stress and a negative impact on survivors' mental health. Additionally, there is often a negative response and resistance, greater job insecurity and significant display of layoff survivor syndrome aforementioned caused by the emotional trauma of downsizing (Kim, 2003; Rusaw, 2004). Furthermore, Baruch and Hind's (1999) study examined the nature of the new relationship formed as a result of downsizing in the context of professional development. They contend there is a "shift away from paternalistic and benevolent secure employment, towards an emphasis on continuous responsibility for self-development on the part of the employee" (p. 295). Most survivors' narratives aligned with Baruch and Hind's (1999) study in that participants recognized the paradigm shift of the teaching profession as no longer being *stable*, *secure*, or *insulated* as once perceived, through the jolting experience of the RIF. These authors ratify the literature on

downsizing from a professional development standpoint is limited and, as a result, pursued studies to remedy this deficiency. Likewise, Gandolfi (2009) asserts there is a lack of studies that focus on efficacy of survivor programs. He acknowledges the gap in research that addresses professional development in the aftermath of downsizing and proposes further empirical research studies to bridge this gap. London (1996) contends the viability of an organization depends on the competencies of the employees. Organizations must assess employees' skill sets, increase relevant professional development training, encourage employees to demonstrate innovative ways to add value to survive in the new learning structure, and embrace new cultural norms often formed as a result of downsizing.

These findings from the case studies are an important contribution to the body of literature related to survivors' experiences specifically in the area of professional development. In the context of organizational downsizing, the current literature reveals few survivor narratives discussing their perceptions of the impact of such a despairing and immobilizing event on their desire to pursue professional development opportunities in the aftermath.

The pursuit of personal professional development opportunities. Several survivors discussed the triggering event of the RIF as the pivotal and jolting moment in which they were ignited to pursue personal professional development opportunities, and selected literature aligns well with these findings. Skylar intimately reflected on the paradigm shift that occurred as a result of the RIF. It was noted as the most significant event that shaped her new *reality*. Her experience highlights the evolution of self-awareness in the midst of organizational downsizing from the survivors' perspective,

To me personally that [the RIF] makes me want to become an administrator even more. I am glad that I am seeing this happening and I feel it makes me aware. So that hopefully one day when I do have my certification then I can make these decisions, or at least, advocate for those students. It [the RIF] brings that feeling in me, to want to advocate for them, one day [...] they did all those budget cuts and we started seeing all these personnel and resources taken away and just things working differently. There's nothing we can do. We're just trying to survive. We're trying to do what we can. That was the mindset survival. We can't be asking for anything and we can't be saying why don't we have this? We were just thankful we had a job. Now that slowly some of that funding has come back I feel that they're not putting it necessarily where it should go. Because now they've [administrators] have seen that we can survive on this [limited resources]. They gave the stipends back but they never gave us back our reading interventionist. That has been really hard because I am a reading teacher.

Skylar continued to communicate the paradigm shift to a more professional development oriented mindset,

It did, because now when I do things at school, I feel like, you have an option. You can go to the hospitality committee and plan baby showers, or I can be in the campus improvement committee and really get involved in what's going on. And, I always opt now for those committees. I was in the district improvement committee for two years. Since then, and I was on the campus improvement committee, since then. I don't want to do just the getting by stuff. I want to learn more, and do more.

Likewise, Sophia echoed a sentiment of cynicism which aligns with the literature on layoff survivors' syndrome,

I think really it came down to me that it [the RIF] made you really realize the importance of trying to do things for yourself because in the whole loyalty aspect in the end you're just a number that can be replaced and there are always teachers out there needing jobs. There's always going to be someone to be able to fill in. If you have opportunities take them and [remain] loyal to yourself. Don't try to be loyal to a campus because in the end that campus may not be loyal back.

Sophia's narrative not only articulated what it meant to be faced with the harsh reality of a *nothing* will ever be the same mentality, however, her sheer will to pick up the pieces and pursue professional development opportunities in the midst of such challenging circumstances shows the resilience exhibited by all these survivors.

Commitment to increase marketability in the event of a future RIF. In regard to commitment to professional development to increase marketability in the event of a future RIF, findings also indicated selected participants discussed their desire to stay *off the list*. It is important to note this renewed commitment seemed like a subconscious attempt to not only increase their preparedness and competencies, but decrease anxiety, buffer the negative impact of the initial shock of the layoff announcement, and reduce the impact on the psyche in the event of a future RIF. Sophia described her motivation to invest in professional development,

For me I really felt [the RIF] motivated me really push especially towards the area that I wanted. [...] I still wanted to learn but then I didn't stop there. I was like, "All right what can I learn? What do I need to know? So I did research. They

obviously provided professional development for me. I felt like you have your year of professional development and I went to two or three PD in the first six weeks. PD really helped too. I think though it [the RIF] motivated you to one, focus on yourself and where you wanted to grow. Two, focus on the job that I had and growing in that. I spent my own time still doing my development to know about English.

Similarly, Skylar's perception of the paradigm shift to increased self-advocacy and the orientation to think more professionally in terms of *marketability* is supported in the literature. Rose Opengart and Darren Short (2002) contend there is a paradigm shift in employees' orientation toward career development. These authors describe free agent learners as assembling "a portfolio of skills and maintaining employability security" (p. 225). Free agent learners take control of their own learning and focus on employability and pursue professional development opportunities to improve their knowledge and competencies to increase marketability. They contend these employees seek opportunities to learn in order to broaden their competencies to make themselves more marketable by focusing on learning and development. Aligned with this literature, Skylar described her evolution in her 'free agent' mindset,

I had been teaching first grade for four years and I had no intention of changing to another grade level or anything. I didn't ask to be changed. Over last summer before the school year my principal emailed me and she told me that the third grade dual language teacher was leaving and she offered the position to me, if I wanted it. I had just started my Master's program and at that time I probably would have said no because I would have to learn PD for a whole new grade level

and that would be difficult. But now that I am thinking professionally about that [my career] it's going to be beneficial for me, as an administrator to be in a star grade. I felt that if there was another budget cut I would be more marketable if I had taught a different grade level. I accepted it which was great because I love teaching third grade. I do feel more prepared now. My thinking has changed. I feel that the more that I can do and learn, the better it will be. I will be more prepared if [the RIF] would ever happen again.

Additionally, Opengart and Short's (2002) research explored HRD's role in meeting the needs of free agent learners by providing professional development opportunities to maintain employability and take ownership of career development. Similarly, Susan's perception of her motivation to pursue personal professional development aligned with Caudron's (2000) assertion that more employees are seeking additional professional development primarily for survival rather than a desire for self-enrichment. She contends free agent learners recognize continued personal professional development is essential to employability and therefore demand employers provide more learning and development opportunities to meet their needs. Susan shared her commitment to pursue professional development in the midst of organizational downsizing to increase marketability in the event of another RIF,

In a sense you want to make sure that you stay on top of our game because the more training you have the more experience you have. It seems the less likely you would be the one to lose your job.

The literature in the field coincides with the need to pursue professional development opportunities to increase marketability in the event of a future RIF. Likewise, Goldhaber

and Theobald's (2011) study on teacher workforce revealed those who held an advanced degree were less likely to receive layoff notices. Furthermore, these authors contend:

On average, teachers with a master's degree or an endorsement in a subject area with teacher shortages are about 0.6 percentage points less likely to receive a RIF notice. Conversely, teachers with endorsements in health, physical education, or the arts are far more likely to receive a layoff notice [...] we find evidence that school districts behave strategically by retaining teachers who have endorsements in multiple areas and therefore provide flexibility in terms of the classes they can teach. (p. 82)

Aligned with Ward's (1984) declaration of survivors' motivation to pursue professional development opportunities and what school districts are doing to support training efforts and reduce teacher layoffs. Sophia articulated,

I continued to go out and get more certifications because I knew I wanted to teach English eventually. I continued to go to English meetings [...] I wanted to be able to [know] especially at that point if I had to go do an interview somewhere. I needed to be able to know what I was talking about.

Ward (1984) states:

Rather than RIF some experienced teachers, some school districts have chosen to support and subsidize programs of retraining for current excess faculty so that they might qualify for positions where shortages currently exist. Such programs can be a way of retraining valued and experienced faculty member in the face of shifting demands for teaching specialties. (p. 189)

Additionally, VanSciver (1990) suggests:

It would seem that establishing expectations for teachers, identifying deficiencies, providing assistance, and documenting the processes of evaluation and remediation would be enough. Often they aren't. School boards, administrators, and teacher unions must commit themselves to making teacher dismissals a realistic option. Otherwise, the current wave of reform, like others before it, will consist more of rhetoric than substance. (p. 319)

The RIF was a significant event that jolted the foundation of loyalty and trust many survivors held toward the administration. This chaotic occurrence served as the motivation to pursue additional certifications and advanced degrees to insulate survivors from the inherent and negative consequences of RIFs and increase marketability through gained competencies in core subjects and high demand areas.

Theme Five: Impact of RIF on Commitment to School

The decline in commitment to the school and employee morale, contrasted with increased commitment to student learning were major findings of the case study. Survivors' initial shock pervaded their emotional well-being as well as their commitment to the school. Many felt an unspoken loyalty toward teachers existed. However, the RIF transformed survivors' mindset to one of survival that bred mistrust and negatively impacted their commitment to the school. A noteworthy finding was that survivors' commitment for students increased and they were more resolved to prioritize student learning in the midst of organizational downsizing. Survivors held a sense of responsibility to not let students become a victim in the aftermath of the RIF's process. To the contrary, research shows that student learning is often compromised and

negatively impacted by cuts in student programs and services.

A major finding in the area of commitment to school was a call for greater transparency in the RIF's process by administrators so that uncertainty and untrustworthiness does not erode the foundation of openness which is often associated with a public entity. Sophia declared,

I feel it depends on how things are handled on your campus. I feel if they would've been more open about things then it could've been better because they [the administrators] were transparent with everything happening. I feel the campuses where that [less transparency] was happening you still stay committed because you trusted them. When that trust is lost because there wasn't transparency they're [the administrators] going to throw you under the bus every time if they have to. They don't care as long as they have a job.

Sophia's perception on organizational disloyalty and a call to action for greater transparency align with Amundson et al.'s (2004) study on survivors of downsizing which revealed that honest and transparent communication before, during, and after the downsizing process was a primary concern for survivors. Likewise, Kowske et al. (2009) suggest organizations can increase survivors' commitment by "strengthening trust and confidence by clearly communicating why the layoffs occurred and how the action of downsizing, as a fulfillment of organizational strategy, will position the organization for future success" (p. 53). Mark's (2006) workplace recovery study suggests to increase commitment and adoption of new culture and role among survivors leadership should recognize survivors' loss of peers and sense of normalcy, and should address the four elements of the recovery process including empathy, energy, engagement, and

enforcement to increase commitment, engagement and effectiveness. Likewise, Bercovitz and Feldman (2008) suggest that leaders embrace survivors' previous experience, if any, with downsizing and their position in the organization which in turn may greatly influence survivors' adoption to embrace change and increase commitment. Kowske et al.'s (2009) study on employee engagement within the context of downsizing asserts that after a layoff had occurred "disengage employees were 2.5 times more likely than engaged employees to consider leaving their organization in the next 12 months" (p. 50). Additionally, these authors suggest by "communicating a clear path for their growth and tangible investment in training and development" (p. 54) survivors' engagement and commitment may be increased. Brockner (1992) contends organizations invest in survivors by assisting them in clarifying their personal values, learning competencies and further develop marketable skills to increase commitment. Moreover, Feldman (1996) proposes in the face of diminished financial resources, leadership needs to participate in operational decisions on how these scarce resources are allocated for employee development to increase commitment among survivors. Kim (2003) asserts job satisfaction and organizational commitment decline as a result of downsizing. Harel et al.'s (2006) landmark study on job counseling and retraining in the midst of downsizing contends the "perception of psychological contract breach" and "many of the psychological, familial, and social disturbances, brought on by the dismissals or the organizational crisis, may be avoided" (p.139) if organizations invested in professional development programs. These opportunities provide a sense of engagement in which survivors feel empowered because they see the schools investing in them and their future. Kataria et al. (2013) suggest when organizations recognize the 'psychological' contract

and provide career development opportunities survivors flourish and increase their commitment. De Pater et al.'s (2011) study on career development in downsizing revealed that by "increasing transparency, predictability, and employee voice" (p. 226) survivors commitment increased. Additionally, this study highlighted how career adaptability could be used as a "coping mechanism" (p. 227). This body of literature aligned with the findings in that most survivors used their commitment to pursue personal professional development opportunities such as additional certifications and advanced degrees to *cope* with the instability and anxiety associated with organizational downsizing and to increase their marketability in the event of a future RIF.

Decline in morale. De Pater et al. (2011) contend there has been limited empirical research on the link between career adaptability among adult survivors and organizational commitment and loyalty. These authors conducted a study on career planning in the context of downsizing. They assert career planning is essential to improving workplace culture. They suggest survivors seek more challenging professional development and organizations match career path selection, to salvage and increase *morale* and improve the learning culture. DeYoung and Mirabal's (2005) study on organizational commitment from the administrators perspective, contend "commitment was influenced by three shared components: acceptance of the organizational values, willingness to exert effort on behalf of the organization and a desire to remain an employee of the organization" (p. 45). Correspondingly, Larkey and Morrill (1995) assert "committed members are viewed as stable, productive, and more likely to accomplish organizational goals than their less committed colleagues" (p. 193). Carly emphatically expressed her cynical perspective of the impact of the RIF on her morale,

It [the RIF] definitely made my morale decline. My overall feelings declined. My sense of loyalty definitely eroded. It [the RIF] also made me realize that at the end of the day as much as you think people do care they really don't. That sounds really negative but you could work and work and work. You can even watch people who retired it seemed like what used to be a big event got reduced to just the feeling of "oh, good, you're retiring" that means one salary less that we have to pay. So for me personally I just really have a sense of cynicism. It's hard to avoid. Not that I stay stuck in that place but I would be dishonest if I didn't say that there was definitely a sense of cynicism there.

Consistent with survivors' perception on survivors' guilt, Kim (2003) contends in the aftermath of RIF there is a decline in organizational commitment. He suggests survivors' organizational commitment is diluted and is counterproductive to the initial goal of downsizing which is to improve the organizational effectiveness. Likewise, Gandolfi (2009) suggests most survivors exhibit symptoms of layoff survivors' syndrome in the aftermath of downsizing. Survivors can often harbor feelings of resentment and apathy. Consequently, this can lead to decreased levels of morale, employee engagement, and organizational commitment. Furthermore, he suggests human resource professionals develop and implement a comprehensive strategic plan for downsizing that includes a clear and transparent RIF communication protocol, support systems, and most importantly, personal career development opportunities, to diminish the unintended and negative consequences of downsizing (Gandolfi, 2009). Additionally, Baruch and Hind (1999) call for greater transparency to improve employee *morale*. These authors suggest organizations engage in best practices to minimize the effects of layoff survivors'

syndrome by “conducting the process in a fair and open way, emphasizing employee participation at decision-making stages, coupled with practical solutions to identified problems” (p. 302) during all phases of organizational downsizing.

Survivors’ perception on morale and organizational commitment aligned with Amundson et al.’s (2004) study on the consequences and mitigating factors associated with organizational commitment in the aftermath of a RIF. These consequences include increased anxiety about future RIFs, potential job loss, and change in interpersonal relationships with former colleagues, and negative attitudes toward the organization. The data revealed that several survivors voiced their extreme anxiety about future RIFs and being *on the list*, the mindset of *will I be next*, and survivors’ guilt for lost peers. Kowske et al., (2009) assert “downsizing can have a profound impact on how employees see the workplace and in turn, their commitment to stay or their intention to quit” (p. 56). Likewise, McNary’s (1943) seminal research asserts there have been unprecedented funding cuts in education. As a result, RIF’s are more prevalent in public schools and a negative consequence is a decline in staff morale. The literature in the field supports the misconception among leadership that administrators assume survivors will comply with their new work roles. The data revealed this was not the case. Survivors often exhibit passive aggressive resistance behaviors to cope with the adverse, unstable, and chaotic work environment often associated with organizational downsizing. These behaviors are contrary to organizational goals and overall mission (Ciancio, 2000). This misconception was evident across interviews when most participants felt there was an expectation from administrators *to be thankful for your job and you have no right to complain considering many of your peers were laid off* mentality. Furthermore, Ashar and Shapiro (1990)

suggest in times of educational budget cuts, administrators are at greater risk of backlash and defensive behaviors from survivors based on the idea of rationality and retrenchment.

These authors contend:

Under diminishing resources, decisions become critical, and the decision process is carefully watched and guarded. Thus, pressures for formal, rational decisions will probably increase as they derive not only from external constituencies but also from internal participants whose interests are at stake [...] the demands for increased rationality are directed at administrators at times when ambiguity and uncertainty rise. (p. 124)

Additionally, the findings revealed hostile behaviors such as defensiveness, resistance, argumentativeness, and other adversarial behaviors in regard to the layoff process, criteria used –*seniority*, lack of transparency, and diminished resources.

Increased commitment to students. At first glance it would seem logical that if commitment to the school declined commitment to students would also decline.

Notwithstanding these assumptions, the researcher would need to look at students' academic achievement in addition to the emotional impact of the RIF. Conversely, the findings revealed there was a renewed sense of commitment to students to make sure they were not casualties of the RIFs process. The current body of literature is extremely limited on the specific topic of organizational downsizing and the impact on commitment to students. Thus this finding was noteworthy. Another finding, that commitment to personal professional development increased in the aftermath of RIF in schools, expands the existing literature as the majority of the literature focuses on providing transition services for the laid off employees rather than survivors in the context of corporate

downsizing. This finding supports the notion that most research focuses on organizational downsizing and the decline in organizational effectiveness and productivity in a non-school environment rather than professional development in educational organizations, such as schools, in the aftermath of RIF.

Melissa communicated increased commitment to students despite the adverse circumstances of organizational downsizing,

I am a loyal person and I understand the decision that the district made was because of what was created at the state level. As far as the campus and how decisions were made it didn't change. As far as my loyalty and my purpose for working with kids that didn't change just because of the criteria that were set.

Overall, these findings from the data expand the current body of literature, but highlight the need for further research on RIF's impact on teachers' commitment and the potential residual effects on student learning and achievement.

Implications to the Field of Study

Understanding the impact of downsizing on survivors' commitment, personal professional development, and emotional well-being is valuable in designing best practices in professional development opportunities, workplace learning programs and counseling programs to address the significant disruptions of organizational downsizing. Within the context of schools, disruptions include a negative impact on student programs, instruction, emotional and psychological attitudes, increased workloads, and decline in morale. Two significant findings of the cross-case study were insightful to the field of educational leadership and human resource professionals. There was an increase commitment to students in the aftermath of downsizing. This is helpful for educational

leaders to target resources to increase teacher instructional resources and personal professional development opportunities to increase teacher effectiveness and competencies to improve student learning. There was a renewed desire to positively impact students on behalf of survivors even in the midst of declining morale. School administrators can foster this synergy to make significant contributions to student achievement, teacher effectiveness and teacher quality. The other significant finding was that survivors expressed a reinvigorated motivation to pursue professional development opportunities for additional certifications and advanced degrees to increase marketability. This was an attempt to harness their inherent anxiety of change and decrease their chances of being on future reduction in force lists. This insight is helpful for human resource professionals to develop innovative, engaging, and relevant personal professional development opportunities to increase teachers' competencies to bridge the student achievement gap. These programs should align with the schools' mission, vision, and learning objectives to improve student learning and performance while maintaining the delicate balance of embracing the voices and perspectives of survivors. Further research would facilitate our understanding of the complex and often arduous process of organizational downsizing and its impact on survivors' emotional stability, organizational commitment, personal professional development, and employee morale before, during, and after a RIF has occurred.

Impact on Policy Research and Practice

The cross- case study could have a significant impact on facilitating a more humane process of organizational downsizing and its impact on survivors' commitment, personal professional development, and emotional well-being in schools. Given the

economic and political environment in which schools must consistently adapt and comply, significant budgets cuts and reduction in force are inevitable. As a result, workplace learning for survivors is significantly impacted and an intense focus needs to be targeted to provide them with the competencies needed to facilitate professional development and learning in the workplace. As a consequence of an unprepared and misaligned downsizing initiative, survivors' narratives are often disregarded. The survivors' emotional turmoil over lost co-workers and ambiguous new roles exacerbated with the lack of personal professional development opportunities beyond the required hours, further solidifies the need for further research related to workplace learning in the context of organizational downsizing. On policy research, this study could inform policy makers, such as the state legislature, to enact educational and school funding policies that hold state entities accountable and bear some of the burden schools have to incur as a result of such adverse policies. School leadership should provide support systems, additional funding for training and certifications, counseling services, and appropriate resources to lessen the negative impact on survivors. Greater transparency, honest, and open communication of future budgetary measures was desirable among survivors interviewed. Many organizations provide severance packages, transitional support, and outplacement services to displaced workers as a result of organizational downsizing. Similarly, schools should provide survivors significant resources such as counseling, competency training, and personal development opportunities to help ensure successful transition into their new roles and assimilation into the new learning culture that includes increased class sizes with greater responsibility and workloads. Embracing survivors' untold stories in the aftermath of organizational downsizing will positively impact the

workplace, improve employee morale, and facilitate best teaching practices to encourage collaboration to achieve greater teacher quality and positively impact student learning.

Strengths and Limitations

The strengths of a case study were that it sought to understand the underlying issues of a phenomenon and entailed an in-depth and rich description of the study (Yin, 2009). In regard to delimitations, the focus of the study was on the impact of a RIF in three school settings including two suburban and one urban school district. There are school districts in other regions that experienced organizational downsizing during the specified time. Though they may have had similar experiences, they were not included in the case study. The researcher's past experiences as an educator and a survivor of a RIF led to a concentration on three specific school districts for research. A limitation of this case study was that some of the nine participants' ability to accurately recall key details from their recollections on how the RIF emotionally impacted their well-being, commitment to the school, and personal professional development could have been skewed due to inherent distortions and repressed memories as a result of their traumatic experiences as a survivor. Due to differing contextual views of the nine cases, generalization was not the focus of the outcome for this study.

Recommendation for Future Practice and Research

Key recommendations for future practice and research in the area of professional development, emotional, and psychological consequences in the aftermath of a RIF, as well as the role commitment played emerged from the findings of the multiple case studies. This qualitative study focused on the employees who remained with the school following a RIF which occurred during 2010-2011 in three school districts including one

metropolitan and two suburban districts in the Southwest region. Survivors shared their in-depth perceptions of the emotional and psychological toll this chaotic event imparted to them as well as how their commitment to the school and personal professional development were impacted.

Recommendation for Future Practice

1. Human Resource professionals, campus leaders, and counselors on individual campuses should collaborate to address the emotional impact of a RIF by acknowledging and authenticating potential feelings of fear, anxiety, and guilt with those employees or *survivors* who remain with the school. HR professionals can employ interventions such as counseling to address their needs. A method that could be used is giving survivors a questionnaire on related resources desired such as counseling in order to address the negative emotional consequences.
2. Considering the emotional turmoil survivors experience as the result of RIFs, Human Resource professionals and administrators, both at the district and campus levels, should provide a supportive environment, such as support group meetings, to address survivors' needs. Findings suggest if survivors are allowed space to share their experiences this significantly contributes to a decrease in the symptoms of layoff survivors' syndrome which could be a detriment to achieving schools' goal and mission of teaching and educating students. The literature suggests given this platform, survivors are able to process their negative emotions, share coping strategies, and replace negative thoughts with positive and inspiring thoughts.

3. Curriculum Coordinators, Instructional Coaches, and other personnel in charge of faculty professional learning and development should design professional development opportunities beyond the state mandated requirement, such as professional learning communities and peer-to-peer learning opportunities, to engage survivors and not only increase their self-efficacy but promote positive collaborations among peers to minimize adverse reactions and survivors' guilt associated with lost colleagues as a result of a RIF. The literature suggests if survivors are engaged it not only increases their commitment but facilitates positive emotional health to improve teacher effectiveness and quality.
4. Administrators should lessen the increased workload as the result of the RIF by implementing more team-oriented projects or job share opportunities for survivors to share the load with remaining peers. This would engage the survivors to positively interact with peers to reduce anxiety, insecurity, and reconnect survivors with peers.
5. Administrators should engage teacher's input in an effort to understand their concerns and address equity to design professional development programs that are relevant, engaging, and innovative to decrease survivors' anxiety and increase core competencies to reduce angst about being on the list in the event of a future RIF. Findings revealed that survivors' commitment to pursue personal professional development opportunities in the aftermath of the RIF increased. Administrators should provide increased financial support for survivors to gain additional certifications, advanced degrees, and relevant

competencies that are instrumental to survivors' job performance and professional success.

6. Educational leaders should promote a *transparent* environment in which survivors are given a *communication* protocol and guidelines that highlight pending procedures for a RIF's implementation. It is understood that budget cuts and school funding policies will continue to impact school operations. However, school leadership can minimize the potential negative impact on survivors by implementing proactive communication tools to facilitate transparency and build trust. One tool could include frequent faculty meetings that update survivors on RIF's implementation and measures being taken by administrators to ensure dignity, respect, trust, and transparency throughout the process.
7. Considering the literature substantiates the detrimental effects layoff survivor syndrome has on teachers' emotional well-being and personal professional relationships, school administrators should implement stress reduction activities for survivors, at no cost, to minimize and combat the symptoms related to this syndrome such as fear, anxiety, and depression. These activities could include free gym memberships for at least 30-60 days, collaborative team social functions after school hours, as well as in-school team building activities such as coffee and celebratory events to foster team unity in the midst of adverse circumstances often associated with RIFs.
8. Recognizing the negative consequences of organizational downsizing and the impact on survivors' emotional and psychological well-being, instructional

personnel such as instructional coaches and curriculum developers should develop faculty training materials to prepare and educate HR and administrators on how to implement RIFs in a fair and equitable way (i.e. deliver layoff announcements on a Friday at the end of the day) to mitigate the negative impact on employee morale and the learning culture.

9. Considering the relatively recent phenomenon of organizational downsizing in the context of public schools, HR professional and educational leaders in charge of implementing RIFs should develop additional criteria other than seniority that includes may include teacher performance, teacher quality, and teacher effectiveness.

Recommendation for Future Research

In an effort to expand the body of literature in the area of organizational downsizing in the context of schools and the impact of RIF on professional development, organizational commitment, and survivors' well-being, it was found that several other key areas need to be examined and researched.

1. Only school personnel from three school districts that experienced a RIF were chosen as participants in this multiple case study. Research should also be conducted in school districts in other regions that have experienced a RIF.
2. This study focused on campus-level personnel in the affected three school districts on organizational commitment, personal professional development, and emotional health. Future research should be conducted involving multiple stakeholders such as parents, administrators, district-level leaders, and teachers to triangulate data to capture different dimensions and examine these

constructs of organizational downsizing and survivorship in the context of schools.

3. The nine case studies included both men and women. Future research should be conducted with participants of one gender that could yield gender specific insight regarding how survivors commitment, pursuit of personal professional development opportunities, and emotional well-being are impacted.
4. This study focused on survivors' commitment to the school after a RIF occurred. Findings revealed a noteworthy sub-theme that survivors' commitment to students increased in the aftermath. Future research should focus on specifically engaging in research that studies the RIF's impact on survivors' commitment to students.
5. Future research could be done on the impact of a RIF on student achievement and learning in subsequent years within a two to three year timeframe to examine the residual effects of a RIF in the aftermath of organizational downsizing.
6. This study was not race specific and included multiple races and ethnicities. Future research should focus on *race* in regard to survivors' commitment, personal professional development, and emotional well-being to examine ethnic and cultural constructs.
7. This study focused on survivors' commitment to the school, the pursuit of personal professional development opportunities and emotional and psychological attitudes in the aftermath of RIF. Future research should be focused on examining other areas such as survivors' teaching effectiveness,

quality, and intention to stay. In addition, future research should be conducted to further examine emerging professional development alternatives such as professional learning communities, peer to peer learning, and other innovative professional development to positively increase survivors' organizational commitment, improve core competencies, and reduce anxiety about future RIFs.

8. This was a qualitative study using the case study methodology to examine the impact of RIF on survivors' organizational commitment to the school, personal professional development, emotional, and psychological impact. Future research should be focused on *quantitative* studies to examine educational policies such as Reduction-in-Force in schools and the cost of lost personnel on teacher effectiveness, teacher quality, and student learning.

Researcher Reflections

Using a social constructivism paradigm meant co-constructing knowledge through a cultural, social, and historical lens. It looked at survivors' reality of the RIF and the residual effects on their emotional and psychological well-being, organizational commitment, and personal professional development. Through the social constructivist lens, I wanted to make sense of survivors' narratives and what they meant in the context of organizational downsizing. I wanted to actively listen to their stories to understand how the social and historical context shaped their narratives. The notion of the social world, not as fixed (Cohen et al., 2004), but rather co-constructed with survivors through their social practices, framed how, I, as the researcher engaged in dialogue to understand the phenomenon of survivorship.

I learned from this study that through action and discourse (Collin & Young, 2004) survivors formed a community of support, much like the Army when their soldiers prepare for battle. There was a sense of cohesiveness and a call to action among the survivors studied to self-advocate for their own professional development even at the expense of student learning if it meant they were prepared for battle or at least was on the victorious team.

Going into the research study I was confident I could remain neutral, given I was a survivor of a RIF. To my surprise I did remain neutral and withheld my own judgment of the situation. I listened to survivors tell their narratives with such emotions and vigor as to convince themselves they were in a good place emotionally and career wise. The truth is I was amazed at how detailed survivors' were when sharing the impact the RIF had on their emotional well-being four years later, after the RIF occurred. I was inspired at the same time by their resilience and dedication to students despite the adverse circumstances in the aftermath of the RIF. From this study, I, as a social justice researcher, can continue to champion for the silent voices in organizational change and to advocate for support services for those who remain in the aftermath.

As a human resource practitioner, this study will affect my work to continue to development professional development training for educational leaders with decision making influence. My goal is to inform and educate them of the potential negative consequences and the need to engage strategic resources whether instructional, professional learning, or counseling for survivors to mitigate the adverse impact on the workplace. I will engage other HR professionals to emphasize employee participation (Baruch & Hind, 1999) to minimize the effects of layoff survivors' syndrome that can

threaten organizational survival (DeYoung & Mirabal, 2005).

This qualitative research case study aligned with my insatiable thirst for examining human behavior in organizational change. I sought to study the impact of organizational downsizing in the aftermath of a RIF, and the impact on survivors' commitment, personal professional development, and the emotional and psychological attitudes in its aftermath. My goal was to contribute to the body of literature in the field of learning and development, educational leadership, human resources development, workplace and organizational learning, education policy, and teacher education. As I conducted this study, I obtained nine participants. Each one represented a case study, resulting in nine case studies. I conducted multiple cross-case analysis as I integrated the case study methodology. Survivors provided in-depth, introspective, and emotionally raw data that provided insight into the impact of organizational downsizing on their emotional well-being, personal professional development and organizational commitment.

As the researcher, I was aware of my inherent and explicit biases as a former educator and *survivor* of a RIF, and my residual emotions, either positive or negative, would somehow taint or negatively skew the data. Although inherent bias is unavoidable in the research process, I am confident I was able to separate my own personal experiences as a *survivor* in organizational downsizing to maintain a high level of integrity, ethical responsibility, and openness, without judgment, to listen objectively to survivors' in-depth accounts of the residual effects of the RIF. Upon the conclusion of my study, not only was valuable in-depth insight into the impact of the RIF on survivors' organizational commitment, personal professional development, and the emotional effect gained from the participants, but best practices for human resource professionals and

educational leaders to implement in public schools today. This insight will assist those who implement organizational downsizing to improve the process by addressing survivors' needs. Additionally, these findings will help to minimize the negative consequences of organizational downsizing on the learning culture, improve teacher effectiveness, teacher quality, and student learning. Research-based strategies can be implemented during the transition phase of budgetary crises to enhance the opportunities for survivors to work in partnership to embrace and adopt change to improve the working and learning environment in which students thrive and ultimately achieve success. Moreover, change is inevitable but through collaboration among all stakeholders including parents, students, community, school board, educational leaders, and survivors can navigate successfully.

Concluding Thoughts

I have always known since early childhood when I had my lemonade stand I wanted to be an entrepreneur and receive my Ph.D. My passion has always been in business and my long career has been in that particular field. I am a strong believer that everything happens for a reason. I believe every experience, whether good or bad, shapes the person that you become. This is true for my journey. After a career in the corporate arena, I was laid off. This was a pivotal point and started my journey into education. I have always had a proclivity for teaching. I would always be the one person people would come to for complex subjects. I would break the concepts into simple parts that could be easily understood. I was the child in kindergarten who always operated out of the box, thought it was boring to draw within the lines, and didn't understand why math problems were easy. It was discovered I was gifted and talented. After working in

financial services and capital management firms, I planned to teach secondary public school for five years and then become an administrator. I stayed over six years and changed my mind about becoming a principal. Simultaneously, while teaching, I began to teach at a prominent university as an adjunct professor. This is where I caught the higher education teaching bug so to speak. I loved teaching adults in the Accelerated Degree Program in the College of Business. I enjoyed the interaction with adult learners and marveled at them as they faced their challenges head-on to realize their dreams of returning to school and being a role model for their children and others. I was honored to witness this transformation. After these encounters, I knew I wanted to teach full-time in higher education and perform research hence my journey to pursue a Ph.D. The doctoral program in Adult, Professional and Community Education has aligned with my career goals in that it integrates my passion for organizational change, organizational behavior, organizational commitment, human resources development, and workplace learning along with the fusion of my love for education, teaching, and educator development. It allows me to be more diverse in my competencies and satisfies my innate commitment to diversity in learning experiences whether in business, education, or sociology issues with the community education piece. I am a seasoned entrepreneur in organizational learning, training, and professional development, outplacement, transition services, and human resources.

As a human resource veteran, organizational learning expert, and instructor, who is passionate about the field of organizational change, as well as the professional learning success of educators, it is my hope that educational and human resource leaders would actively embrace the voices of survivors of organizational change to improve the learning

culture for both educators and students. It is critical to address survivors' needs to minimize the negative impact and unintended consequences associated with educational finance reform and educational policies, such as a RIF, which can potentially impede and negatively impact the schools' mission of educating students. As a former survivor of a RIF, I have seen the negative impact on employee morale, the learning culture, lack of resources, and cut in student programs that are a direct result of budgetary reduction measures. There is the prevalent mindset from administrators and human resource professionals that survivors are expected to immediately adopt the inherent changes of a layoff including lost peers and increased workload and *to be thankful to have a job*. The findings of the data show survivors' positive motivation to pursue personal professional development with support of administrators by funding additional certifications in high need subject areas and advanced degrees. Moreover, there are negative consequences to the continued neglect of survivors' often silenced voices and experiences of emotional trauma including fear, anxiety, despair, depression, and survivors' guilt. We, as human resource professionals and educational leaders, must focus our resources to combat the unintentional costs associated with low employee morale, decreased commitment, and minimize the emotional toll on survivors. In the end, what is at stake are student learning and academic achievement. It is my hope this qualitative case study not only contributes to the field of teacher learning and development, but will serve as the sounding board for validation and institutional support on behalf of survivors of organizational downsizing.

APPENDIX SECTION

APPENDIX A

CONSENT FORM TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title of Project: Organizational Downsizing and the Aftermath: Survivors' perception of the impact on their organizational commitment and personal professional development in the context of schools

Student: Lynn Taylor, MBA
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Texas State University - San Marcos IRB approval #EXP2014P922015K

PURPOSE: You are being asked to participate in a research project that seeks to investigate how organizational downsizing impacts survivors' commitment to personal career development and the organization. You are specifically being asked to participate in this study after another participant, colleague of the investigator, or the investigator herself identified you as a potential participant who might meet the criteria of the study. The intent of this research is to understand your views and experiences as a survivor working within an organizational setting after downsizing has occurred. Specifically, this study will examine how and in what ways you have been successful or faced challenges in this position/environment. If you volunteer to participate in this research, you will participate in an initial interview lasting for approximately 1 hour. In the interview, you will be asked to discuss your views and experiences on being a survivor within your organization. For instance, you will be asked questions like the one that follows: 1) How have your emotional and psychological attitudes been impacted in the aftermath of organizational downsizing? Give me some examples. All interviews will be audio-recorded with your permission. The audio tapes will be used for transcription purposes only within the qualitative context to capture the survivors' perspective of the downsizing event and how it relates to organizational commitment and personal professional development in the workplace. The audio tapes will be stored in a secure location and will be disposed/shredded/erased after transcription has been performed. Your

participation is voluntary and as such, you may withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice or jeopardy to your standing with Texas State University. There will be no identifiable information and no questions that could reasonably place the subjects at risk will be asked during the study.

RISKS: In reflecting and talking about your experience as a survivor of organizational downsizing, you may become uncomfortable with unhappy experiences or memories recalled. However, you may elect to not answer any of the questions with which you feel uneasy, and still remain a participant in the research. There are no known psychological or physiological risks associated with participating in this research. Participants are not required to respond to any question that they do not feel comfortable answering. All answers will remain confidential.

BENEFITS: You may not benefit from your participation in this research. Research on survivors of organizational downsizing in an organizational setting may be beneficial to other organizational setting, human resource administrators and corporations to develop best practices in understanding how best to navigate, support, and retain high production and workplace learning and career development opportunities for survivors. In addition, the research may provide further insight into understanding the types of programs and policies to research and/or pursue in order to support and retain survivorship and reduce the potential negative impact on personal career development and learning in the workplace.

COMPENSATION: You will not be paid for participation in this research.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Your name will never appear on any survey, research instruments or audiotapes. No Identity will be made in the data analysis. All written materials and consent forms will be stored in a locked file in the investigator's office and the principal investigator, Lynn Taylor, will have sole access. Your response(s) will appear only in statistical data summaries when the data are presented in written or oral form at scientific meetings. Your name will never appear in any publication of these data. All materials will be kept for three years.

RIGHT TO WITHDRAW: You are under no obligation to participate in this study. You are free to withdraw your consent to participate at any time without penalty. Your withdrawal will not influence any other services to which you may be otherwise entitled.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS: A summary of the results of this research will be supplied to you, at no cost, upon request.

VOLUNTARY CONSENT: I have read the above statements and understand what is being asked of me. I also understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my consent at any time, for any reason, without penalty. On these terms, I certify that I am willing to participate in this research project.

I understand that should I have any concerns about my participation in this study, I may call the doctoral student who is asking me to participate, Lynn Taylor. If I have any concerns that my rights are being violated, I may contact the Director of the Office of Research Compliance at Texas State University - San Marcos, Becky Northcut at (512) 245-7975.

Participant's Signature

Date

Doctoral Student's Signature

Date

APPENDIX B

DISSERTATION INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Hello, my name is Lynn Taylor and I am a Ph.D. candidate in the College of Education at Texas State University. I am studying the impact of teacher/staff layoffs that occurred within the last few years on staff members who did not lose their jobs. I want to gain insight into the impact of these layoffs on your work, professional development and commitment to the school/district in the aftermath of downsizing.

Research questions to be addressed in bold and interview questions below.

RQ 1: How have the survivors' emotional and psychological attitudes been impacted in the aftermath of a RIF?

1. Can you tell me how the layoffs played out at your school?
2. What kinds of positions were cut from the school?
3. How did you feel about the way this process was handled? How did you feel about teachers and staff members losing their jobs?

RQ 2: How has the survivors' commitment to personal professional development been impacted after Reduction-in-Force has occurred?

4. As it relates to job responsibilities, how has the school provided opportunities for your professional development prior to the layoffs? After the layoffs? Can you give me some examples?

RQ 3: In what ways does Reduction-in Force impact the survivors' organizational commitment to their schools/districts after downsizing has occurred?

5. How has your commitment to your school/ district been impacted by the layoffs? Can you give me some examples for each one?

RQ 4: What is the nature of the relationship between the survivors' commitment to personal professional development and individual schools in the aftermath of Reduction –in-Force?

6. How did the layoffs impact instruction, student programs and other services? Can you give me some specific examples?
7. How did these layoffs impact your work? Can you give me some specific examples?

8. If layoffs had to occur again next year, what changes to the process would you recommend to your school and district administrators?
9. Is there anything else you would like to tell me that I haven't asked?

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