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# BI Norwegian Business School – Master Thesis

## - Those who stay: Job Insecurity, Respectful Engagement and Openness to Change following a Downsizing -

*The moderating effect of Respectful Engagement on the relationship between Job Insecurity and Openness to Change*

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# Abstract

This study aims to examine the relationship between job insecurity, openness to change and respectful engagement among layoff survivors. We propose that job insecurity, measured by *threat to job features* and *powerlessness,* negatively affect layoff survivors' *openness to change* and that *respectful engagement* will positively moderate these relationships. In an attempt to test our model, we use hierarchical regression analysis on a sample consisting of employees from the Norwegian labor market. The results show that threat to job features negatively affect layoff survivors' openness to change, and further indicate that respectful engagement is an important aspect to acknowledge as it positively moderates the relationship. However, the results also reveal that powerlessness does not have a significant negative correlation to openness to change. In addition, the effect of respectful engagement is not significantly positively moderating this relationship. Implications for theory and practice, limitation and directions for future research are also discussed.

**Keywords:** change, downsizing, job insecurity, job features, powerlessness, high quality connection, respectful engagement

# Introduction

Organizations are faced with continuous and unparalleled changes (Madsen, Miller & John, 2005), and in order to remain competitive they should be able to detect changes, predict trends, and adapt (Kraiger & Ford, 2007). Change initiatives within organizations have increased as companies have struggled with matters such as downsizing, technological advancement, mergers and instability (Madsen et al., 2005). In today's working environment organizations may be forced to restructure due to economic downturns. A common strategy in many organizations has been downsizing (Ngirande & Nel, 2012), and this has been a change management strategy for more than two decades (Gandolfi, 2008). Organizational downsizing may not only have a negative impact on the organization and the employees, but also the government and the society as a whole (Ngirande & Nel, 2012). Appelbaum and Donia (2001) argued that affected employees do not only consist of those leaving, but also the ones who are left behind in the organization, the survivors. A psychosocial problem is created among the survivors where they become self-absorbed, risk averse and narrow minded, which in turn result in low morale and commitment, that can potentially harm the organization.

Most employers are aware of the importance of their remaining employees, but find it difficult to keep them productive (Ngirande & Nel, 2012). According to Brockner (1992), the underlying causes for layoffs, and how it effects the ones leaving have been frequently studied. However, how it affects the productivity and morale of the survivors is often overlooked. This is unfortunate because how survivors respond to organizational interventions after a downsizing may have a significant impact on productivity (Gutknecht & Keys, 1993; Whetten & Cameron, 1994). Even in companies that report increased firm performance, data suggests that performance among layoff survivors decrease (Baumol, Blinder & Wolff, 2003). The remaining work force may resist interventions by slowing their work pace or working against others when the company wants to implement a new policy. In some cases, they may also seek employment elsewhere, which may harm the organization as it loses valued assets (Susskind, Miller & Johnson, 1998). These behaviors may be damaging for the organization, because as Baumol and colleagues (2003) stated, in times of crisis, an organization depends on its employees' commitment. Brockner (1992) suggested that managers will be able to

make more informed decisions about how to handle layoffs if the factors that influence survivors' reactions can be identified. Additionally, he stated that it is possible for managers to influence the determinants of survivors' reactions.

In our study we focus on the understanding of the attitudes of the survivors after a downsizing, a change strategy that is particularly evident in the Norwegian working market today. A more thorough understanding of employees' attitudes in times of change may help managers to develop better strategies in order to influence employees' openness to change. We find this vital to investigate further, because a major factor that contributes to the failure of many organizations to achieve their objectives after a downsizing is that they don't adequately and effectively take the "people factor" into consideration (Abbelbaum, Delage, Labib & Gault, 1997). Change efforts may fail as a consequence of lack of support from the employees (Devos, Buelens & Bouckenooghe, 2007), because employees' willingness to participate is essential in order to succeed with any change (Miller, Johnson & Grau, 1994).

Attitudes may be formed already when hearing about a change, and it is therefore vital to secure a favorable response early in the change process (Lawrence, 1954). Several constructs have been used to investigate employees' attitudes to change (Choi, 2011). Wanberg and Banas (2000), suggested that openness to change is a particularly important construct in the early stage of a change process. According to Armenakis, Harris and Mossholder (1993), is it critical to have a high level of openness to change when making employees ready for the upcoming change, and Miller et al., (1994) further stated that openness to change is a necessary condition for implementing a successfully planned change. Hence, this study uses openness to change to measure survivors' attitudes to change efforts.

According to Brockner (1992), it is not only the perceived fairness of the layoff that influence survivors, but also the changes in their work setting that often accompanies layoffs. Perceived sources of threat and opportunities represent some of the changes that may accompany a layoff. One important factor affecting survivors is the job insecurity that arises. This happens because downsizing affects the continuity of the employee's current job and they experience a feeling of being powerlessness to maintain their status in a job (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt,

1984). When reading up on the literature on job insecurity it becomes apparent that the threat of loss of job has received much attention within research. This study aims at investigating two equally important but less studied constructs; *threat to job features* and *powerlessness*.

Lastly, another important research field our study focus on is the interaction between employees and their supervisor. Research has found that organizations may influence an employees' openness to change through social relationships at work (Madsen et al., 2005). Our study will look at the effect of high quality connections (HQC), and further suggests that the connection between survivors and their immediate supervisor is essential in the aftermath of a downsizing. Dutton (2003) argued that the first pathway to build HQC is through *respectful engagement*. There seems to be limited research on employees' perception of their leader as respectfully engaged in times of change. However, Weick (1993) suggested respectful interaction as a way to counteract vulnerability in organizations, and to prevent organizational collapse. Due to the importance of social interactions for individuals, in addition to the frequencies of organizational changes, this relationship needs further investigation. Respectful engagement will therefore be covered in our study as a moderator on the relationship between job insecurity and openness to change among layoff survivors. Our conceptual framework is illustrated in Figure 1. Our research question is as follows:

*"Does Job Insecurity affect layoff survivors Openness to Change, and will Respectful Engagement moderate this relationship?"*
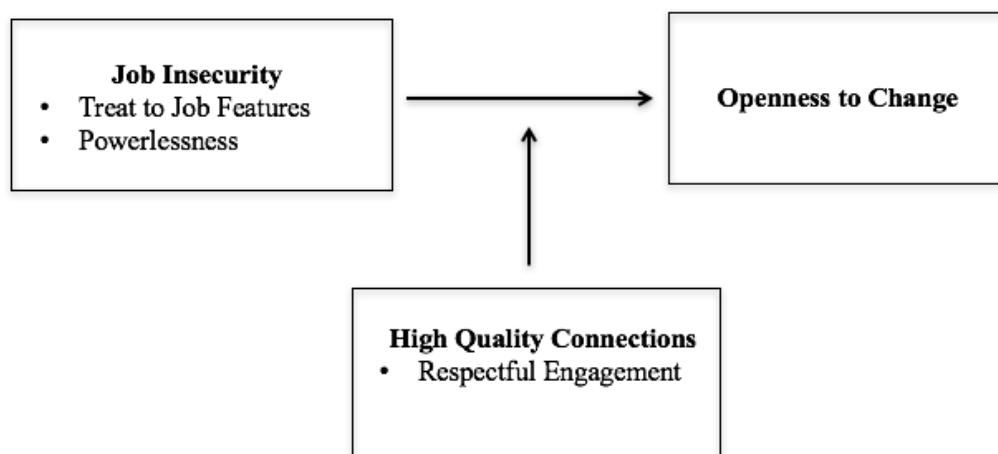


*Figure 1: Conceptual Framework*

# Theoretical Background

The aim of this chapter is to provide a foundation for our hypotheses. The first part of the theoretical background explores theoretical contributions within the field of organizational change, with a focus on employees' openness to change. Secondly we will examine the literature on job insecurity and present research that has contributed to the proposition of our first hypotheses regarding threat to job features and powerlessness. Lastly we present the framework of high quality connections and explore the theoretical background of the construct respectful engagement which is measured in our final hypotheses.

## Organizational Change

*Content, Context and Process within Organizational Change*

Armenakis and Bedeian (1999) stated that three factors; content, context and process, are important in order to shape employees' reactions to change efforts. It is important to gather knowledge about conditions related to all these factors in order to better understand organizational change. The authors further stated that content issues focus on the substance or type of organizational change, context issues focus on the forces in the internal or external environment of organizations, and lastly, process issues focus on the actions that are undertaken in the enactment of an intended change.

One way to classify different types of changes has been proposed by Beer and Nohria (2000), who divide types of changes into Theory E (economic value-driven change) and Theory O (organizational capabilities-driven change), and is based on different assumptions regarding how and why they should be conducted. Theory E is the "hard" approach to change and is often captured in media. It consists of heavy use of economic incentives, restructuring, drastic layoffs and downsizing. The goal of Theory O is to develop a corporate culture and human capability. This is done through organizational learning, the process of changing, obtaining feedback, reflecting, and making further changes.

Our study builds on previous research and investigates a type of change within Theory E. We aim at investigating factors within companies that have recently gone through a downsizing as this has been a common strategy in many organizations (Ngirande & Nel, 2012). Downsizing is defined as a purposeful

reduction in the size of an organization's workforce (Cascio, 1993). Mirabal and DeYoung (2005) viewed organizational downsizing as a set of activities planned to improve organizational productivity, efficiency and/or competitiveness, and thus an improvement of the organization's overall performance.

After layoffs the survivors may have lost their coworkers, subordinates, friends and supervisors, in addition to organizational resources that may have been of great value to them (Brockner, Grover & Blonder, 1988). Loss of relationships may influence employees´ well-being, performance and self-esteem (Kozlowski, Chao, Smith & Hedlund, 1993). Because of the changes that have been caused in their immediate environment they need to reconfigure how they communicate, and their work processes will be greatly affected in order to adapt to the new organizational culture (Gutknecht & Keys, 1993).

Context has, in addition to content, been emphasized as important when influencing employees' reactions to change (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999), because employees have different attitudes towards change depending on the context surrounding them (Devos et al., 2007). Oreg, Vakola and Armenakis (2011) pointed to supportive environment and trust, commitment, culture and job characteristics as important contextual factors affecting employees' reaction to change.

After a downsizing the context surrounding the survivors may be very different from previous. In a meta-analysis conducted by Datta, Guthrie, Basuil & Pandey (2010) several negative effects of downsizing were accounted for, such as survivors' lack of commitment and job performance (Armstrong-Stassen, 1998), undesirable work environment (Amabile & Conti, 1999), and lack of organizational trust and support (Brockner, Konovsly, Cooper-Scheider, Folger, Martin & Bies, 1994). In addition, did Coch and French (1948) find that it affected employees trust in management. It may therefore be difficult for the organization to establish a desirable context surrounding the employees that affects their reactions to a proposed change initiative. Our study will contribute to the research on context of change and investigate the buffering effect of employees' perception of their immediate supervisor.

Lastly, process has been emphasized as an important aspect that influence employees' reactions (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999). For instance, may participation be vital as this gives employees an opportunity to have an impact on the change. Lewin (1974, cited in Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999) introduced the concepts unfreeze - moving(change) - refreeze as the successive phases for the progress of change. Openness to change is comparable to the unfreezing state introduced as it takes place in the beginning of a change process.

*Openness to Change*

Different constructs that focus on employees´ attitudes toward change have been investigated in research and, according to Choi (2011), important constructs involving an individual's positive or negative judgment about the change are *readiness to change, commitment to change, openness to change,* and *cynicism about organizational change*. Additionally, the different constructs have different meanings. Knowledge about these constructs provides organizations with more information about how employees perceive different change initiatives. Wanberg and Banas (2000), suggest that out of these constructs *openness to change* is particularly important in the early stage of a change process. They define openness to change as "willingness to support the change and positive affect about the potential consequences of a change" (p. 132).

Survivors support or hostility towards a change initiative will be affected by how the upcoming changes will affect them. For instance, downsizing may affect employees differently (Freeman & Cameron, 1993). For some it may be favorable (Cameron, Freeman & Mishra, 1991), while it may hurt and devastate others (Cascio, 1993). There is limited research on factors that may explain the variability in survivors' openness to change after a downsizing. Susskind and colleagues (1998) found that structural holes were an important factor that affected survivors' openness. They stated that survivors who lost resources through an increase in structural holes were less likely to support change initiatives. Additionally, Devos et al., (2007), found that organizational changes that lead to several job losses in the organization had a negative effect on organizational members' openness to change. They further found that employees´ openness to change decreased dramatically when trust in leaders were low. The importance of trust in leaders has further been supported by Ertürk (2008).

Other researchers have investigated antecedents that affect employees' openness to change in other contexts. Wanberg and Banas (2000) investigated organizations going through different changes due to restructuring of programs. They found that within individual difference variables, personal resilience, a construct consisting of self-esteem, perceived control, and optimism, was associated with higher levels of openness to change. In their study three context-specific variables were also found to be predictors for openness to change, and these were the quality of information about the change, participation in decision making in the process, and self-efficacy for coping with the changes. They further highlighted the importance of investigating context and individual-level factors, and stated that more research is needed on the individual level in order to identify factors that may explain employees' openness to change and how organizations can deal with these.

**Job Insecurity**

Based on previous research we identify job insecurity as an important variable to investigate among layoff survivors, in addition to being a potential antecedent for openness to change (Devos et al., 2007). The fear that is awakened with an organizational change, which one can assume is closely related to uncertainty about the future, has been used synonymously with job insecurity. This is especially visible in downsizing, where the job stability will be affected by layoffs and restructuring, and that survivors are powerless to maintain their current status (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984).

Job insecurity refers to employees´ negative reaction towards changes concerning the job (Sverke & Hellgren, 2002), and has been defined in ways such as "Perceived powerlessness to maintain desired continuity in a threatened job situation" (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984, p. 438), and an "overall concern about the future existence of the job (Rosenblatt & Ruvio, 1996, p. 587).

Traditionally, job insecurity has been defined from two perspectives; a global and a multidimensional view. The researchers that have adopted the global view describe job insecurity as an overall concern about the continued existence of the job in the future (Witte, 1999). Within the multidimensional approach job insecurity is a concept consisting of different factors, such as threat to various job

features, and powerlessness to counteract such threats. Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt (1984) were the first to introduce a multidimensional definition. Further, they emphasized that threat to the job itself, importance of total job, threat to valued job features, importance of valued job features, and a feeling of powerlessness are terms that best describe job insecurity.

In relation to the two dimensions of perceived loss of continuity in a job situation, Hellgren, Sverke, & Isaksson (1999) used the terms quantitative and qualitative job insecurity. The first refers to concerns about the future existence of a job, while the latter refers to perceived threats of impaired quality in the employment relationship (e.g. deterioration of working conditions, lack of career opportunities, and decreased salary). They further argued that quantitative insecurity and qualitative insecurity may lead to different outcomes. Additionally, according to Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt´s (1984) review of the research on job insecurity, the subjective threat involved in job insecurity is multifaceted and cannot be captured by a global variable. The global and multidimensional perspective offer different operationalization of job insecurity, but they both emphasize that it is a subjective experience (Keim, Landis, Pierce, & Earnest, 2014).

Previous research on job insecurity has usually been conducted in the context of organizational crisis or decline (Rosenblatt & Ruvio, 1996), and the primarily focus has been on the meaning of the construct and its implication for work attitudes and behaviors. It has been proved to have an impact on outcomes such as well-being, turnover intention, organizational commitment and job performance (Sverke et al., 2002). Our study is conducted in organizations after a downsizing, and Devos and colleagues (2007) argued that following a downsizing, employees may experience job insecurity. Over the years downsizing has increased job insecurity among workers as it has been associated with other practices, such as outsourcing and an increased use of temporary workers (Quinlan & Bohle, 2009).

Job insecurity has been proven to influence various organizational attitudes and behaviors (Sverke et al., 2002), and some research is conducted in relation to organizational change. The majority have found a negative effect of job insecurity on organizational change (Rosenblatt & Ruvio, 1996; Babalola, 2013; Usman, Shahzad, Roberts & Zafar, 2015). Job insecurity has been investigated in relation

to attitudes towards work and has been found to affect both organizational commitment and resistance to change, (Scheck, Kinicki & Davy 1997; Rosenblatt & Ruvio, 1996).

Babalola (2013) stated that employees are affected by seeing coworkers lose their jobs, and found in his study on industries in Nigeria that job insecurity had a negative effect on employees' commitment and openness to change. This was further supported by Usman and colleagues (2015) who found a negative relationship between job insecurity and openness to change. They stated that a reason for this relationship may be that employees are afraid to give up their authority. When being informed about the upcoming changes in the organization they may see it as a threat to their authority within the organization and therefore become more insecure and less open towards upcoming changes. These studies did however investigate quantitative job insecurity, which is related to the threat of job loss. This type of job insecurity has received much attention in previous research, but relatively little is known about qualitative job insecurity. Hence, our study has taken a qualitative approach to job insecurity, and will investigate two equally important but less studied components; threat to job features and powerlessness.

*Threat to Job Features*
Qualitative job insecurity concerns perceived uncertainty related to a threat against an individual´s job situation in the future. The uncertainty functions as a work stressor with negative consequences for the individual (De Witte et al., 2010; Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984). Few studies have investigated consequences of qualitative job insecurity, but this has been proven to be linked to both work-related and general health outcomes (Vander Elst, Richter, Sverke, Näswall, De Cuyper, & De Witte, 2014). In addition, Hellgren et al., (1999) found qualitative job insecurity to be related to both job dissatisfaction and turnover intentions. Thus, perceived threats against an individual´s job situation, that give rise to reactions from employees, can be important both from a managerial and occupational health perspective.

Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt (1984) stated that an important but often overlooked feature of job insecurity is loss of job features. In their review of the literature on

job insecurity they list important job features such as career progress, income stream, status/self-esteem, autonomy and resources. Threat to job features may hinder the psychological contract between the employee and the organization (Schein, 1965). Employees may feel that their psychological contract is violated when anticipating a cut in income (e.g. decrease of expected future raises and cuts in pay). Less touchable properties of job features may also be the focus for an employee. Loss of status, decreased autonomy, and fewer resources may be outcomes of an organizational change, and result in major concerns for the employees. Furthermore, the fragmentation and traumatization of work groups may lead to concerns about loss of community (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984).

Rosenblatt and Ruvio (1996) conducted a case study of Israeli teachers on job insecurity. Related to job features, the research argued that autonomy when performing work, completion of entire job and feedback on performance are features that can be related to improved working conditions. The authors further stated that changes in these features may pose a threat to employees. Additionally, when employees experience their job as threatened, they may respond to this situation in terms of psychologically protecting him/herself by voluntary withdrawal from the job. This may be apparent in behaviors such as decrease in involvement, commitment, or loyalty. They further argue that as long as the workplace undergoes changes of any kind, job insecurity will follow.

Sverke et al. (2002) observed through their meta-analysis that stronger associations between job insecurity and its outcomes are found in studies that use multiple indicator measures. They further argued how future research would benefit from using scales with a broader content domain to better capture the magnitude between job insecurity and its outcomes. The previous discussion of research done in the field of job insecurity leads us to our first hypothesis:

*H1a: Threat to job features will negatively affect employees Openness to Change*

*Powerlessness*

Ashford and colleagues (1989) argued that "powerlessness" is an essential part of the definition of job insecurity, and Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt (1984, p. 438)

conceptualized job insecurity as "powerlessness to maintain desired continuity in a threatened job situation". Powerlessness is understood as a lack of autonomy and participation. According to Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt (1984), powerlessness contains an individual's ability to counteract the threats identified with other aspects of job insecurity. This means that the level of powerlessness among workers will affect how they experience potential threats to their job.

Undesired and unexpected powerlessness is argued to generate reactance, helplessness and work alienation (Ashforth, 1989). These negative consequences of powerlessness have been found by researchers to be related. This is described as efforts to change the job situation (reactance) that leads to different forms of withdrawal behavior (helplessness and work-alienation), and a decline in involvement and organizational commitment (Steers & Mowday, 1981, cited in Ashforth, 1989). According to Ashforth (1989), each stage is worsened by the intensity of the previous experience. Even though these studies have not been conducted within the context of organizational change, it is possible to assume that layoff survivors may experience some of the same negative consequences.

Job insecurity has also been operationalized as control at work (e.g., Bussing, 1999). People want to have personal control over the immediate parameters of their work (Hespe & Wall, 1976; Tannenbaum & Cooke, 1979). When they don't experience autonomy and participation at work their expectations and desires are not met (Louis, 1980). This may result in helplessness, and as a consequence their desires are likely to decline (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1977; Steers & Mowday, 1981, cited in Ashforth, 1989). Their reaction may be due to symbolic purposes, or against changes to the status quo. Either how, the way they perceive the structure and the context at work affect their experience of powerlessness within the organization (Ashforth, 1989).

We were only able to find two studies that had investigated both powerlessness and openness to change. Chawla and Kelloway (2004), found that powerlessness together with threats to the total job predicted openness to change. This study, however, did not say anything about powerlessness alone, and thus, does not explain this particular relationship. The other study we found, investigated powerlessness in relation to downsizing. As a part of qualitative job insecurity

Armstrong-Stassen (1998) studied perceived powerlessness among managers in organizations that had gone through downsizing and found a relationship to openness to change. She performed a longitudinal study and reported that powerlessness increased over a time period and suggested that this may be due to a feeling of being less able to influence decisions related to the future of their job. Managers and employees may experience downsizing differently, but we were not able to find any studies investigating the relationship among layoff survivors.

Sverke and colleagues (2002) have encouraged researchers to investigate the concept of powerlessness further, due to less research on this construct separately from other aspects of job insecurity. The previous discussion leads to our second hypothesis:

H1b: *Powerlessness will negatively affect employees Openness to Change*

**High Quality Connections (HQC)**
As context may constitute different attitudes to change (Devos et al., 2007), various specific contexts have been proposed such as culture and climate (Jones, Jimmieson, & Griffiths, 2005; Schneider, Brief & Guzzo, 1996), leadership style (Bommer, Rich & Rubin 2005), and trust in management (Devos et al., 2007). Additionally, the same contextual factors may explain why some change initiatives fail (Johns, 2001, 2006). Our study proposes that connections among workers may also play an important contextual role.

It is vital that there exists a connection between workers in order to accomplish work, and the quality of this connection will in turn affect how organizations function (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003). HQC are short-term interactions where two individuals both experience vitality, positive regard and mutuality (Dutton, 2014) HQC has been conceptualized and defined through three capacities where one aspect focuses on features of the connection, while the two others focus on each individual's experience in the connection (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003).

Research has found HCQ to have several positive outcomes for both individuals and the organization (Dutton, 2003), such as increased psychological health (Heaphy & Dutton, 2008), increased capacity to think and create (Carmeli, Dutton & Hardin, 2015), increased capacity to adapt and be resistant (Stephens, Carmeli,

Heaphy, Spreitzer & Dutton, 2013). Dutton (2003) suggested that an organization's capacity to adapt and change depends upon the quality of the relationship among the employees. This may indicate that when HQCs are present, individuals may be more willing to change and better handle challenges that come their way.

There are four pathways to create HQC. The first is respectful engagement, which means engaging with another person in a way that sends a message of value and worth. Another pathway is task enabling, which implies helping/facilitating another person´s successful performance. The third pathway is trusting, which involve conveying to another that we believe they will meet our expectations and are dependable. The last pathway is playing which means participating in a game with another where the goal is to have fun (Dutton, 2014). As respectful engagement is an aspect of HQC, which seems to be less studied, this study will investigate respectful engagement as a moderator in the relationship between job insecurity and openness to change.

*Respectful Engagement*

Respectful engagement refers to confirming that what another person does is valued, demonstrating attention to the actions of others, providing supportive communication and listen actively (Dutton, 2003), in a greater extent than a global, diffuse sense of appreciation (Stephens & Carmeli, 2015). These interactions are referred to as strategies. The first one is *being present*, which could take several forms including minimizing distraction, using appropriate body language, and being available. A second strategy is *being genuine* which involves acting from authentic feelings and motivations. Thirdly, *communication affirmation* can be achieved by looking for value in another person, communicating recognition, express genuine interest, and treating time as precious. The fourth strategy, *effective listening*, involves active listening and empathy. Lastly is the strategy of *supportive communication*, which can be achieved by making requests instead of demands, communicating in specific rather than general terms, and making descriptive instead of evaluative statements.

Higher levels of respectful engagement are manifested when employees perceive each other as acting in ways that are based on the five strategies (Dutton, 2003).

According to Dutton (2003) HQC and respectful engagement creates a circulative relationship because respectful engagement creates HQCs and HQCs, again, create respectful engagement, which can manifest itself throughout the organization.

Respectful engagement may be confused with other relational constructs, but many of these are based on the exchange of resources while respectful engagement emphasizes that interrelating at work can be based on more humanizing forms of interpersonal connections (Carmeli et al., 2015). Respectful engagement focuses on members' actual behaviors in interaction with each other instead of resources that these behaviors generate which makes it different from coworker support (Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008). It is also distinct from leader-member exchange, which focuses on mutual respect as one aspect within the quality of leader-subordinate relationship. It is also different from perceived organizational support, which focuses on beliefs about the organization´s support for members, instead on how members treat and interrelate with each other (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Thus, respectful engagement is a distinctive relational construct in organizational research.

According to Dutton (2003), everyone has a need to respectfully engage with others, but unfortunately this is not the case in many organizations. Respectful engagement highlights the importance of being accepted as a person of worth and value and fosters acceptance and openness, in addition to motivating interaction and making individuals engaged in one another. This lead to several positive outcomes such as positive interpersonal emotions and a positive work environment, which affects one's capacity to build other forms of durable resources, such as the capacity to adapt (Carmeli et al., 2015). In a positive work environment, it is more likely that individuals feel like they can thrive, and mutually develop a sense of aliveness and openness to learning (Stephens & Carmeli, 2015). This may be beneficial in times of change. Changes involve new situations, and employees may easier adapt and be open to the changes if they are surrounded by a positive environment where they are open to learn. Additionally, people are strengthened from within and equipped to be more resourceful and resilient through positive emotions (Fredrickson, 1998).

We were not able to find any studies that have investigated respectful engagement in the context of downsizing. However, resilience has been stated to evolve from respectful interaction in organizations (Ireland, Hitt, & Vaodyanath, 2002), and is an important factor in enabling virtuousness (Stephens, et al., 2013). Cameron, Caza and Bright (2002) used the label "virtuousness" on collective behaviors, which represent conditions of flourishing, enablement, and vitality. They investigated the importance of virtuousness in organizations that had gone through a downsizing, and found that employees who observed virtuousness in their organization also perceived their organization as less affected by negative outcomes of downsizing. They found a buffering effect of virtuousness and suggested that this is due to leaders that strive to display tonic and phasic virtuousness in their behavior. They further stated that the resilience that is associated with virtuousness helps absorb misfortune, recover from trauma, and maintain employees' drive in difficult circumstances.

In addition to demonstrating positive outcomes, respectful interaction has been investigated with emphasis on how this type of interaction can prevent negative conditions for individuals and groups in organizations. For instance, Weick (1993) suggested that actions such as respectful interactions can be taken in order to prevent organizational collapse. He emphasized that the only thing that can keep up with a rapidly changing environment is face-to-face interaction. This highlights the importance of interaction, as another person enlargers the pool of information that is available. According to Lanham, McDaniel, Crabtree, Miller, Stange, Tallia, & Nutting (2009), respectful interactions may help individuals to learn from mistakes by actively seeking out and value others opinions, in addition to sharing their own opinions and be open to change their mindset. When interacting respectfully, it is likely that individuals will solve problems together. This is especially important in challenging situations as new meanings and solutions often arise through interaction.

Even though respectful engagement has been mentioned to be of importance both for the individual and the organization, there seems to be limited research within this field. We have taken a positive organizational approach to investigate if employees' perceptions of their leaders as respectfully engaged will moderate the

relationship between job insecurity and openness to change in organizations that have gone through downsizing. Hence we propose our final two hypotheses:

*H2a: Respectful Engagement will positively moderate the relationship between Threat to Job Features and Openness to Change.*

*H2b: Respectful Engagement will positively moderate the relationship between Powerlessness and Openness to Change.*

## Method

**Sample and Procedure**

Due to the sensitive topic of downsizing we were not able to get participants from as many big companies as initially expected. After contacting 69 companies, it became evident that the majority of the feedback received from managers indicated the highly relevance of our topic, but also that they were not comfortable with sending out our survey at this point in time, so closely after their downsizing. Hence, participants in the present study consist of a convenience sample of employees from a diversity of Norwegian companies who wanted to participate due to their own motivation and curiosity about the topic. To distribute our survey, e-mails were sent out to several companies in addition to posting it on LinkedIn and Facebook.

We took a quantitative approach to collect data, and our survey was distributed through the use of Qualtrics. All participants were informed about anonymity and that they took part in a research project regarding layoff survivors and organizational change (Appendix 1). The research project is approved by Norsk Samfunnsvitenskapelig Datatjeneste (NSD) (Appendix 2). The number of respondents is 102, consisting of 46.1% males ($n$=47), 52% females ($n$=53), and two participants chose not to answer. The age of the participants varies from 20 to 59, where 44% were between 20 to 29 years, 22% were between 30 to 39 years, 15% were between 40 to 49 years and 16% were between 50 to 59 years. Three participants chose not to answer.

**Measures**

The different measures used in our study consist of two aspects within job insecurity (threat to job features and powerlessness), openness to change, and respectful engagement. The items were measured on a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5 or 1 to 7 (Appendix 3). Additionally, respondents were given the option to tick off "I choose not to answer" on all items. All measures have been used in previous research and found to be both valid and reliable. All questionnaires were originally in English. Even though many companies use English in their daily work life and are familiar with the language, the items had to be translated into Norwegian to avoid confusion about the meaning/understanding of the particular words stated in the questionnaire (Appendix 4). They were therefore put through a translation-back translation procedure (Brislin, 1986).

*Dependent Variable - Openness to Change*

Layoff survivors' openness to participate in change were measured with a scale consisting of seven items based on the questionnaire of Miller et al. from 1994, and modified by Susskind et al. (1998) to fit our context. The items consist of statements such as *"I think the implementation of the recent downsizing positively affects how I accomplish my work"*. Responses were given on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Four of the questions were reverse coded in IBM SPSS preceding the main analysis.

*Independent variable - Job Insecurity*

To measure job insecurity, two out of five factors developed by Ashford et al. (1989) were used. To measure "threat to job features" participants were asked: *"Looking at the future, what is the probability that changes could occur - changes you don't want or might disagree with - that would negatively affect each of these features"*. 17 items were presented, such as *"the current freedom to schedule your own work?"*, and responses were given on a five-point Likert scale from 1 (negative change very unlikely) to 5 (negative change very likely). Powerlessness was measured with 3 statements such as *"I have enough power in this organization to control events that might affect my job"*. Responses were given on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Thus, a high score on threat to job features indicates a high level of job insecurity, while a high score on powerlessness indicates a low level of job insecurity.

*Moderator - Respectful Engagement*

Respectful engagement was measured using a nine items scale developed by Carmeli, et al., (2015). Respondents reported on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = (not at all) to 5 (to a very large extent). The nine items consist of statements such as *"Organizational members here are always available to hear out and listen to each other"*.

*Control Variables*

Data were collected for control variables which included gender, age, education and trust. Participants were asked to enter their gender; male or female. Age was divided into six categories; under 20, 20-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59 and 60 and above. Education was accounted for as grunnskole (primary and secondary school), videregående skole (comprehensive school), universitet/høyskole (university) 1-3 years, and universitet/høyskole (university) 4 years and above. In addition to respectful engagement trust is another pathway for building high quality connections, and was therefore chosen as a control variable in this study. The reason for choosing trust and not task enabling and playing (the other two pathways) was that these are not measured using quantitative research and we were not able to find any properly developed measures for these variables. Unfortunately, due to the set boundaries for the scope of our final thesis, we did not have the time to develop two new measures. Trust was measured using six items from Mayer and Davis (1999), measuring ability, benevolence and integrity. It includes items such as *"My supervisor is very concerned about my welfare"*. Responses were given on a five-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

*Data Analysis*

Before starting the analysis, we cleaned up our data and removed some cases and items where there were too much missing data. 177 participants had started the survey, but 75 participants were removed since they had not completed the majority of the survey, leaving us with 102 usable cases. This was done based on Hair, Black, Babin and Anderson, (2010 p. 45) who state that cases where 10% of the data is missing can be ignored. Further, two items; Jobfeatures3 (third question on threat to job features) and Openness1 (first question on openness to

change) were also removed because they both exceeded the other rule of thumb when it comes to missing data, which states that it is appropriate to delete items if over 15% of the answers are missing (Hair, Black, Babin and Anderson, 2010, p. 46). All of the other items showed missing values around 2-5%, hence these were not expected to cause any problems in our analysis and therefore retained.

We analyzed our data using several methods. As mentioned, all our questionnaires have been used in previous research. However, threat to job features and powerlessness are two less studied constructs within job insecurity and was therefore investigated in a factor analysis to ensure that they were independent of each other. We also wanted to make sure that the terms and variables we have verbally stated in our questionnaires are reflected in our measurement model. Job features and powerlessness were therefore investigated in an unweighted least squares analysis in SPSS. This method is recommended for small samples and when the number of expected factors is small (Jung, 2012). In order to explore the structure of our sample, we find oblique rotation to be the most suitable method as we expect that our questionnaires contain variables that might be correlating (Pallant, 2010).

We are aware of the fact that our sample size may violate one of the assumptions for performing a factor analysis, namely the fact that our sample is characterized as small with less than 150 responses (Tabachnik & Fidell, 2007). The problem may be that the correlations coefficients among the variables are less reliable in small samples, tending to vary from sample to sample. Factors that are obtained from small data sets do not generalize as well as those derived from large samples (Pallant, 2010). According to Winter, Dodou and Wieringa (2009, p. 147) "exploratory factor analysis (EFA) is generally regarded as a technique for large sample sizes (N), with N=50 as a reasonable absolute minimum". Additionally, Barlett, Kotrlik and Higgins (2001) stated that factor analysis should not be performed on less than 100 respondents. Hence, despite our small sample, EFA seems appropriate to perform.

To test H1a and H1b we used hierarchical multiple regression analysis, which was done in order to investigate if our independent variables were able to predict our dependent variable. To test H2a and H2b, that respectful engagement would

moderate the relationship between job insecurity (measured through threat to job features and powerlessness) and openness to change, we used a hierarchical moderated regression. This method was used to investigate if the strength of the relationship, between job insecurity and openness to change, changed because of the interference of our moderator variable, respectful engagement.

# Results

## Mean, Standard Deviation and Correlation

In Table 1, the mean, standard deviation and Pearson correlation of all the variables used in the present study are provided.

*Table 1 Mean, Standard Deviation, and Correlation*

| Variable | Mean | SD | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Openness to Change | 4.09 | 1.17 | (.79) | | | | | | | |
| 2. Threat to Job Features | 2.91 | 0.71 | -.48** | (.88) | | | | | | |
| 3. Powerlessness | 2.56 | 1.07 | .28** | -.38** | (.85) | | | | | |
| 4. Respectful Engagement | 3.61 | 0.85 | .46** | -.39** | .32** | (.94) | | | | |
| 5. Trust | 3.61 | 0.90 | .41** | -.30** | .38** | .83** | (.91) | | | |
| 6. Age | 3.17 | 1.40 | -.05 | .12 | .12 | .13 | .10 | - | | |
| 7. Gender | 1.59 | 0.82 | -.03 | .11 | -.13 | .06 | -.07 | .152 | - | |
| 8. Education | 3.76 | 1,15 | .03 | .23* | .03 | .13 | -.04 | .12 | .26** | - |

*N*=102

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Coefficient alpha reliabilities are on the diagonal in parentheses

## Factor Analysis

We inspected the suitability for using factor analysis by making sure that the correlation matrix revealed many correlations above .3 (Pallant, 2010). The Kaiser Meyer-Olkin value was .796 , which exceeds the recommended value of .6 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). This means that our sample is adequate for performing factor analysis. Bartlett´s Test of Sphericity (Bartlett, 1954 cited in Pallant, 2010) reached statistical significance (.000) supporting the factorability of the correlation matrix. When using the default options for performing a factor analysis in IBM SPSS it became evident that, when using the Kaiser´s criterion (Pallant, 2010), six components exceeded an eigenvalue of 1. Together the components explained a total variance of 71.249 %. However, an inspection of the

scree plot in the output from IBM SPSS shows a "break" after the third component. We performed a parallel analysis (Horn, 1965 cited in Pallant, 2010), which supports the use of three components. However, we chose to base our extraction of components on the theory suggesting that these are two distinct components; threat to job features and powerlessness (Ashford et al., 1989). According to this a forced two-component extraction was performed. We relied on self-reported measures and therefore it was checked if any variables loaded less than .3. If this were the case, these would have been removed. All items loaded above .3 but one item within "threat to job features" (Jobfeatures8) was removed due to violation of discriminant validity (Pallant, 2010), leaving us with components with strong loading items (Appendix 5).

After removing items, a Cronbach´s alpha test was conducted to ensure that both the new scales were reliable. This was done to ensure internal consistency within each scale in such a way that all items measure the same construct (Hair et al., 2010). We made sure that all values were above .7, which are considered acceptable (Pallant, 2010). In the new scales, 15 items represented threat to job features with a Cronbach´s alpha value of .88 and 3 items represented powerlessness with a Cronbach´s alpha value =.85 (table 1).

In table 1 all the coefficient alpha (Cronbach alpha) are visible in parentheses from our reliability test of the variables. Our dependent variable, openness to change, showed a Cronbach´s alpha of .79, our moderator variable, respectful engagement, showed a Cronbach´s alpha of .94, and our control variable, Trust, showed a Cronbach´s alpha of .91.

**Regression Analysis**

Several assumptions were investigated before conducting the hierarchical multiple regression analysis, starting with sample size. According to Pallant (2010) the danger with too small sample size in a regression analysis is that the results do not generalize. However, Tabachnick and Fidell, (2007) suggested a way to calculate an appropriate number of cases where they take the number of independent variables multiplied with eight and plus 50. This formula suggests that we should have at least 66 cases. As our sample consists of two independent variables and 102 cases we concluded that we are able to use this this method. Still, because of

the small sample Adjusted R Square are reported in the results (Pallant, 2010). Because multicollinearity is a potential problem with self-reported measures, and due to the interaction terms, both the independent variables, the control variables and the moderator were centered by subtracting the mean of the variable from each total scores. Further, we computed the interaction terms to use in the hierarchical moderated regression (Aiken & West, 1991).

Additionally, we investigated the correlation between the independent variables to ensure that it was not too high, and was found to be below .5 (-.38), (table 1) demonstrating a medium relationship. We further investigated the relationship between our two independent variables and the dependent variable to see if they demonstrated at least some relationship (-.48 (threat to job features) and .28 (powerlessness)) (Table 1).

Further we investigated the Tolerance and VIF Values to detect possible problems with multicollinearity (Pallant, 2010). The Tolerance values were found to be above .10 and the VIF values were less than 10, which is preferable (Pallant, 2010) The normal probability plot of the regression standardized residual and the scatterplot suggest no major deviations from normality or many outliers. Cook´s Distance was also checked and demonstrated a maximum value of .22, which is below the limit of 1, suggesting no major problems with outliers (Pallant, 2010).

*Direct Effect*

The first set of hypotheses regarding job insecurity suggest that threat to job features will negatively affect organizational members' openness to change (H1a), and the more powerlessness employees experience, the less open they will be to change (H1b). We performed a hierarchical multiple regression to test these hypotheses, were age, gender, trust and education were controlled for. The control variables were placed into the first block, and threat to job features and powerlessness were placed into the second block (table 2, step 2).

The model summary reveals that Adjusted R square for the second step of the model was 28%, $F(7,90)= 6.39$. There was a significant main effect by threat to job features to openness to change with a beta value of -.36 (Standardized

Coefficient), *p*<.00, *t*(102)= -3.36. This indicates that the less insecurity experienced in relation to threat to job features the more employees are open towards organizational change, and H1a is supported. However, there were no significant main effect of powerlessness on openness to change with a beta value of .04(Standardized Coefficient), p= 0.72, *t*(102)= .37 This indicates that powerlessness is not significantly related to employees openness to change, hence, there is no support for H2b.

*Moderation Effect*

We further tested our next hypothesis which proposes that respectful engagement will moderate the relationship between threat to job features and openness to change (H2a), and that respectful engagement will moderate the relationship between powerlessness and openness to change (H2b). H2a implies that the higher levels of respectful engagement, the less negative the relationship between threats to job features and openness to change. The interaction term, with respectful engagement multiplied with threat to job features, were added into step three in the hierarchical regression analysis (table 2, step 3a). The model summary reveals that Adjusted R square for the third step of the model was 31.3%, *F*(8,89)=6,52. The final model records a beta value of=.21(Standardized Coefficient), p<.05, *t*(102)= 2.30. This indicates that the more employees perceive their supervisor to be respectfully engaged, the less affected they are of perceived threat to job features on their openness to change, hence, H2a is supported.

H2b implies that high levels of respectful engagement, will decrease the negative relationship between powerlessness and openness to change (table 2, step 3b). Even though the direct relationship is not significant we wanted to test the moderator effect of respectful engagement because it is possible for the moderation to flip over the main effect to be significant. The model summary reveals that Adjusted R square for this model was 27.2%, *F*(8,89)=5.53, and it records a beta value of -.01(Standardized Coefficient), p=.91, *t*(102)=-.11. Thus, H2b is not supported.

*Table 2. Hierarchical regression analysis results*

Dependent Variable: Openness to Change

| Step Variable | 1 β | 1 t | 2 β | 2 t | 3a β | 3a t | 3b β | 3b t |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Trust | .42** | 4.35 | .10 | .59 | .09 | .57 | .10 | .58 |
| Age | -.10 | -1.02 | -.06 | -.69 | -.05 | -.57 | -.06 | -.67 |
| Gender | .01 | .13 | -.00 | -.05 | -.02 | -.22 | -.01 | -.06 |
| Education | .03 | .25 | .09 | .94 | .04 | .44 | .09 | .92 |
| Respectful Engagement | | | .23 | 1.33 | .22 | 1.32 | .23 | 1.32 |
| Threat to Job Features | | | -.36** | -3.36 | -.39** | -3.70 | -.36** | -3.31 |
| Powerlessness | | | .04 | .37 | .06 | .65 | .04 | .37 |
| Respectful Engagement X Threat to Job Features | | | | | .21* | 2.30 | | |
| Respectful Engagement X Powerlessness | | | | | | | -.01 | -.11 |
| R² | .14 | | .28 | | .31 | | .27 | |
| Δ R² | | | .16 | | .04 | | .00 | |
| F(df) | 4.87(4)** | | 6.39(7)** | | 6.52(8)** | | 5.53(8)** | |

Values in bold are relevant for hypotheses
$n=102$
$\beta$=Standardized coefficient
$R^2=R^2$ adjusted
$\Delta R^2 = R^2$ Change
*P<.05
**p<.01

*Figure 2. Interactive effect on Respectful Engagement and Threat to Job Features on openness to change*
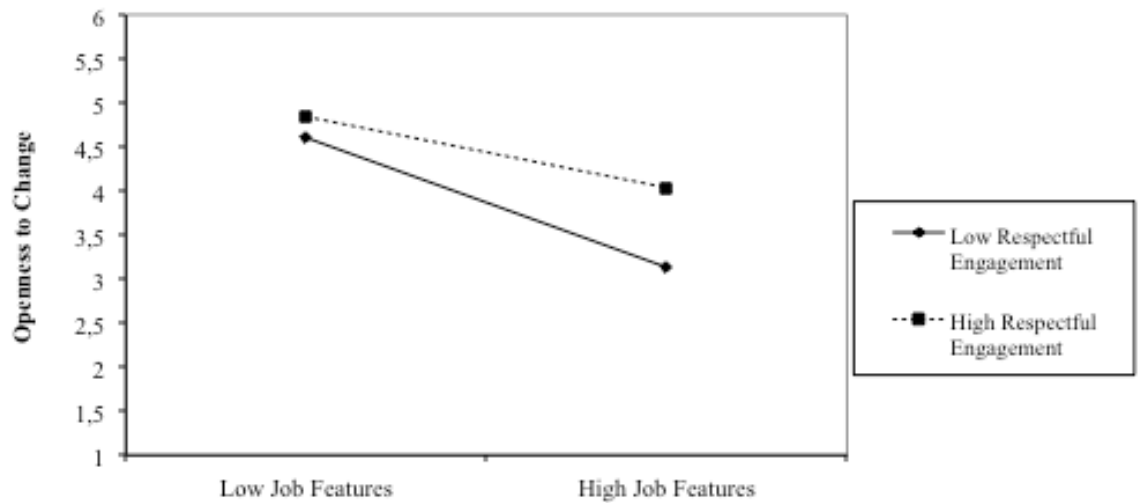


The significant interaction for high and low values of respectful engagement are shown in figure 1. This diagram shows that the negative relationship between threat to job features and openness to change is weaker when respectful engagement is high.

## Discussion

The aim of this study was to investigate the effect of job insecurity, measured through the underlying constructs of threat to job features and powerlessness, on layoff survivors' openness to change in organizations that have gone through a downsizing. Further we wanted to investigate whether respectful engagement had a moderating effect on the direct relationship.

According to Keidel, Bell & Lewis (1994), 75% of organizational downsizings may leave the company in worse shape than before. It is therefore important to detect predictors of employees' openness to change within the organizations after a downsizing. This study offers insights into predictors of survivors' attitudes in the wake of an organizational downsizing. It adds to research on the two less studied constructs of job insecurity, threat to job features and powerlessness, as predictors of employees' openness to change. In addition, it provides information about the importance of the supervisor's role in a change process. Results from this study also add to the less studied construct respectful engagement as a moderator.

**Theoretical Implications**

This study has made some important theoretical contributions. The direct effect of threat to job features on openness to change were found (H1a). However, there was no support for the direct effect of powerlessness on openness to change (H1b). Further, we found a moderated effect of respectful engagement on the relationship between threat to job features and openness to change (H2a), but no effect of the moderator between powerlessness and openness to change (H2b). Hence, hypothesis H1a and H2a were supported, but H1b and H2b were not supported.

The results from our study contribute to the research field of job insecurity, more specifically the underlying aspects of job insecurity that may affect employees' openness to change. Due to inconsistent findings (Sverke et al., 2002) on whether job insecurity has an effect on employees' openness to change, our initial thought was that this may be due to the use of a global rather than a multidimensional approach to job insecurity. Therefore, we chose to take on a multidimensional approach in the investigation of job insecurity and focus on some more specific underlying aspects; threat to job features and powerlessness. Armstrong-Stassen (1998) used downsizing as a context when investing job insecurity and openness to change and found a significant relationship among the variables. In this study, however, she measured quantitative job insecurity. Several researchers have established that there is a predicative relationship from quantitative job insecurity to openness to change (e.g. Devos et al., 2007; Chawla and Kelloway, 2004). This study contributes to the understanding of qualitative job insecurity and demonstrates that qualitative job insecurity seems to have the same effect on openness to change as quantitative job insecurity.

That we did not find support for H2b, contradicts the findings made by Armstrong-Stassen (1998). However, she performed a longitudinal study over a two-year period and suggested that the amount of powerlessness experienced increases over time. Our study was only conducted at one point in time and it is therefore not possible to investigate if the same effect is to be found, and it may explain why powerlessness did not have a significant effect on employees' openness to change in our results.

The empirical analysis also establish support for H2a. This means that positive perceptions of a supervisor may facilitate an environment more favorable to individuals' openness to change. This finding contributes to the research field within high quality connections and emphasizes the importance of respectful engagement within organizations. HQC have been suggested to be the key to innovation and change as this type of interaction ensures richer and more frequent communication between employees. It motivates people to do their best for the organization as a whole (Dutton, 2003). This perspective on relationships at work enriches our understanding of how this is vital for positive work outcomes, and how leaders play a critical role in influencing employees attitudes (Bommer, Rich & Rubin, 2005). Our findings support previous research done by Weick in 1993, and emphasize the importance of respectful interaction in difficult times when individuals are depending on the relationship with others in order to adapt to the rapidly changing environment. Respectful interaction is one way to counteract vulnerability during changes, so even though employees may experience job insecurity as a consequence of a downsizing, respectful interaction with their leader can buffer this effect.

**Practical Implications**

The results from the current study have practical implications for the management and the organization. After a downsizing several change initiatives are conducted. In order to avoid unfavorable progresses where employees are not open for these upcoming changes, it is important to be aware of aspects that affect employees' openness to change. One intention with the present study was to be able to predict a relationship between aspects of job insecurity and openness to change. We hope that our results will make it easier for leaders to detect which areas to focus on when trying to shape employees' attitudes to change initiatives following a downsizing.

Our findings suggest that it is important to be aware of the insecurity related to job features (e.g. career progress, pay etc.), since these may be jeopardized by the proposed changes in the workplace. A solution for leaders when taking this into consideration could be to provide more accurate information about how the downsizing may affect the features of one's job. It has been shown that the more information employees receive about a change is important in relation to

experienced job insecurity, because a person's sense of control and predictability can be reestablished by positive information about future outcomes (Ashford et al., 1989). However, we acknowledge the fact that this may be difficult for the management if they don't have much information about the future themselves, but keeping employees informed about the process may contribute to their feelings of being involved.

Further, our study offers practical implications related to the acknowledgement of the importance of HQC. More precisely about employees' perception of their leader as respectfully engaged. Our results demonstrate that when employees perceive their supervisor as respectfully engaged, this kind of interaction modifies the relationship between experienced job insecurity and openness to change, which highlights the importance of the closest supervisor´s role in a change process. Leaders should be present, genuine in their approach at work, communicate affirmation, listen effectively and be supportive in their communication (Dutton, 2003). Dutton (2014) stated that there are several ways to increase respectful engagement in the workplace. For instance, management should hire new associates based on integrity, their ability to be trusted and that they have others´ best interest in mind. Further should organizations have a buddy system from the beginning of the employment in order to foster high quality connections and build a relationship and positive work environment. In addition to hire individuals based on their interpersonal ability, they should also train this ability in the workplace.

Due to protection of our sources we are not able to mention any names, but companies that we have been in touch with acknowledge the possibility of benefiting from knowing what aspects to focus on when trying to reduce the experienced job insecurity that often accompanies organizational downsizing. If organizations want to effectively implement a change initiative it is important to have the employees alongside the change (Miller et al., 1994) and our study suggests which concrete aspects managements can focus on in terms of both reducing experienced job insecurity and actively make supervisors aware of the important role they play in the aftermath of a downsizing.

**Limitations and Implications for Future Research**

The stated contributions from our study should be seen in context of several limitations that also suggest opportunities for future research. First of all, our study uses a convenience sample which came as a result of the challenge we experienced when trying to get companies to distribute our survey to a whole department. Hence, our study consists of employees that freely wanted to participate, which may affect the results in the way that they don't fully represent the population of the drawn sample, and thus may not be generalizable. Voluntary participation may be a problem, because it increases the probability of recruiting individuals who feel particularly strong about the issue at hand which may bias the results (Sousa, Zauszniewski, & Musil, 2004). Additionally, we have a relatively small sample and future research should replicate our study using a randomly distributed sample to be able to generalize our results and minimize the possibility of bias (Fricker, 2008).

This study was a cross-sectional study, so data were collected at one point in time. Therefore, no causal inferences may be drawn from our study. We are not able to rule out alternative explanations for our observed associations. When using cross-sectional design, a potential bias may be common method variance (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee & Podsakoff, 2003). Further research should consider using multiple methods to investigate our model and we especially encourage researchers to use a longitudinal design to demonstrate the causality between the variables examined in this study. It will allow for a more rigorous investigation of causality and directionality. It would then also be possible to investigate if powerlessness increases over time as Armstrong-Stassen (1998) found in her study.

Additionally, even though we did not find support for our estimated relationship between powerlessness and openness to change, we strongly encourage future research to investigate this construct based on the related consequences of helplessness, reactance and work-alienation (Ashforth, 1989), as the results may have highly practical implications for organizations. If employees experience high levels of powerlessness they may supposedly distance themselves from the work and become more passive. One can assume that these are not features that organizations want as a part of their workforce.

Further, our results are based on a self-report questionnaire and results may therefore be influenced by self-report bias such as face validity and social desirability. Self-reports are more vulnerable to response bias (Loo & Loewen, 2004), for instance there is a possibility that respondents may have overestimated or underestimated their openness to change. However, we believe that self-report questionnaires were appropriate for all measures used in our study. We also tried to reduce common method bias (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee & Podsakoff, 2003), through separating the questions with page breaks in Qualtrics so respondents were not able to read through the whole survey at once and know which questions that were coming up next.

A further limitation may be that job insecurity could have been better understood if our study had included the items that measure *the importance* of job insecurity and powerlessness presented by Ashford et al. (1989). These items are also part of the measurement of total job insecurity. This could have given us valuable information about how essential these factors affect employees. However, to make it easier and faster for respondents to answer our survey, we tried to keep the number of items in the questionnaire low and prioritized some aspects of job insecurity that were less studied in previous research. However, we acknowledge that it could have been useful to include all items in the measurement of job insecurity.

Lastly, it becomes apparent from the descriptive of our respondents that nearly half of our sample (44%) consists of respondents with an age ranging from 20-29. This indicates that the results may not take the perspective of older workers into consideration. This may limit our results in the way that younger workers may be more flexible and adaptive by nature, hence giving a more positive response to how open they would consider themselves to the changes that their recent downsizing has brought to the workplace. We encourage future research to replicate our study on a bigger sample to aim for more diverse sample and generalizable results.

# Conclusion

This study has developed a set of hypotheses to test the relationships between experienced job insecurity, openness to change and respectful engagement among layoff survivors following a downsizing. More specifically, we aimed to investigate if respectful engagement will moderate the direct relationship between experienced job insecurity and openness to change. In accordance to theory in the research field of job insecurity, threat to job features and powerlessness are two important but less studied aspects of job insecurity. Our results suggest that when employees perceive the features of their job as threatened they are less open to change. However, their experience of powerlessness in the organization does not seem to affect their openness to change in our study.

Interestingly, our results suggest that respectful engagement moderates the relationship between threat to job features and openness to change. This suggests that if leaders are present, genuine, communicate affirmatively, listen effectively and be supportive in their communication, which characterize the interaction in respectful engagement, this will buffer the negative relationship between perceived threat to job features and openness to change. Thus, this study indicates that it is important to emphasize the importance of the interaction between the immediate leader and the employee in a change process. Accordingly, given the importance of employee attitudes to organizational change, the findings from our study may well serve as an important reminder of which aspects that need to be present or prevented when planning organizational change, especially in the aftermath of a downsizing.

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1 – Information letter to research participants

Kjære XXX,

I forbindelse med at vi nå skriver vår masteroppgave fra Handelshøyskolen BI, ved institutt for Ledelse og Organisasjon, trenger vi hjelp fra bedrifter i Norge som har nedbemannet til å svare på vår spørreundersøkelse. Derfor lurte jeg på om du kunne hjulpet oss med å sende ut undersøkelsen vår til arbeidere som fortsatt jobber i XXX.

Data fra spørreundersøkelsen vil bli behandlet helt konfidensielt og respondenter vil ikke trenge å oppgi navn på sin bedrift da XXX ikke vil bli nevnt i prosjektet. Vi er interessert i svar fra et mangfold av bedrifter som har nedbemannet og vet at anonymitet er svært viktig for å få valide resultater. Prosjektet skal etter planen avsluttes og leveres inn til Handelshøyskolen BI 01.09.2016 og alle opplysninger vil da bli slettet. Dette er et kvantitativt studie som er godkjent av Personvernombudet for forskning, Norsk senter for forskningsdata (NSD).

Deltakerne kan når som helst trekke sitt samtykke så lenge studien pågår.

Vi håper dere vil være interesserte i å delta i forskningsprosjektet vårt, og vi setter veldig stor pris på deres hjelp. Det settes også veldig stor pris på om dere videresender spørreundersøkelsen vår til avdelinger som har gjennomgått nedbemanning. Med hensyn til forskningsprosessen er det fint om du gir oss beskjed om hvor mange du sender til.
Trykk på linken under for å gjennomføre spørreundersøkelsen. Den tar mellom 5 og 7 minutter.
https://bino.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_9oSj9J8KNOh6DAN

Dersom du har noen spørsmål er det bare å ta kontakt.

Med vennlig hilsen
Bente Hvistendahl og Henriette Blomhoff
Tlf: 994 99 329   eller   402 11 135
Masterstudenter i Ledelse- og Organisasjonspsykologi
Handelshøyskolen BI.

**Appendix 2 – Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS**

**Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS**
NORWEGIAN SOCIAL SCIENCE DATA SERVICES

(NSD)

Harald Hårfagres gate 29
N-5007 Bergen
Norway
Tel. +47-55 58 21 17
Fax. +47-55 58 96 50
nsd@nsd.uib.no
www.nsd.uib.no
Org.nr. 985 321 884

Miha Skerlavaj
Institutt for ledelse og organisasjon Handelshøyskolen BI
Nydalsveien 42
0442 OSLO

Vår dato: 31.03.2016          Vår ref: 47434 / 3 / HJP          Deres dato:          Deres ref:

TILBAKEMELDING PÅ MELDING OM BEHANDLING AV PERSONOPPLYSNINGER

Vi viser til melding om behandling av personopplysninger, mottatt 16.02.2016. Meldingen gjelder prosjektet:

| | |
|---|---|
| 47434 | *Employees reactions to organisational change - the moderating effect of respectful engagement on the relationship between job insecurity and openness to organisational change* |
| Behandlingsansvarlig | *Handelshøyskolen BI, ved institusjonens øverste leder* |
| Daglig ansvarlig | *Miha Skerlavaj* |
| Student | *Bente Hvistendahl* |

Personvernombudet har vurdert prosjektet og finner at behandlingen av personopplysninger er meldepliktig i henhold til personopplysningsloven § 31. Behandlingen tilfredsstiller kravene i personopplysningsloven.

Personvernombudets vurdering forutsetter at prosjektet gjennomføres i tråd med opplysningene gitt i meldeskjemaet, korrespondanse med ombudet, ombudets kommentarer samt personopplysningsloven og helseregisterloven med forskrifter. Behandlingen av personopplysninger kan settes i gang.

Det gjøres oppmerksom på at det skal gis ny melding dersom behandlingen endres i forhold til de opplysninger som ligger til grunn for personvernombudets vurdering. Endringsmeldinger gis via et eget skjema, http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/meldeplikt/skjema.html. Det skal også gis melding etter tre år dersom prosjektet fortsatt pågår. Meldinger skal skje skriftlig til ombudet.

Personvernombudet har lagt ut opplysninger om prosjektet i en offentlig database, http://pvo.nsd.no/prosjekt.

Personvernombudet vil ved prosjektets avslutning, 31.08.2016, rette en henvendelse angående status for behandlingen av personopplysninger.

Vennlig hilsen

Katrine Utaaker Segadal

Hanne Johansen-Pekovic

Kontaktperson: Hanne Johansen-Pekovic tlf: 55 58 31 18
Vedlegg: Prosjektvurdering
Kopi: Bente Hvistendahl bentehvistendahl@hotmail.com

# Personvernombudet for forskning

## Prosjektvurdering - Kommentar

### INFORMASJON OG SAMTYKKE

Utvalget informeres skriftlig om prosjektet og samtykker til deltakelse. Informasjonsskriv og samtykkeerklæring er noe mangelfullt utformet. Vi ber derfor om at følgende tilføyes:

- hvilken institusjon som er ansvarlig for prosjektet (Handelshøyskolen BI)
- at opplysningene behandles konfidensielt og hvem som vil ha tilgang
- dato/tidspunkt for planlagt anonymisering av datamaterialet/prosjektslutt

Vi ber om at revidert informasjonsskriv sendes til personvernombudet@nsd.no .

### INFORMASJONSSIKKERHET

Vi legger til grunn at behandlingen av personopplysninger er i samsvar med interne retningslinjer for informasjonssikkerhet ved Handelshøyskolen BI.

Qualtrics er databehandler for prosjektet. Handelshøyskolen BI skal inngå skriftlig avtale med Qualtrics om hvordan personopplysninger skal behandles, jf. personopplysningsloven § 15. For råd om hva databehandleravtalen bør inneholde, se Datatilsynets veileder: http://www.datatilsynet.no/Sikkerhet-internkontroll/Databehandleravtale/.

### PROSJEKTSLUTT OG ANONYMISERING

Vi forstår det slik at dere har lagt opp til å anonymisere datamaterialet innen 31.08.16. Anonymisering innebærer å bearbeide datamaterialet slik at ingen enkeltpersoner kan gjenkjennes.
Vanligvis vil anonymisering innebære at:
- direkte personidentifiserende opplysninger slettes (inkludert koblingsnøkkel)
- indirekte personidentifiserende opplysninger slettes eller grovkategoriseres (f.eks. bakgrunnsopplysninger som arbeidsplass, stilling, alder og kjønn)

Vi gjør oppmerksom på at også databehandler (Qualtrics) må slette personopplysninger tilknyttet prosjektet i sine systemer. Dette inkluderer eventuelle logger og koblinger mellom IP-/epostadresser og besvarelser.

**Fra:** Hanne Johansen-Pekovic <hanne.Johansen-Pekovic@nsd.no>
**Sendt:** 12. april 2016 10:02
**Til:** bentehvistendahl@hotmail.com
**Emne:** Prosjektnr: 47434. Employees reactions to organisational change - the moderating effect of respectful engagement on the relationship between job insecurity and openness to organisational change

Hei,

Takk for revidert informasjonsskriv. Dette ser nå bra ut.

God jobbing med prosjektet!

--
Med vennlig hilsen Hanne Johansen-Pekovic
rådgiver/adviser
Tel: +47 55 58 31 18
nsd.no | twitter.com/NSDdata

**NSD**

nsd.no

NSD er nasjonalt arkiv for forskningsdata og et av verdens største i sitt slag. NSD arkiverer, tilrettelegger og formidler data til forskningsmiljøer både nasjonalt og internasjonalt, og utarbeider teknologiske løsninger. NSD har egen seksjon for

**Appendix 3 – Measurements**


**Job Insecurity**

Measures are based on Ashford, Lee & Bobko, 1989

*Threat to job features*

To capture the perceived threat to job features, we asked "looking at the future, what is the probability that changes could occur – changes you don´t want or might disagree with that would negatively affect each of these features?" responses are given on 5 point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5 (Negative change very unlikely, 1; Negative change unlikely, 2: negative change neither likely nor unlikely, 3; Negative change likely, 4: negative change very unlikely, 5)

1. Your geographic location?
2. Your potential to get ahead in the organization?
3. Your potential to maintain your current pay?
4. Your potential to attain pay increases?
5. The status the comes with your position in the company?
6. Your current freedom to schedule your own work?
7. Your current freedom to perform the work in the manner you see fit?
8. Your current access to resources (people, materials, information) in the organization?
9. Your current sense of community in working with good coworkers?
10. The amount of feedback you currently receive from your supervisor?
11. The supervision you receive?
12. The physical demands your job places on you
13. The opportunity to interact with the public?
14. The variety of tasks you perform?
15. The e opportunity to do an entire piece of work from start to finish
16. The Significance of your job?
17. The extent to which you can tell how well you are doing your job as you do it?


*Powerlessness*

Responses were given on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree)

1. I have enough power in the organization to control events that might affect my job

2. In the organization, I can prevent negative things from affecting my work situation

3. I understand the organization well enough to be able to control things that affect me

**Openness to Change**

Measurment based on Miller, Johnson & Grau (1998), and modified by Susskind, Miller and Johnson, (1998)

1. I would consider myself "open" to the change the recent downsizing brought to my work role

2. Right now, I am somewhat resistant to the changes in my work role (R)

3. I am quite reluctant to consider changing the way I now do my work (R)

4. I think the implementation of the recent downsizing positively effect how I accomplish my work

5. From my perspective, the recent downsizing was for the better

6. The changes as a result of downsizing are for the worst in accomplishing my work (R)

7. The changes as a result of the downsizing negatively effect how I perform my work role (R)

**Respectful Engagement**

Measurment is based on Carmeli, Dutton and Hardin (2015). Responses are given on a Likert type scale from 1 = (not at all) to 5 (to a very large extent).

1. My Supervisor is always available to hear out and listen to me

2. My supervisor pay the utmost attention to my needs

3. My supervisor here expresses genuine interest my position and the units they are managing and responsible for

4. My supervisor recognizes and understand what goes into each other's work

5. My supervisor emphasizes other members' good sides

6. My supervisor expresses appreciation and respect for my contribution to the organization

7. My supervisor appreciates how valuable my time is

8. My supervisor makes requests, not demands from me

9.    My supervisor speaks to me in a respectful rather than in a demanding way

**Trust**

Measurement is based on Mayer and Davis (1999). We used six out of seventeen items. Responses were given on a Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree)

1.  My supervisor is very capable of performing his/hers job.
2.  My supervisor is known to be successful at the things he/she tries to do.
3.  My supervisor is very concerned about my welfare.
4.  My needs and desires are very important to my supervisor
5.  My supervisor has a strong sense of justice.
6.  I never have to wonder whether my supervisor will stick to his/her word.

## Appendix 4 – Questionnaires

### Introduksjon

Hensikten med studien er å samle inn informasjon vedrørerende endringsprosesser i forbindelse med nedbemanning. Ansvarlig institusjon for prosjektet er Handelshøyskolen BI, Oslo.

### Deltagelse

Deltakelse i studien er helt frivillig.

### Prosedyre

Det tar 5-7 minutter å fullføre undersøkelsen på fem sider med ca. 10 spørsmål per side.

### Konfidensialitet og anonymitet

Alle data behandles konfidensielt og blir **kun** rapportert på aggregert nivå og ikke individ nivå. Alle data blir trygt lagret hvor kun studentene som utfører prosjektet har tilgang til dem. Alla data blir slettet når studien er avsluttet. Planlagt prosjektslutt er 31.08.16. Anonymisering av data begynner 15.05.16.

### Spørsmål om studien

Spørsmål kan rettes til Bente Hvistendahl eller Henriette Blomhoff, e-post: bentehvistendahl@hotmail.com eller henriettepb@outlook.com. **Prosjektslutt er beregnet til senest 01.09.16.**

**Med tanke på framtiden, hva er sannsynligheten for at endringer kan forekomme som vil påvirke hver og en av disse aspektene ved jobben din *negativt***

| | Negativ endring er svært usannsynlig | Negativ endring er litt usannsynlig | Negativ endring er verken sannsynlig eller usannsynlig | Negativ endring er sannsynlig | Negativ endring er svært sannsynlig | Ønsker ikke å svare |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Din geografiske plassering? | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Din mulighet for å komme videre innen din bedrift? | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Din mulighet til å opprettholde nåværende lønn? | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Din mulighet til å oppnå lønnsøkning? | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Statusen som følger din stilling i din bedrift? | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Din mulighet til å styre din tid som du gjør i dag? | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Din mulighet til å utføre oppgavene som du selv ønsker det? | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Din mulighet til å få tilgang til nødvendige ressurser (mennesker, materiale, informasjon) i organisasjonen? | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Din tilhørighet og fellesskap med gode kollegaer? | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Tilbakemeldinger du mottar fra din nærmeste overordnede? | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Den veiledning du mottar? | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| De fysiske krav til din stilling? | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Mulighet til å jobbe med publikum/brukere? | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Variasjon i oppgavene du utfører? | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Muligheten til å utføre en fullstendig oppgave fra start til slutt? | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Viktigheten og betydningen av din jobb? | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| I hvilken grad du kan avgjøre hvor godt du utfører jobben din? | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

## Angi hvor enig eller uenig du er i følgende påstander

| | Svært uenig | Litt uenig | Verken enig eller uenig | Litt enig | Svært enig | Ønsker ikke å svare |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Jeg har nok innflytelse i denne organisasjonene til å kontrollere hendelser som påvirker min jobb | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| I min jobb kan jeg forhindre at negative ting påvirker min situasjon | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Jeg forstår organisasjonen godt nok til å kunne kontrollere ting som påvirker meg | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

**Med tanke på den nylige nedbemanningen i din bedrift, vennligst angi hvor enig eller uenig du er i følgende påstander**

| | Svært uenig | Uenig | Noe uenig | Hverken enig eller uenig | Noe enig | Enig | Svært enig | Ønsker ikke å svare |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Jeg anser meg selv som "åpen" for den endringen den siste nedbemanningen førte til i min jobbrolle | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Akkurat nå føler jeg litt motstand mot endringen i min jobbrolle | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Jeg er ganske motvillig mot å tenke på å endre den måten jeg nå utfører jobben min på | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Jeg synes gjennomføringen av den siste nedbemanningen har innvirket positivt på hvordan jeg utfører arbeidet mitt | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Fra mitt ståsted var den siste nedbemanningen til det bedre | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Endringene som følge av nedbemanningen er til det verre for å utføre arbeidet mitt | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Endringene som følge av nedbemanningen innvirker negativt på hvordan jeg utfører arbeidet mitt | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

**Med tanke på din nærmeste leder
hvordan opplever du han/hun på de følgende områdene**

| | Ikke i det hele tatt | Til en liten grad | Til en viss grad | Til en stor grad | Til en veldig stor grad | Ønsker ikke svare |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Min leder er alltid tilgjengelig for å la meg meg få snakke om ting og lytte til meg | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Min leder tar mine behov på alvor | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Min leder her viser oppriktig interesse for min stilling og de enhetene han/hun leder og har ansvar for | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Min leder er klar over og forstår hva som ligger i arbeidet til hver enkelt | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Min leder legger vekt på andre medarbeideres gode sider | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Min leder viser at han/hun setter pris på og respekterer mitt bidrag til organisasjonen | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Min leder forstår hvor verdifull min tid er | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| | | | | | | |
| Min leder kommer med anmodninger, ikke krav til meg | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Min leder snakker til meg på en respektfull snarere enn en forlangende måte | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

**Med tanke på din nærmeste leder
hvordan opplever du han/hun på de følgende områdene**

**Med tanke på din nærmeste leder,
vennligst angi hvor enig eller uenig du er i følgende påstander**

| | Svært uenig | Uenig | Hverken enig eller uenig | Enig | Svært enig | Ønsker ikke å svare |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Min leder er svært dyktig i jobben sin | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Min leder er kjent for å lykkes med det han/hun prøver å gjøre | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Min leder er svært opptatt av mitt ve og vel | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Mine behov og ønsker er svært viktig for min leder | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Min leder har en sterk rettferdighetssans | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Jeg trenger aldri å lure på om min leder vil holde ord | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

**Ditt kjønn**

○ Mann

○ Kvinne

**Din alder**

○ Under 20 år

○ 20-29 år

○ 30-39 år

○ 40-49 år

○ 50-59 år

○ 60 år og over

**Utdanning**

○ Grunnskole

○ Videregående opplæring

○ Universitet/høyskole 1-3 år

○ Universitet/høyskole 4 år og mer

**Appendix 5 – Pattern Matrix**


**Pattern Matrix**[a]

|  | Factor | |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1 | 2 |
| JobFeatures6 | .782 | |
| JobFeatures10 | .706 | |
| JobFeatures15 | .669 | |
| JobFeatures17 | .650 | |
| JobFeatures5 | .614 | |
| JobFeatures16 | .594 | |
| JobFeatures12 | .566 | |
| JobFeatures13 | .525 | |
| JobFeatures7 | .518 | |
| JobFeatures14 | .471 | |
| JobFeatures9 | .460 | |
| JobFeatures11 | .446 | |
| JobFeatures4 | .426 | |
| JobFeatures1 | .414 | |
| JobFeatures2 | .403 | |
| Powerlessness1 | | .854 |
| Powerlessness2 | | .779 |
| Powerlessness3 | | .750 |

Extraction method: Unweighted Least Squares.

Rotation method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization


[a] =Rotation Converged in 5 Iterations


*Note:* the numbers reflect the order the questions are stated in our questionnaire.

JobFeatures 8 was removed

# Preliminary Thesis Report

# -Attitudes towards Organizational Change-

## Supervisor: Miha Škerlavaj

Hand-in date: 15 January 2016

Campus:

BI Oslo

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GRA19003 Preliminary Thesis Report

Program:

Master of Science in Leadership and Organizational Psychology

**Table of Content**

# 1.0 Introduction

Organizations are faced with continuous and unparalleled changes (Madsen, Miller & John, 2005), and in order to remain competitive they should be able to detect changes, predict trends, and adapt (Kraiger & Ford, 2007). Change initiatives have increased as companies have struggled with matters such as downsizing, technological advancement, mergers and instability (Madsen et al., 2005). In order to conduct a successful change, some researchers have concluded, based on the failure rate of change projects, that it may be important not to underestimate the central role of individuals in the change process, and adopted a micro-level perspective on change (Choi, 2011). At the same time, change efforts may fail as a consequence of lack of support from the employees (Devos, Buelens & Bouckenooghe, 2007), because employees' willingness to participate is essential in order to succeed with any change (Miller, Johnson & Grau, 1994). It is therefore important to understand factors that may influence this. Attitudes may be formed already when hearing about a change, and it is therefore vital to secure a favorable response early in the change process (Lawrence, 1954), and Miller et al. (1994), suggest that *openness to change* may measure this attitude.

One area where organizations may influence employees openness to change is through social relationships at work (Madsen, et al., 2005), and we suggests that relationships influence employees attitudes towards the change process by enhancing their capacities and motivating them to engage with each other to gain a more open and thorough view of what is going on in the organization. Dutton and Ragins (2006) states that work relationship are central regarding how work gets done. From the age of 20 to 70 people often spend most of their time in organizations (Carmeli, Dutton & Hardin 2015), and as relational behavior is essential for human existence and dignity (Rawls, 1971, cited in Carmeli et al., 2015) it is important to gather more information about this behavior at the workplace. In Dutton (2003) it is stated that the first pathway to build high-quality connections (HQC) is *respectful engagement*. If organizational members are engaging with one another respectfully, several positive interpersonal emotions will emerge and broaden people's capacities to build other forms of durable resources (Carmeli, et al., 2015). There seems to be limited research on respectful interaction in the workplace and its relation to change. Weick  (1993) did however suggest several sources that may counteract vulnerability in organizations and one of these was respectful interaction. He

suggests that if trust, honesty and self-respect are more fully developed, new and positive options are created such as mutual adaption, blind imitation of creative solution and trusting compliance. Still, this is an area in research that needs more research and will therefore be covered in this study. We hope to contribute to research on conditions where employees are more open to organizational changes. We suggests that a greater level of respectful engagement will affect employees attitudes towards an organizational change, and have developed a model to investigate how respectful engagement indirectly, through relational information processing may affect employees openness to change. As *job insecurity* often is related to negative changes concerning the job (Sverke & Hellgren, 2002), we further suggest that job insecurity will moderate the indirect relationship between respectful engagement and employees openness to change.

### 1.1 Research Questions

Based on out theoretical framework we have developed the following research questions:

1. Does respectful engagement indirectly, through the facilitation of relational information processing (RIP), affect employee´s openness to change?
2. Does Job insecurity moderate the indirect relationship between respectful engagement and openness to change?

**Model**
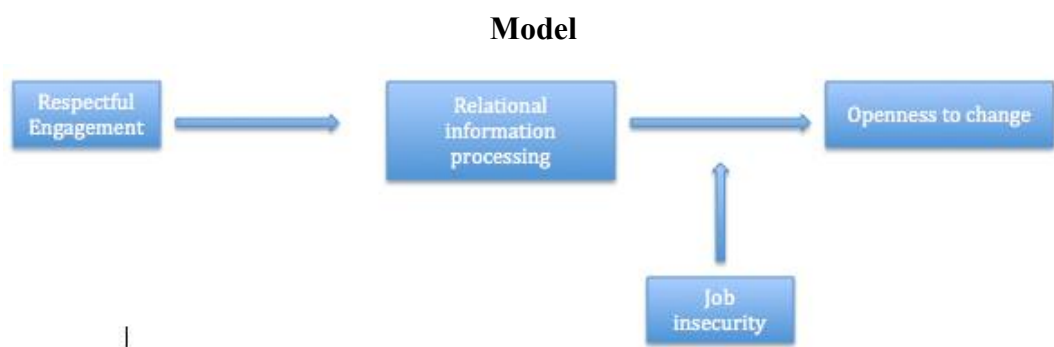
# 2.0 Theoretical Framework

## 2.1 Reactions towards Change

In the organizational change literature the primary focus has been on how organizations prepare, implement, and react in relation to organizational change (Oreg, Vakola & Armenakis, 2011). However, what has been stated to be equally important is individuals reactions to organizational change, and more focus on the individual level may explain under which conditions employees are open towards organizational change. Effort done at the organizational level may shape employees attitudes towards change and foster perceptions of support, trust and participation (Choi, 2011). Several constructs are used for change recipient´s reaction and Oreg and colleagues (2011) combine these constructs in four categories, which are pre-change antecedents categories, change antecedents categories, explicit reactions and change consequences. This study will look further into pre-change antecedents such as respectful engagement and relational information processing. It will also investigate change antecedents such as job insecurity. Explicit reactions can be divided into affective reactions, cognitive reaction and behavioral reactions and we will look further into cognitive reactions and investigate openness to change as a reaction towards organizational change.

### 2.1.1 Openness to Change

In order to succeed with an organizational change it is vital to overcome potential resistance to change (Miller et al., 1994), and organizations must be able to enhance employee´s support for the change and their acceptance of change initiatives. Different constructs that focus on employees' attitudes towards change has been investigated, and they all have distinct meanings. Knowledge about these constructs provides organizations with more information about how employees perceive different change initiatives. Important constructs involving an individual's positive or negative judgment about the change are readiness to change, commitment to change, openness to change, and cynicism about organizational change (Choi, 2011). Wanberg and Banas (2000), suggest that out of these constructs openness to change is particularly important in the early stage of a change process. According to Armenakis, Harris and Mossholder (1993), when creating employee readiness to change it is critical to have a high level of openness to change, and Miller et al., (1994) further states that openness to change is a necessary condition for implementing a successfully planned change.

Lewin (1951, cited in Weick & Quinn, 1999) introduced the concepts of unfreeze-change-refreeze in a change process, and openness to change is comparable to the unfreezing state, as it finds place in the beginning of the change process. Openness has been conceptualized as "support for change, positive affect about the potential consequences of the change, and it is considered necessary, initial condition for successful planned change" (Covin & Kilmann, 1990; Lewin, 1952; Lippit, Watson & Westley, 1958; cited in Miller et al., 1994, p. 60). Wanberg and Banas (2000) argues that this definition consist of two factors: (a) willingness to support the change, and (b) positive affect about the potential consequences of change, and that there are different antecedent for these two factors. Choi (2011) argues that since openness to change may change over time, because individual´s experience may change during an organizational change, this construct is better conceptualized as a state instead of a trait.

**2.2 High Quality Connections**

Organizations need their employees to interact and connect in order to accomplish work, and the quality of these connections will affect how organizations function. Quality connections is affected both by changes in the individual and by the social context, as it is a dynamic process. High quality connections have been conceptualized through three capacities: *emotional carrying capacity, the tensility of the tie, and the degree of connectivity*. The former refers to the ability to express more positive or negative emotion in relationships. These connections, with higher quality, are better at surviving expressions of more absolute emotion of varying kinds. The second capacity, tensility of the tie relates to the connections capacity to bend and survive strain, and to function in different situations. The last capacity, degree of connectivity refers to a relationship´s generativity and openness to new ideas and influences, and bounce back from behavior that could shut down generative processes (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003). One way to create high quality connections is through creating strategies for respectful engagement. Strategies for respectful engagement are concerned with how to engage others in such ways that send out messages of value and worth (Dutton, 2003). Such strategies may be especially important in uncertain situations where employees are stressed and unsecure about their future.

*2.2.1 Respectful Engagement*

We will focus on the potency of respectful engagement (RE) as a key form of positive connections and examine its influence on openness to organizational change at the individual level. According to Dutton (2003) high quality connections and respectful engagement creates a circulative relationship because respectful engagement creates high quality connections and high quality connections, again, create respectful engagement, which can manifest itself throughout the organization or a work unit. Carmeli et al. (2015) state that, RE is created through different forms of interaction. Several acts cause respectful engagement, such as conveying presence, communicating affirmation, effective listening and supportive communication. Higher levels of RE are manifested when employees perceive each other as acting in these ways (Dutton, 2003).

RE focus on members' actual behaviors in interaction with each other instead of resources that these behaviors generate, this makes it different from coworker support (Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008). According to Dutton (2003), everyone have a need for respectfully engaging together with others, but unfortunately in many organizations this is not the case. The importance of being accepted as a person of worth and value is highlighted in RE, and it emphasize that interrelating at work can be based on less instrumental and more humanizing forms of interpersonal connections (Carmeli et al., 2015).

RE has several positive outcomes for the individual. It fosters acceptance and openness, in addition to motivating interaction and makes individuals engaging in one another  (Carmeli et al., 2015). Mutual empowerment, associated with openness and zest, is also encouraged through RE, and this allows people to grow-in-relationship (Miller & Stiver, 1997, cited in Carmeli et al., 2015). By enabling work coordination and improving the speed and quality of learning, it is stated that respectful engagement enables effective performance. Positive emotions like appreciations and gratitude are created through the sense of being interpersonally accepted, which is a result of members engaging with each other respectfully (Strom & Strom, 1987). The capacity to build other forms of durable sources, (e.g. the capacity to adapt) are broadened by these interpersonal emotions. Additionally, people are strengthened from within and equipped to be more resourceful and resilient through the positive emotions (Fredrickson, 1998). Small act on respectful engagement fill a relationship with greater energy while at the same time sending signals and modeling behavior that are picked up by others

(Dutton 2003). It may therefore suggested that through RE, individuals will make people more able to adapt, and hence will be more willing to contribute in a positive way in a change process (e.g. be more open to change).

*2.2.2 Relational Information Processing*

Relational information processing (RIP) is a vital aspect of interpersonal communication (Knobloch & Solomon, 2005), and it involves a process where members of an organization use conversation to reflect upon their goals at work (Carmeli, et al., 2015). Conversation is a basic element of human interaction and essential for organizational communication (Ford & Ford, 1995). Additionally, reflection is a vital element in how individuals think about what has been done, and also why it has been done and how (Carmeli, et al., 2015). Research has demonstrated that when individuals reflect upon experiences this will in turn produce more effective learning and enhanced performance (Di Stefano, Gino, Pisano & Staas, 2014 cited in Carmeli et al., 2015). RIP involves how organizational members actively engage each other in relation to their goals and ways of performing their work. RIP focus on reflection-in-conversation and differs from social information processing, even though both focus on members´ immersion in a social context, RIP involves a more active level of interpersonal behavior. It involves seeking colleagues´ inputs and reactions to their work, in addition to thinking deeply with others. This process results in a comprehensive exploration in the present (Carmeli, et al., 2015).

As RE and RIP are relatively new constructs, we are only aware of one study investigating this relationship. Carmeli et al. (2015) investigated these two constructs and its relationship to creativity on undergraduate students, and they found a positive relationship between RE and RIP. They argued that employees who engage in RE are also more motivated and equipped to engage in RIP. The reasoning behind this is that RE involves recognizing, accepting and affirming other employees and what they have to offer. This in turn may foster conversation where employees can think about what they do at work, and why they do it, in addition to how. We believe that the same relationship could be found in the Norwegian work market, and propose the first hypothesis:

*H1: Respectful Engagement is positively related to Relational Information Processing*

*2.2.3 Relational Information Processing and Openness to Change*

We suggest that RIP will influence an individual's openness to change. Previous research has investigated different antecedent to openness to change, where most research are conducted on context related factors. It has been stated that it may be important to focus more on a micro-level perspective, which contains the individuals in the organization, and under which conditions employees support change (Choi, 2011). Arvonen and Petterson (2002) argue that the best combination for effectiveness in dealing with change is an orientation toward behaviors and change behaviors. Gilley, Gilley and McMillan (2009) also state that communication methods and -systems influences how and when change is adopted. Openness to change reflects organizational members attitudes and research has often investigated employee's attitudes from either the job characteristics model or the social information-processing model (Miller et al., 1994). Social information-processing occurs as the available information in organization influence individuals perception regarding their needs and their job characteristics (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). Communication shapes individuals perception regarding their needs, what a job is like, and how to express feelings. In a planned change, information may be particularly important in shaping individuals impression of the change.

That communication is important when producing change is not a new idea (Ford & Ford, 1995) but we are not aware of any previous studies investigating the effect of relational informational processing on employees openness to change. In contrast to social information processing RIP captures a more active level of interpersonal behavior. Employees who engage in RIP are more likely to generate, build on and combine greater variety of information as they are more likely to reflect upon others point of view, which may result in a richer understanding of what is going on around them (Carmeli et al., 2015). This information may provide more insight into the consequences of potential changes and insight into positive outcomes from other´s point of view in addition to one's own. This may provide individuals with the opportunity to see change outcomes as positive for others than one self and in turn be more open towards potential changes.

Employees who engage in RIP are likely to discuss and reflect with each other in an open and nonjudgmental way (Carmeli et al., 2015). This way of

interacting is also associated with mindfulness (Bishop, et al., 2004). In the literature, mindful behavior has been characterized by openness to new information, being aware of new perspectives, creating new perspectives, and an orientation in the present (Langer, 1997; Sternberg, 2000; Fiol and O´Conner, 2003 cited in Valorinta, 2009). Avey, Wernsing and Luthans (2008) suggested that in times of organizational change, mindful employees have greater opportunity to acknowledge different thinking patterns that challenge their ability to be optimistic and resilient at work. We expect that interacting through RIP will open up for new insight and knowledge about what is going on and provide employees with more consciousness regarding organizational changes.

*H2: Relation Information Processing is related to Openness To Change.*

*2.2.4 The mediating role of Relational Information Processing*

We suggest that RIP will mediate the relationship between RE and openness to change. In this model we hypothesize that RE facilitates RIP, and RIP will in turn foster individual's openness to change. Interaction among employees is related to the provision and interpretation of communicative behavior (Sennet, 2003, cited in Stephens, Heaphy & Dutton, 2011). Employees who are encouraged to share their experiences and interrelate through RE may be more likely to create an enriched conversation about the work, which in an organizational change process may provide them with more information and a more open view on the upcoming change. When sharing information, employees become sources of knowledge for each other, and this may facilitate a process where employee's build on other's unique input (Carmeli et al., 2015), which we believe will make employees more open to potential changes in the organization. If organizational members are engaging with one another respectfully, the sense of being interpersonally accepted, valued and affirmed will call up positive emotions like appreciation and gratitude. These positive interpersonal emotions broaden people's capacities to build other forms of durable resources such as the capacity to adapt (Carmeli et al., 2015). We therefore propose the following hypothesis:

*H3: Relational Information Processing will mediate the link between Respectful Engagement and Openness to Change*

**2.3 Job Insecurity**

Job Insecurity is an important construct in the organizational change literature as it has an impact on several outcomes such as well-being, turnover intention, organizational commitment and job performance (Sverke, Hellgren & Näswall, 2002). A characteristic of organizational change is found to be uncertainty about the future (Schweiger & Walsh, 1990, cited in Chawla & Kelloway, 2004). The fear that is awakened with change has been synonymously with job insecurity (Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt, 1984). Oreg et al., (2011) state that job insecurity is a change antecedent related to perceived harm for the individual.

Job insecurity refers to employees´ negative reaction towards changes concerning the job (Sverke & Hellgren, 2002), and has been defined in a number of ways such as "Perceived powerlessness to maintain desired continuity in a threatened job situation" (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984, p. 438), "overall concern about the future existence of the job (Rosenblatt & Ruvio, 1996, p. 587), and "an individual´s expectations about the continuity in a job situation" (Davy, Kinicki & Scheck, 1997, p. 323).

A distinction can be drawn between a global and a multidimensional operationalization of job insecurity. Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt (1984) were the first to introduce a multidimensional definition and stated that an important but often overlooked feature of job insecurity is a loss of job features. Further, they emphasized that threats to the job itself, importance of total job, threats to valued job features, importance of valued job features, and a feeling of powerlessness are terms that best can describe job insecurity. In relation to the two dimensions (global and a multidimensional) of perceived loss of continuity in a job situation, Hellgren, Sverke, & Isaksson (1999) used the terms quantitative and qualitative job insecurity. The first refers to concerns about the future existence of a job, while the latter refers to perceived threats of impaired quality in the employment relationship (e.g. deterioration of working conditions, lack of career opportunities, and decreased salary development). They further argue that quantitative insecurity and qualitative insecurity may lead to different outcomes.

Ashford et al. (1989) developed a measure of the different aspects of the multidimensional definition. A combination of the dimensions was made into a multiplicative scale of job insecurity. In our study we will focus on the perceived

threats of job features and powerlessness, as these are less studies in previous research.

*2.3.1 The moderating role of job insecurity*

Based on research on job insecurity and it´s relationship to change, we suggest that job insecurity will moderate the indirect relationship between respectful engagement and employees´ openness to change. Inconsistent findings have been reported on the relationship between job insecurity and openness to change. Armstrong-Stassen (1998) conducted a study where managers were exposed to a threat of job loss, and no relationship between threat of job loss and openness to change was found. On the other hand, some researchers have found a significant relationship. For instance did Chawla and Kelloway (2004) find that communication and job security predicted openness to change. They proposed a model, which posits that high quality communication and early involvement of employees in the change process determines successful change, and the aspects can also facilitate trust and openness to change. In addition, they also reported that employees are proposed to be less open to change when job insecurity is perceived as high. Favorable attitudes towards change can be fostered by increased information distribution about the proposed change, as this may decrease fear and provide employees with the competence needed for making the change happen (Wanberg & Banas, 2000). Based on previous research, we believe that job insecurity will influence our model in a negative way. Since job insecurity is conceptualized as consisting of different aspects, we choose to focus on threats of job features as one aspect on job insecurity, and investigate how this may work as a moderator in our model.

*H4a: Perceived Threat to Job Features will moderate the indirect relationship between Respectful Engagement and Openness to change.*

Some definitions emphasize the importance of powerlessness in job insecurity. For instance did Ashforth (1989) conceptualize it as a "powerlessness to maintain desired continuity in a threatened job situation" (p. 438). Powerlessness is defined as a lack of autonomy and participation. Reactance, helplessness, and work alienation is said to be generated by unexpected or undesired powerlessness (Ashforth, 1989). As a part of quantitative job insecurity,

Armstrong-Stassen (1998) studied perceived powerlessness among managers and found a relationship to openness to change. Powerlessness has also been found to be related to openness to change together with qualitative insecurity (e.g. threat to the job itself) (Chawla & Kelloway, 2004). Additionally, Sverke et al. (2002) have encouraged researchers to investigate the concept of powerlessness further, due to less research on this construct separately from other aspects of job insecurity. Hence, this study will hopefully add to the research on powerlessness as an aspect of job insecurity. This study will add to the understanding of powerlessness as a moderator between pre-change antecedents (e.g. respectful engagement) and explicit reaction (e.g. openness to change).

*H4b: Powerlessness will moderate the indirect relationship between Respectful Engagement and Openness to Change.*

### 2.4 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to examine the variables respectful engagement and openness to change with relational information processing as a mediator and job insecurity as a moderator. First of all, due to the small amount of research that has been done on the micro-level/attitudinal construct of respectful engagement, we want to investigate if this type of interaction will work as an antecedent to openness to change. Second, based on the literature that argues that information processing is showed as an antecedent to openness to change (Miller et al., 1994), we want to investigate if relational information processing may work as a mediator in our model. Lastly, we want to investigate if job insecurity, which is closely related to openness to change (Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt, 1984), will affect the assumed indirect relationship between respectful engagement and openness to change (mediated through relational information processing).

### 3.0 Method

### 3.1 Sample and Procedure

We plan to distribute our surveys to companies in the Norwegian work market. We aim to distribute the surveys to approximately 1000 respondents and hope that we will get a response rate of 15% so that our results will stem from around 150 respondents. We are so far not sure of which companies to choose, or what changes these companies might be facing.  In order to get many participants we will choose big companies in our study. We will translate all measures into

Norwegian, to be sure that the questions or statements are understood in the same way by participants. Our survey will be distributed by email and we hope that the companies we approach will find our research interesting and be willing to help us in responding our survey. Our survey will be developed in Qualtrics. We will investigate the Norwegian work market in order to find big companies that are up against organizational changes. We will then apply to NSD in order to be able to contact companies, and since this may take some time, we plan to start collecting our data in the end of March/beginning of April, and our aim is to have a first draft of our final thesis ready by the 1st of July.

## 3.2 Measurements

### 3.2.1 Independent Variable - Respectful Engagement

Carmeli, Dutton and Hardin´s (2015) nine items scale will be used to measure respectful engagement (Appendix, 17). Respondents reports on a 5 points Likert-type scale (1 = not at all, to 5 = to a very large extent) to find out whether RE is the way organizational members interrelate at work. the nine items consist of statements such as "Organizational members here are always available to hear out and listen to each other". The scale is reliable ($\alpha$ = .85).

### 3.2.2 Mediator - Relational Information Processing

To measure RIP three items developed by Carmeli et al., (2015) will be used (Appendix, p. 17). Respondent will be given a 5 points Likert-type scale (1 = not at all, to 5 = to a very large extent) to find out whether RIP is the way organizational members process deep information at work. RIP is found to be distinct from RE. It was reliable ($\alpha$ = .71), and contains items such as "I thoroughly reflect upon my goals and the ways to attain them with my colleagues at work".

### 3.2.3 Moderator - Job Insecurity

We will measure job insecurity using items developed by Ashford et al. (1989) (Appendix, p. 18). We plan to use two factors; "threats to job features", consisting of 17 items, and "powerlessness", consisting of 3 items. Participant will report their answer on a 5 point Likert scale ranging from (1 agree, to 5 strongly disagree).

*3.2.4 Dependent Variable - Openness to Change*

Our plan is to measure openness to change using 8 items based on Miller, et al. (1994) (Appendix, p. 18). Respondents will report their answer on a 7 point Likert scale (1 Strongly disagree, to 7 strongly agree). The items will be rewritten since we will conduct our study in several organizations.

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**Appendix**

**Respectful Engagement**

Carmeli, Dutton & Hardin, (2015):

1.  Organizational members here are always available to hear out and listen to each other

2.  Organizational members here pay the utmost attention to each other's needs

3.  Organizational members here express genuine interest in each other's position and the units they are managing and responsible for

4.  Organizational members here recognize and understand what goes into each other's work

5.  Organizational members here emphasize other members' good sides

6.  Organizational members here express appreciation and respect for each other's contribution to the organization

7.  Organizational members here appreciate how valuable other members' time is

8.  Organizational members here make requests, not demands from each other

9.  Organizational members here speak to each other in a respectful rather than in a demanding way

Responses will be done on a five-point Likert-type scale running from 1 = not at all, to 5 = to a very large extent. The scale has an internal consistency (Cronbach´s alpha) of .85. (Carmeli et al., 2015. P. 9)


**Relational Information Processing**

Carmeli, Dutton & Hardin, (2015):

1.  I thoroughly reflect upon my goals and the ways to attain them with my colleagues at work

2.  I thoroughly reflect upon the way things are done with my colleagues at work

3.  I constantly discuss questions with my colleagues at work about why am I using certain ways of doing things and whether there are better alternatives to complete the tasks

Responses will be done on a five-point Likert-type scale running from 1 = not at all, to 5 = to a very large extent. The scale has an internal consistency (Cronbach´s alpha) of .71. (Carmeli et al., 2015. P. 9)


**Openness to Change**

This measurement will be based on Miller, Johnson and Grau (1994), but they have to

be rewritten to fit with the organizational change our sample is facing. The following 8 items will be used:

1.   I would consider myself to be "open" to the changes the wok teams will bring to my work role

2.   Right now, I am somewhat resistant to the proposed changes in work tams (reversed)

3.   I am looking forward to the changes in my work role brought about by the implementation of work teams

4.   In light of the proposed changes in the work teams, I am quite reluctant to consider changing the way I now do my work (reversed)

5.   I think that the implementation on work teams will have a positive effect on how I accomplish my work (reversed)

6.   From my perspective, the proposed changes in the work teams will be for the better

7.   The proposed changes in the work teams will be for the worse in terms of the way that I have to get my work done (Reversed)

8.   I think that the proposed changes in the work teams will have a negative effect on how I perform my role in the organization (Reversed)

   Respondents will report on a 7 point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree to 7 (strongly agree).


**Job Insecurity**

Ashford, Lee & Bokblo (1989) p. 827

*The perceived threats of job features:* "Looking to the future, what is the probability that changes could occur – changes you don't want or might disagree with that would negatively affect each of these features?" (negative change very unlikely, 1; negative change unlikely, 2: negative change neither likely nor unlikely, 3; negative change likely 4; negative change very likely, 5)

1.   Your geographic location?

2.   Your potential to get ahead in the organization?

3.   Your potential to maintain your current pay?

4.   Your potential to attain pay increases?

5.   The status that comes with your position in the company?

6.   Your current freedom to schedule your own work?

7.   Your current freedom to perform your work in the manner you see fit?

8.   Your current access to resources (people, materials, information) in the organization?

9.   Your current sense of community in working with good coworkers?

10.  The amount of feedback you currently receive from your supervisor?

11.  The supervision you receive?

12.  The physical demands your job place on you?

13.  The opportunity to interact with the public?

14.  The variety of tasks you perform?

15.  The opportunity to do an entire piece of work from start to finish?

16.  The significance of your job?

17.  The extent to which you can tell how well you are doing your job as you did?

*Powerlessness:* "Indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statement" (strongly disagree, 1; disagree, 2: neither agrees nor disagrees, 3: agree, 4: strongly agree, 5)

1.   I have enough power in the organization to control event that might affect my job

2.   In the organization, I can prevent negative things from affecting my work situation

3.   I understand this organization well enough to be able to control things that affect me.