

Patterns of the Psychological Contract Among  
Rural Saskatchewan Vice-Principals

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College of Graduate Studies and Research  
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Saskatoon

by

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## ABSTRACT

As demands on school-based administrators continue to increase, so do their responsibilities. Historically the roles and responsibilities of school principals have been clearly delineated in both the legislation governing in-school administrators and also in principals' job descriptions. Principals typically know the expectations of their leadership roles, however, the same cannot be said for all vice-principals (VPs).

The pattern that emerges is one that shows the VP as being a jack-of-all-trades. Typically, Saskatchewan rural VPs do not have clearly delineated expectations formally or informally in either legislation or job description. Most often VPs positions are advertised as containing a teaching component and "other duties as assigned." The 2001 Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation (STF) recommendations for improving in-school administration positions have led to little change (p. 3).

The conceptual framework focused on the relationship between geographical location (distance), gender and rural Saskatchewan VP perceptions of employee-made and employer-made workplace obligations. VPs are a critical yet often overlooked component of school effectiveness. This emphasized the need for advancing our understanding of VPs' employment relationship and connecting this to the "VP role restructured" blueprint found in the literature. The purpose of this study was to investigate, explore and describe the pattern of the psychological contract among Saskatchewan rural VP's and facilitate better utilization of their skills and leadership.

Quantitative and qualitative methods were used in this study. The quantitative data was derived from Rousseau's (2000) Psychological Contract Inventory (PCI) survey questionnaire. This survey was used to determine the extent of employee-made and employer-made workplace obligations from the VP perception. The sample consisted of

42 VPs employed in rural Saskatchewan schools. The qualitative data were generated from participant responses to the open-ended questions attached to the end of the PCI. The responses to the survey and the open-ended questions were analyzed according to the research questions, emerging themes and recurring themes. After the data were analyzed, relationships were revealed between geographical location, gender, and rural VPs' perceptions of workplace obligations.

The findings in this study revealed VPs were generally in agreement that relationships between distance, gender and perceptions of workplace obligations were slight at best. It was also revealed that VPs' perceptions of employee-made and employer-made workplace obligations were characterized as *well-being* items representative of loyalty and security features of a relational psychological contract. VPs indicated a willingness to commit to the organization and effort tirelessly regardless of distance or gender.

Participants almost unanimously expressed their aspirations for the inclusion of professional growth, skill enhancement and increased leadership responsibilities in their assigned, expected and assumed role behaviors. Participant responses were generally consistent with the literature. Derived from participants' qualitative responses, VPs lead busy work lives. As revealed in the findings, VPs indicated they had aspirations for enhanced leadership opportunities. This study generated many implications for practice, policy and research.

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advice as I embarked on this study of the psychological contract among rural Saskatchewan VPs.

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A.J. (Jim) Propp

March 30, 2004

## DEDICATION

To my wife Susan -- your enduring love, support and encouragement sustain me.

Thanks for being there.

To my family – your encouragement and pride in my achievements  
helped me tackle the obstacles.

And to all the wonderful educators and administrators I have had the privilege of working  
with and learning from over the course of my public school career.

*Knowledge speaks; wisdom listens.*  
Jimi Hendrix

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **THE PROBLEM**

The role of the assistant or vice principal is one of the least researched and least discussed topics in professional journals and books focusing on educational leadership (Weller & Weller, 2002). No universal definition of the role or clearly defined job description for the position of vice-principal exists. For the purpose of this study, vice-principal and assistant principal refer to the position of second level school-based administrator. Typically assistant principals are tenured vice-principals, however, for consistency of language, the term “vice-principal” is used in this thesis to avoid confusion.

The vice-principal role (hereinafter referred to as VP) was open to interpretation by principals and central office personnel alike, and often became one that fulfilled the common contractual phrase of “performing any other duties assigned by a superior” (Weller & Weller, 2002, p. xiii). Glanz and Hartzell both noted the tendency of educational administration literature to focus only on the principalship (as cited in Brien, 2002). Since roles and responsibilities differ between the two positions, the principalship literature cannot be viewed as a sufficient substitute for specific research on the vice-principalship in its own right (Brien, 2002, p. 1). What was clear was the position of vice-principal was largely understudied. A search of VP literature yielded very little text particular to either Canadian or Saskatchewan contexts. Brien, from the University of Alberta indicated, “the role of the vice-principal has received little

attention in the educational research and practitioner literature” (p. 1). “In a review of 756 articles published between 1993 and 1999, only 8 articles or 1 percent focused on the role of the [VP]” (Kaplan & Owings, 1999, p. 81). Calabrese described vice-principals as the neglected variable in the effective schools equation (as cited in Brien, 2002).

The need for vice-principals in rural schools was great. A Saskatchewan Teachers’ Federation (2001) report on the principalship indicated, “[t]here is an absolute need for a second administrator in every school” (p. 11). However, professional training for the vice-principalship was by and large underprovided at the present time in Saskatchewan. As the school organization accepts changes like School PLUS, the demands on in-school administrators also increase (L. Duffee, personal communication, July 9, 2003). “[The] vice-principalship [was] consistently viewed as a critical aspect of in-school leadership” (Renihan, 1999). This “new” school organization, characterized by greater decentralization, requires an understanding of the pattern of psychological contracts among rural Saskatchewan vice-principals. Psychological contract was the perception of an exchange agreement [largely implicit and unwritten] between oneself and another party (Rousseau, 1998, p. 665). For this study, psychological contract was understood to exist between the VP and his or her employer.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the pattern of the psychological contract among rural Saskatchewan vice-principals, with attention to geographic location (distance), and gender. This study had two main objectives. The first objective was to describe the context of rural Saskatchewan VPs by attending to geographical location (distance) and gender. The second objective was to describe the pattern of the

rural Saskatchewan VPs psychological contract. The inspiration for the present study was Ann Hrabok's (2003) work involving experienced college instructors and the dimensions of their psychological contracts.

To further the understanding of the employment context of rural Saskatchewan VPs, the examination of geographical location, and demographics provided insight into the perception, pattern and scope of the psychological contract among rural Saskatchewan VPs. For the purpose of this study, Rousseau's (1995) definition of psychological contract was employed:

The psychological contract is an individual's beliefs, shaped by the organization, regarding terms of an exchange agreement between individuals and their organization. Psychological contracts have the power of self-fulfilling prophecies: They can create the future. People who make and keep their commitments can anticipate and plan because their actions are more readily specified and predictable both to others as well as to themselves. (p. 9)

Psychological contract was manifest in the statement "I know what you want from me and you know what I want from you" (Rousseau, 1995, p. 10). Rousseau (1995) stated, "psychological contract agreement exists in the eye of the beholder as contracts are fundamentally psychological" (p. 6). Contract was generally accepted as the belief in obligations between two or more parties. Obligations occurred because people agree in some way to be obligated (e.g., accepting tuition money from one's employer knowing that some form of payback is expected); therefore, obligation was a commitment to some future action even if the extent of mutuality or real agreement was

not clear (p. 6). Millward and Brewerton (2000) stated that employee obligations were anything believed to be owed to the employer or workplace even though there may be no written or clearly spoken agreement. Further, employer obligations were anything believed to be provided by the employer even though no written or spoken agreement exists (p. 31). The key feature of the psychological contract was that the individual voluntarily assents to make and accept certain promises, as he or she understands them (p. 10). In each individual's psychological contract there was the perception of agreement and mutuality if not agreement in fact; thus, psychological contract was potentially idiosyncratic and unique to each person who agreed to it (p. 10). Do rural Saskatchewan VPs know what the employer wants from them and what VPs want from their employer? What are rural Saskatchewan VPs perceptions about their psychological contract agreements with their employers?

### **Background to the Problem**

The 2001 Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation (STF) Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Principalship defined the term "principal" as inclusive of VPs (p. 4). The report stated that "[s]ometimes the differences between schools and communities create disparities, both real and perceived, with respect to principals' working conditions, workloads and quality of work life. All principals should have reasonable working conditions and workloads and enjoy a similar quality of work life" (p. 24). The issues and directions for in-school administrators indicated in this STF report underscored the need for study of rural Saskatchewan VPs and the pattern of their psychological contract. This point was also emphasized in an earlier 1998 STF study into principals' workload and worklife that found, "[a]s with virtually every field of

research, there is still much to do in exploring the highly complex and demanding workload and work life of principals [and vice-principals]" (p. 6).

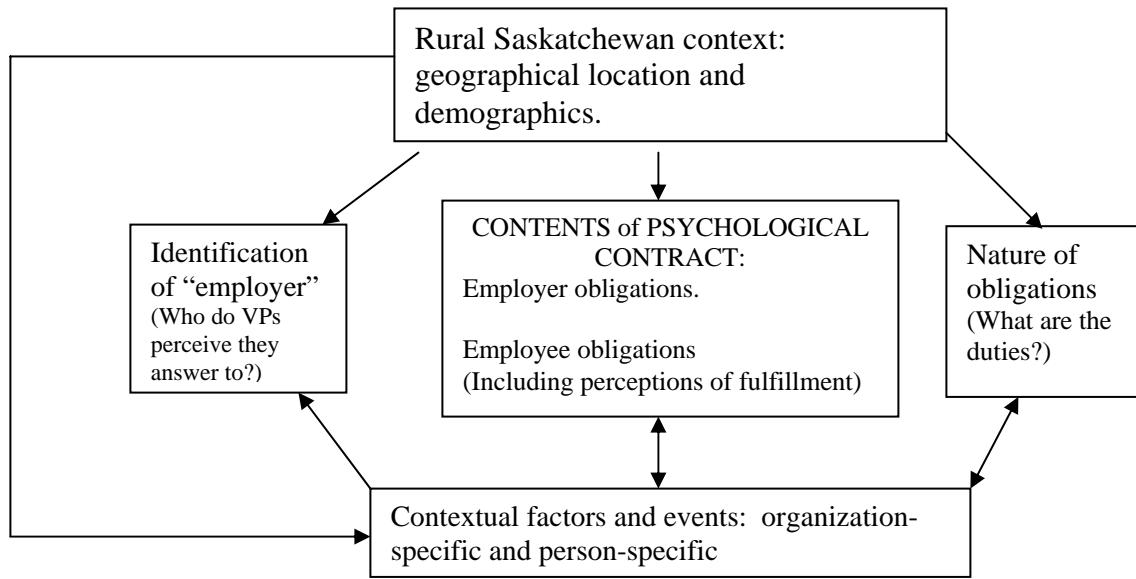
A theme found in the literature indicated the position of vice-principal was understudied (Brien, 2002; Calabrese, 1991; Glanz, 1993; Hartzell, 1993; Renihan, 1999). The VP position was characterized by rapid and continuous change in order to keep abreast of changes in schools, school divisions, communities and society in the province of Saskatchewan. As for rural Saskatchewan VPs, the scope of their duties was ever-widening. The current reality in Saskatchewan's rural schools was that cutbacks in education have affected school divisions as well as schools, not only undermining the level of support they provide to [in-school administrators], but sometimes creating a climate of uncertainty and criticism that may be decidedly unsupportive of the school and the [in-school administrator] (STF, 2001, p. 12). Renihan (1999) indicated that one of the overarching issues facing rural schools was the elimination of the position of vice-principals in the school, which made the job of the principal that much more demanding. "The vice-principal was generally viewed as a crucial support, not only because this person would handle part of the administrative workload, but also because . . . the principal could share ideas or problems" (STF, 1998, p. 62). A salient feature of Renihan's study was that teachers avoid administrative postings because the workload was perceived as overwhelming. Consistent with this perception was the observation by educators that expectations on in-school administrators (including VPs) were ever expanding. This emphasized the need for further study into the pattern of the psychological contract among rural VPs.

Perusal of The Saskatchewan School Boards' Association (SSBA) web site indicates literature pertaining to the study of rural principalships; however, the same site was virtually void of study specific to the rural VP. Twenty-five research reports about "Leadership" were found, however, all focused on the principalship with only passing mention of the rural vice-principalship. The aim of this study was to construct knowledge by interpreting geographical location, demographics, and workplace obligations of rural Saskatchewan VPs. What pattern of the psychological contract emerges?

### **Conceptual Framework**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the pattern of the psychological contract among rural Saskatchewan VPs. The present study had two main objectives. The first objective was to describe the context (geographical location and demographics) of rural Saskatchewan VPs, from their own perceptions. The second objective was to describe the pattern of the psychological contract of rural Saskatchewan VPs, also from their perception. The conceptual framework of this study parallels work done in a post secondary institution by Hrabok (2003). Based on the Hrabok (2003) model, this conceptual framework has five parts:

1. Identification of the employer, from the employee perception.
2. The employee perception of the contents of the psychological contract with respect to reciprocal exchange of employee obligations and employer obligations and perceived levels of fulfillment.
3. The rural Saskatchewan context: geographical location, and demographics.
4. Contextual factors: organization-specific and person-specific.
5. The nature of the workplace obligations.



*Figure 1.1 Conceptual framework. The relationships are indicated by arrows.*

This study demonstrated the relationship of contextual factors of rural Saskatchewan and the pattern of the psychological contract among rural Saskatchewan VPs. The initiative for investigating the psychological contract of rural Saskatchewan VPs involved more than furthering the understanding of the employee-employer relationship. To operate schools and school divisions efficiently and effectively in meeting needs of the increasingly more diverse K-12 students in rural Saskatchewan, particular attention needs to be paid to the psychological contract or “exchange” relationship that exists between VPs and the rural Saskatchewan school system.

### **Problem Statement**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the pattern of the psychological contract among rural Saskatchewan VPs with attention to geographical location and gender. The study had two main objectives:

1. To describe the context (geographical location and demographics) of rural Saskatchewan VPs.
2. To describe the pattern of the rural Saskatchewan VP psychological contract.

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the contextual (geographical location [distance] and gender) characteristics of the rural Saskatchewan VP?
2. Who is “the employer” from the perspective of the rural Saskatchewan VP?
3. To what extent do rural Saskatchewan VPs perceive the employer has made obligations to them?
4. To what extent do rural Saskatchewan VPs perceive they have made obligations to their employer?
5. What is the relationship between geographical location, gender and rural Saskatchewan VPs work related obligations?
6. What is the relationship between organization-specific factors or events and VPs’ perceptions of their workplace obligations?
7. What is the relationship between person-specific contextual factors or events and VPs’ perceptions of their workplace obligations?
8. Is there a variation in principles of the psychological contract according to geographic location?

This study explored the pattern of the psychological contract of rural Saskatchewan VPs. Participants were selected by geographical location parameters (i.e., rural schools) and the position of VP. The descriptive dimension of this study required data collection of rural Saskatchewan VP’s. Seventy-eight rural VPs were contacted to

participate in the study. Forty-eight VPs agreed to participate in this research and were mailed survey documents. The data analysis noted emerging themes, and presented relationships between geographical location, gender, and patterns of rural Saskatchewan VP's psychological contract.

### **Significance of the Study**

Kindsvatter and Tosi suggested "the VP is quite decidedly the forgotten man in educational literature; he is seldom the topic of the professional writer's concern" (as cited in Hagan, 1984, p. 8). Kindsvatter and Tosi further suggested that one reason for this was the fact that the VP operated largely within the shadow of the principal, therefore, it was assumed that the position was basically the same as the principalship (p. 8). A second reason given by Kindsvatter and Tosi was that the VP role included such a wide range of duties within a school that researchers typically study positions whose functions were more clearly defined (p. 8). Weller and Weller (2002) reported that the vice-principal position tends toward a "catchall" function resulting in a haphazard collection of responsibilities, expectations and obligations. This point was illustrated in Marshall's (1993) "portrait" of the role of the VP:

[VPs] are among the first people to arrive at school in the morning.

Frequently, their first stop is at the front desk to pick up discipline notices from the preceding day, Then it's a quick pass through detention hall. . . Next may come a quick cup of coffee with the principal or some teachers, a before school meeting with parents. . . or a sneak attack on the inevitable pile of paperwork that threatens to take over the desk top. Once students begin to arrive the [VP] starts walking. (Marshall, 1993, p. 7)

As reported in the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) 1991 report on restructuring the role of the VP, “[t]he role of the VP in the day-to-day administration of the school is some combination of that which is assigned, expected and assumed” (NASSP, 1991, p. 1). It was the view of this researcher that the majority of the VP’s role was ephemeral. Granted, duties like attendance and discipline appear to be fixed to the VP position; however, as change affected schools, it was quite likely that the first to respond to the changes was the VP. The implications for the pattern of the psychological contract were further exacerbated by the geographical location, and demographic factors associated with rural Saskatchewan. This descriptive study explored the pattern of the psychological contract of rural Saskatchewan VPs. Exploring the psychological contract was essential to a better understanding of the rural Saskatchewan vice-principalship.

### **Importance of the study**

This research provided information that rural school divisions could consider when managing employment relationships with rural VPs, recognizing the unique opportunities and challenges of managing a fair sized, professional group. Participants in this study were selected by geographic location determined to be within the parameters of “rural” school as provided by the STF. These parameters were further delineated in Chapter Three. This study required data collection of Saskatchewan VPs in rural contexts; therefore, rural Saskatchewan VPs were surveyed. The following statements were designed to communicate the importance of this study:

1. Study may contribute new knowledge to present literature regarding rural Saskatchewan VPs.
2. Study may clarify current VP relationship with employer.
3. Study may identify possible stressors rural Saskatchewan VPs experience in their workplace.
4. Results of this study may facilitate psychological contract professional development opportunities for rural in-school administrators.
5. This study may increase awareness of rural Saskatchewan VP position and influence a renewed affirmation of this position to anyone who aspires to it.
6. This study will probably test the validity of results in a different population.
7. This study may enhance transferability of the findings pertaining to the psychological contract.

This research provided information that rural school divisions could consider when administering their employment relationship with rural Saskatchewan VPs, by recognizing the unique opportunities and challenges of managing this influential and professional group.

### **Definition of Terms**

The following terms were employed in this study regarding patterns of the psychological contract among rural Saskatchewan VPs:

1. **employee**. Rural VP employed by a rural Saskatchewan school division.
2. **employer**. The employing school division; organization is a synonym.
3. **exchange**. Reciprocation between employee and employer.
4. **expectation**. Something hoped for.

5. **geographical location.** This is the actual map location of towns, districts or regions of Saskatchewan VPs participating in the study. This includes distance from school division central office.
6. **obligation.** What one is required to do. A moral or legal responsibility.
7. **organization-specific context.** Environmental pressures (e.g., technological, economic, socio-demographic, political, legal, and competitive environmental forces) which exert force on the organization and translate into organizational actions such as restructuring, downsizing, increased reliance on temporary workers, reducing costs, and emphasis on quality. Organizational actions in the educational context are accountability, student-teacher ratios, standardized curriculum and evaluation. These organizational actions, typically expressed through human resources practices, affect the psychological contract (Hrabok, pp. 53-59).
8. **person-specific context.** ‘Triggering events’ (e.g., passage of time, aging, professional growth, shifts in human resources practices, willingness to trade family time for work) in an individual’s life that influences an individual’s psychological contract (Hrabok, 2003, pp. 59-62).
9. **position.** The place or status in the organizational structure.
10. **psychological contract.** Individual beliefs, shaped by the organization, regarding terms of an exchange agreement between individuals and their organization (Rousseau, 1995, p. 9).
11. **role.** The prescribed behavior of a given position.

12. **rural**. In Saskatchewan, an area with a population of less than 5000 people is deemed rural.
13. **rural school**. A school located in a community with a population of less than 5000 people.
14. **urban**. In Saskatchewan centres that have populations of 5000 people or more are deemed urban.
15. **vice-principal**. The second level school-based administrator. VP is a synonym.
16. **workplace**. Workplace refers to the specific school and school division the vice-principal is employed in.

### **Assumptions**

1. Assumption was made that rural VPs possess the knowledge to assist in identification of the dimensions of the psychological contract and exchange of obligations with their employer.
2. Assumption was made that rural VPs possess the knowledge and skill to determine factors regarding their own geographical and demographic context.
3. Assumption was made that the respondents are honest.
4. Assumption was made that the respondents will understand both the survey and questions they are asked.
5. Assumption was made that VPs contacted will complete and return the PCI.

### **Delimitations**

This study of the pattern of the psychological contract among rural Saskatchewan VPs was in rural Saskatchewan schools in communities of less than 5000 population.

The respondents were VPs of schools that had a VP on staff at the time of the study.

This study was based on a mailed survey, The Psychological Contract Inventory or PCI (Rousseau, 2000) rather than on direct observation. The participating population was small, (48); therefore the entire population was invited to participate in the survey in the fall of 2003. From this group of 48 VPs contacted, 42 VPs agreed to participate in the research. The response rate was 87.5%. E-mail and telephone correspondence were follow up strategies used with non-respondents to raise this percentage. The survey instrument does not include all administrative and supervisory tasks of a VP; those tasks not listed may not be transferable to other situations. Furthermore, the findings of this study are delimited to rural Saskatchewan VPs located in communities with a population of 5000 or less.

### **Limitations**

This study was conducted within rural school divisions in the Province of Saskatchewan. The unique variables of the schools and school divisions in rural Saskatchewan are out of the control of the researcher and may limit the transferability of the study's results and findings. Second, the possibility exists that participating VPs may have a lack of experience in their current position. Consequently, these respondents may be unable to provide unencumbered responses to the survey questionnaire. Third, the potential exists that respondents may not be completely genuine or honest. In this case the existing employment relationship between the VP and their employer may positively or negatively influence the VP's survey questionnaire responses. A final limitation to this study was the actual number of respondents (42) who agreed to participate in this study.

## **Organization of the thesis**

Chapter two presents a review of the literature and research regarding the problem statement and research questions already outlined. The literature review contains two dimensions. The first dimension of the literature review relates to research into the VP role. This section illustrates “typical” role behavior of VPs in North American public schools. Some extrapolation was required since the overwhelming majority of research in this area was on the role of principals rather than VPs. The second dimension of the literature review outlines the background of the psychological contract concept, provides a definition to operationalize the term psychological contract, describes the partners involved in psychological contract formation, outlines the nature of the psychological contract, describes how the psychological contract can change, and indicates the research directions involving psychological contract agreements. The aim of the literature review was to provide a comprehensive and current exploration of the psychological contract construct as well as the role, responsibilities and duties of VPs.

Chapter three describes the methodology used in this study. The survey instrument, and procedures for use are outlined. This chapter also presents the purpose of the study and identifies the processes used in the collection and analysis of the data. Chapter three also provides a description of the participants in the study and the methods of data collection used. Ethical considerations are included in this chapter.

Chapter four presents the analysis of the data and the findings from the data. This discussion relates to the research questions posed in Chapter one. Included in this chapter are tables showing geographic and demographic factors, extent of employer-made and employee-made obligations, fulfillment levels of employer-made and

employee-made obligations. Results from the analysis of the survey data and open-ended questions provides a descriptive treatment of the findings. Frequency analysis and analysis of variance provide analytical treatment of the findings. Chapter five presents a summary of the study, discussion, conclusions, and implications for practice, policy and further research.

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The first section of this chapter is a review of the current literature and research pertaining to the study of VPs including expected and assigned roles and responsibilities, actual and potential duties, the VP role and the VP role restructured. The second section of this chapter is a review of the literature and research relevant to psychological contract study. Topics include what is psychological contract, why study psychological contract, who are psychological contract partners, function of the psychological contract, psychological contract and change and how the psychological contract can be measured.

#### **VP Literature: Role and Responsibility**

No matter how intriguing the position sounds, VPs were largely an overlooked topic of study in educational research. “The vice-principal is perhaps the most dynamic and changing feature of school systems, yet it has not always been the focus of much investigation” (Howard, 2000, p. 1). Hartzell’s (1993) study suggested the VP was all but neglected in practitioner literature. Renihan (1999) also indicated research into the VP position was understudied. In view of this shortage of research, Saskatchewan’s *Education Act, 1995*, was a logical starting point in looking for a job or role description for vice-principals.

According to section 175(1), (2), of the *Education Act, 1995* the role of the vice-principal in the school was prescribed by the principal. Typically, the job description for the vice-principal was support for the principal and to take charge of the school during

temporary absences of the principal. By assignment and definition of the principal, the vice-principal position supports the principal's administrative decisions, leadership and school initiatives.

The reality of the vice-principal's job, however, was not generally focused on being the instructional leader. Burgardt (1997) related "a review of the literature indicates that the role and function of the vice-principal depends to a great extent upon the expectations, motives and attitudes of the principal" (p. 9). Weller and Weller's (2002) survey of 100 VPs from urban, suburban and rural schools found, in general agreement with the existing literature that the primary responsibilities for VPs continue to be discipline and attendance counting. Approximately 77% of respondents identified discipline and attendance as their major job assignments, whereas 13% indicated discipline or attendance were secondary to their primary responsibilities of improving instruction or overseeing vocational education program (p. 11).

In schools that had two or more VPs, generally one was responsible for curriculum and instruction matters while the other was responsible for discipline and attendance (p. 11). In general, the roles and responsibilities of vice-principals was an evolving set of duties, with new jobs added when necessary. Howard's (2000) study of teaching VPs in Saskatchewan suggested that the VP position was characterized by going in several directions at once because of the overwhelming hours, steady interruptions during the day and sacrifice of their personal life.

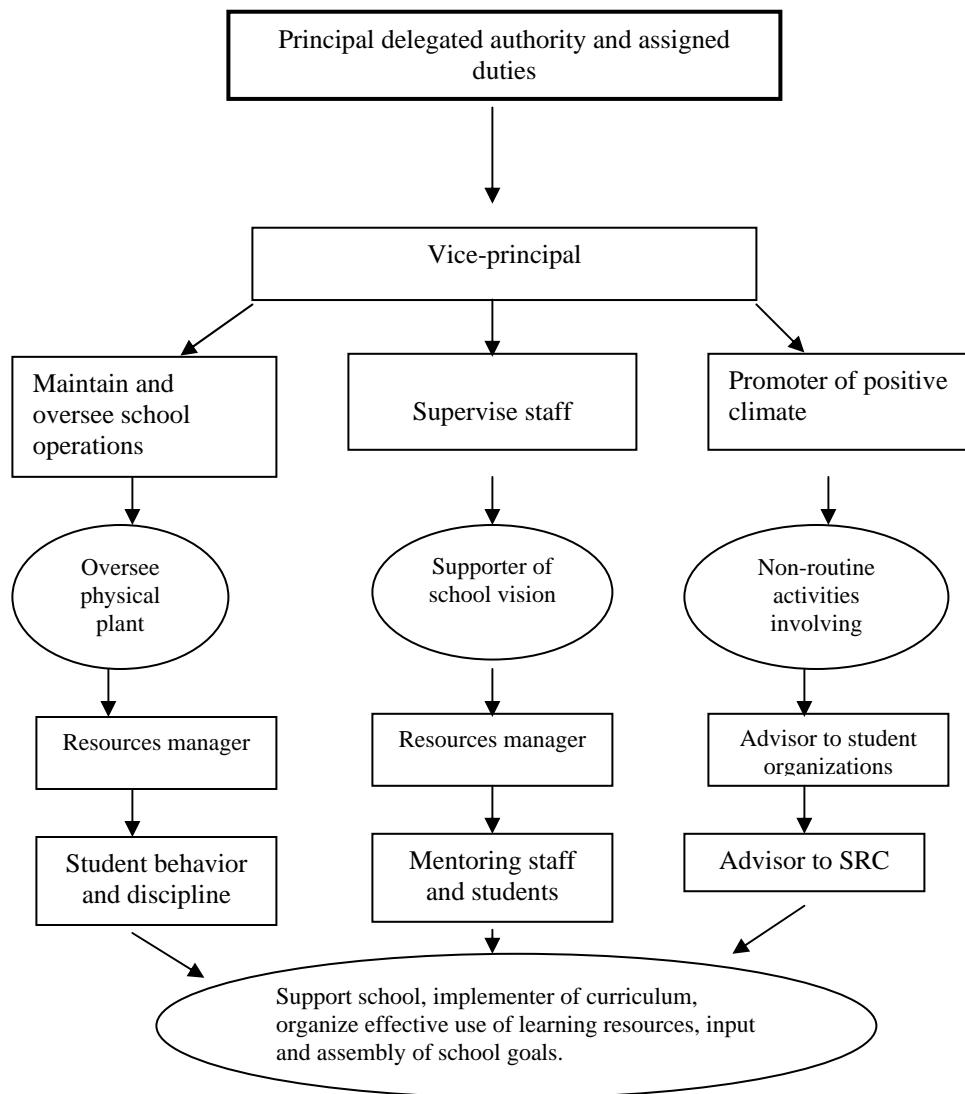
Renihan (1999) noted that many of the respondents in his study emphasized and discussed the clear relationship between the significant increase of expectations and the consequent time pressures of the administrator's job (p. 6). Hagan (1984) stated the VP

[performs] a myriad of duties with their greatest involvement in the areas of staff, personnel and pupil duties; rural VPs indicated that their top ten duties were: student discipline, teacher daily supervision, schedules, parent-teacher conferences, school policies, student attendance, school inventories, playground facilities, teacher complaints, textbook accounting and fire drill procedures (pp. 29-30).

The [VP] spends a large part of each day performing various caretaker tasks. In the performance of these tasks he or she is constantly setting priorities and juggling activities designed to maintain the stability of the organization and status quo of the school culture. (Koru, 1993, p. 67)

Arganiosa (1999) indicated, “[t]he secondary school [VP] leads a busy life every day. . . The [VP] found himself being disciplinarian of students, supervisor to the staff, advisor to student organizations and a lot more as part of his daily routine” (p. 92).

Figure 2.1 presents a “snap shot” of the vice-principal’s probable duties and responsibilities. According to Burgardt (1997) “. . . the role of the vice-principal as leader seems to [be] all but forgotten in secondary school administration” (p. 1). As indicated in the VP literature, the VP role was largely forgotten no matter what the grade level or geographical location. One theme that emerged was that VPs tend to spend a lot of their time dealing with student discipline and managerial or clerical tasks. Numerous studies pointed to student discipline as the number one job dissatisfaction among VPs (Burgardt, 1997; Celikten, 2001; Porter, 1996; and Williams, 1995). VP’s job frustrations were, in part, attributed to job description. “[VPs] do not have a consistent, well defined job description, clearly stated duties or method of evaluating outcomes from accomplished tasks” (Celikten, 2001, p. 67).



*Figure 2.1.* Probable roles of vice-principals.

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Adapted from The Assistant principalship: Essentials for effective leadership, by

L.D. Weller and S. J. Weller, 2002. Sage: Thousand Oaks, CA

In reference to roles and responsibilities of school-based administrators, Fullan (1997) stated:

There are two features of principal's work which present them with aggravation. One is the endless stream of meetings and new policy directives . . . The other is a daily schedule which consists of continual interruptions. There are plenty of studies of the individual workdays of principals, and they draw the same conclusions: principals' workdays are characterized by dozens of small interactions. The research literature has come to label the work of principals as involving brevity, variety and fragmentation.

(as cited in Howard, 2000, pp. 36-37)

Even though Fullan described principal's work, this type of experience could very easily belong to either a rural school principal or VP. Marshall (1991) noted that with so many tasks and duties to perform, "VPs find that their roles are at cross-purposes with each other" (as cited in Howard, 2000, p. 15). Sadly, no one really understands the complexities, lack of satisfaction and dilemma within the role of VP. "Job descriptions need to be clearly communicated periodically to all groups who hold expectations for the person responsible for that job" (Howard, 2000, p. 18).

What VPs expect and what they find in the job surprises all and shocks some; they are not trained for their assigned responsibilities and the personal satisfactions and stresses are not as they expected (Hartzell, Williams & Nelson, 1995, p. 25 as cited in Howard, 2000, p. 6). Hassenpflug (1991) stated that the [VP] generally had five major responsibilities: student discipline, textbook distribution, cafeteria supervision, assigning

lockers and attending student activities. She also stated that other administrative staff could implement these tasks (as cited in Celikten, 2001, p. 68). In discussing the VP position, Porter (1996) stated “[r]esponsibilities for the position are almost universally under the umbrella of ‘daily operations chief’” (p. 28). Marshall (1993) provided a “portrait” of the VP as, “. . . among the first people to arrive at school in the morning and most often they hit the ground running” (pp. 7-8).

The literature resonated with the image of the VP as one very busy person. A study done in 1998 on the private lives of school administrators from a spousal perspective uncovered some deep concerns about the impact of their jobs. Survey comments by spouses taking part in the study were emotional and troubling. Two examples include, “. . . there is not much time left for us,” and, “. . . he is so drained from his job, he has nothing to give when he is home” (as cited in Howard, 2000, p. 36). This commentary confirmed the current reality that increasing demands created mounting pressure on school leaders including the VP. Clearly boards must emphasize strong, positive leadership skills for the VP.

### ***The VP Role Restructured***

In the review of the literature the theme that the VP role needs restructuring to focus more on leadership skills was noted. Porter (1996) stated the VP should truly assist the principal. Leadership should be limited to the principal’s style and expectations (p. 27). Williams (1995) indicated that VPs must share the responsibility for leadership and development of the school’s vision, goals and programs (p. 80). Burgardt’s (1997) study resonated with how critical the VP job is, yet how little credit or encouragement was received. The National Association of Secondary School Principals

(NASSP) 1991 report called for VP's to have more involvement in instructional leadership, and that they should be somewhat relieved of their more traditional duties of discipline and attendance. The expansion of the instructional role of the [VP] is both necessary and possible (as cited in Celikten, 2001 p. 70). Kaplan and Owings (1999) suggested a model for shared leadership in schools that not only utilized the VP as a valuable resource to the principal, but also provided a way to establish and develop a collaborative culture (pp. 83-84). These authors also suggested that shared leadership could work to minimize stressors and provide more time for the job (p. 84).

As presented in table 2.1, the NASSP proposed the “role of the VP in the day-to-day administration of the school is some combination of that which is *assigned, expected* and *assumed*.

Table 2.1

*Role Behavior of Vice-Principals*

Role	Behavior
Assigned	-job description, contracts, organizational structure, directions from superiors, mentors and personnel evaluations.
Expected	-tradition, training programs, the media and interactions with faculty, staff, colleagues, parents and students.
Assumed	-what the VP chooses to do to complement and expand upon the assigned and the expected. It can be creative and active.

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Note: Adapted from: Restructuring the role of the VP, NASSP (1991)

The NASSP (1991) stated “. . . whether the [VP] is a preparatory position for the principalship or a career position, it must be enhanced to play a more vital role in

instructional leadership” (p. v). Koru (1993) indicated that VPs were perhaps the only group working in schools that were able to be all over the school, performing mainly clerical tasks and few curriculum or instructional development responsibilities (p. 70-71). This was not meant to downplay that VPs should be charged with instructional improvement activities and practice these skills (Hill, 1994 p. 8).

### ***The VP: The Unsung Hero***

VPs and in-school administrators as the traditional “hammer,” “cop-on-the-beat,” “building manager” role of thirty years ago have to change the vice-principalsip so that it provides opportunities to develop skills and value orientations that are desired in future leaders (Hill, 1994, p. 6). As Williams (1995) proposed VPs must encourage excellence in instruction and, “. . . to feel good about themselves, to be challenged, and to be encouraged to grow” (p. 72) so “. . . their job frustrations are lessened and they become more satisfied with their work” (p. 80). The point was that duties and responsibilities found within the roles of the vice-principalsip need to be re-evaluated in order to make it a diversified and meaningful position. “School boards need to develop job descriptions which clearly defined and emphasize the development of strong and positive leadership skills in the vice-principalsip” (Howard, 2000, p. 7).

The reality was that schools have become more complex and expectations of schools have increased. Subsequently, the role of the VP, “. . . must be redefined so that he/she may contribute more to the productivity of the school. A major theme in the literature is that attendance and disciplinary functions have not met the expectations of VPs in the position” (Celikten, 2001, p. 69). The VP had been referred to as the unsung hero of the school. Considering all the established functions that VPs perform daily and

the flurry of change they experience, it was more than fair to recognize the importance of the VP position for all schools in Saskatchewan.

In summary, the position of VP was indeed important to the operation of schools (Celikten, 2001; Howard, 2000; Renihan, 1999; Williams, 1995). As a major part of their job description, the VP had responsibility for most of the managerial tasks associated with in-school administration (NASSP, 1991). Considering the changing reality of schools, the VP position must move into more of an associate principal role to facilitate learning the skills necessary to take charge of the instructional leadership activities that VPs need to be getting involved with (Celikten, 2001; Williams, 1995; NASSP, 1991).

### **The Psychological Contract**

This part of the literature review presented current literature pertaining to the psychological contract. The psychological contract literature was reviewed in order to describe and explain the psychological contract as concept, construct and research topic.

#### ***Why Study the Psychological Contract?***

Why do people work so hard or not so hard? What can organizations do to continue to attract and retain the most qualified employees? With all of the change experienced in the work world, how can psychological contract be used as a tool for understanding human needs? As outlined in part one of this literature review, VPs were on the front lines of change currently happening in schools. STF reports (1998; 2001) presented data and description pertaining to in-school administrators showing rural Saskatchewan schools were fairly hectic places for all personnel, but perhaps more so for administrators. The rural VP was perhaps more sensitive to the effects of change.

Funding disparities, the effects of rural depopulation, erosion of the local tax base and ultimately declining enrolments were hot topics in rural schools over the last twenty years or so. These factors influenced the amount of teaching time and release time assigned to the VP, the extra functions the VP might have to pick up in the event of a staff reduction, as well as the prospect the VP might not have a job in one school forcing a move to another that might be more remote and/or isolated.

Why study the psychological contract? The psychological contract was studied to facilitate understanding of human needs especially considering the amount and the kind of change people at work have been experiencing. “[T]here is a need to understand the human responses. To help us understand human responses, psychological contacts are useful tools as they are able to give structure to otherwise ambiguous challenges” (Morrison, 1994, p. 354). Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler (2000) suggested that psychological contract study, “. . . presents another opportunity to re-examine the fundamental aspect of organizational life, the employee-employer relationship” (p. 903).

Sims (1994) indicated the challenges the aging baby boomers bring to the employment relationship. “Boomers want to pursue less frantic careers; community, family, security and meaning are distinctly more important to them today” (p. 373). Psychological contract was the way to focus on study of rural Saskatchewan VPs working in differing rural contexts in order to describe the unwritten part of the employment contract.

### ***What is the Psychological Contract?***

In the process of preparing this section of the literature review, the historical timeline of the psychological contract concept surfaced. The origins of psychological

contract can be traced back to the work of Argyris (1960), Levinson et al. (1962), and Schein (1965). Collectively these scholars refined each other's notions of psychological contract resulting in these "early definitions [highlighting] the mutuality of expectations between the two parties to the exchange relationship" (Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler, 2000, p. 905). Sims (1994) provided a brief historical perspective to the concept of the psychological contract:

1950-1980: "cradle-to-the-grave" type of psychological contract:

Hard work and loyalty would be rewarded with job security and steady rewards (financial and promotional). Traditional psychological contracts were characterized by stability, predictability and growth.

The organization saw their workforce as permanent and built loyalty by making financial investments in training and by guaranteeing long-term employment. Employees were committed to the organization and they expected advancement up the corporate ladder. . . . .

1980's-present: Employees have learned that good performance is no longer a guarantee of job security. Downsizing and unilateral cancellation of implied contracts profoundly affect the surviving employees. Some of their basic tenets –beliefs in fairness, equity, and justice have been violated. Their sense of security has been destroyed . . . [raising] employees' mistrust of the organization. (p. 374)

Morrison (1994) suggested the psychological contract was particularly good structure to use when things have gone awry:

We can't define what the new expectations should be until we discover what they already are. Then, leaders and followers work together to negotiate what they need them to be. It is a process that is never completely conscious. (p. 372)

Morrison (1994) argued that contracts were created from what people do; therefore, the psychological contract was more of a reality than are the formal policies, “ . . . [in] fact it is the reality as opposed to what someone says reality should be” (p. 357). Spindler’s (1994) understanding of ‘psychological contract’ was “. . . the *bundle of unexpressed expectations that exist at the interfaces between humans* [italics in original] and that “. . . psychological contract creates emotions and attitudes which form and control behavior” (p. 327). Kissler (1994) explained the “new employee contract” was couched in the psychological contract concept:

The essence of the new employee contract was articulated by the HAL 9000 computer in the movie, *A Space Odyssey 2001*, when it said to its employer, ‘I’m sorry Dave, I can’t do that.’ The exchange altered the relationship between the two entities. (p. 337)

Schein (1978) stated the psychological contract was an ongoing process of negotiation between employee and employer, and that the psychological contract was real in the sense that both the employee and boss had strong expectations of each other after some period of “learning” and “socialization” had passed (p. 121). Critics of psychological contract “theory” take issue with the fact employee and employer contracts were essentially private; therefore, how was it possible for a contract to exist at all when neither party knows what each other’s agenda really is? Guest (1998) referred

to this as an “analytical nightmare” and took issue with assessing the psychological contract when it was after all a perceptual concept (p. 650). In the literature, there was a healthy philosophical repartee between scholars of the “Rousseau school” and those who emphasize a more formal operationalizing of the psychological contract concept, construct and theory (Guest, 1998).

The “Rousseau school” was the direction this study involving Saskatchewan VPs and the pattern of their psychological contract followed. How then do we define psychological contract? Schein (1978) presented the notion that:

“[through] various and actual events, a “psychological contract” is formed which defines what the employee will give in the way of effort and contribution in exchange for challenging or rewarding work, acceptable working conditions, organizational rewards in the form of pay and benefits and an organizational future in the form of a promise of promotion or other forms of career advancement.

This contract is “psychological” in that the actual terms remain implicit; they are not written down anywhere. (p. 112)

One of the key attributes of the psychological contract was the understanding that this was an *individual’s* perception of the reciprocal exchange agreement held with the employer. Groups or teams do not hold this implicit type of agreement; it was an individual with his or her organization who enters into the psychological contract. So what *is* psychological contract?

For the purpose of this study, Rousseau’s (1995) definition of psychological contract was employed:

The *psychological contract* is an individual's beliefs, shaped by the organization, regarding terms of an exchange agreement between individuals and their organization. Psychological contracts have

The power of self-fulfilling prophecies: They can create the future.

People who make and keep their commitments can anticipate and plan because their actions are more readily specified and predictable both to others as well as to themselves. (p. 9)

Psychological contract was manifest in the statement "I know what you want from me and you know what I want from you" (Rousseau, 1995, p. 10). Another key feature of the psychological contract was that the individual voluntarily assents to make and accept certain promises, as he or she understands them (p. 10). In each individual's psychological contract there was the *perception* of agreement and mutuality if not agreement in fact; thus, psychological contract is potentially idiosyncratic and unique to each person who agrees to it (p. 10). For rural Saskatchewan VPs, critical questions surfaced not only in regard to what was the pattern of their psychological contract, but as importantly, with whom was their contract of reciprocal obligations made? From the perception of the VP, who was the employer, i.e., whom do VPs perceive they answered to?

### ***The Psychological Contract "Partners"***

Recent psychological contract literature raised the issue that Human Resources Managers (hereinafter referred to as HRM), and other agents of the organization may be in the position to form psychological contracts with employees especially when the issue of benefits enters the employee-employer relationship (Lucero & Allen, 1994). In an

effort to avoid convoluting this aspect of psychological contract agreements, it was determined that “a psychological contract was an individual’s system of belief shaped by the organization regarding terms of an exchange agreement between him/herself and the organization” (Rousseau, 1989; Rousseau & Parks, 1993 as cited in Rousseau and Grelle, 1994, p. 383). The fact that the psychological contract partners were the employer and the employee was obvious. Even Guest (1998) conceded there were two parties involved in a psychological contract (p. 650). However, Guest also raised the question, “. . . at which point in a relationship between an individual and an organization is a psychological contract said to exist?” (p. 651). Perhaps the more daunting issue was in determining who the employer was especially when considering that rural VPs were employees of publicly funded school systems. This matter is explored more completely from the research data to be reported in Chapter four.

### ***Function of the Psychological Contract***

A compelling aspect of the psychological contract literature was the often-spirited debate concerning its function. Critics of the psychological contract construct debated whether it was a contract at all (Guest, 1998, p. 652). Since the psychological contract was largely in the ‘eye of the beholder’ it was difficult to apply the legal meaning of contract. Neither party to the psychological contract can really know what the other party’s contract contains so how can there be an agreement? On this matter, “Conway cites Cheshire on contract law where ‘an agreement or at least the outward appearance of an agreement’ was an essential ingredient of a contract” (Cheshire, 1991 as cited in Guest, 1998, p. 652). So if the contract was ‘in the eye of the beholder,’ how do contract holders check to see what the other has drawn up? Moreover, legal contracts

can only be changed with the consent of both parties, yet the “psychological contract can be arbitrarily and secretly changed by either party” (Guest, 1998, p. 652). This raised the question of it being a contract at all. Spindler (1994) provided a legal definition of the term contract:

A contract can be enforced in court . . . When asked to enforce an agreement, the court will make every effort to interpret the agreement based on the document itself and not by reference to other factors. The personalities of the contracting parties or how they feel about each other are of no interest to the court. (p. 325)

Guest (1998) proposed that psychological contract was best left in the realm of metaphor since its features did not fit the legal definition of contract. Rousseau (1998) in her response to Guest explained that those who do not clearly understand the psychological contract concept put this type of argument forward.

A critical feature of the psychological contract was the semantic debate regarding whether or not psychological contracts were indeed contracts especially with respect to the matter of breech or violation. As Spindler (1994) indicated, the courts will interpret the actual document in the event a contract dispute goes to court. What then happens when the contract that was violated was safely stored in the contract holder’s mind?

Psychological contracts are enforced by withholding or withdrawing from the relationship [and] this is not a conscious response . . .

While a legal court creates rights recognizable in a courtroom, *a psychological contract creates emotions and attitudes which form and control behavior.* (Spindler, p. 326-327)

Rousseau (1998) argued “[by] definition, a psychological contract was the perception of an exchange agreement between oneself and another party” (Argyris, 1962; Levinson, 1962; Rousseau, 1989; Rousseau, 1995 as cited in Rousseau, 1998, p. 665). Rousseau (1998) advocated, “it is the *perception* of mutuality not mutuality in fact [that] is at the heart of the psychological contract. Scholars on the subject have not equated psychological contract with a legal contract” suggesting those who do confuse the two was characteristic of lay people new to the psychological contract concept (p. 666).

Kissler (1994) related the issue of “old” and “new” employee contracts to the concept of psychological contract (p. 337). What was noteworthy of Kissler’s old versus new employment contract idea was in reference to the message this concept sends. The new employee contract was perceived as “a merging of the individual’s ‘body’ and ‘mind’ as a formidable weapon in the marketplace” (p. 351). This function of the psychological contract was presented and compared in table 2.2.

Table 2.2

*Employee contracts: Old and new.*

Old	New
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The organization is “parent” to employee “child.”</li> <li>• Employee’s identity and worth are defined by the organization.</li> <li>• Those who stay are good and loyal; others are bad and disloyal.</li> <li>• Employees who do as they are told will work until retirement.</li> <li>• The primary route for growth is through promotion.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The organization and the employee enter into “adult” contracts focused on mutually beneficial work.</li> <li>• Employee’s identity and worth are defined by the employee.</li> <li>• The regular flow of people in and out is healthy and should be celebrated.</li> <li>• The primary route for growth is a sense of personal accomplishment.</li> </ul>

From “The new Employment contract,” by Gary D. Kissler, (1994), *Human Resource Management*, 33, p. 338.

The message here was that employers who get on side with incorporating psychological contract into their employment relationships were destined to have the edge over their competitors. In school systems there might in fact be something to this. For example, employees in school system “A” were managed by coercion with little attention to reciprocal promises or obligations. Perhaps employees perceived a breach each time requests for compassionate leave were turned down. Consequently, these people find “other ways” of getting their release time. Conversely, employees in school system “B” have in their employment contract compassionate leaves and other provisions for what can be termed “well-being” items. These employees are happy and respectful of being treated with dignity and equity. A powerful feature of the psychological contract was the attention given to the well-being aspects of the employee-employer relationship.

Morrison (1994) presented psychological contracts as having five features or what he terms “qualities” (p. 354-355). In this view, the psychological contract was comprised of (1) unspoken expectations, (2) expectations from the past, (3) inter-dependence, (4) psychological distance, and (5) dynamics (p. 355). These features of psychological contract, “. . . are a way of organizing our social life at work,” and keeping “some sand out of the interpersonal gears” providing stability and feelings of security with employees in the organization (p. 356). The author emphasized that psychological contract does not work as a “device” for manipulating people but rather as a tool for understanding human interactions. “[The] new psychological contract is not revealed after consultation with an expert in human resources,” instead, “[contract

holders] reveal their side of the contracts through their actions" (Morrison, 1994, p. 371).

Rousseau (1995) presented the psychological contract as having two dimensions; the transactional and relational (p. 97). Essentially any employment contract was example of the transactional contract. The transactional contract referred to the negotiated, well-described terms of exchange; monetizable, specific, and of limited duration (Guzzo & Noonan, 1994, p. 448). In this sense the employee negotiates (or in the case of Saskatchewan educators, has these items negotiated locally and provincially) rate of pay, raises, incentives, vacation time, and health benefits, for a certain length of time. Millward and Brewerton (2000) stated "... the relational [contract] positively correlated with job and organizational commitments, and also with the expressed willingness to work overtime without pay (i.e., go the extra mile for the organization)" (p. 15). Rousseau (1995) indicated the psychological contract also had a relational element (p. 97). The relational was more abstract; not easily monetizable and broadly concerned the relationship between the individual and the employing organization, for example, being treated with respect by an employer (Guzzo & Noonan, 1994, p. 448). The transactional and relational functions of the psychological contract were presented in Figure 2.2. These features were not mutually exclusive. In fact, organizations may avoid clear contract terms that may lead to transitory situations referred to as the "transitional" contract (Rousseau, 1995, p. 98-99). Millward and Brewerton (2000) stated relational contracts were "... more strongly linked with permanent than temporary contracts, with full-time rather than part-time working patterns and with long-term rather than short-term employment relationships (as indicated by organization and

job tenure)" (p. 15). Observations of long-term employees in school systems regularly demonstrated more of the relational elements of the psychological contract. Some Saskatchewan school divisions regularly and routinely employed significantly high levels of teachers on temporary contracts. The concern was that the ambiguity of being "temporary" might lead to the transitional type of contract and result in high turnover of teachers especially in rural areas. Functions of the psychological contract were affected by time, organizational culture and climate as presented in Figure 2.2.

Rousseau (1995) stated:

Transactional and relational terms are not mutually exclusive. Although firms employing temporary workers are likely to have pure transactional contracts (with limited commitments on both sides) and family businesses may hold to highly relational arrangements with employees, who often are also family members, two other forms also occur. Balanced contracts, which blend transactional and relational terms, occur when relationships are desired but the organization is able to specify performance demands as a condition of membership. Moreover, contemporary organizations, due to changes past and present, may manifest no clear contract terms (neither relational nor transactional), giving rise to an unstable, transitory situation referred to her as a "transitional" contract. (p. 99)

		<i>Performance terms</i>	
		Specified	Not Specified
<i>Duration</i>	Short term	<p>Transactional (e.g., retail clerks hired during Christmas shopping season)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low ambiguity</li> <li>• Easy exit/high turn over</li> <li>• Low member commitment</li> <li>• Freedom to enter new contracts</li> <li>• Little learning</li> <li>• Weak integration/identification</li> </ul>	<p>Transitional (e.g., employee experiences during organizational retrenchment or following merger acquisition)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ambiguity/uncertainty</li> <li>• High turnover/termination</li> <li>• Instability</li> </ul>
	Long term	<p>Balanced (e.g., high-involvement team)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High member commitment</li> <li>• High integration/identification</li> <li>• Ongoing development</li> <li>• Mutual support</li> <li>• Dynamic</li> </ul>	<p>Relational (e.g., family business members)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High member commitment</li> <li>• High affective commitment</li> <li>• High integration/identification</li> <li>• Stability</li> </ul>

*Figure 2.2. Features of psychological contracts in organizations*

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From *Psychological contracts in organizations: Understanding written and unwritten agreements*, D.M. Rousseau, 1995, p. 98.

Millward and Brewerton (2000) stated, “ . . . [as] age and organizational tenure increases . . . employees become more relationally oriented towards their employer. . . they become comfortable with their employer [and] lose the desire to move on in order to further their careers elsewhere” (p. 18).

There are various ways of representing the psychological contract as metaphor, legal agreement, employee (personnel) contract or personal contract. Essentially it comes down to the employee-employer relationship, sense of mutuality and their perception of what constitutes agreement. Millward and Brewerton (2000) stated, “[even] agreements in writing are open to different interpretations . . . [the] longer the

relationship endures, the broader the array of considerations involved in the exchange and the deeper the relationship becomes,” and that “[the] psychological contract pertains to the subjectivity inherent to all employment contracts,” and “[to] this extent, contracts are ‘constructions’ created by the interpretation of what a promise or obligation means to each individual” (p. 11).

Lucero and Allan (1994) proposed that, “[as] both parties’ interests are met the result should be fewer violations of the employee’s psychological contract and the associated adverse consequences” (p. 444). These authors wrote about current employee-employer conflict over employers reducing work place benefits as a cost cutting move. The employee perception was that this constituted a violation of their psychological contract. Employees and employers were moving in different directions resulting in an adversarial relationship (p. 442). What was occurring with rural Saskatchewan VPs?

### **Psychological Contract and Change**

Rural school closures, restructuring and amalgamation, resulted in more geographically remote schools and changes in the work force. As the environments of rural schools change, what was the relationship to the pattern of the psychological contract among rural Saskatchewan VPs? How were workplace obligations changing?

### ***Organization-Specific Factors and Events***

Hrabok (2003) reported that organizations routinely dealt with technological, economic, socio-demographic, political, legal and competitive forces. Major trends, such as these affecting organizations, offer a view of society that, in turn, cyclically mirrors the behavior and values of its employees (p. 52). Organization-specific events

play a major role in the renegotiation of the psychological contract. Rousseau (1995) suggested that HRM practices adopted from organizational strategies have direct implications for the development of the psychological contract (p. 181). “The way an organization initiates and manages change has profound implications for the psychological contract and may create new or reinforce old expectations” (D.E. Morrison, 1996 as cited in Hrabok, 2003, p. 59). It stands to reason that educational organizations function in a similar capacity as they face pressures from major technological, political, economic and social trends.

### ***Person-Specific Factors and Events***

The role of the individual employee in changing the psychological contract was a major part in the change process. Rousseau and Greller (1994) suggested that:

[a] person’s experience in an organization, even the very nature of the relationship with the organization is shaped by personnel actions such as recruiting, appraising performance training and benefits administration. Each has obvious implications for differentiating *among* individuals. However, each has a powerful impact on what goes on *within* individuals as well, particularly in terms of choices they make regarding the organization: whether to join, how to expend effort, what to learn, how long to stay, or the way to treat other people. How people interpret and make sense of their experiences during recruitment, performance reviews, transfers and promotions form the basis for understanding the conditions of their employment. (p. 385)

More simply put, the psychological contract encompasses the actions employees believe were expected of them and what response they expected in return from the employer (Rousseau & Grelle, 1994, p. 386). These authors explained that, “. . . HR has largely ignored the implications of its practices on the creation of the psychological contract” (p. 386) and “[r]ecognizing how HR practices shape individual psychological contracts can move us toward more consistent communication and management of the psychological contract” (p. 399). Person-specific events and psychological contract focus the organization and the individual into working out a shared and explicit understanding of evolving expectations. Moreover, once employee and employer can say what they need and describe what they believe they are receiving, a basis exists for improved contract performance (p. 399).

### ***How the Psychological Contract can be Measured***

The focus in the psychological contract literature was on obligations within the context of the employment relationship. Initially researchers employed interviews to create descriptions of psychological contracts within firms but in the 1980's and 1990's the research placed a greater emphasis upon quantitative assessments (Rousseau & Tijoriwala, 1998, pp. 679-680). What appeared to be the latest direction in research and measurement of the psychological contract was the use of both quantitative measures to enhance the empiricism of the research and qualitative methods to measure the implicit features of the employee-employer relationship. Since the concept of psychological contract was defined as an individual's belief in reciprocal obligations arising out of the interpretation of promises, Rousseau and Tijoriwala (1998) concluded the following:

1. Subjective or self-reported measures are the most direct source of information on the nature and content of the psychological contract.
2. Assessments focusing on promises, resulting obligations, and reciprocal exchanges are preferred forms of measures when operationalizing the psychological contract and its terms.
3. Measures of ‘expectations’ are not direct operationalizations because they are contaminated by content unrelated to promissory interpretation. (p. 681)

A key notion in the psychological contract literature was that these contracts have both idiosyncratic and generalizable aspects. These contracts were by definition subjective and that which proceeds from or takes place within the mind of a person was the focus of the study. “Whether we emphasize the idiosyncratic or generalizable aspects of that experience, or both, was a function of two features: (1) the focus of the research question and (2) the stability of the context in which the contract occurs” (Rousseau and Tijoriwala, 1998, p. 681). The long history of research on perceptions of organizations and employee-employer relations indicated that many features the psychological contract were generalizable across persons (e.g., rewards, career opportunities, leader-member exchanges) (p. 681).

It was emphasized that a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods was perhaps the best way to proceed in operationalizing psychological contracts and continued methodological development (p. 693). These data can be collected with the use of a survey instrument with open-ended questions, for example. Since the psychological contract had these two dimensions of what can be measured empirically (the explicit features) and those that were in the party’s mind (the implicit features), it

was logical that mixed methods of data collection be used in psychological contract research:

Our thesis has been that promissory beliefs arising within the framework of a psychological contract comprise both person- and organization-specific content, (typically assessed via qualitative methods) as well as theoretically meaningful domains generalizable across individuals and firms (usually operationalized through quantitative measures). We conclude that both quantitative and qualitative methods are important in research regarding psychological contracts. . . However, the very changes that make operationalizations challenging also make the psychological contract a critical area for continuing research. (Rousseau & Tijoriwala, 1998, p. 693)

Turnley and Feldman (1999) in their study examined the relationship between violations of employees' psychological contracts and their exit, voice, loyalty and neglected behaviors. They found that psychological contract violations were both more frequent and more intense among managers working in downsized or restructured firms, particularly in terms of job security, compensation and opportunities for advancement (p. 895). Moreover, Turnley and Feldman stated that:

Because psychological contracts exist at the individual level, it is indeed difficult to construct a scale that taps all the obligations that might make up an employee's psychological contract. For some research questions, then, greater use of idiographic measures of the psychological contract may be most appropriate. (p. 919)

One thing that was clear was that employment relationships were undergoing transformation. The need for more rigorous research was needed before psychological contracts can change with a minimum of damage to both individuals and organizations (p. 920). Millward and Brewerton (2000) stated, “[the] use of employee only measures of the psychological contract do not preclude the possibility of investigating the employer side of the equation, though the viability has yet to be ascertained” (p. 35). What was needed when studying the psychological contract was combined qualitative and quantitative methods to ensure comprehensive measurement of both explicit and implicit dimensions of the psychological contract.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

This chapter presents the methods employed in this study of rural Saskatchewan VPs and the pattern of the psychological contract. Discussion in this chapter includes selection of this research topic, research design employed, selection of participants, data collection methods and data analysis. Support from the literature pertaining to the methodology is included to weave the research process together.

#### **Selecting the Research Topic**

For many years early in this researcher's career, school-based administration was a topic of observation and conjecture. On many occasions armchair critics articulated their perceptions about what school-based VPs should be doing in their jobs. Becoming an administrator after 15 years of classroom teaching provided this researcher an opportunity to experience school-based administration from the inside. While a member of administrators' groups in two rural school divisions, we as colleagues often found occasions to vent, discuss, and support one another in our "parking lot" conversations. These discussions planted the seed for initiating a study to find out what reality was like for VPs in rural Saskatchewan's schools. While these conversations provided the impetus for this study, it was learning about psychological contract as a participant in a graduate level class in organizational theory that fuelled the desire to study the question, what is the pattern of the psychological contract among rural Saskatchewan VPs?

Recent Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation (STF) reports (e.g., 1998, 2001) suggested VPs were a valuable component in effective and efficient schools, however, conditions in rural schools and school divisions in Saskatchewan were very demanding and hectic for VPs. The purpose of this study was to explore, examine and describe the pattern of the psychological contract of rural Saskatchewan VPs with attention to geographical location and gender.

### **Research Design**

This study engaged both qualitative and quantitative methods of inquiry to explore, collect data and describe the pattern of the psychological contract among rural Saskatchewan VPs. Cronbach claimed that statistical research was not able to take full account of the many interaction effects that take place in social settings and that, “. . . qualitative inquiry accepts the complex and dynamic quality of the social world” (as cited in Hoepfl, 2001, p. 1). Considering the implicit nature of psychological contracts, qualitative methods were used in this study to gain in-depth information that might be difficult to generate quantitatively. Lincoln and Guba (1985) advocated that “[if] you want people to understand better than they otherwise might, provide them information in the form in which they usually experience it” (p. 120). Qualitative research reports are rich with detail and insight into participants’ experiences of the world, and may harmonize with the reader’s experience and thus be more meaningful (Hoepfl, 2001, p. 2). The qualitative method of inquiry in this study was designed to capture a sense of the position of rural Saskatchewan VP. This sense was derived from VP’s perceptions given in response to open-ended questions posed at the end of the survey instrument:

1. Describe an event when you felt good about your work as a VP.
2. Describe the factors particular to rural Saskatchewan that you believe have influenced your relationship with your school system as a VP.
3. Describe an event where you felt that your geographic location affected your work as a VP.

The responses to these questions provided description of the implicit dimension of VPs' psychological contract, and presented a snapshot of the lived experience of rural Saskatchewan's VPs.

Mellenberg et al. (2003) stated, “[as] long as quantitative and qualitative research have a set of methodological rules in common . . . they can supplement each other” (p. 215). Gall, Gall and Borg (2003) stated, “. . . phenomenology shares the goal of other qualitative research traditions to understand how individuals construct and are constructed by social reality” (p. 481).

The qualitative mode of inquiry was required in this study to explore and describe the implicit dimensions of rural Saskatchewan VPs psychological contract and present a snapshot of this lived experience. van Manen (2000) advocated that, “various aspects of phenomenological method clearly make the practice of this form of inquiry challenging and worthy of academic recognition.” The quantitative mode of inquiry in this study was required to provide descriptive and analytical treatments of the survey (PCI) findings. Numerical data was used to identify perceptions and trends held by VPs.

### ***Selection of the Participants***

This study explored the pattern of the psychological contract among rural Saskatchewan VPs. For this purpose, 48 rural VPs in the Province of Saskatchewan

were surveyed. Rural VP was described as the second level in-school administrator on the staff of a rural school in the role at the time of the study. Participants were selected by geographic location determined to be within the parameters of “rural” defined as, “a community of 5000 people or less.” At the request of the researcher, Saskatchewan Learning provided a list of (52) rural school divisions. Directors were contacted by e-mail with an attached letter of transmittal requesting permission to contact school VPs. Seventy-eight rural schools VPs were contacted by e-mail with an attached letter of transmittal inviting participation in this research. Of the VPs contacted, 10 declined participation in the study. Eight VPs did not respond to or acknowledge the invitation to participate even after subsequent follow-up contact by phone and e-mail. Return e-mail correspondence from two Directors indicated they no longer had VPs in their systems. Six rural school divisions chose to not respond to initial and follow up contact regarding participating in this research.

### ***Data Collection Methods***

Rural Saskatchewan vice-principals (VPs) were the participants in this study. This study used Rousseau’s Psychological Contract Inventory (PCI) found as Appendix A. In August and September of 2003, Directors of 52 rural school divisions were contacted by e-mail. Attached to the e-mail was the letter of transmittal (Appendix C) explaining the purpose of the study. By September 2003, Directors (40) responded to the initial contact e-mail and 36 school divisions agreed to participate in this research. With the participating school divisions determined, lists of VPs were requested from respective central offices. Initial VP contact was by e-mail requesting their participation in this research. Attached to this e-mail was the letter of transmittal (Appendix C) that

explained the purpose of the study, use of the findings, and ethical considerations.

VPs indicated their interest in participating by return e-mail on or about September 15, 2003. After 10 days, a follow up e-mail was sent to VPs who had not replied to the initial e-mail. The last follow up e-mail was sent between September 29 and October 4, 2003. Survey packages were mailed out to participating VPs (48) on or before October 6, 2003. It was requested that VPs mail the completed questionnaire back on or before October 22, 2003. Included in the survey package was a self-addressed, postage paid return envelope. Follow up e-mail reminders were sent October 22, 2003 and October 29, 2003. In total 42 questionnaires were returned for a response rate of 87.5%. Upon receipt of each questionnaire, each was coded numerically from 1 to 42 in the order it was received. As of October 31, 2003, returned surveys (42) were organized for machine scoring using the Scantron located in the Saskatchewan Educational Leadership Unit office at the University of Saskatchewan (SELU).

### ***Reliability and Validity***

Use of this established survey instrument addressed credibility and dependability concerns. Fink and Kosecoff (1998) stated that, “a well-designed, easy-to-use survey always contributes to reliability and validity” (p. 6). In the context of this mixed quantitative-qualitative study, a valid and reliable survey instrument should generate findings that satisfy trustworthiness requirements. According to Rousseau and Tijoriwala (2000) initial analyses of the PCI scales met the traditional standards for convergence and reliability, with a minimum Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of .70 (p. 8). These authors indicated that 11 of the 14 PCI obligation scales, “. . . meet established criteria for internal consistency reliability and convergent and discriminant validity (as

assessed by the item-level factor analyses on the total sample,” however, employee and employer short-term obligations and the employer stability obligation require revision (pp. 12-13).

***The instrument.*** The PCI contains both content and evaluation measures. First, it assessed a variety of specific terms (e.g., to train me for my particular job or opportunities for promotion) that can arise in employment. Second, the PCI assessed the extent to which the respondent believed he or she fulfilled commitments to the employer and whether the employer fulfilled its commitments in turn (Rousseau, 2000, p. 2). According to Rousseau (2000), the PCI assessed individual subjective reports regarding a particular employment relationship by measuring the subjective experience of the employment relationship from various frames of reference: 1) worker/employer or contractor, 2) supervisor or manager of a particular worker or group of workers, and 3) an “ideal” or preferred psychological contract as described by workers, managers, or others (p. 2). The PCI was designed to serve two basic purposes: 1) as a psychometrically sound tool for assessing the generalizable content of the psychological contract for use in organizational research, and 2) as an assessment to determine the extent to which workers experience a “transactional” or “relational” arrangement with their employer (Rousseau, 2000, pp. 2-3).

Each construct in the PCI instrument was measured twice, first in terms of the respondents beliefs regarding the employer’s obligations to the employee and then again in terms of the employee’s obligations to the employer. The PCI instrument was divided into four sets: 1) employer obligations, 2) employee’s description of employer-employee relationship, 3) employee obligations, and 4) employee description of the relationship to

the employer. Each set of items required respondents complete Likert type scales that reflect the following:

1 not at all	2 slightly	3 somewhat	4 moderately	5 to a great extent
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The data were used to explore and describe the fulfillment levels of employer commitments (obligations) and employer commitments (obligations). Data from the PCI also determined VP perceptions of their employment contract as either relational or transactional. The PCI was appropriate to study the pattern of the psychological contract among rural VPs since the instrument's design determined fulfillment levels of management, of which VPs were a part. This study was about the pattern of the psychological contract among rural VPs; therefore, the PCI was an appropriate instrument in this study. The survey instrument included the following three open-ended questions at the end of the questionnaire:

1. Describe an event when you felt good about your work as a VP.
2. Describe the factors particular to rural Saskatchewan that you believe have influenced your relationship with your school system as a VP.
3. Describe an event where you felt that your geographic location affected your work as a VP.

VP responses explored and described the experiential and implicit dimensions of rural Saskatchewan VPs and their psychological contracts. These data expanded the survey data collected. These three open-ended questions were of a structured design, i.e., designed within a schedule of three topics the researcher wanted to explore. This schedule of open-ended questions ensured all participants were asked for the same information.

### ***Data Analysis***

The survey results were analyzed initially with PulseSurvey II by Scantron software. Next, the results were analyzed with Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software and generated descriptive statistics regarding demographic information and perceptions of VP employment contracts. Further analysis with SPSS generated descriptive statistics that determined contract type (transactional or relational), extent of reciprocal employee-employer obligations, and fulfillment levels of employee-made and employer-made obligations. The analysis allowed for a comparison of VP's perceptions regarding the extent that employer obligations were made based on (1) VP distance from their central office, and (2) gender. This comparison answered the following questions:

1. Do rural Saskatchewan VPs perceive that geographical location (distance) and gender impact their work related obligations?
2. What is the relationship between geographic location and principles of the psychological contract among rural Saskatchewan VPs?
3. What is the relationship between gender and principles of the psychological contract among rural Saskatchewan VPs?

Participants in the research responded to three open-ended questions posed at the end of the survey questionnaire and generated the qualitative data. Upon receipt of the questionnaires, each was assigned a numeric code according to the order in which it arrived. At the close of the data collection period, the responses to the open-ended questions were coded manually. First, all responses to question number one were explored, compared and then common themes documented. These themes were colour

coded yellow. The same process was used for the responses to open-ended questions two and three. These themes were colour coded green and pink respectively.

The qualitative procedures followed an inductive data analysis procedure. Participant responses to the three open-ended questions at the end of the questionnaire facilitated the discovery and recording phase of the process (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). These responses became the data. The raw data were manually scanned and topics emerged. These topics were coded and organized into topical *emic* (insider's view) categories. These *emic* categories were scanned for emergent themes. The respondents' verbatim comments were coded according to the pattern or theme that emerged. These topical *emic* categories were then re-organized into *etic* (outsider's view) categories based on the patterns that emerged from the thematic groupings. The respondent's verbatim comments in the *etic* categories provided the verbatim narrative used by the researcher in answer to research questions number six, seven, and eight.

Analysis of the qualitative data produced three themes, related to VP's understanding of a, (1) "positive relationship in the school," (2) "influence of rural factors on VP relationship in the school system," and (3) "extent of geographical location" and VP's work. The topics that emerged from this data were categorized, and subsequently classified according to these themes. Relationships of these themes and topics were noted, and named. Exploration and description of these themes and topics presented organization-specific contextual factors, person-specific factors and VPs' relationship to them. This data also provided the verbatim comments and narrative presented in the data analysis in Chapter four.

### **Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness was determined by using a two-point plan. First, in order to demonstrate confirmability, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested that “. . . the researcher can demonstrate neutrality of research interpretations through a ‘confirmability’ audit” (p. 320). This means providing an audit trail or, 1) raw data; 2) analysis notes; 3) reconstruction and synthesis products; 4) process notes; 5) personal notes and 6) preliminary developmental information (p. 321). The researcher generated an audit trail comprised of these components. Second, the survey findings were used to either corroborate or refute the qualitative findings. It was believed that these strategies established confirmability. When credibility and dependability were established it followed that confirmability and trustworthiness were also established (pp. 317-319).

For the purpose of this study, transferability cannot be specified. Information provided can be used by other readers to determine whether findings were applicable to a new situation. Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated “[it] is the [researcher’s] responsibility to provide a data base that makes transferability judgments possible on the part of potential appliers” (p. 318).

### **Ethical Considerations**

The participants selected for this study were not chosen by random sampling, nor were they close personal friends of the researcher. It was understood by the researcher that qualitative research raised concerns regarding bias and/or subjectivity. The researcher had a genuine interest in knowing what patterns of the psychological contract among rural VPs were. In order to explore, describe and know what patterns of the psychological contract were like among rural Saskatchewan VPs, investigating their real

world contexts was logical. This study proceeded with respect given to all ethical considerations relevant to qualitative research. Permission was obtained from the administrative personnel of the participating school divisions. Participants were informed of the purpose and nature of the study and how the findings were used and documented. They were also informed that their participation was voluntary and they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time. All information from the PCI questionnaire were presented anonymously and used in the final thesis document with consent from the participants.

Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured, as much as possible, through the use of pseudonyms in reference to school divisions, schools and participants involved in the study. Information was reported in aggregate form and quotations were assigned to pseudonyms. Every effort was made to respect the rights and professional careers of those who consented to participate in this study. Procedures outlined by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioral Sciences Research Ethics Board were followed with respect to guidelines concerning consent, confidentiality, right to withdraw participation from the study, and opportunity for feedback. The application to the Ethics Committee and Ethics Approval appear as Appendix B.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter presents the data obtained from the quantitative and qualitative data collection methods as outlined in Chapter Three. The data and presentation of findings are organized under the research questions as follows:

1. What are the contextual (geographical location [distance from central office] and gender) characteristics of the rural Saskatchewan VP?
2. Who is “the employer” from the perspective of the rural Saskatchewan VP?
3. To what extent do rural Saskatchewan VPs perceive the employer has made obligations to them?
4. To what extent do rural Saskatchewan VPs perceive they have made obligations to their employer?
5. What is the relationship between geographical location, gender and rural Saskatchewan VPs’ work related obligations?
6. What is the relationship between organization-specific factors or events and VPs’ perceptions of their workplace obligations?
7. What is the relationship between person-specific contextual factors or events and VPs’ perceptions of their workplace obligations?

8. Is there a variance in principles of the psychological contract according to geographic location?

The pattern of the psychological contract of rural Saskatchewan VPs was identified using the researcher's ranking of PCI psychological contract items, and each item's corresponding mean (M), and standard deviation (SD) scores. VP responses to three open-ended questions at the end of the questionnaire provided the qualitative data. VP perceptions of the relationship between organization-specific factors, person-specific factors and workplace obligations were presented as verbatim information. Narrative responses were used to identify differences related to geographical location and principles of the VP psychological contract.

### **Reporting the Findings**

The following sections present the findings pertaining to the research questions. In this descriptive portion of the study, frequency, percentage, rank, mean, and standard deviation tables are presented with each research question.

#### ***Contextual Characteristics of Rural Saskatchewan***

Contact with 52 rural Saskatchewan school divisions generated a "pool" of 78 rural Saskatchewan VPs. From this pool, 48 VPs agreed to participate in this research and 48 survey questionnaire packages were mailed out. The return of 42 questionnaires resulted in a return rate of 87.5%. A description of respondents is provided in Table 4.1. The majority<sup>1</sup> (68.3%) of respondents indicated their geographical location was less

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<sup>1</sup> majority is defined as 51% or more of respondents

Table 4.1

*Description of the VP respondents (N = 42)*

Variables	Number	Percent
Geographical factors		
Distance from Central Office:	13	31.7
High (over 50 km)	28	68.3
Low (50 km or less)		
School Type		
Predominantly elementary grades	11	26.2
Predominantly high school grades	13	31.0
K-12	18	42.9
School Designation		
Community school	4	9.5
Non-community school	38	90.5
Total years with organization		
0-5 years	14	33.3
6-10	9	21.5
11+	19	45.2
Total years as VP		
0-2	19	45.2
3-5	17	40.5
6+	5	4.3
Total years in education		
0-5	1	2.4
6-10	7	16.7
11+	34	81.0
Total years in administration		
0-2	9	21.4
3-5	20	47.6
6+	13	31.0
Graduate degree or diploma		
Yes	21	50.0
No	21	50.0
Gender		
Male	26	61.9
Female	16	38.1
PD/in-service opportunities available to me		
Not at all	0	0.0
Slightly/somewhat	8	19.1
Moderate/to a great extent	34	80.9
Administrative release time available to me		
Not at all	0.0	0.0
Slightly/somewhat	17	40.4
Moderate/to a great extent	25	59.5
Secretarial/clerical support available to me		
Not at all	1	2.4
Slightly/somewhat	11	26.2
Moderate/to a great extent	30	71.4

than 50 kilometres from central office. The most frequently reported (42.9%) school type was the K-12 school. The overwhelming majority (90.5%) of these schools were

not designated community schools. Of the 42 respondents in the study, 45.2% reported having 11 or more years with their current organization and 45.2% reported being in the VP role for 0-2 years.

In summary, the majority of respondents in this research were experienced male educators, long-term employees of their school systems, new to administration and working in K-12 schools. Furthermore, the majority of respondents reported their school structures were “non-community” schools.

### ***Who is “the employer” from the perspective of the rural Saskatchewan VP?***

The point of this question was to determine to whom rural Saskatchewan VPs perceived as “the employer” in terms of who they “answered to.” Table 4.2 presents respondents’ perceptions of the employer.

Table 4.2

*Respondents’ perception of the “employer.”*

PCI Items	Frequency	Percentage
The Government of Saskatchewan	1	2.4
The Board of Education	9	21.4
The Director	27	64.3
The Local Board	2	4.8
Community	1	2.4
Parents/Guardians	1	2.4
Students	1	2.4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>100.0</b>

It was understood that the Board of Education signed the pay-cheque. However, given the wide diversity of Saskatchewan rural schools, who had VPs perceived as the one they are responsible to? According to recent psychological contract literature, employees might perceive “other agents” in the organization as being in a position to form psychological contracts (Lucero & Allen, 1994). This might address the finding

that small percentages of VPs selected educational partners other than “the Director” as “the employer” in terms of who they perceived they answered to.

Although differences exist among VPs’ perception of “the employer,” 64.3% of VPs indicated “the Director” was to whom they answered to. One respondent reported that, “. . . [our] administration group is small; we all live in the same community and [consequently] know each other well.” What was unclear from the questionnaire results was whether VPs answered the remaining PCI questions as if the Board and Director were one entity.

### ***To What Extent Do Rural Saskatchewan VPs Perceive the Employer has Made Obligations to Them?***

This section of the findings pertains to the employee perceptions of the extent to which the employer had made obligations to them. Respondents were asked to rate the PCI items using a Likert scale (1 for *not at all*; 2 for *slightly*; 3 for *somewhat*; 4 for *moderately*; and 5 for *to a great extent*) to indicate the extent to which they perceived the employer made obligations to the employee. Table 4.3 presents the 27 PCI items and VP responses.

Interpretation by the researcher determined VP’s perceived their employer had made obligations in five main areas. The first area was job security. Percentages indicated the employee perceived the employer made obligations, “*to a great extent*,” to provide the employee *secure employment, steady employment* and *opportunity for career development* within the system. Stability was noted as a theme in these findings. The majority of respondents selected “*not at all*” and “*slightly/somewhat*” responses to the *job as long as the employer needs me* obligation. This indicated that these VPs did not

Table 4.3

*Extent VPs Perceived Selected Employer Obligations were Present*

PCI item	n =	Not at all %	Slightly/ somewhat %	Moderately/to a great extent %
A job as long as the employer needs me.	41	41.5	36.6	21.9
Concern for my welfare	41	0.0	31.8	68.3
Limited involvement in the organization	42	21.4	57.1	21.4
Support me to attain the highest levels of performance	42	0.0	26.2	73.8
Opportunity for career development within this firm	42	0.0	33.3	66.7
Help me develop externally marketable skills	42	11.9	42.9	45.2
Secure employment	42	2.4	21.5	76.2
Makes no commitments to retain me in the future	42	70.7	21.9	7.3
Be responsive to my personal well-being	42	2.4	40.5	57.1
Training me only for my current job	42	19.0	59.5	21.5
Help me to respond to ever greater industry standards	42	7.1	38.0	54.7
Developmental opportunities with this firm	42	9.5	38.1	52.3
Job assignments that enhance my marketability	41	19.5	34.2	46.3
Wages and benefits I can count on	42	0.0	9.5	90.5
Make decisions with my interests in mind	41	7.3	70.8	22.0
A job limited to specific, well-defined responsibilities	42	16.7	59.5	26.8
Support me in meeting increasingly higher goals	42	0.0	42.9	57.1
Advancement within the firm	42	11.9	42.8	45.3
Potential job opportunities outside the firm	41	36.6	41.5	22.0
Steady employment	42	2.4	7.2	90.5
A job for a short time only	39	89.7	7.7	2.6
Concern for my long-term well-being	41	2.4	46.4	51.2
Require me to perform only a limited set of duties	42	40.5	47.6	11.9
Enable me to adjust to new, challenging performance requirements	42	2.4	33.4	64.3
Opportunities for promotion	42	2.4	47.6	50.0
Contacts that create employment opportunities elsewhere	42	33.3	47.6	19.1
Stable benefits for employees' families	42	7.1	16.6	76.2

perceive themselves as expendable.

Second, the majority of respondents perceived their employer had made obligations “to great extent,” to *support me to attain the highest levels of performance*. These respondents indicated they were willing to enhance their skills and become better in the job in exchange for the necessary support required for achievement of this employee goal. Third, VPs were almost unanimous in the perception that employers had made commitments to provide *wages and benefits I can count on*, and fourth, to provide *stable benefits for employees' families*. As revealed by these participants security was a major theme. The majority of VPs were willing to commit to meeting high performance demands, however, there was the expectation of stable wages and benefits from the employer in reciprocation. Noted was a loyalty-for-security type of relationship. Last, 68.3% of VPs perceived their employer made obligations related to *concern for my welfare*. It is possible the employer made obligations to their well-being in exchange for employees’ commitment to high performance in the job. Themes relating to stability, security and well-being were noted in these findings. This denoted a perceived relationship between employee loyalty and security in exchange for employer support for employees’ skill enhancement in pursuit of reaching high levels of job performance. VPs were virtually undivided in their perceptions that the employer made workplace obligations to them. This supported the VP perception that they had a future within the organization.

Table 4.4 presents the researcher’s ranking of PCI item mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) scores. These findings indicated the degree employer obligations were met according to the perception of rural Saskatchewan VPs.

Table 4.4

*Degree Employer Obligations were Met According to VP Perception (N = 42)*

Item	Rank /27 <sup>a</sup> (items this section)	Rank /78 (Total PCI items)	M	SD
Steady employment	1	3	4.45	0.89
Wages & benefits I can count on	2	6	4.36	0.73
Secure employment	3	16	4.10	1.01
Support me to attain the highest levels of performance	4	20	3.98	1.00
Concern for my personal welfare	5	22	3.88	0.95
Opportunity for career development within this firm	6	23	3.81	0.97
Stable benefits for employees' families	7	23	3.81	1.13
Enable me to adjust to new, challenging performance requirements	8	27	3.69	1.12
Support me in meeting increasingly higher goals	9	46	3.64	0.98
Be responsive to my personal concerns and well being	10	30	3.62	1.08
Opportunities for promotion	11	34	3.45	1.09
Concern for my long term well-being	12	35	3.44	1.12
Help me to respond to ever greater industry standards	13	36	3.40	1.21
Developmental opportunities with this firm	14	38	3.36	1.25
Help me develop externally marketable skills	15	40	3.24	1.28
Advancement within the firm	16	41	3.14	1.26
Job assignments that enhance my external marketability	17	42	3.10	1.32
Make decisions with my interests in mind	18	45	2.83	0.97
A job limited to specific, well-defined responsibilities	19	46	2.74	1.11
Limited involvement in the organization	20	48	2.67	1.18
Training me only for current job	21	49	2.55	1.13
Potential job opportunities outside the firm	22	57	2.32	1.27
Contacts that create employment opportunities elsewhere	23	59	2.29	1.17
Require me to perform only limited duties	24	66	2.12	1.13
Short-term employment	25	72	1.58	1.11
Makes no commitments to retain me in the future	26	73	1.54	1.00
A job for a short time only	27	77	1.23	0.71

<sup>a</sup> Ranking provided by the researcher using means scores.

The discussion of these findings was limited to obligations with mean scores greater than 3.81. The ranking, mean and standard deviation scores of employer-made

obligations indicated the perceived extent that these employer-made obligations were *met* “to a great extent.” In Table 4.4, higher placed items that had standard deviation scores over 1.00 indicated that some VPs rated the item lower.

The majority of VPs, as represented by the mean score of 4.45, perceived that their employers had made, “to a great extent,” obligations to ensure *steady employment*. The mean score of 4.36 indicated almost all VPs perceived their employer had, “to a great extent,” made obligations to provide *wages and benefits I can count on*. The mean score of 4.10 denoted the majority of VPs perceived their employer made obligations “to a great extent” to provide *secure employment*. Mean scores of 3.98 for *support me to attain the highest levels of performance* and 3.88 for *concern for my personal welfare* indicated smaller majorities of VPs perceived these employer-made obligations were met “slightly/somewhat.”

A consistency was noted between the VP perceptions of employer-made obligations and their perceptions of the degree the obligations were met. Not surprisingly, the majority of respondents perceived that the employer not only made obligations to provide stability, security and well-being but also met these obligations with employees, “to a great extent.” Rousseau (2000) classified these employer-made obligations as *loyalty* and *security* features of a *relational* psychological contract. The findings generated by the PCI indicated that the majority of rural Saskatchewan VPs perceived that their employers had made *loyalty* and *security* obligations, “to a great extent.” As one respondent stated, “[the] relationship between [Central] office and administrators is secure because we know that time and effort put into our present schools is valued and will continue to be supported by [Central] office.”

In summary, the findings revealed VPs were almost unanimous that the employer made workplace obligations to them. The degree employer-made obligations were met was highest with the following workplace obligations: *secure employment, steady employment, and wages and benefits I can count on*, and to a lesser extent, the employer made obligations to *support me to attain the highest levels of performance, concern for my personal welfare and opportunity for career development*. These VPs believed the employer was obligated to provide development and training opportunities and support VPs with:

- work-related efforts in meeting goals,
- adjusting to new and challenging performance requirements, and
- attaining the highest levels of performance.

Most VPs indicated they were willing to commit to these obligations. However, in exchange for this commitment, the majority of participants expected the employer to commit to their obligations to provide *steady employment, wages and benefits I can count on* and *secure employment*.

***To what extent do rural Saskatchewan VPs perceive they have made obligations to their employer?***

The point of this question was to investigate VPs' perceptions regarding the extent to which obligations were made to their employer. Table 4.5 presents the findings regarding VP perceptions about obligations made to the employer. This section identified employee obligations included in the PCI questionnaire and the results derived from the data.

Table 4.5

*Extent VPs Perceived Selected Employee-made Obligations were Present*

PCI Item	n =	Not at all	Slightly/ Somewhat	Moderately/ To a great extent
		%	%	%
Quit whenever I want	41	73.2	19.5	7.3
Make personal sacrifices for this organization	42	4.8	16.7	78.6
Perform only required tasks	41	65.9	31.7	2.4
Accept increasingly challenging performance standards	42	2.4	19.0	78.6
Seek out developmental opportunities that enhance my value to this employer	42	2.4	9.5	88.1
Build contacts outside this firm that enhance my career potential	42	4.8	45.2	50.0
Remain with this organization indefinitely	42	4.8	38.1	57.1
I have no future obligations to this employer	40	60.0	32.5	7.5
Take this organization's concerns personally	42	4.8	33.3	61.9
Do only what I am paid to do	41	87.8	9.8	2.4
Adjust to changing performance demands due to business necessity	42	0.0	19.1	81.0
Build skills to increase my value to this organization	41	0.0	4.9	95.1
Build skills to increase my future employment opportunities elsewhere	42	11.9	26.2	61.9
Plan to stay here a long time	42	2.4	47.6	50.0
Leave at any time I choose	41	36.6	48.7	14.7
Protect this organization's image	42	0.0	7.2	92.9
Fulfill limited number of responsibilities	41	43.9	34.2	21.7
Respond positively to dynamic performance requirements	42	0.0	14.3	85.7
Make myself increasingly valuable to my employer	42	0.0	9.5	90.4
Increase my visibility to potential employers outside the firm	42	11.9	57.2	31.0
Continue to work here	42	0.0	38.1	61.9
I am under no obligation to remain with this employer	41	31.7	48.7	19.6
Commit myself personally to this organization	42	0.0	21.4	78.6
Only perform specific duties I agreed to when hired	41	75.6	21.9	2.4
Accept new and different performance demands	42	0.0	14.3	85.7
Actively seek internal opportunities for training and development	42	0.0	21.4	78.5
Make no plans to work anywhere else	41	26.8	43.9	29.3

Ten major items emerged from these data pertaining to VPs' perceptions of employee-made obligations. First, nearly all VPs reported they had made, "to a great

extent,” a commitment to *build skills to increase my value to this organization.*

Second, rural Saskatchewan VPs were almost completely agreed they had, “to a great extent,” made obligations to their employers to *protect this organization’s image.* Third, 90.4% of rural Saskatchewan VPs believed they had, “to a great extent,” made an obligation to their employer to *make myself increasingly valuable to my employer.*

Fourth, as presented in Table 4.5, the majority of respondents perceived they had, “to a great extent,” made obligations to their employer to *seek out developmental opportunities that enhance my value to this employer.* Exactly 50.0% of respondents had a post-graduate degree or diploma, and 80.9% of respondents indicated their employers provided, to a great extent, effective PD/in-service opportunities (see Table 4.1). These findings validated the perception held by the majority of VPs that obligations were made to enhance their skills and increase their value to the employer.

Fifth, a large majority of VPs (85.7%) perceived they had, “to a great extent,” made obligations to their employer to *accept new and different performance demands* and sixth, *respond positively to dynamic performance requirements.* Seventh, nearly all VPs perceived they had made, “to a great extent,” obligations to *adjust to changing performance demands due to business necessity.* Eighth, VPs, for the most part, perceived they had, “to a great extent,” made obligations to their employer to *make personal sacrifices.* Ninth, a large percentage of VPs (78.6%) believed they had, “to a great extent,” made an obligation to their employer *accept increasingly challenging performance standards.* Lastly, the dominant perception among VPs was they had, made “to a great extent,” obligations with the employer to *commit myself personally to this organization.* As one respondent wrote, “[there] is no time in my public life that I

am myself . . . my behavior and opinions are always deemed to be a reflection of the school and school system.”

In addition to the items previously mentioned, VP responses to four items were also of interest. These items were: *quit whenever I want, perform only required tasks, do only what I am paid to do, and only perform specific duties agreed to when hired.* As indicated in the findings VPs overwhelmingly responded “not at all” to these PCI items. These respondents were crystal clear in their perception that the VP position required making obligations to schools and school systems to provide long-term service and do more than outlined by job description or what they were paid to do. The majority of rural Saskatchewan VPs perceived making a variety of obligations, in varying degrees, to their employers. It was noted that the list of employee-obligations made to the employer was more numerous than the list of employer-obligations. VPs were almost unanimous in their perceptions of workplace obligations that were particular to skill enhancement, career development and increased value to the organization. Additionally, there was a high level of agreement among VPs and their obligations to *make personal sacrifices for this organization, and commit personally to this organization.* These VPs revealed their willingness to fully commit to the organization, however, in exchange there was the expectation of secure and steady employment, wages and benefits that can be counted on, and opportunities for VPs to build a future with the organization. Based on the findings presented, the extent to which rural Saskatchewan VPs perceived they had made obligations to their employer was “to a great extent” with respect to the ten obligations previously discussed. Table 4.6 presents the ranking by the researcher of

Table 4.6

*Degree Employee Obligations were Met According to VP Perception (N = 42)*

Item	Rank /27 <sup>a</sup> (items this section)	Rank /78 (total PCI items)	M	SD
Build skills to increase my value to this organization	1	4	4.44	0.59
Protect this organization's image	2	5	4.43	0.77
Accept new and different performance demands	3	6	4.36	0.79
Make myself increasingly valuable to my employer	4	8	4.24	0.62
Actively seek internal opportunities for training and development	5	10	4.21	0.84
Commit myself personally to this organization	6	11	4.17	0.76
Adjust to changing performance demands due to business necessity	7	14	4.14	0.84
Continue to work here	8	21	3.95	1.01
Enable me to adjust to new, challenging performance requirements	9	27	3.69	1.12
Take this organization's concerns personally	10	27	3.69	1.12
Plan to stay here a long time	11	31	3.52	1.15
Building skills to increase my future employment opportunities elsewhere	11	31	3.52	1.33
Remain with the organization indefinitely	11	33	3.50	1.21
Opportunities for promotion	12	34	3.45	1.09
Build contacts outside this firm that enhance my career potential	13	39	3.31	1.18
Increase my visibility to potential employers outside the firm	14	43	2.93	1.24
Seek out assignments that enhance my employability elsewhere	15	44	2.86	1.26
Make no plans to work anywhere else	16	52	2.54	1.38
No obligation to remain	17	53	2.51	1.31
Fulfill limited number of responsibilities	18	58	2.29	1.44
Leave at any time I choose	19	65	2.12	1.17
I have no future obligations to remain with this employer	20	69	1.73	1.06
Quit whenever I want	21	71	1.61	1.18
Perform only required tasks	22	74	1.46	0.81
Only perform specific duties I agreed to when hired	23	76	1.32	0.65
Do only what I am paid to do	24	78	1.17	0.54

<sup>a</sup> Ranking provided by the researcher using mean scores.

employee-made obligations and the VPs perception of the degree they these employer obligations were met.

Ranked number one with a mean score of 4.44, VPs perceived that they had met, “to a great extent,” the employer-made obligation to *build skills to increase my value to this organization*. Ranked second with a mean score of 4.43, the majority of VPs perceived they had, “to a great extent,” met the obligation with their employer to *protect this organization’s image*. Ranked third with a mean score of 4.36, the PCI item *accept new and different performance demands* indicated most VPs perceived they had met the obligation, “to a great extent,” with their employer. This finding indicated a perceived need by VPs to keep up with the changing demands of the rural Saskatchewan vice-principalship. A mean score of 3.95 associated with the employee obligation of *continue to work here a long time* indicated the majority of VPs perceived they had met this obligation to a moderate degree. PCI items with mean scores in the range of 3.69 to 3.31 indicated that smaller majorities of VPs perceived they had met their obligations with their employer “somewhat or slightly” to *stay here a long time, building skills to increase my future employment opportunities elsewhere and seek opportunities for promotion*.

The mean score of 1.17 is not only the lowest mean score on the whole PCI, it also provided evidence that a majority of VPs had, “to a great extent,” met the obligation to do more than they were paid to do. As previously presented, these data revealed nearly all VPs perceived they had met, “to a great extent,” the obligation of making personal commitments and sacrifices for their schools and school systems. The theme that emerged here is that these VPs had not gone into these positions for the money or a less demanding work life.

Rousseau (2000) categorized these employee-made obligations as pertaining to *loyalty* and *security*. The findings from the PCI indicated that the majority of rural Saskatchewan VPs perceived that as employees they had met these *loyalty* and *security* obligations, “to a great extent.” As one respondent stated, “I give up my personal time for extra-curricular, community and school demands leaving little time for my own family or pursuit of grad studies.” Another respondent declared, “I get home late and still have prep and marking to do for the next day.”

The rank, mean and standard deviation scores given for the PCI items presented in Table 4.6 illustrated the extent of perceptions that VPs *met* these selected workplace obligations with their employers.

***What is the Relationship between Geographical Location, Demographics and VPs’ Perceptions of Workplace Obligations?***

The point of this question was two-fold. First, the relationship between distance (as gathered from PCI results and open-ended questions 2 and 3) and VP perceptions of the workplace obligations made with their employer was explored. Second, the relationship between gender (as gathered from PCI results) and VP perceptions of the workplace obligations made with the employer was explored. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) procedures were used to determine variances with respect to both dimensions of this question. Description of the findings related to this question are organized and reported in two parts

***Relationship between distance and employer-made obligations.*** Table 4.7 presents the survey findings and results, F ratio (*F*) and significant difference (*p*) of the

Table 4.7

*Relationship Between Distance and Employer-made Obligations (N = 42)*

PCI item	High (<50km)		Low (>50km)		F	p		
	n = 13		n = 28					
	M	SD	M	SD				
A job as long as the employer needs me.	2.67	1.15	2.11	1.29	1.684	.202		
Concern for my welfare	4.00	1.13	3.82	0.90	.282	.599		
Limited involvement in the organization	2.23	1.01	2.89	1.23	2.865	.099		
Support me to attain the highest levels of performance	4.23	1.01	3.86	1.01	1.216	.277		
Opportunity for career development within this firm	4.23	0.83	3.61	0.99	3.849	.057		
Help me develop externally marketable skills	3.69	1.32	3.04	1.26	2.342	.134		
Secure employment	4.38	0.77	3.96	1.10	1.528	.224		
Makes no commitments to retain me in the future	1.23	0.44	1.70	1.17	1.966	.169		
Be responsive to my personal well-being	3.85	1.07	3.50	1.11	.889	.352		
Training me only for my current job	2.15	1.07	2.71	1.15	2.201	.146		
Help me to respond to ever greater industry standards	3.69	1.32	3.25	1.17	1.168	.287		
Developmental opportunities with this firm	3.77	1.09	3.14	1.30	2.274	.140		
Job assignments that enhance my marketability	3.15	1.21	3.11	1.40	.009	.925		
Wages and benefits I can count on	4.69	0.63	4.21	0.74	4.061	.051		
Short-term employment	2.18	1.60	1.35	0.0	4.780	.036*		
Make decisions with my interests in mind	2.75	1.14	2.82	0.75	.045	.834		
A job limited to specific, well-defined responsibilities.	2.92	1.26	2.68	1.06	.422	.520		
Support me in meeting increasingly higher goals	3.85	1.07	3.54	0.96	.863	.359		
Advancement within the firm	3.38	1.26	3.00	1.28	.812	.373		
Potential job opportunities outside the firm	2.15	1.28	2.41	1.31	.334	.567		
Steady employment	4.54	0.66	4.39	0.99	.230	.634		
A job for a short time only	1.15	0.55	1.28	0.79	.262	.612		
Concern for my long-term well-being	3.85	1.21	3.22	1.05	2.800	.102		
Require me to perform only a limited set of duties	1.85	1.14	2.21	1.13	.931	.341		
Enable me to adjust to new, challenging performance requirements	3.77	1.09	3.64	1.16	.109	.743		
Opportunities for promotion	3.54	1.05	3.43	1.14	.087	.770		
Contacts that create employment opportunities elsewhere	1.85	0.99	2.50	1.23	2.809	.102		
Stable benefits for employees' families	3.85	1.07	3.79	1.20	.024	.877		

p < .05

one-way ANOVA using the employer obligations section of the PCI and the distance variable.

Discussion of findings was within the parameters of the research question, “what is the relationship between geographical location (distance), gender and perceptions of rural Saskatchewan VPs work related obligations?” These findings were presented in two parts: first, the relationship between *distance* and VPs perception of employer-made obligations was explored; second, the relationship between *gender* and VPs perception of employer-made obligations was discussed. In consideration of space limitations, discussion was confined to the significant differences only.

The employer obligations items included in the PCI questionnaire were categorized according to respondent designation of “high” and “low” distance. Table 4.7 presented, by distance, the extent VPs perceived they made obligations to their employer. Comparison of the selected obligations, categorized by distance, indicated VPs’ perceptions of employer-made obligations did not vary much by distance. Furthermore, as presented in Table 4.7, the findings indicated that the variances among the “high” and “low” distance groups were not coincidental.

ANOVA assumes equality of variance across groups; this assumption does not hold true for these data. Significant differences were identified from the one-way ANOVA because variances below .050 were significant. Variance in VP perceptions was noted between VPs in the “high” and “low” distance groups with respect to employer-made obligations of *opportunity for career development within this firm* (.057), *wages and benefits I can count on* (.051) and *short-term employment* (.036). In regard to *short-term employment*, it was noted that although this item was a significant part of the original PCI instrument, it was not really applicable to this analysis involving

VPs. For the most part, VPs in this research were long-term employees of their respective organizations (see Table 4.1).

The data presented in Table 4.7 indicated varying mean scores of these selected PCI items. The mean score of 3.86, represented VPs who were less than 50 km from their Central office, and indicated they perceived the employer had made, “somewhat” to “moderately,” obligations *to support me to attain the highest levels of performance*. The mean score of 4.23 indicated the majority of VPs who were more than 50 km from their Central office perceived the employer had made, “to a great extent,” obligations to *support me to attain the highest levels of performance*. A similar result was noted with the *opportunity for career development within this firm* employer-made obligation. A mean score of 4.23 indicated most VPs in the “high” distance category perceived the employer met this obligation to a greater extent than VPs in the “low” distance category.

Variance also appeared in mean scores related to the perceived degree the employer had met the obligation with VPs, *require me to perform only a limited set of duties*. VPs in the “high” category generated a mean score of 1.85 compared to the mean score of 2.21 produced by VPs in the “low” distance category. The researcher interpreted that this indicated “high” distance VPs were slightly more likely to perceive that as distance from central office increased, so did the obligation to do more than outlined by job description or salary. A similar pattern appeared with the PCI item, *contacts that create employment opportunities elsewhere*. Mean scores of 1.85 and 2.50 for the “high” and “low” distance groups indicated that the farther away from their Central Office, some “high” distance VPs were somewhat more likely to view the VP position as a way to create contacts for employment elsewhere. The standard deviation

scores over 1.00 for the higher placed PCI items indicated some VPs rated these items higher than “not-at-all” on the Likert scale.

As presented in Table 4.7, mean scores related to these employer obligations indicated two noteworthy similarities. First, majorities of VPs in both the “high” and “low” distance categories perceived their employers had met obligations to provide long-term employment. Mean scores of 1.23 and 1.70 for the PCI item, *makes no commitments to retain me in the future*, and mean scores of 1.15 and 1.28 for the PCI item, *a job for a short time only*, corresponded to the “not-at-all” level on the Likert-type scale used on the questionnaire. As interpreted by the researcher, nearly all VPs perceived that their employment relationship was “long-term” regardless of distance from their Central offices. The second similarity related to *wages and benefits I can count on, steady employment and stable benefits for employees' families*. The mean scores for these PCI items regarding employer-made obligations indicated the majority of VPs perceived their employer had met these obligations “to-a-great-extent.”

As revealed by the ANOVA results, the relationship between geographical location and rural Saskatchewan VPs work-related obligations was minimal. A comparison of the mean scores between “high” and “low” distance VPs indicated minimal differences in VPs’ perceptions regarding the extent to which employer-made workplace obligations were met according to distance. As indicated in the findings, no real relationship existed between distance and VP work related obligations.

***Relationship between gender and employer-made obligations.*** Table 4.8 presents the second dimension of the research question, “what is the relationship between gender and rural Saskatchewan VPs work related obligations?” The point of

Table 4.8

*Relationship Between Gender and Employer-made Obligations (N = 42)*

PCI item	Male n = 26		Female n = 16		F	p
	M	SD	M	SD		
A job as long as the employer needs me.	1.96	1.08	2.73	1.44	3.817	.058
Concern for my welfare	3.92	0.74	3.80	1.26	.155	.696
Limited involvement in the organization	2.65	1.13	2.69	1.30	.008	.930
Support me to attain the highest levels of performance	3.96	0.87	4.00	1.21	.014	.905
Opportunity for career development within this firm	3.92	0.89	3.62	1.09	.936	.339
Help me develop externally marketable skills	3.35	1.16	3.06	1.48	.477	.494
Secure employment	4.12	0.91	4.06	1.18	.027	.871
Makes no commitments to retain me in the future	1.54	0.95	1.53	1.13	.000	.988
Be responsive to my personal well-being	3.58	1.03	3.69	1.20	.101	.752
Training me only for my current job	2.46	1.07	2.69	1.25	.390	.536
Help me to respond to ever greater industry standards	3.38	1.13	3.44	1.36	.018	.893
Developmental opportunities with this firm	3.31	1.19	3.44	1.36	.105	.747
Job assignments that enhance my marketability	3.04	1.34	3.19	1.33	.119	.732
Wages and benefits I can count on	4.31	0.74	4.44	0.73	.311	.580
Short term employment	1.48	0.82	1.77	1.54	.578	.452
Make decisions with my interests in mind	2.96	0.96	2.60	0.99	1.326	.256
A job limited to specific, well-defined responsibilities	2.88	1.07	2.50	1.15	1.205	.279
Support me in meeting increasingly higher goals	3.62	0.90	3.69	1.14	.052	.821
Advancement within the firm	3.15	1.26	3.12	1.31	.005	.944
Potential job opportunities outside the firm	2.65	1.23	1.73	1.16	5.532	.024
Steady employment	4.38	0.75	4.56	1.09	.391	.536
A job for a short time only	1.21	0.72	1.27	0.70	.062	.805
Concern for my long-term well-being	3.32	1.07	3.62	1.20	.720	.401
Require me to perform only a limited set of duties	2.46	1.10	1.56	0.96	7.213	.010*
Enable me to adjust to new, challenging performance requirements	3.62	1.10	3.81	1.17	.304	.584
Opportunities for promotion	3.50	1.03	3.38	1.20	.128	.722
Contacts that create employment opportunities elsewhere	2.50	1.10	1.94	1.24	2.346	.133
Stable benefits for employees' families	3.96	0.92	3.56	1.41	1.239	.272

p < .05

this question explored the relationship between gender and VP perceptions regarding the extent to which workplace obligations were made.

This section identified respondents as either “male” or “female” in the matter of demographic information. Categorization of selected employer-made obligations included in the PCI questionnaire was according to respondent designation of gender. As presented in Table 4.8, variances in mean scores of these selected PCI items indicated only minimal differences in VP perceptions according to gender. The standard deviation scores over 1.00 for the higher placed PCI items indicated some VPs rated these items at the “not-at-all” point on the Likert scale.

Mean scores of 4.12, for male VPs and 4.06 for female VPs, indicated most respondents perceived the employer had made obligations, “to a great extent,” to ensure *steady employment*. Represented by mean scores of 4.31 for male VPs and 4.44 for female VPs the majority of VPs perceived the employer had made obligations, “to a great extent,” to ensure *wages and benefits I can count on*. Mean scores of 4.38 for male VPs and 4.56 for female VPs indicated VPs perceived, almost unanimously, that their employer met “to a great extent,” the obligation to provide *steady employment*.

Results of the ANOVA procedure that used the employer obligations section of the PCI and the gender variable are presented in Table 4.8. Differences between male and female perceptions were identified from the one-way ANOVA; however, these differences in the relationship between gender and VP perceptions of employer-made obligations were minimal and limited to three obligations. Differences in VPs’ perceptions were noticed between male and female VPs with respect to employer-made obligations of *a job as long as the employer needs me* (.058), *potential job opportunities outside the firm* (.024), and *require me to perform only a limited set of duties* (.010). As revealed by VPs, their perceptions differed as to the extent these obligations were met by

the employer. In reference to *a job as long as the employer needs me*, survey responses identified female VPs perceived their position as slightly more tenuous than males. Conversely, male VPs ( $M = 2.65$ ) revealed that for *potential job opportunities outside the firm*, they perceived somewhat more opportunity outside of their school system when compared to females ( $M = 1.73$ ). Regarding the employer-made obligation *require me to perform only a limited set of duties*, survey responses identified female VPs ( $M = 1.56$ ) perception that they were more willing to perform duties outside of a job description than male VPs ( $M = 2.46$ ).

The mean scores for these employer obligations indicated two noteworthy similarities. First, as indicated by male and female VPs, some respondents in each gender group perceived their employers had made obligations to provide long-term employment. Mean scores for males (1.54) and female (1.53) for the PCI item, *no commitments to retain me in the future*, and mean scores for males (1.21) and females (1.27) for the PCI item, *a job for a short time only*, correspond to the “not-at-all” level of the Likert-type scale used on the questionnaire. These survey results determined that the majority of VPs perceived their employment relationship as “long term” regardless of gender.

Minimal differences existed between gender groups and VPs’ perceptions of the extent employer-made obligations were met. As interpreted by the researcher, most male VPs perceived that their employer made, “to a great extent,” obligations to support their career development, wages and secure employment. This perception was shared by most female VPs; however, females indicated a greater willingness to give up their personal time for their jobs. It is not surprising that differences in male and female VP

perceptions of fulfillment levels of workplace obligations surfaced in the findings.

Much has been written about the differences in male and female psychology; however, it was not an objective of this study to present that discourse here.

In answer to the research question, “what is the relationship between demographics (gender) and rural Saskatchewan VPs work related obligations?” the results presented in Table 4.8 indicated only minimal differences in perceptions between gender groups and employer-made workplace obligations. The greatest difference was in regard to the following three employer-made obligations:

- *a job as long as the employer needs me,*
- *potential job opportunities outside the firm and,*
- *requires me to perform only a limited set of duties.*

### **Summary**

This section of Chapter Four presented the findings from the quantitative part of the research activity. These data were presented in both written and table form. In the process of responding to the research questions, the survey results indicated the relationship between geographic location, gender and VPs perceptions of “employee-made” and “employer-made” workplace obligations.

As revealed by respondents, only minimal differences existed in participant perceptions of the relationship between gender groups and employer-made obligations. These differences in perceptions were likely not exclusively gender oriented. The researcher’s interpretation of the survey results identified factors such as *total years with the organization, total years of experience in education, total years in administration,* and *total years as VP* likely impacted VP perceptions of workplace obligations.

Three questions surfaced from these findings. Were some female VPs more secure in their positions? Were there more opportunities for male VPs than female VPs? Why were female VPs seemingly more willing to do more than the job description outlined? Unfortunately, answers to these questions exceeded the extent of this study.

The relationship between geographical location (distance), gender and perceptions of rural Saskatchewan VPs work related obligations was minimal. In general, VPs indicated only slight relationships between distance, gender and perceptions of employer-made workplace obligations and the extent of fulfillment levels. It was feasible that the demographic factors, *total years with the organization, total years of experience in education, total years in administration, and total years as VP* (as presented in Table 4.1) impacted the relationship between distance, gender and VP perceptions of employer-made workplace obligations.

### **Qualitative Findings**

This section presents the findings generated by the qualitative part of the study. Participants in the research responded to three open-ended questions posed at the end of the survey questionnaire. The three open-ended questions were:

1. Describe an event when you felt good about your work as a VP.
2. Describe the factors particular to rural Saskatchewan that you believe have influenced your relationship with your school system as a VP.
3. Describe an event where you felt that your geographical location affected your work as a VP.

Upon receipt of the questionnaires, each was assigned a numeric code according to the order in which it arrived. At the close of the data collection period, the responses

to the open-ended questions were coded manually. First, all responses to question number one were explored, compared and then common themes documented. These themes were colour coded yellow. The same process was used for the responses to open-ended questions two and three. These themes were colour coded green and pink respectively. As identified in Chapter three, the three major themes that emerged from the data for each open-ended question became the categories by which the verbatim remarks were classified. Topics related to each theme were then colour coded and categorized according to theme.

### **The Relationship Between Organization-specific Factors or Events and VPs' Workplace Obligations**

This section presents the findings about how VPs' workplace obligations might or might not change as a result of certain rural Saskatchewan, school system and/or school factors. Responses to this question were examined for commonalities in relation to the major economic, social, political and technological trends affecting rural Saskatchewan. These factors initiated change in the schools and school system as an organization.

#### ***Organization-specific Factors and Events***

In commenting on factors particular to rural Saskatchewan that might have a relationship to the school system, VPs acknowledged a relationship between organization-specific factors and events and their workplace obligations. VPs were almost unanimous in their perceptions that economic, social, political and technological trends from the wider society impacted the school organization and ultimately their work as VPs. "The agricultural lifestyle, economic swings and taxation all have an impact on

the school," reported one respondent. Combined with "school system restructuring and the uncertainty regarding security of teaching and administrative positions" and "declining enrolment . . . [and] smaller staff numbers" the theme that emerged was VPs perceived they were doing more responsibilities without parallel increases in resources. As reported by participants, these experiences confirmed the perception that their workplace obligations had changed because of the impact of economic downturn, drought, rural depopulation, shrinking enrolment, school restructuring and amalgamation.

The rural reality, as reported by respondents, was largely comprised of local economic, political and social matters. One respondent stated:

The agricultural lifestyle, the economic swings and taxation all have an impact on the school. The lack of diversification in the economy makes downturns dramatic. Frustrations at home tend to move into the school. School boards are elected and feel the need to respond to these issues and this often has an impact on our relationship. At other times, the election of personalities of a different nature could swing the agenda quickly.

As described by this passage, rural schools often undergo significant change in reasonably short periods of time. Many changes can occur in rural Saskatchewan during the interval between federal, provincial or municipal elections, or the time between harvest in the fall and spring seeding. Schools, typically the closest public institutions in the community, often experience pressure in response to wider economic, political, social or technological forces. One respondent indicated, ". . . local boards try to micro-

manage the school," and "[at times] there is confusion regarding the role of the board in on-site decisions regarding what is required for the operation of the school." This observation was supported by another respondent who indicated, ". . . power of local boards -- or at least their perceived power -- versus the division [board] perception of their limited role." This discrepancy about power created confusion in two ways. First, some VPs reported confusion in their relationship between themselves and their local and division boards. Second, these VPs reported confusion about their perceptions of workplace obligations. As reported by VPs in amalgamated school divisions, a major theme affecting employee-employer relationships was "school system restructuring and the uncertainty regarding security of teaching and administrative positions."

As revealed by respondents, the reality of rural Saskatchewan was often characterized by educators performing more duties without parallel increases in resources, particularly as distance from central office increased. A majority of VPs reported the effect of rural depopulation was a factor affecting the organization and their relationship to it. As one VP stated, ". . . declining enrolment has impacted on the school in many ways from smaller staff numbers to the provision of extra-curricular programs." Another VP added, "small school, limited resources, number of teachers and subject loads," as key factors of rural Saskatchewan that had influenced this VP's relationship with the school system. The common theme that emerged from VP responses to question two, in general, had to do with expectations and ultimately workplace obligations. The majority of VPs reported, ". . . community, extra meetings, extra-curricular activities, being available 24-7," and "doing more with less," resulted in these VPs experiencing difficulty with attending to all their duties. A minority of VPs

reported, “it is getting harder to attend to everything [especially] with so little release time.”

VPs in the “high” distance category related that the distance factor initiated changes with workplace obligations. This relationship was indicated in the following VP comments: “Students do not have access to museums, libraries, and art shows like urban students. School trips are expensive; thus fundraising becomes an issue.” It was also reported that with school closures and amalgamation of school divisions, there were greater distances between the individual schools, higher levels of administration, Directors, Regional Directors, and STF. One VP pointed out that “[this] often leads to miscommunication between board, Directors and STF.” Additionally, one respondent stated that with recent amalgamation, “meetings are more difficult with the increased distances between schools.”

Factors such as drought, high taxes and economic downturn greatly impacted rural communities. One respondent indicated, “[there is] a lack of appreciation for education; teachers and administration [are] not viewed as positive in the community [resulting in] a strained relationship with the school system.” This strained relationship resulted in changing obligations evidenced by VP comments such as, “this is life in a fish bowl,” and, “you are never off 24-7,” or, “[I have] more demands because I live in the town where I am VP.”

It was reported that living in the community also had its benefits. In particular, VPs who reside in the community reported, “building trust, respect and understanding” with the community and cultivating “closer relationships with members of the staff,” as well as the benefits of, “. . . getting to know students well . . . often getting to know their

families, histories and problems.” Additionally, three VPs who live in rural communities indicated “. . . there is the ‘small town feeling’ [that] this is a community not just a job” and that “[we are] members of the same small community,” and “I am seen as a taxpayer.”

In summary, as identified by the majority of respondents, organization-specific factors influence VPs’ workplace obligations. As found in respondents’ narrative responses, rural communities and their schools experienced forces of economic, political, social and technological trends that occurred in the wider society. In commenting on these factors, a majority of VPs perceived a relationship to their workplace obligations.

Gleaned from responses to open-ended question number two, “rural reality,” “relationships,” and “distance” emerged as the factors particular to rural Saskatchewan that a majority of VPs perceived affected their relationship with the school system. As presented in this section, these VPs indicated that rural depopulation, shrinking enrolments, amalgamation, intimacy of rural communities, economic swings and perceived power of school boards had impacted the obligations made to their employer and the employer-made obligations to the employee. This dimension of VP’s pattern of the psychological contract was most often regarded as “doing more with less,” with little reward, if any, for accepting these changed obligations. Only one VP pointed out, “my school division appreciates this commitment to personal growth.”

This section explored rural Saskatchewan VPs as a unique group of educators. The findings described the idiosyncratic, individual and distinctive nature of their

psychological contract with respect to their perceptions of organization-specific factors and events and the relationship to distance.

### ***Person-specific Contextual Factors and Events***

This section presents the person-specific events identified from VP responses to open-ended question number one. In the process of manually coding and categorizing the responses to this question, the following three themes emerged; “relationships” and communication with students, staff and community; “problem-solving” and dealing with demands of the VP job; and, “accomplishment and recognition” of VPs “getting good at the job” and assuring their place in the organization.

The “relationships” category to a large extent pointed to VPs interest and enthusiasm for the job. When VPs were asked to describe an event when they felt good about their job, the most frequent response was, “making someone’s day.” This response was made in reference to staff as often as it was to students. In particular, “making connections” often qualified the “making someone’s day” response. One VP stated the boost received when, “a student comes to me and we are able to have an open and honest discussion.” Another response given was that a percentage of VPs enjoyed “the community connection and support for the school” especially with special events like Remembrance Day and dances. One respondent indicated the intrinsic reward of “working with the local community to plan and fundraise for a school project.” The majority of VPs reported that even though their working days were hectic, interest and enthusiasm for these types of relationships and connections impacted the workplace obligations made, especially in reference to duties outside of job description and what they were paid to do.

VP responses to question one were categorized as “problem-solving” factors and events. This information pointed to what VPs did in order to get better at the job. A sentiment shared by one VP was, “being able to know things [reference to school division deleted] and make decisions,” and, that “it is fun to go to work and face new challenges everyday.” Several respondents related instances when they “[acted] as mediator[s] to resolve student-student, teacher-student and student-teacher-parent disputes.” One VP wrote about being able to problem-solve with a student [involved in a theft] and the child’s father. “We worked together with dad to return [the stolen item] and set fair consequences. Dad was impressed with my approach.” One VP described taking a leadership role in a school initiative with responsibility to “devise, create and implement [the] program.” This sentiment was shared among the majority of respondents.

Respondents also provided examples of collaborative problem solving when asked for examples of when they felt good in their jobs. “Planning, goal setting and working with school and community to enhance the school,” and “being able to collaborate with teachers, administration, Board and Director in matters of policy,” in addition to opportunities for VPs “to collaborate with the principal and community in making and keeping partnerships” were mentioned as events when VPs felt good in the job. Almost all VPs perceived these duties enhanced their skills in dealing with the demands of the job, and provided intrinsic rewards from the experiences.

A related theme that emerged from responses to the first open-ended question was the matter of “support” as perceived by a majority of VPs involved in problem-

solving activities. The following selected VP comments illustrated “support” in dealing with the demands of the job:

“It makes my day when I know I have helped and supported a staff member.”

“I feel very good when there is a student in crisis and I am able to help.”

“I feel great in my role as VP when I am able to get assistance for families.”

“I feel very good in my role of VP working with and supporting our school support worker in keeping [reference deleted] students in school.”

“I feel great when supporting learning by facilitating staff, student and/or parent learning.”

These statements indicated that most VPs perceived “support” in the duties they performed on the job. These person-specific factors and events were areas of work interest and job priorities for VPs. These factors and events provided opportunities for VPs to deal with the demands of the job, and in the process develop and enhance job skills.

The third theme that emerged from the qualitative data was “accomplishment and recognition.” The responses related to this theme generally exhibited dimensions of “getting good at the job,” and enhanced opportunities for VPs to have a future with the organization.

In general, the majority of VPs felt good in their role when events facilitated positive school promotion; for example, “positive and consistent discipline, extra-curricular activities and new technology” were mentioned as positive things. A majority of VPs commented that they felt proud when recognized for support of school events, activities, programs and/or policies. “My being a part of the multi-year process

[resulting in] achieving Community school designation was huge; a huge sense of accomplishment," disclosed one respondent. Another participant indicated feeling recognition and accomplishment when, "the principal empowered me to lead the staff, community and students through the process of establishing a new mission [and long term vision] for the school."

Most respondents indicated pride in their work through diverse activities such as, "my principal and I developed a positive climate in our staff, that has filtered into most classrooms and continued between most students," and, "staff has responded well to my [expectations] rather than with resistance," or, "I developed a new computer lab," and "I brought a new attendance program into the school and it is successful." One VP indicated difficulty "narrowing it down to one event when I felt good in my job; there are so many!" although this sentiment was shared by most respondents. Another VP stated, ". . . there are occasions that are a celebration of the education system . . . when anyone associated with the education system feels good about his/her job."

As pointed out by another respondent, "[The] relationship between community and school in rural Saskatchewan results in greater expectations from the school system to act in a public relations role." The pattern that emerged from these responses illustrated VPs high level of job satisfaction with activities and events that were positive, generated enthusiasm, and were geared to growth and opportunity for recognition. "Success has given me job satisfaction," stated one VP.

From the VP comments presented here, person-specific factors and events impacted their experience "getting good at the job," skills enhancement and creation of a future direction that included the VP as part of the organization. In answer to the

research question, “What is the relationship between person-specific contextual factors or events and perceptions of VPs workplace obligations?” the findings presented here indicated that a majority of VPs perceived person-specific factors had a substantial relationship to their workplace obligations.

### **Variation in Principles of The Psychological Contract According to Geographic Location**

This section of the findings presents the responses to open-ended question number three, “describe an event where you felt your geographical location affected your work as a VP.” In the process of coding and categorizing the qualitative data, three themes emerged: “access,” “sacrifice,” and “community.” Each theme is presented with its related topics.

The data collected for this question related mostly to the matter of access and the limitations to access that distance played in more remote schools. For consistency, responses were divided into “high” (greater than 50 km from central office) and “low” (less than 50 km from central office) subgroups.

It was frequently reported by respondents in “low” distance schools that, “[being] close to a major city and all of its resources . . . and [having] access to programs to help students, i.e., social services, inter-case management,” were not major issues. This question generated a lot of interest from many of the VPs working in “high” distance schools, especially in reference to the frustration experienced from the lack of access and availability to human services and resources beneficial to students, schools and communities. For example, two respondents commented, “[It is difficult] accessing appropriate services to meet student needs,” and “[The] lack of [access to] people

resources on a regular basis, i.e., social services, may take several days to appear if at all.” In addition, two other VPs commented that “ . . . it is difficult having access to facilities that benefit students with needs, or for all students, like a pool for therapy or class swimming lessons,” and, “funding and accessing funding to secure necessary equipment and personnel to support student disabilities.”

In categorizing the data, *frustration* best described the effect distance had on respondents in the “high” distance group. One VP reported that, “we had a situation requiring RCMP and the nearest detachment is over an hour away. The RCMP said they were short staffed and there was no response. We were left to fend for ourselves.” As Saskatchewan prepares for implementation of the School PLUS model for strengthening capacity of its schools, one of the lynch pins of the model is centralized human service providers in the school building. One VP from a “high” distance school commented “we have trouble getting access to these services now . . . what happens with School PLUS [i.e., when it is implemented]?”

From the data gathered in response to VPs’ descriptions of how geographical location affected their work, professional development (PD) surfaced as an issue impacted by distance. Two VPs commented that, “PD is limited,” and, “ . . . access to PD opportunities is affected by distance. Costs to my division have been a factor in attending some very education-appropriate conferences and speakers.” Another respondent mentioned the impact distance had on the ability to pursue graduate studies while working full-time, for example, “ . . . there is no way I can drive 3-1/2 hours for a night class and drive back the same night.” It was apparent that interest in graduate studies was shared by the majority of “high” distance and “low” distance VPs. However,

for at least one VP in the “high” distance group, weekend commitments to extra-curricular activities combined with the physical limitations that distance placed on access to graduate classes precluded pursuit of this type of PD.

The second major theme that emerged from the qualitative data derived from the third open-ended question related to the sense of sacrifice perceived by respondents in this study. In some cases this sense of sacrifice was quite tangible. For example, “ . . . personal time is devoted to extra-curricular, community and school demands, therefore, little time is left for family and/or graduate studies,” or, “I get home late every night and still have preparation and marking to do for tomorrow.” It was mentioned that distance and driving time affected some VPs work. “I sacrifice personal time, family time and family togetherness because of [the amount] of driving time.” Administrative release time also surfaced from comments related to distance and its affect on VP work. One VP captured this reality and stated, “. . . limited admin time makes it difficult getting everything completed.”

On the matter of geographical distance and its perceived impact on VP’s work, “amalgamation” emerged as a sub-theme. Two responses were cogitative, “our division recently amalgamated and the division is trying to get a handle on all of its schools. Unfortunately school autonomy and individuality is being replaced by conformity,” and, “I fear this restructuring [amalgamation] may lead to the VP position as being seen as less of a shared leadership position and more a part of hierarchical organizational structure.” Other responses were more practical, for example, “some of our schools are up to two hours away from the division office. The cost of sending all school administrators to meetings may result in VPs being ‘shut-out’ of attending these

meetings and being part of the admin group.” These comments indicated the perception that geographical distance, especially for these “high” distance VPs, translated into a sense of sacrifice in doing their jobs.

The third theme that emerged from responses to open-ended question number three was “community.” This was a pervasive theme as references to community emerged in a majority of VP responses to all three open-ended questions. In regard to geographical location and its affect on VPs' work, responses focused on the impact of distance and community. Responses ranged from procedural matters, “the distance [limits] sending severe discipline students home,” and “when students get hurt we are about [25 km] from the closest hospital,” to a perceived benefit of distance, “we are a distance from major cities [so] there are very little drugs and alcohol in our school.” One rural VP provided a very cogent response to this question that indicated:

The connection with community makes the school a central focus. Often times the school will get more involved with community events to develop good community relations. I feel our community organization determines the role of the school to a large degree.

In exploring the data derived from responses to open-ended question three, narrative comments from VPs in schools that were greater distances from central offices and/or urban areas perceived they made greater obligations to the employer. As a result, access to “people” resources, sense of sacrifice and the impact distance played on community were a pronounced part of the VPs work related duties. VPs in schools close to central offices and/or urban areas were almost unanimous in reporting unencumbered

access and availability of “people” resources. No discernible difference emerged in relation to VPs’ sacrifice of personal time needed to meet workplace obligations, or the demands community relations placed on the VP’s job. Table 4.9 presented rank, mean and standard deviation scores of “high” and “low” VPs and the PCI items regarding workplace commitments and fulfillment levels.

Table 4.9

*Variation in Principles of The Psychological Contract According to Geographic Location: Comparison of Fulfillment Levels by Distance*

PCI Items	<u>High</u> n = 13			<u>Low</u> n = 28		
	Rank <sup>a</sup>	M	SD	Rank <sup>a</sup>	M	SD
Overall, how well have you fulfilled your commitments to your employer	1	4.69	0.48	2	4.46	0.51
In general, how well do you live up to your promises to your employer?	1	4.69	0.48	1	4.54	0.58
Overall how well does your employer fulfill its commitments to you?	2	4.38	0.77	4	3.89	0.63
Overall, how satisfied are you in your job?	4	4.08	0.64	3	4.07	0.77
To what extent are employer-made obligations the responsibility of senior management?	5	3.85	1.34	6	3.71	1.05
To what extent are employer-made obligations the responsibility of the organization generally?	6	3.62	1.26	5	3.75	0.97
To what extent are employer-made obligations the responsibility of your boss/manager?	7	3.15	1.63	7	3.54	0.92
To what extent are employer-made obligations the responsibility of coworkers/work group?	8	2.31	1.32	8	2.68	1.02
To what extent are employer-made obligations the responsibility of others?	9	1.69	1.38	9	1.82	1.09

<sup>a</sup> Ranking provided by the researcher according to mean scores.

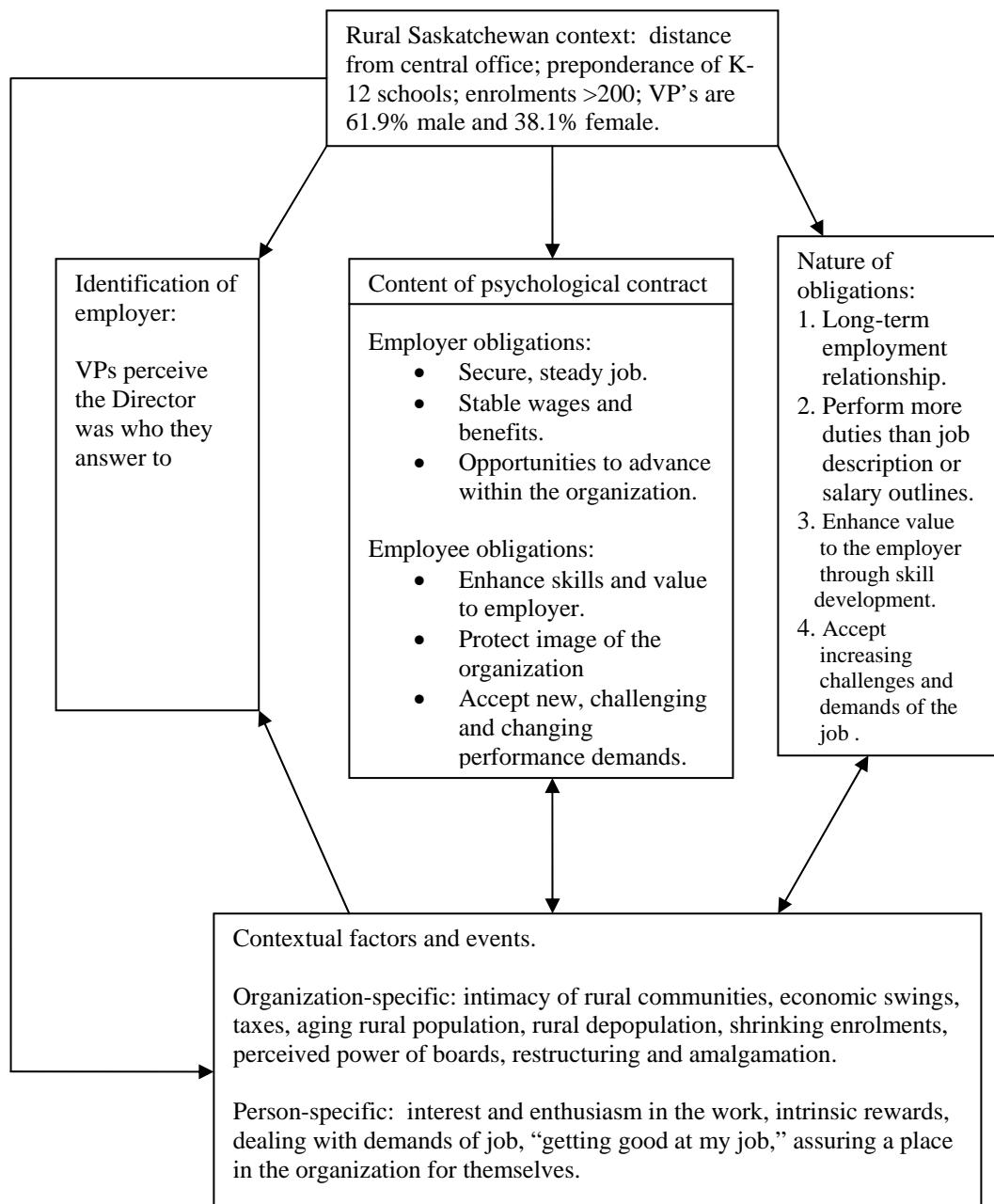
As presented in Table 4.9, the greatest difference in “high” and “low” VP perceptions was exhibited in the ranking for the PCI item, *overall, how well does your employer fulfill its commitments to you?* With a rank of 2, mean score of 4.38 and standard deviation of 0.77, a majority of VPs in the “high” group actually perceived their employer does a better job of fulfilling its commitments than their counterparts in

the “low” group, who provided a rank of 4, mean score of 3.89 and standard deviation of 0.63. This finding was profound because the qualitative data indicated that the influence of distance was greater on VPs in the “high” group. The explanation for this discrepancy was not known since this finding was outside the scope of this study. It was noted, however, that “high” distance VPs perceived the employer fulfilled its obligations to a greater extent than did “low” distance VPs and was corroborated by “high” distance VPs rank of 2, mean score of 4.38 and standard deviation of 0.77 and “low” distance VPs rank of 4, mean score of 3.89 and standard deviation of 0.63. Otherwise, minimal differences existed in perceived fulfillment levels between VP distance groups.

After the data were analyzed, one key difference in principles of the psychological contract according to geographic location was observed. VPs in schools farther than 50 km from their central office commonly reported frustration in doing their jobs. These VPs commented that distance limited access to “people” resources, PD, other schools and central office. The majority of “low” distance VPs did not experience job frustration because of distance. VPs in both distance groups were almost completely agreed that a connection existed between job demands, rural school and community “relationships,” problem solving, accomplishments, recognition and VP workplace obligations.

### **Summary of the Data Analysis**

This chapter presented the findings of the study. The relationship of the findings and the conceptual framework are provided in Figure 4.1.



*Figure 4.1. Pattern of Psychological Contract among Rural Saskatchewan VPs Identified from Data Analysis.*

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Adapted from, The psychological contract of experienced instructors, by A. Hrabok, (2003).

The study presented findings that:

1. Described the context (geographical location and demographics) of rural Saskatchewan VPs.
2. Described the pattern of psychological contract of the rural Saskatchewan VP.

The following is an explanation of the findings presented within the structure of the Conceptual Framework as presented in Figure 4.1.

### ***Identification of the Employer: Who do VPs Perceive they Answer to?***

The first research question identified the contextual characteristics (location and demographics) of the rural Saskatchewan VP. The second research question required VPs to identify whom they perceived they answered to. As stated by Rousseau (1995) the parties to the psychological contract can be a complex matter. In this study it was understood that Boards of Education were responsible for “signing the pay cheques,” however, identification of the employer from VPs perceptions was a necessary first step in this study. The first question on the questionnaire listed the various stakeholders in public education and 64.3% of VPs identified, “the Director,” as who they answered to.

### ***Content of The Psychological Contract***

The content or pattern of psychological contract was identified through research questions three and four: “To what extent do rural Saskatchewan VPs perceive the employer has made obligations to them?” and “To what extent do rural Saskatchewan VPs perceive they have made obligations to their employer?” As presented in Figure 4.1, the majority of VP responses indicated the obligations they perceived their employer had made to them, and the obligations they perceived they had made to their employer. The majority of VPs perceived that these obligations were made

“moderately” and “to a great extent.” In addition, these employer-made and employee-made obligations ranked in the top three by the majority of VPs. Rousseau (1995) stated that psychological contract could be identified as relational, transactional, transitional or balanced (p. 98). The workplace obligations as identified by majorities of VPs reflected *loyalty* and *security* and indicated that their pattern of psychological contract was *relational*. As revealed by the majority of VPs, employer-made obligations reflected *loyalty* and *security* and indicated employer psychological contracts were also *relational*. The fact that VPs in this study were experienced educators and long-term employees might also account for the perception that the psychological contract was relational rather than transactional.

### ***Nature of The Obligations***

The findings presented in Figure 4.1 were derived from the questionnaire results and qualitative responses VPs provided to the open-ended questions. These responses determined that the majority of VPs’ obligations or duties were not limited to what was outlined in job descriptions or what they were paid for. The nature of workplace obligations were determined to enhance VPs skills and value to the organization as well as enable them to accept new and challenging demands in the job.

### ***Contextual Factors***

The findings in Figure 4.1 were derived from VPs’ responses to the three open-ended questions at the end of the survey questionnaire. These results were presented in reference to the research questions, “what is the relationship between organization-specific factors or events and VPs’ perceptions of their workplace obligations?” and,

“what is the relationship between person-specific factors or events and VPs’ perceptions of their workplace obligations?”

It was evident from the findings that the majority of VPs were impacted by the economic, political, social and technological trends affecting the larger school organization. These respondents determined the organization-specific factors of economic downturn, rural depopulation, shrinking enrolments, taxation, differing perceptions of local and division board’s understanding of their power, school system restructuring and amalgamation impacted VPs doing their jobs. As indicated in the findings the majority of VPs dealt with these factors and in the process “got better in the job.” As these demands on the VP job occurred, workplace obligations changed.

Nearly all VPs identified relationships, communication, problem solving, accomplishments, recognition and intrinsic rewards as the person-specific factors and events that impacted them in their work as VPs. These VPs indicated that as they dealt with these factors and events they maintained interest and enthusiasm for the work. The majority of VPs perceived these dealings as opportunities to learn the job, enhance job skills, increase value to the employer, and assure their place within the organization.

The investigation of the pattern of the psychological contract of rural Saskatchewan VPs resulted in the identification of their psychological contract as *relational* even though many of their workplace duties were *transactional* in nature. The findings indicated that the majority of VPs were experienced educators and long-term employees of their school systems. These VPs articulated their commitment to the employment relationship, although they admitted the work was hectic and frustrating at times. VPs were almost in complete agreement that they had made obligations to their

employer to stay at their job in exchange for skill enhancement, career development and eventual promotion opportunities. Also indicated in the findings was the perception held by the majority of VPs that their employers made obligations to them to provide steady and secure employment, stable wages and benefits and opportunities for career development and advancement.

This study explored and described the pattern of the psychological contract of rural VPs and indicated their perceptions of employer-made and employee-made workplace obligations as well as the relationship between distance, gender and workplace obligations. Rousseau (1995) stated, “[a] contract is in essence an agreement [bound] to both rights and responsibilities . . . rich in assumptions as well as facts, uncertainty as well as predictability,” and, “. . . [is] a way for both groups [employer and employee] to know and create the future” (p. 223). In the case of rural Saskatchewan VPs and their role in increasingly diverse rural schools, this study of the pattern of the psychological contract advanced the understanding of the VP position. Study of VPs’ psychological contract was an important step as they create the future with their employer.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **SUMMARY, DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS**

This chapter presents a summary of the study, reviews the literature relating to the role and responsibilities of VPs, and psychological contract literature, and discusses the findings of both surveys and open-ended questions. It concludes with implications for practice, policy and further research.

#### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the pattern of the psychological contract among rural Saskatchewan vice-principals (VPs), with attention to geographic location (distance) and gender. It was the intent of this study to explore and describe the reciprocal employer-made and employee-made obligations and identify the relationship between distance, gender and workplace obligations. The research questions dealt with this problem within eight areas. The two main objectives of the study were:

1. Describe the context of rural Saskatchewan VPs by attending to the distance and gender descriptions and,
2. Describe the pattern of the rural Saskatchewan VPs' individual psychological contract.

The following section provides a summary of the findings related to the research questions explored in this study.

### ***Contextual Characteristics (distance and gender) of the Rural Saskatchewan VP***

Data was provided about the demographic factors of rural Saskatchewan VPs (see Table 4.1). The majority of respondents indicated they were from schools less than 50 kilometres from central office. The overwhelming majority of participants in this study worked in K-12 schools that were not designated community schools. The majority of participants were long-term employees of the school system, but new to administration. Of the 42 VPs who completed and returned the survey questionnaire, 61.9% were male and 38.1% were female. Other than reported differences in gender and distance from central office, the demographic characteristics for rural Saskatchewan VPs were quite similar.

### ***Identification of the Employer from the Perspective of the Rural Saskatchewan VP***

In this study, “the employer” was considered the entity to which the VP perceived they “answered to.” In answer to the question, “who is the employer?” *The Director* emerged as the most frequently selected response. Most of respondents (64.3%) indicated the Director was “the employer” they answered to (see Table 4.2). It was noted that a minority of respondents (21.4%) indicated “The Board of Education” in answer to this question. It is not known if respondents answered the remaining sections of the questionnaire cognizant of their perception of the employer.

### ***The Extent Rural Saskatchewan VPs Perceive the Employer Made Obligations to Them***

VPs were almost unanimous that the employer made workplace obligations to them. As revealed by VPs, the “top-three” employer-made obligations were the following:

- steady employment
- wages and benefits I can count on, and

- secure employment

Also indicated by the researcher was that the majority of VPs perceived that their employers made obligations to provide *opportunity for career development within this firm*. These VPs believed the employer was obligated to provide development and training opportunities and support VPs with:

- work-related efforts in meeting goals,
- adjusting to new and challenging performance requirements, and
- attaining the highest levels of performance.

Most VPs indicated they were willing to commit to these obligations. However, in exchange for this commitment, the majority of participants expected the employer to commit to their obligations to provide *steady employment, wages and benefits I can count on and secure employment* (see Table 4.3).

### ***The Extent Rural Saskatchewan VPs Perceive They Made Obligations to Their Employer***

There was unanimity among VPs that obligations were made to the employer. These obligations are as follows:

- to build skills to increase my value to this organization,
- protect this organization's image,
- make myself increasingly valuable to my employer,
- seek out developmental opportunities that enhance my value to this employer,
- accept new and different performance demands,
- respond positively to dynamic performance requirements,
- adjust to changing performance demands due to business necessity,

- commit myself personally to this organization,
- make personal sacrifices for this organization and
- accept increasingly challenging performance standards.

It was noted that the list of employee-obligations made to the employer was more numerous than the list of employer-obligations. VPs were almost unanimous with their perception that they made these obligations to their employer. Additionally, there was a high level of agreement among VPs and their obligations to *make personal sacrifices for this organization*, and *commit personally to this organization*. These VPs revealed their willingness to fully commit to the organization, however, in exchange there was the expectation of secure employment, steady employment, wages and benefits I can count on, and opportunities to build a future with the organization.

### ***The Relationship between Geographical Location, Gender and Rural Saskatchewan VPs' Work Related Obligations***

Respondents' perceptions were presented in two parts. The first part described the relationship between geographical location (distance) and VPs perceptions of workplace obligations. The second part of this discussion presented respondents' perceptions regarding the relationship between gender and VPs perceptions of workplace obligations.

***The relationship between distance and employer-made obligations.*** These respondents indicated that as distance from central office increased perceptions differed about the degree workplace obligations were met both by their employers and themselves. It was noted that the differences were slight. The one-way ANOVA (see Table 4.7) exposed only minimal variances in perceptions regarding the degree

workplace obligations were met between “high” distance and “low” distance VPs.

The greatest difference in perceptions between “high” distance and “low” distance VP groups were identified as the following:

- opportunity for career development within this firm
- wages and benefits I can count on
- short-term employment

With respect to *opportunity for career development within this firm*, and *wages and benefits I can count on*, “low” distance VPs perceived a greater obligation to the employer. Might VPs in the “high” distance group perceive less of an obligation by their employer because of less frequent contact with central office and senior administration? In regard to *short-term employment* it was stated in Chapter 4 that although this was an important part of the original PCI instrument, it was not applicable to this study of VPs. As revealed in the demographic information, VPs in this research were long-term employees of their school systems (see Table 4.1).

From the respondents’ verbatim comments about the relationship between distance and workplace obligations, the following common themes emerged:

- access to “people resources” was often challenging for VPs in “high” distance schools.
- As reported by these VPs, an increased cost associated with traveling greater distances (meetings, PD) was perceived as problematic.
- These respondents reported “frustration” in doing the job (largely because of the greater distance from STF, school division office, museums, sports venues, and other education-appropriate attractions).

The majority of respondents in the “low” distance group reported no major frustrations related to distance and doing their jobs. One respondent acknowledged being close to a city facilitated easy access to “. . . all the services” for VPs, teachers and their students. In general, based on respondents’ perceptions of the relationship to distance and their workplace obligations, differences were reported, although the ANOVA determined the differences were slight.

***The relationship between gender and employer-made obligations.*** As revealed by VPs (see Table 4.8), their perceptions of the relationship between gender and workplace obligations formulated part two of this discussion. When the data were analyzed according to gender, perceptions did not vary much; however, slight differences were found between male and female VPs on the following items:

- require me to perform only a limited set of duties
- potential job opportunities outside the firm, and
- a job as long as the employer needs me

Male VPs revealed they were more likely than female VPs to use the VP position as a way for *potential job opportunities outside the firm*. Unfortunately, no evidence surfaced in this study that could inform these questions.

The greatest difference in perceptions between female and male VPs was with the *require me to perform only a limited set of duties* PCI item. It is unknown why female VPs perceived they were more likely to exceed the duties as outlined by their job description. In contrast, perceptions of male VPs indicated they were less likely to see their appointment to VP as *a job as long as the employer needs me*. Why female VPs perceived their appointment to the VP position as more tenuous than males was

unknown. The questions associated with these differences in perceptions between male and female VPs were important, however, answers were beyond the extent of this study.

Based upon interpretation of the researcher, there were demographic variables other than gender that might account for differences in VPs' perceptions of employee-made and employer-made workplace obligations. When the demographic data were analyzed, four possible explanations for the differences in male and female VP perceptions were realized. The possible explanations were the following:

- number of years in education,
- years within the organization,
- level of education, and
- school size

It seemed logical that these demographic attributes accounted for the differences in perceptions. As indicated in Chapter Two, long-term employees were highly committed, growth oriented, dynamic, highly integrated and stable (Millward & Brewerton, 2000; Rousseau, 1995). As revealed by participants in this study, the majority of VPs were long-term educators.

As reported in their demographic information, the majority of VPs disclosed they had been with the school system for six or more years, but were new to administration. It was likely that these factors bore as great a relationship to VPs' perceptions of employee-made and employer made workplace obligations as did the gender variable.

***The relationship between organization-specific factors and events and VPs' perceptions of their workplace obligations***

Respondents acknowledged a relationship between organization-specific factors and events and their workplace obligations. VPs were almost unanimous in their perceptions that economic, social, political and technological trends from the wider society impacted the school organization and ultimately their work as VPs. “The agricultural lifestyle, economic swings and taxation all have an impact on the school,” reported one respondent. Combined with “school system restructuring and the uncertainty regarding security of teaching and administrative positions” and “declining enrolment . . . [and] smaller staff numbers” the theme that emerged was VPs perceived they were performing more responsibilities without parallel increases in resources. As reported by participants, these experiences confirmed the perception that their workplace obligations had changed because of the impact of economic downturn, drought, rural depopulation, shrinking enrolment, school restructuring and amalgamation.

***The relationship between person-specific factors and events and VPs' perceptions of their workplace obligations***

There was almost complete agreement among VPs with the perception that person-specific factors impacted them in their work. The most commonly described factors were “relationships” including communication with students, staff and community; “problem-solving” including dealing with the demands of the job; and “accomplishment and recognition” of VPs “getting good at the job” thus assuring their place in the organization.

These respondents indicated that their relationships and connections impacted workplace obligations. This was especially the case in reference to additional or

changing duties that exceeded job description and what VPs were paid to do. VPs often expressed having responsibility for more duties than they had time in the day. Although their days were often described as hectic, VPs' interest and enthusiasm for creating and maintaining relationships and connections were perceived as well worth the effort.

The majority of VPs revealed "problem-solving" was a person-specific factor deemed to have a relationship to workplace obligations. Respondents perceived being able to work through problems and challenges as opportunities to get better at the job. One VP reported "being able to know things . . . and make decisions," as well as looking forward to ". . . new challenges everyday" as factors that facilitated learning the job and getting better at it. Respondents consistently reported opportunities for taking leadership roles in school initiatives, being able to "devise, create and implement [the] program," ". . . making and keeping [community] partnerships," and "being able to collaborate with teachers, administration, Board and Director" as important personal experiences for learning the VP job. Most VPs perceived these person-specific duties facilitated their skill development as they dealt with the demands of the job.

Also reported by the majority of VPs was the support they realized from involvement in problem-solving activities and performing their "on-the-job" duties. As one respondent indicated, "[it] makes my day when I have helped and supported a staff member." The majority of respondents perceived these person-specific factors and events not only as areas of interest but also priorities. The commonly held perception among respondents was that these were opportunities to simultaneously deal with the demands of the job and enhance their job skills.

Respondents were almost unanimous in their perception of “accomplishment and recognition” realized from “getting good at the job” and “dealing with the demands of the job.” VPs indicated various school and community activities as examples of factors and events that impacted the VP job. One respondent reported “. . . [my] leadership with [achieving] Community school designation,” and another VP reported leadership for establishing “a new mission and long-term vision” as events that provided a sense of “. . . huge accomplishment. . . .” The pattern that emerged from VP responses indicated their high level of job satisfaction with activities and events that were positive, generated enthusiasm and were geared to growth. “Success has given me job satisfaction,” stated one respondent.

After the qualitative data were analyzed, the person-specific factors and events, as identified by VPs, were determined to have a relationship to workplace obligations. Respondents indicated that in dealing with the demands of the job and “getting good at the job,” they were able to enhance and diversify their skill set. From involvement with “relationships,” “problem-solving,” and “accomplishment and recognition” experiences, most VPs acknowledged their involvement with changing workplace obligations enhanced their skills. In addition, these respondents perceived these experiences created a “future direction” that included the VP as part of the organization.

***Variation in Principles of The Psychological Contract According to Geographic Location***

There was consistency among VPs in the “high” distance group and their perception that distance impacted workplace obligations. These respondents often reported *frustration* in doing their jobs. In particular, these VPs experienced limitations

in accessing “people” resources and PD. One respondent indicated that it was “[difficult] accessing . . . people resources on a regular basis . . . [they] may take several days to appear if at all.” In addition, these respondents perceived that amalgamation impacted their work, largely because of increased distances and higher costs to travel among schools and their central office.

To revisit the psychological contract literature from Chapter Two, psychological contracts, as exchange agreements, were grounded in the notion of reciprocity (Rousseau, 1995, p. 10). VPs in the “high” distance group commonly held the perception that increased distances impacted their workplace obligations made with their employer. These VPs were almost universal in describing that providing “people” resources support in place of human resource providers (e.g., social services) resulted in changed workplace obligations made with the employer. Conversely, VPs in the “low” distance group were virtually unanimous with the perception that distance had not created any unnecessary frustration in doing their jobs. These VPs indicated access to “people” resources was not a problem. As determined by these VPs, no major change in workplace obligations was experienced.

Both groups shared similar perceptions about workplace obligations and the job demands with respect to rural school relationships, community relationships, problem solving, accomplishments and sense of recognition. Overall, no major differences were noted in principles of psychological contract according to geographic location, apart from the following exception outlined by “high” distance VPs.

- VPs in schools that are greater distances from central office and/or urban areas perceived they made greater obligations to the employer. Access to “people”

resources and the impact of distance played a somewhat limited role with VPs' workplace obligations.

On the other hand, VPs of schools close to central office and/or urban areas reported greater access and availability to "people" resources. These VPs did not report undo frustration in doing their jobs. It must be emphasized that differences in principles of psychological contract according to distance were minimal and limited to the items presented in this section of the discussion.

## **Discussion**

This section discusses the findings regarding participant perceptions on the pattern of the psychological contract with reference to the research literature. It also discusses conclusions drawn from the analysis of the research findings.

### ***The VP Role and Responsibilities***

According to Koru (1993), the VP role and responsibilities were typically characterized as "... constantly setting priorities and juggling activities designed to maintain the stability of the organization and status quo of the school culture" (p. 67). Participants in this study revealed that their days were long, hectic and busy as they attended to such diverse activities as attendance, discipline, clerical duties, curriculum, school activities and community leadership projects. Celikten (2001) indicated the lack of a well defined, consistent job description resulted in VP frustration (p. 67). Marshall (1991) determined that the overwhelming number of VP duties routinely culminated in role conflict (as cited in Howard, 2000, p. 15). Marshall (1993) provided a portrait of VPs as very busy people (pp. 7-8). This was consistent with the description provided by respondents in this study. VPs indicated a diverse and demanding workplace schedule

comprised of regular, assigned duties and responsibility for most any contingencies that occurred on the job. Respondents in this study frequently reported they lacked sufficient time to attend to everything encompassed in the VP job.

### ***The Role Restructured***

A major theme revealed in the qualitative data was the pride VPs experienced from participating in school or community-based leadership opportunities. There was a high level of unanimity among VPs that the position be restructured to include more of these leadership activities as part of their regular duties. Williams (1995) stated that VPs must share in the leadership and development of the school's vision, goals and programs (p. 80). Hill (1994) supported this position that VPs should be charged with instructional improvement activities and practice these skills (p. 8). This sentiment was emphasized in the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) 1991 report. This report advised VPs be given greater involvement in instructional leadership and recommended VPs be relieved of the traditional duties of discipline, attendance, and clerical responsibilities to achieve this change.

This view, commonly found in the literature, was consistent with participants' narrative comments. When the data were analyzed, respondents clearly indicated their aspirations for more shared-leadership and collaborative opportunities in the VP position. As revealed by participants' job related experiences, there was a genuine interest expressed in expanding their collaborative opportunities. VPs indicated a sense of pride, accomplishment, recognition and professional growth gained from their participation in collaborative activities such as the following:

- “. . . [collaborating] with the principal and community in making and keeping partnerships,”
- “. . . working with the school and community to enhance the school,” and
- “. . . [collaborating] with teachers, administration, Board and Director in matters of policy.”

Kaplan and Owings (1999) stated their model for shared leadership not only utilized the VP as a resource for the principal, it also provided a way to establish and develop a collaborative culture (pp. 83-84). Participants in this study were generally in agreement that increased collaborative activities were a major priority in a restructured VP role.

Within this context of the VP role restructured, the ten workplace obligations VPs perceived they made to their employer need to be revisited. To recall, VPs perceived they made the following ten obligations to the employer:

- to build skills to increase my value to this organization,
- protect this organization’s image,
- make myself increasingly valuable to my employer,
- seek out developmental opportunities that enhance my value to this employer,
- accept new and different performance demands,
- respond positively to dynamic performance requirements,
- adjust to changing performance demands due to business necessity,
- commit myself personally to this organization,
- make personal sacrifices for this organization and
- accept increasingly challenging performance standards.

These obligations indicated VPs' goal to strengthen the organization by personally committing to the VP position, their own skill development and the organization itself. The nature of these obligations was characterized by the relationship to leadership skills and leadership preparation. The message was clear that VPs desired more leadership and vision opportunities in the position.

The NASSP (1991) report stated VPs' day-to-day activities were a combination of assigned, expected and assumed roles (see Table 2.1). This report emphasized that regardless of whether the VP position was a career position or preparatory for the principalship, "the VP position needs to be restructured to play a more vital role in instructional leadership" (p. v). The participants in this study were almost unanimous in their perceptions of the "top-ten" employee-made workplace obligations (see Table 4.5). These obligations underscored the need for a restructured VP role and provided possibilities of what the restructured VP role might include.

### ***The VP: The Unsung Hero***

The participants' responses to the survey and open-ended questions provided a remarkable commentary regarding the current reality of the VP position. Participants' written comments characterized the position as a combination of the "cop-on-the-beat" and "building manager" roles of 30 years ago with role behaviors that identify increased diversification into human services areas. This diversification of VP duties was perceived as largely the result of significant changes that were occurring in rural Saskatchewan society. As one respondent stated, "... economic swings and taxation all have an impact on the school . . . [frustrations] at home tend to move into the school." Coupled with political, social and technological trends affecting rural Saskatchewan

communities, rural schools and rural VPs have a lot to contend with. According to the literature, the VP has been the unsung hero of the school; despite the myriad functions they perform, and the flurry of change they experience, this critical administrator goes essentially unnoticed (Celikten, 2001; Hill, 1994; & Howard, 2000).

Williams (1995) emphasized re-evaluating the roles and responsibilities of the VP role in order to make it diversified and meaningful (p. 80). As indicated by VP perceptions of employee-made workplace obligations, respondents were essentially in agreement that the VP job required them to:

- accept new and different performance demands,
- respond positively to dynamic performance requirements,
- adjust to changing performance demands due to business [societal trends] necessity,
- commit myself personally to this organization,
- make personal sacrifices for this organization and
- accept increasingly challenging performance standards.

Participants' written comments described the day-to-day activities, expectations and routines of the job which typically included a mix of attendance, discipline, and clerical duties along with the leadership dimensions of the VP job. According to Celikten (2001) a major theme in the literature was that attendance and disciplinary functions had not met the expectations of [VPs] in the position (p. 69).

Not surprisingly, VP's were almost unanimous with the perception that they made obligations with the employer to:

- build skills to increase my value to this organization,

- protect this organization's image,
- make myself increasingly valuable to my employer,
- seek out developmental opportunities that enhance my value to this employer.

In pursuit of fulfilling these obligations, VPs found opportunities to develop leadership skills. Hill (1994) indicated that the traditional role of the VP needed to yield to opportunities for VPs to develop skills and value orientations that are desired in future leaders (p. 6). In consideration of VPs' perceptions of employee-made and employer-made workplace obligations, a restructured VP position, as determined by the researcher, was one way to elevate the visibility and importance of the position.

Howard (2000) recommended that school boards develop clearly defined job descriptions that emphasized development of strong and positive leadership skills in the VP position (p. 7). As revealed by VPs, accomplishment and recognition in the job were important person-specific factors and provided major intrinsic rewards. For an enhanced employment relationship to be created and maintained, the VP as "hero of the school" needed to be given voice; furthermore, the role must be redefined to facilitate VP contributions to the leadership, transformation and overall productivity of the school.

### **Psychological Contract Revisited**

STF reports (1998; 2001) described rural schools as hectic places for all personnel, but perhaps especially so for administrators. As described in the previous section, rural Saskatchewan VPs were sensitive to the effects of change from the wider society as they impacted schools and school systems. These factors affected the amount of teaching time and release time assigned to the VP, and impacted the number of extra duties the VP may have to pick up in the event of a staff reduction. Termination of the position in

one school, requiring a move to another possibly more remote school was an anxiety expressed by a small number of “high” distance rural Saskatchewan VPs in their responses to the open-ended questions.

As outlined in Chapter Two, VPs were routinely on the front lines of change happening in schools. What can organizations do to attract and retain the most qualified employees? The psychological contract was used in this study as a tool to further the understanding of human needs and employment relationships. This section presents the data collected with the psychological contract literature.

### ***Why Study the Psychological Contract?***

As revealed by respondents in this study, the rural Saskatchewan VP position was often described as ever-expanding. From participant responses of workplace experiences, the complexities of the VP position emerged. Recognizing the implicit nature of workplace obligations, psychological contract seemed the most valid approach for study of rural Saskatchewan VPs’ psychological contract. Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler (2000) stated psychological contract study, “. . . presents another opportunity to re-examine the fundamental aspects of organizational life, the employee-employer relationship” (p. 903). Considering the amount and kind of change experienced in the VP role, psychological contract study facilitated understanding of human needs and responses. To help understand human responses, psychological contracts are useful tools as they give structure to otherwise ambiguous challenges (Morrison, 1994, p. 354). Psychological contract was selected as the means to study rural Saskatchewan VPs working in different rural contexts in order to describe and explore the unwritten and

implicit part of their employment contract. In this way, VPs organizational life and employee-employer relationship were examined.

### ***What is the Psychological Contract?***

Morrison (1994) stated that contracts are created from what people do; therefore, the psychological contract is more of a reality than are the formal policies (p. 357). Spindler (1994) indicated the psychological contract creates emotions and attitudes which form and control behavior (p. 327). Schein (1978) stated the psychological contract was an ongoing process of negotiation between employee and employer and was real in the sense that both employee and boss have strong expectations of each other after some period of learning and socialization has passed (p. 121).

According to Schein (1978), “. . . the psychological contract defines what the employee will give in the way of effort and contribution in exchange for challenging or rewarding work, acceptable working conditions, organizational rewards . . . and an organizational future” (p. 112). Once the data were analyzed, the majority of participants in this study revealed that their psychological contract contained the following *employer-made* workplace obligations:

- secure employment,
- wages and benefits I can count on, and
- steady employment.

In exchange, VPs were almost in complete agreement with the perception that the psychological contract contained the following *employee-made* obligations:

- make personal sacrifices for this organization,
- accept increasingly challenging performance standards,

- seek out developmental opportunities that enhance my value to the employer,
- adjust to changing performance demands due to business necessity,
- build skills to increase my value to this organization,
- protect this organization's image,
- respond positively to dynamic performance requirements,
- make myself increasingly valuable to my employer,
- commit myself personally to this organization, and
- accept new and different performance demands.

When the quantitative data were analyzed, the majority of VPs indicated that they perceived the previously mentioned obligations were made between themselves and the employer. Furthermore, these VPs determined these obligations were met *to a great extent* by themselves (see Table 4.6) and their employers (see Table 4.4).

As presented in Chapter Two and reiterated here, a major dimension of the psychological contract was the understanding that it was an *individual's* perception of the reciprocal exchange agreement held with the employer. Rousseau (1995) stated that in each individual's psychological contract there was the perception of agreement and mutuality if not agreement and mutuality in fact; thus, psychological contract was potentially idiosyncratic and unique to each person who agreed to it (p. 10).

Rousseau (1995) determined the psychological contract held between employee and employer was manifest in the belief that "I know what you want from me and you know what I want from you" (p. 10). With respect to VP perceptions that were revealed through the survey data, the majority of VPs know not only what they want from their employer but also what the employer wants from them. As described by VPs, in

exchange for their huge commitment of time, energy and effort to the organization, they expected the employer to provide challenging and rewarding work, acceptable working conditions, organizational rewards (in the form of pay and benefits) and assurance of a future with the organization.

### ***Who are the Psychological Contract Partners?***

The fact that the psychological contract partners were the employer and the employee was obvious. Rousseau and Grelle (1994) pointed out “a psychological contract is . . . between [the individual] and the organization” (p. 383). According to the literature, the fact that psychological contract required agreement between two parties was largely undisputed. Even Guest (1998) in his criticism of psychological contract study conceded there were two parties involved in a psychological contract (p. 651). Lucero and Allen (1994) indicated that there were other agents in the organization that may be in the position to form psychological contracts with employees. Participants in this study acknowledged that the Board of Education signed the pay-cheque. Given the reality that publicly funded school systems included numerous stakeholders (see Table 4.2), determining the identity of the employer was considered an important and a critical first step in psychological contract study.

After the data were analyzed it was revealed that VPs were not unanimous in their perceptions of the identity of “the employer.” Of VPs surveyed, 21.4% designated “The Board of Education” as the employer. This was consistent with the perception that, “. . . other agents in the organization were in the position to form psychological contracts” (Lucero & Allen, 1994). More importantly, 64.3% of VPs believed “the Director” was their employer in terms of who they regarded as the one they answered to.

What was unclear was if participants completed the survey as if “The Director” and “The Board of Education” were one entity.

### ***Function of the Psychological Contract***

As presented in Chapter Two, an important aspect of the psychological contract was the debate in the literature over its function. Critics of the psychological contract construct debated whether it was in fact a contract at all since it did not fit the legal definition of a contract (Guest, 1998; Spindler, 1994). Rousseau (1998) in response to this type of criticism stated that those who do not clearly understand psychological contract put forward this type of argument (p. 665). Scholars on the subject pointed out that those who equate psychological contract with a legal contract had confused the two, which was typical of lay people new to the psychological contract concept (p. 666). Spindler (1994) conceded that “. . . [while] a legal court creates rights recognizable in a courtroom, *a psychological contract creates emotions and attitudes which form and control behavior* [italics in original]” (pp. 326-327). This advanced the psychological contract as a fundamentally implicit agreement.

This position was congruent with Rousseau’s (1998) definition that psychological contract was “. . . the perception of an exchange agreement between oneself and another party.” Through the process of completing the survey, participants responded to the questionnaire items by considering workplace obligations from the perceptions of both the employer *and* employee. In this way participants in the study acknowledged the psychological contract as an exchange agreement between oneself and another party.

Kessler (1994) related the matter of employment contracts to the concept of psychological contract (see Table 2.2) and created a “new” employee contract. This “new” employee contract merged the individual’s ‘body’ and ‘mind’ and was perceived as a formidable weapon in the marketplace (p. 351). Simply stated, the psychological contract draws power from the attention given to the well-being aspects of the employee-employer relationship. VPs were almost unanimous in determining *secure employment, steady employment and wages and benefits I can count on* as the key employer-made workplace obligations. It is not surprising that these obligations correspond with the “well-being” aspect of the employment relationship.

In exchange, VPs were almost in complete agreement with workplace obligations that exhibited characteristics of “well-being.” Upon examination of the ten main employee-made workplace obligations (see Table 4.6), the following six obligations were consistent with “well-being:”

- seek out developmental opportunities that enhance my value to the employer,
- build skills to increase my value to this organization,
- protect this organization’s image,
- make myself increasingly valuable to my employer,
- commit myself personally to this organization, and
- accept new and different performance demands.

These employee-made obligations were revealed by participant responses to the survey questionnaire items. Morrison (1994) indicated the psychological contract was not revealed after consultation with an expert in human resources, instead, contract holders revealed their side of the contracts through their actions (p. 371). VP written comments

revealed occasions when they “felt good in the job” and experienced intrinsic rewards from their duties. Some examples of “well-being” are the following:

- “positive and consistent discipline. . .” or,
- “. . . [mediating] student-student, teacher-student and student-teacher-parent disputes,” or
- “. . . [helping] a student in crisis,”
- “. . . working with school and community to enhance the school,” and
- “. . . [collaborating] with teachers, administration, Board and Director in matters of policy.”

Considering the nature of these VP comments, it was curious that only 57.1% of VPs perceived the employer made obligations to *be responsive to my well-being* (see Table 4.3). The reason for such a small majority was not divulged in the data. According to Morrison (1994) psychological contracts kept “some sand out of the interpersonal gears” and provided stability and feelings of security with employees in the organization (p. 356). This was consistent with participant perceptions as presented in the findings.

Rousseau (1995) presented the psychological contract as having two dimensions; the transactional and relational (p. 97). The transactional dimension referred to the negotiated, well described terms of exchange; monetizable, specific, and of limited duration (Guzzo & Noonan, 1994, p. 448). In the case of participants in this study, items such as (but not limited to) salary, and health benefits, were negotiated by the STF in the provincial collective agreement made with the province. Additionally, jurisdictional Local Negotiating Committees (LINC) negotiated with individual Boards on items such

as (but not limited to) preparation time, PD and leaves. The transactional dimension pertained to the negotiated written contract signed by the employer and employee.

Guzzo and Noonan (1994) indicated the relational dimension was more abstract; not easily monetizable and broadly concerned with the relationship between the individual and the employing organization. For example, a relationship item like ‘being treated with respect by an employer’ (p. 448), may be exhibited in career development, promotion or tuition money for skill enhancement. The majority of participants (see Table 4.3) perceived their employer made the obligation to provide *opportunity for career development within this firm*. Half of the participants in this study perceived their employer made the obligation to provide *opportunities for promotion*.

Participants were almost unanimous in recognizing the VP role required doing more than salary or was outlined in their assigned duties. Of participants, 87.8% responded “not at all” to the employee obligation, *do only what I am paid to do* (see Table 4.5). In addition, a large majority of participants indicated they were willing to *commit myself personally to this organization*. This indicated VPs acceptance of “going above and beyond” the transactional requirements of the VP position. These perceptions of workplace obligations were characteristic of Rousseau’s (2000) *loyalty and security* features of relational contracts. Millward and Brewerton (2000) stated “. . . the relational [contract] positively correlated with job and organizational commitments, and also with the expressed willingness to work overtime without pay (i.e., go the extra mile for the organization)” (p. 15). Most participant responses indicated consistency with this information. Once the data were analyzed, the VP perception of the psychological contract as a *relational* contract was confirmed.

Millward and Brewerton (2000) stated that the relational contract was, “. . . more strongly linked with permanent than temporary contracts, with full-time than with part-time working patterns and with long-term rather than short-term employment relationships (as indicated by organization and job tenure)” (p. 15). To recall, the majority of participants were long-term (six or more years) employees of their school divisions. The majority of participants (81%) reported eleven or more years in education. Millward and Brewerton (2000) stated, “. . . [as] age and organizational tenure increases . . . employees become more relationally oriented towards their employer,” and, “. . . as they become comfortable with their employer [they] lose the desire to move on in order to further their careers elsewhere” (p. 18). Rousseau’s (1995) psychological contract typology as presented in Figure 1.1 indicated that long-term employees, characterized as *relational*, are highly committed, growth oriented, dynamic, highly affective, highly integrated and stable. These characteristics were consistent with the information provided by participants in this study. As revealed by participants in this study, the function of the psychological contract was consistent with Spindler’s (1994) position that the psychological contract created the emotions and attitudes which formed and controlled workplace behavior.

### ***Psychological Contract and Change***

The context dimensions of rural Saskatchewan VPs were explored in research questions six and seven. It was revealed that both organization-specific and person-specific factors and events have a relationship to workplace obligations.

***Organization-specific factors and events.*** According to the literature, organization-specific events play a major role in the renegotiation of the psychological contract (Hrabok, 2003; Rousseau, 1995). The majority of participants in this study reported that economic, social, political and technological trends in the wider society affected the school organization and impacted their work as VPs. D. E. Morrison (1996) indicated that “[the] way an organization initiates and manages change has profound implications for the psychological contract and may create or reinforce old expectations” (as cited in Hrabok, 2003). In particular economic downturn, drought, rural depopulation, shrinking enrolment, school restructuring and amalgamation affected the school system. The majority of VPs reported these factors often caused changes to workplace obligations. Most participants reported “doing more with less” and “uncertainty of teaching and administrative positions” as factors that impacted the employee-employer relationship, however, the organizational strategies for managing these changes were not reported.

***Person-specific factors and events.*** Rousseau and Geller (1994) indicated “[a] person’s experience in an organization . . . particularly in terms of choices they make regarding the organization . . . how to expend effort, what to learn, how long to stay, or the way to treat people . . . [forms] the basis for understanding conditions of their employment” (p. 385). Participants provided numerous factors and events particular to rural Saskatchewan that impacted their relationship with their school system. From these person-specific factors, the following three themes emerged:

- “relationships” including communication with students, staff and community;
- “problem-solving” including dealing with demands of the VP job; and,

- “accomplishment and recognition” of VPs “getting good at the job” thus assuring their place in the organization.

These factors characterized *learning the job* and *dealing with the demands of the VP position* and resonated with participants’ work interests and enthusiasm for the job.

According to Rousseau and Grelle (1994) once the employee and employer can say what they need and describe what they believe they are receiving, a basis exists for improved contract performance (p. 399). As revealed by these participants, they knew what they needed and what they were receiving in the VP position.

When the qualitative data were analyzed, only slight differences were revealed in perceptions of workplace obligations according to geographic location. First, VPs working in schools greater than 50 km from central office or an urban area often reported *frustration* in doing their jobs. In particular, a number of these “high” distance VPs experienced limitations accessing “people” resources, and PD. Second, VPs perceived *amalgamation* of school systems impacted their work, largely because of increased distances among schools and their central office. Conversely, the majority of respondents in the “low” group reported no major frustration related to distance and doing their jobs.

Hrabok (2003) stated that “[psychological] contract, as a scientific construct, can play a role in examining the employment relationships of educators,” and that “the concept is underutilized in education” (p. 232). STF reports (1998; 2001) indicated the workload and work life of VPs was highly demanding. The psychological contract construct provided a way to explore VPs’ employment relationship and described VPs’ perceptions of employee-made and employer-made obligations.

Two themes emerged in the findings that were not considered prior to the commencement of the data collection. The first theme that emerged was in response to the open-ended question that asked for VPs' perceptions of workplace obligations and the relationship to distance. In describing how their work was impacted by geographical location, *access to support* was identified as a concern particularly in view of the linkages mandated by the School PLUS model. Respondents from schools that were located in the more remote regions of the "high" distance category indicated that requests for support services often go unfulfilled. Their concern was about the lack of the human services linkages and what might happen when their schools begin the process of implementing the School PLUS model for strengthening the capacity of their schools.

The second theme emerged in response to the open-ended question that asked VPs to describe factors particular to rural Saskatchewan that they believed impacted their relationship with the school system. As reported by a minority of participants, amalgamation emerged as a factor that influenced them in their work. These respondents related their experiences that increased distances within amalgamated school divisions affected their pursuit of professional growth. This group of VPs reported increased costs because of greater distances between schools and central office might potentially terminate their attendance at administrators' meetings. Additionally, VPs perceived distance was a hindrance to their pursuit of PD/in-service, and graduate studies.

These participants expressed concern about being left out of regular administrators' group meetings because increased travel costs might result in only

school principals attending these meetings. Participants indicated being excluded from “shared-leadership” opportunities was a major issue that impacted their work as VPs. This group reported that distance had an adverse effect on attending PD/ in-service because of the increased travel costs. Similarly, these participants related that distance, extra-curricular activities and community responsibilities made their pursuit of graduate studies difficult. These participants perceived personal sacrifice and commitments to the school while working full-time essentially precluded pursuit of graduate studies. One VP shared “. . . there is no way I can drive 3-1/2 hours for a night class and drive back the same night.” What was clear from the qualitative responses was that interest in attending administrators’ meetings, PD and graduate studies was relatively even between VPs in both the “low” and “high” distance groups, although access to professional growth opportunities was perceived as more limited by “high” distance VPs. Both groups acknowledged the importance of continuous professional learning and recognized distance impacted their obligation to skill enhancement.

### **Conceptual Framework Revisited**

The conceptual framework used in this study was adapted from the five-part Hrabok (2003) model (see Figure 1.1). Revisiting this framework provided a basis to explore and describe the pattern of the participants’ psychological contract with attention to geographic location and demographics (see Figure 4.1). The following sections present the description of rural Saskatchewan VPs psychological contract according to the conceptual framework.

### ***The Rural Saskatchewan Context***

Participants in this study revealed the majority of respondents were male VPs from schools 50 kilometres and less from their central offices and worked in K-12 schools not designated as Community schools. Participants identified themselves as long-term employees of their school systems; however, they were relatively new to administration.

#### ***Identification of the Employer: Who do VPs Perceive They Answer to?***

An important first step in this study was to know the identity of the other party in the VP psychological contract. As Rousseau (1995) stated the parties to the psychological contract can be a complex matter. In this study it was understood that Boards of Education were responsible for “signing the pay cheques,” however, 64.3% of participants identified “the Director” as the employer they answered to.

#### ***Contents of Rural Saskatchewan VPs Psychological Contract***

Part two of the framework identified the contents of the VP psychological contract. According to the literature, psychological contract was identified as relational or transactional (Guzzo & Noonan, 1994; Millward & Brewerton, 2000; Rousseau, 1995). As revealed by participants, both employer-made and employee-made workplace obligations reflected mainly *well-being* psychological contract items and were consistent with Rousseau’s (1995) workplace obligation classifications of *loyalty* and *security*. Participants perceived the pattern of the psychological contract was primarily *relational*, characterized by high member commitment, high affective commitment, high integration and stability (see Figure 2.2). Participants indicated they were experienced educators and long-term employees of their school systems. This might also account for the

perception that the pattern of the psychological contract was *relational* rather than transactional.

### ***Nature of The Obligations***

Participant responses to the open-ended questions revealed the nature of VPs' workplace obligations. Most VPs perceived their obligations were not limited to what was outlined in job descriptions or salary agreements (see Figure 4.1). The nature of the workplace obligations reflected VPs commitment to "going the extra mile" as they dealt with and learned the job; ultimately this facilitated enhanced job skills and increased value to the organization.

### ***Contextual Factors***

This part of the conceptual framework identified the relationship of organization-specific and person-specific factors and events with VPs' workplace obligations. After the data were analyzed, it was evident that participants in this study believed factors such as economic downturn, rural depopulation, shrinking enrolments, taxation, "power" as perceived by local boards, and school system restructuring and amalgamation impacted them doing their jobs. VPs indicated that as they dealt with these factors, workplace obligations changed; however, VPs also indicated that in the process they "got better in the job."

Participants were almost unanimous with indicating relationships, communication, problem-solving, accomplishments, recognition and intrinsic rewards as person-specific factors that impacted them in their work as VPs. These VPs revealed that as they managed these factors, they learned the job, enhanced job skills, increased value to the organization, and assured their place in the organization. It was also revealed that while

these VPs dealt with person-specific factors they maintained interest and enthusiasm for the work.

The psychological contract can be used to advance a more complete understanding of human needs and promote a strengthened employment relationship between VPs and their employers. Three goals psychological contract can help achieve are the following:

- “high” distance VP access to “people” resources,
- development of clearly documented VP job descriptions including shared-leadership opportunities, and
- consideration of the “well-being” obligations of VPs and their employers.

This process should be supported by administrative networking and professional development. It should be of benefit for VPs, senior administration, local boards and division Boards of Education to participate in these activities geared towards strengthening the employee-employer relationship. Ultimately strengthened interpersonal relationships should be synonymous with strengthened capacity in school systems.

This research may add to the literature on VP role and responsibilities and the literature on psychological contract. This study supported the need for limitations on the clerical and managerial duties of VPs. VPs indicated their aspirations for significantly increased involvement in shared leadership, and vision activities in their schools and school systems. These activities should promote active participation by VPs in their growth as administrators regardless of whether the VP position was a career position or preparatory for the principalship. VPs need support and validation from principals, and senior administration that can be realized from full partnership in leadership activities.

This study emphasized the need for inclusion of VPs in all leadership initiatives and activities regardless of distance from the central office. VPs in “high” distance schools were concerned about their exclusion from participating in shared leadership opportunities with the principal, Director and Board. As found in the literature, the VP is critical to successful school transformation, yet is often overlooked in this capacity. STF reports (1998; 2001) emphasized the need for a second administrator in every school. According to the literature on VP role, the deliberate inclusion of leadership activities in VP duties is a critical component for strengthening the capacity of schools. All educational partners should listen to VPs and take steps to ensure this position is a priority in all school divisions.

### **Implications for Practice, Policy and Research**

What does it all mean? Based on the results of this study it appears that rural Saskatchewan VPs are in agreement with their perceptions of workplace obligations and the pattern of their psychological contract. Overall, respondents are almost unanimous with the image of rural Saskatchewan VPs as very busy people, who are highly committed and dedicated to the “clientele” they serve and the organization they are a part of. However, through the data analysis process, questions surface that require further study. What follows are implications for practice, policy and further research.

#### ***Implications for Practice***

There is great benefit for Boards to listen to VPs about what they need to do their jobs effectively in all rural schools. There should be equal access to “people” resources in all schools regardless of distance from central office. This may require Boards, central office staff and human service providers to collaborate with VPs in order to

generate strategies that ensure access to human services personnel. The School PLUS model for strengthening capacity of schools requires integration of all human services with schools; therefore, access to all rural schools should be assured.

It was discouraging that there are rural school divisions operating without VPs. According to STF reports (1998; 2001) the workload for the majority of rural school staff, including rural school administrators, is overwhelming. VPs are a necessary component for strengthening the capacity of schools regardless of enrolment or distance from central office. There is a need for a VP in every rural school with unencumbered access to appropriate and meaningful support and training opportunities.

There is a relationship between person-specific and organization-specific factors and the VP job. VPs experience many contingencies that arise during the course of a school day. In order to strengthen the employee-employer relationship and possibly address rural school administrator recruitment and retention issues, Saskatchewan Learning and educational stakeholders should cooperatively plan and deliver pre-service and induction activities.

### ***Implications for Policy***

As indicated in the literature review, managerial and clerical tasks are often relegated to the VP position. As schools devise plans and take action to strengthen their capacity, there is a need for continued shared leadership and transformational leadership opportunities for VPs. VPs want more of these types of workplace obligations and therefore, steps should be taken to provide these opportunities. This should facilitate further development of VPs' leadership skills.

Smaller school divisions may consider establishing a “VP candidate’s pool” to provide initial training and support for “rookies” new to site-based leadership. Increased pre-service (induction), funded in-service (like an internship), limited workload (restricted teaching and administrative duties), and restricted extra-curricular and community activities should support VPs skill enhancement and development of leadership abilities.

Aging rural population, rural depopulation, shrinking enrolments, economic downturn and school restructuring continue to impact rural communities and the schools in them. As school professionals deal with increasing duties without a parallel increase in resources, the cost may very well consume school personnel in the process. Communities and Boards may need to consider whether keeping a small school open is the most viable option to providing their children the best learning opportunities available.

### ***Implications for Research***

The majority of research into the psychological contract used quantitative methods of data collection and data analysis. This study is primarily a quantitative study that focuses on the generalizable aspects of the psychological contract (Rousseau & Tijoriwala, 1998). Considering the experiential, perceptual, implicit, individual and idiosyncratic nature of the psychological contract, further qualitative data collection in this area is required. Qualitative data collection should generate meaningful insights into the implicit aspects of psychological contract research generally and of VPs’ individual psychological contract specifically.

The sample in this study is limited to rural Saskatchewan. The majority of respondents (68.3%) are from schools 50 kilometers and less from their central offices. It is not known if any VPs from extremely remote or isolated Saskatchewan schools (i.e., fly-in communities) participated in this study. This indicates the potential for further research using isolated schools in the far northern reaches of Saskatchewan. This data should provide a more complete understanding of the relationship between the distance variable and the VPs' psychological contract.

Issues associated with administration of small schools in rural Saskatchewan emerged in the participant responses to the open-ended questions. The majority of respondents (76.2%) report working in schools of 200 students or more. There is a need to explore and describe the unique experiences and idiosyncrasies of the small rural school. Additional research conducted in schools of less than 200 students should yield different results and is worthwhile exploring.

This study indicated high levels of reciprocity of obligations from the VPs' perception only. Millward and Brewerton (2000) stated, "[the] use of employee only measures of the psychological contract do not preclude the possibility of investigating the employer side of the equation, though the viability has yet to be ascertained" (p. 35). Study of the VP psychological contract involving Directors may advance the understanding of their employment relationship and further inform their pattern of the psychological contract.

Personal correspondence from one of the participants provides the final implication for further research. The quantitative data collection used a survey

questionnaire (PCI) with origins in an industrial (business) model. This participant expresses concern and states the following:

I received your survey and completed what I could. It seems to me that this survey is based on an Industrial model as opposed to an Educational model. I was unable to rate several statements as they were worded in a double-negative manner and I was not comfortable with rating what I "thought" was being implied . . . If they were worded in the positive I would have gladly rated them like "I am obliged to remain with this employer," not "I am under no obligation to remain with this employer." There were a few statements which I didn't rate because they don't apply to my situation . . . I don't have a "limited" number of responsibilities and I didn't agree to "specific" duties when hired. I am fortunate that in my School Division the VPs do all areas of administration. The admin roles [between the school admin team] are shared not assigned.

Perhaps further study using a questionnaire based on an educational model may produce different results. This factor underscores the need for further research.

### **Concluding Comment**

The data analyzed in this study indicated that rural Saskatchewan VPs are responsible for numerous and diverse activities regardless of geographical location or demographics. Participants in this study reported workplace duties congruent with the literature pertaining to the VP role and the VP role restructured. As revealed by VPs, their perceptions of employee-made and employer-made workplace obligations are

consistent with the implicit contracts and *relational* agreements outlined in the psychological contract literature.

One of the issues the researcher found in the literature was the movement away from VPs as “bean counters.” As indicated in the literature, traditionally VPs are involved almost exclusively with attendance, discipline and a legion of clerical and managerial responsibilities. The trend reported by participants in this study is for a major elevation of VP involvement with shared and transformational leadership activities. VPs emphasized their aspirations for leadership and vision responsibilities to become a more significant component of their workplace obligations. This was reported as “the norm” by a small number of respondents; perhaps in time this “exception” to VP duties will become a regular part of the VP position.

Participants in this study believed there are areas that need to be addressed to enhance their side of the employment relationship. A job description characterized by a preponderance of leadership activities for VPs is noted in the literature and by participants in this study. A clearly delineated job description should facilitate a less overwhelming workload and work-life for rural Saskatchewan VPs. Access to “professional growth” opportunities resonate in the qualitative responses VPs provided to the open-ended questions. Skill enhancement and career development obligations are important items for VPs. Furthermore, as indicated by VPs, “well-being” workplace obligations for employees and employers are the major dimension of the pattern of psychological contract among rural Saskatchewan VPs. Continued attention to “well-being” dimensions of psychological contract by both employees and employers should validate VPs’ work and elevate the position to more of an associate principal role.

This study identified the VP position as hectic and challenging. Participants reveal a strong sense of pride and intrinsic value from success, accomplishment and recognition gained from dealing with the challenges and external pressures of the job. Successful VPs are critical to strengthening the capacity of schools. By taking their concerns and successes of workplace obligations into consideration, the role, responsibilities and skills of the VP position are enhanced. For VPs continued success, they need support in the areas identified in this study of the pattern of the psychological contract among rural Saskatchewan VPs.

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## APPENDIX A

The Psychological Contract Inventory (PCI)

Permission has been given to use this instrument.

**PCI**  
Psychological Contract Inventory  
(Rousseau, 2000)

**THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT INVENTORY (PCI)**

Introduction to the Study

This study is not a study of your school, community, or school division. The purpose of the study is to investigate, explore and describe the pattern of psychological contract among rural Saskatchewan vice-principals (VP's).

The psychological contract is an individual's beliefs, shaped by the organization, regarding terms of an unwritten exchange agreement between individuals and their organization. The psychological contract is about the perception the employee has of these unwritten obligations made to the employer and the unwritten obligations the employer has made to the employee. Simply put, psychological contract is manifest in the statement, "I know what you want from me and you know what I want from you."

Rural Saskatchewan vice-principal (VP) is defined as the second level in-school administrator who has at least two years experience as a rural VP and is employed in the VP role at the time of the study.

For your information, the University of Saskatchewan Behavioral Research Ethics Committee protocol for survey respondents is enclosed. This document explains the parameters of the study.

I very much appreciate your taking 20 minutes or so to complete the PCI which contains two parts:

1. Demographic information. Please complete the **DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION FORM**.
2. The four sections contained in the PCI questionnaire.

Thank You!

A.J. (Jim) Propp  
Department of Educational Administration, University of Saskatchewan, Fall, 2003

## **QUESTIONNAIRE**

This PCI questionnaire will require approximately 20 minutes to complete. The PCI questionnaire is being used to collect data regarding individual vice-principal's beliefs, shaped by the organization, regarding the unwritten terms and mutual obligations (the "exchange agreement") between employees and employers. The purpose of the PCI is to collect this data in order to explore and describe the pattern of psychological contract among rural Saskatchewan vice-principals (VP's). The PCI contains four sections. Section 1 explores your relationship with your current employer by asking you to reflect on obligations you perceive your employer has made to you. Section 2 asks you to describe your employer's relationship to you by considering selected employer actions. Section 3 asks you to consider the extent you have made certain obligations to your employer. Section 4 asks you to reflect on your perception of fulfillment levels of employer-employee obligations using a Likert scale.

The PCI questionnaire contains structured questions. In each of the four sections, respondents use a Likert type scale to indicate their individual perceptions about their relationship to the employer and the extent employee-employer obligations have been made and in some cases fulfilled. Please ensure the PCI is completed and returned in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope by Friday, October 17, 2003.

## INSTRUCTIONS

**Please read all instructions before completing the PCI questionnaire**

1. **DO NOT write your name on the PCI.** In this way your anonymity and confidentiality will be assured.
2. Please complete the survey using an HB pencil, or black ink.
3. Please complete DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION form which precedes the PCI.
4. For this application of the PCI, interpret the questionnaire terms, “industry,” “firm,” or “business” to be synonymous with “school division” or “educational organization” you are employed by.
5. When you have completed the PCI questionnaire, please:
  - (a) place the completed PCI in the enclosed self addressed, stamped envelope, (b) ensure the envelope is securely sealed and, (c) drop the envelope in a post office box.
6. Any enquiries may be directed to Jim Propp, Department of Educational Administration, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, SK, or to Dr. Pat Renihan (966-7620) or Dr. Jack Billinton (966-7018), advisors, Department of Educational Administration, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, SK. If your preference is e-mail:

Dr. Renihan: pat.renihan@usask.ca  
Dr. Billinton: jack.billinton@usask.ca
7. By completing and returning this survey, it is assumed that you freely consented to participate in this research. Please ensure that the completed survey is mailed before Friday, October 17, 2003. Please email me at sj.propp@sasktel.net to verify your participation in the PCI survey.

Completion of the PCI questionnaire implies consent to participate in this project.

Thank you very much for assisting me with this research!

Sincerely,  
A.J. (Jim) Propp  
313 Anderson Crescent  
Saskatoon, SK S7H 4A2

## Psychological Contract Inventory Demographic Information

*Please completely fill in the appropriate bubble with a PENCIL to correspond with your answer. Please do not use a check mark or X. Use only one rating per statement. Please do not fold or staple this survey.*

1. Whom do you perceive is your employer in the sense that this is "who you answer to." (Fill in only one.)

The Government of Saskatchewan       Community  
 The Board of Education       Parents/guardians  
 The Director       Students  
 The Local Board

2. Distance your school is from your Central or Division office. (Fill in only one.)

High (over 50 km)  
 Low (50 km or less)

3. School type (Fill in only one.)

Predominantly elementary grades e.g., K-6, K-8  
 Predominantly high school grades e.g., 9-12; 10-12  
 K - 12

4. My school is designated

a community school  
 not a community school

5. Total years with current organization

0 - 5  
 6 - 10  
 11+

6. Years as current VP role

0 - 2  
 3 - 5  
 6+

## 7. Years with current Principal

 0 - 2 3 - 5 6+

## 8. Total years in education

 0 - 5 years 6 - 10 years 11 or more years (Specify: \_\_\_\_\_)

## 9. Total years in administration

 0 - 2 3 - 5 6+

## 10. I have a Graduate degree/diploma?

 Yes No

## 11. Gender

 Male Female

## 12. School enrolment as of today

 100 or less 101 - 199 200 + (Specify: \_\_\_\_\_)***To what extent do the provisions in your school system help you to do an effective job?***

## 13. PD/inservice opportunities available to me

 Not at all Moderate Slightly To a great extent Somewhat

14. Admin release time available to me?  
 Not at all       Moderately  
 Slightly       To a great extent  
 Somewhat
15. Secretarial/clerical support available to me?  
 Not at all       Moderately  
 Slightly       To a great extent  
 Somewhat

#### **Section A**

***Consider your relationship with your current employer. To what extent has your employer made the following commitment or obligation to you? Please answer each question using the following scale.***

16. A job only as long as the employer needs me
17. Concern for my personal welfare
18. Limited involvement in the organization
19. Support me to attain the highest possible levels of performance
20. Opportunity for career development within this firm
21. Help me develop externally marketable skills
22. Secure employment
23. Makes no commitments to retain me in the future
24. Be responsive to my personal concerns and well-being
25. Training me only for my current job
26. Help me to respond to ever greater industry standards
27. Developmental opportunities with this firm
28. Job assignments that enhance my external marketability
29. Wages and benefits I can count on
30. Short-term employment
31. Make decisions with my interests in mind
32. A job limited to specific, well-defined responsibilities

	Not at all	Slightly	Somewhat	Moderately	To a great extent
16.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
17.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
18.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
19.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
20.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
21.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
22.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
23.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
24.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
25.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
26.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
27.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
28.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
29.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
30.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
31.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
32.	<input type="checkbox"/>				

	Not at all	Slightly	Somewhat	Moderately	To a great extent
33. Support me in meeting increasingly higher goals	<input type="checkbox"/>				
34. Advancement within the firm	<input type="checkbox"/>				
35. Potential job opportunities outside the firm	<input type="checkbox"/>				
36. Steady employment	<input type="checkbox"/>				
37. A job for a short-time only	<input type="checkbox"/>				
38. Concern for my long-term well-being	<input type="checkbox"/>				
39. Require me to perform only a limited set of duties	<input type="checkbox"/>				
40. Enable me to adjust to new, challenging performance requirements	<input type="checkbox"/>				
41. Opportunities for promotion	<input type="checkbox"/>				
42. Contacts that create employment opportunities elsewhere	<input type="checkbox"/>				
43. Stable benefits for employees' families	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<b>Section B</b>					
<i>To what extent have you made the following commitment or obligation to your employer? Please answer each question using the scale.</i>					
44. Quit whenever I want	<input type="checkbox"/>				
45. Make personal sacrifices for this organization	<input type="checkbox"/>				
46. Perform only required tasks	<input type="checkbox"/>				
47. Accept increasingly challenging performance standards	<input type="checkbox"/>				
48. Seek out developmental opportunities that enhance my value to this employer	<input type="checkbox"/>				
49. Build contacts outside this firm that enhance my career potential	<input type="checkbox"/>				
50. Remain with this organization indefinitely	<input type="checkbox"/>				
51. I have no future obligations to this employer	<input type="checkbox"/>				
52. Take this organization's concerns personally	<input type="checkbox"/>				
53. Do only what I am paid to do	<input type="checkbox"/>				
54. Adjust to changing performance demands due to business necessity	<input type="checkbox"/>				
55. Build skills to increase my value to this organization	<input type="checkbox"/>				
56. Building skills to increase my future employment opportunities elsewhere	<input type="checkbox"/>				
57. Plan to stay here a long time	<input type="checkbox"/>				
58. Leave at any time I choose	<input type="checkbox"/>				

59. Protect this organization's image
60. Fulfill limited number of responsibilities
61. Respond positively to dynamic performance requirements
62. Make myself increasingly valuable to my employer
63. Increase my visibility to potential employers outside the firm
64. Continue to work here
65. I am under no obligation to remain with this employer
66. Commit myself personally to this organization
67. Only perform specific duties I agreed to when hired
68. Accept new and different performance demands
69. Actively seek internal opportunities for training and development
70. Seek out assignments that enhance my employability elsewhere
71. Make no plans to work anywhere else

### **Section C**

*To what extent do the items below describe your employer's relationship to you? Please answer each question using the following scale.*

72. Withholds information from its employees
73. Difficult to predict future direction of its relations with me
74. Demands more from me while giving me less in return
75. Acts as if it doesn't trust its employees
76. An uncertain future regarding its relations with me
77. Decreased benefits in the next few years
78. Introduces changes without involving employees
79. Uncertainty regarding its commitments to employees
80. Stagnant or reduced wages the longer I work here
81. Doesn't share important information with its workers
82. Uncertainty regarding its commitments to me
83. More and more work for less pay

	Not at all	Slightly	Somewhat	Moderately	To a great extent
59. Protect this organization's image	<input type="checkbox"/>				
60. Fulfill limited number of responsibilities	<input type="checkbox"/>				
61. Respond positively to dynamic performance requirements	<input type="checkbox"/>				
62. Make myself increasingly valuable to my employer	<input type="checkbox"/>				
63. Increase my visibility to potential employers outside the firm	<input type="checkbox"/>				
64. Continue to work here	<input type="checkbox"/>				
65. I am under no obligation to remain with this employer	<input type="checkbox"/>				
66. Commit myself personally to this organization	<input type="checkbox"/>				
67. Only perform specific duties I agreed to when hired	<input type="checkbox"/>				
68. Accept new and different performance demands	<input type="checkbox"/>				
69. Actively seek internal opportunities for training and development	<input type="checkbox"/>				
70. Seek out assignments that enhance my employability elsewhere	<input type="checkbox"/>				
71. Make no plans to work anywhere else	<input type="checkbox"/>				
72. Withholds information from its employees	<input type="checkbox"/>				
73. Difficult to predict future direction of its relations with me	<input type="checkbox"/>				
74. Demands more from me while giving me less in return	<input type="checkbox"/>				
75. Acts as if it doesn't trust its employees	<input type="checkbox"/>				
76. An uncertain future regarding its relations with me	<input type="checkbox"/>				
77. Decreased benefits in the next few years	<input type="checkbox"/>				
78. Introduces changes without involving employees	<input type="checkbox"/>				
79. Uncertainty regarding its commitments to employees	<input type="checkbox"/>				
80. Stagnant or reduced wages the longer I work here	<input type="checkbox"/>				
81. Doesn't share important information with its workers	<input type="checkbox"/>				
82. Uncertainty regarding its commitments to me	<input type="checkbox"/>				
83. More and more work for less pay	<input type="checkbox"/>				

**Section D**

84. Overall, how well does our employer fulfill its commitments to you?
85. Overall, how well have you fulfilled your commitments to your employer?
86. In general, how well does your employer live up to its promises?
87. In general, how well do you live up to your promises to your employer?
88. Overall, how satisfied are you in your job?
89. To what extent do you believe the commitments your employer has made to you are the responsibility of your coworkers/work group?
90. To what extent do you believe the commitments your employer has made to you are the responsibility of your boss/manager?
91. To what extent do you believe the commitments your employer has made to you are the responsibility of senior management?
92. To what extent do you believe the commitments your employer has made to you are the responsibility of the organization generally?
93. To what extent do you believe the commitments your employer has made to you are the responsibility of others? (Whom?) \_\_\_\_\_

	Not at all	Slightly	Somewhat	Moderately	To a great extent
84.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
85.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
86.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
87.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
88.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
89.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
90.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
91.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
92.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
93.	<input type="checkbox"/>				

**Please respond to the following items with as much detail as possible.  
(Attach additional pages as required.)**

1. Describe an event when you felt good about your work as a VP.

2. Describe the factors particular to rural Saskatchewan that you believe have influenced your relationship with your school system as a VP.

3. Describe an event where you felt that your geographic location affected your work as a VP. 157

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**Thank you for your participation and support of this research.**

APPENDIX B:  
Application to Ethics Committee and Ethics Approval

## Application to Behavioral Research Ethics Board

Office of Research, University of Saskatchewan

BSC#: 03-1130

Researcher: Jim Propp. Supervisor: Dr. Pat Renihan, Department of Educational Administration.

- 1a. **Name of student:** Jim Propp. This is a student study. **Type of study:** M.ED, thesis.
- 1b. **Anticipated start date of the research study:** Preferably September **15**, 2003. **The expected completion date of the study:** November 6, 2003.
2. **Title of Study:** *Patterns of psychological contracts among rural Saskatchewan vice-principals.*
3. **Abstract:**

As demands on school-based administrators continue to increase, so do their responsibilities. Historically the roles and responsibilities of school principals have been clearly delineated in both the legislation governing in-school administrators and also in principals' job descriptions. Principals enjoy knowing what is expected of them in their leadership roles, however, the same cannot be said for all vice or VPs. The pattern that emerges is one that shows the vice-principal as being a jack-of-all-trades. Typically, Saskatchewan rural vice-principals do not have clearly delineated expectations formally or informally in either legislation or job description. Most often vice-principal positions are advertised as containing a teaching component and "other duties as assigned." As recently as the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation (STF) *Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Principalship* (2001), recommendations for improving in-school administration positions have led to little change (p.3). The purpose of this study is to investigate, explore and describe the pattern of psychological contract among Saskatchewan rural vice-principals, using qualitative and quantitative methods. The data and information generated will indicate the pattern of the vice-principal's individual psychological contract and possible relationships to geographical location, demographics of rural vice-principals and school milieu.
4. **Funding:** The only costs I am aware of are for my fuel, purchase of the survey instrument, mailing of surveys and return postage.
- 5 a. **Participants:** Procedures for recruiting, selecting and assigning participants: I will make requests (**e-mail message with attached letter of transmittal**) to Directors of rural boards of Education for permission to survey all vice-principals. I will make contact with these people to inform them of the survey. Interview participants will be selected based on geographic location, i.e.,

isolated, rural and near urban (**based on distance from their respective central offices**). For the participants in the interview, the length of the interview, the intent of the study and that the data generated will be reported only as aggregate data with any direct quotes referenced to pseudonyms to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. Participants are mixed based on gender, experience, grade and subject levels taught. **The population (185) is the sample for this study.**

**I do not have a relationship as colleague with the participants now or in the future. Participants may decline to participate in the survey or answer interview questions, as far as I know there will be no coercion. I am not in any authoritative position with participants either. Initial contact will be with rural Directors of education.** Directors of Saskatchewan's rural divisions (the agency) will extend the invitation for participants; it will be indicated that identities and data will be used anonymously and in confidence. **With their approval, contact will be made with vice-principal's (via e-mail) explaining the study (letter of transmittal as attachment). Survey questionnaires will be mailed out to vice-principals who agree to participate in the study.** Interview scripts and the data generated will be stored at the University of Saskatchewan with Dr. Pat Renihan for five years (until 2008). **Consent forms and transcript release forms will be stored separately from materials used.**

- 5b. Please find attached a copy of letter of transmittal to rural Directors and vice-principals (appendix A) and a copy of the interview instrument (appendix D).
6. Consent: Please find attached the Consent Form (appendix B) and the Release of Data Transcript (appendix C)
7. Methods/Procedures: Participants will be surveyed using D.M. Rousseau's Psychological Contract Inventory (Appendix E). Three vice-principals will also be interviewed using the interview instrument as found in appendix D.
8. Storage of Data: The data and interview instruments will be stored at the University of Saskatchewan, entrusted to the care of Dr. P. Renihan, advisor. These materials will not be destroyed for a period of five years, until 2008.
9. Dissemination of Results: The data collected in this study will be disseminated in a Master's of Education thesis **and possibly in published articles. In either case only aggregate data will be reported. No personally identifying information will be reported.** This thesis will be submitted to Dr. Renihan on or before December 5, 2003.
10. Risk or Deception: **All participants will be informed as to the purpose and the nature of the study. Participants will be provided informed consent and may withdraw at any time.** No deception will be used in the survey or interview. Participant identities will be kept anonymous. Data will be kept anonymous. Participants can decline to answer any questions they are not

comfortable with. There are no known risks resulting from participation in this study. The findings will be documented in a Master's of Education thesis and any publication of findings will be reported as aggregate data only. Any direct quotes will be referenced to pseudonyms. Every effort will be taken to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of participants. No data will be reported that reflects identities of the participants, the school or school division.

11. Confidentiality: All information acquired from the survey questionnaire and interview process will be kept confidential and will only be available for use in the final document with written consent from the interviewee. Confidentiality and anonymity will be ensured, as far as possible, through the use of pseudonyms in reference to participants and the school divisions in the study. Any reference to school sites and individual vice-principals will be deleted from quotations. Throughout the study, every effort will be made to respect the rights and professional careers of all those who participate. Participants can withdraw at any time. No names will appear on any documentation (interview documentation will be identified with a numeric code from 01-03) Results will be reported in aggregate form only. Any direct quotations will be referenced to a pseudonym. Only the aggregate results will be made available to the participants. All data, written questionnaires, and interview tapes will be securely stored and retained for a minimum of five years at the University of Saskatchewan in accordance with the University of Saskatchewan guidelines. Original data will not be shared with any focus or peer groups.
  12. Data/Transcript Release: Find attached a copy of the Data/Transcript Release for as appendix C.
  13. Debriefing and feedback: Participant debriefing (member check of interview transcripts) will involve reflection of the interview and responses given. Participants will have the option of changing or deleting responses and reviewing the purpose of the interview to the hypothesis. Aggregate results will be available to participants via email attachment if the participant requests this information.
  14. Required Signatures:

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Dr. Patrick Renihan, Faculty Advisor

Date:

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Dr. Jack Billinton, co-advisor

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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A.J. (Jim) Propp, M.ED student

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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Dr. Patrick Renihan, Department Head

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

15. Contact Name and Information: Jim Propp  
313 Anderson Crescent,  
Saskatoon, SK S7H 4A2  
306.652.1359 (Home)  
306.717.3253 (cell)



**UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN  
BEHAVIOURAL RESEARCH ETHICS BOARD**

<http://www.usask.ca/research/ethics.shtml>

**NAME:** Patrick Renihan (Jim Propp)  
Department of Educational Administration

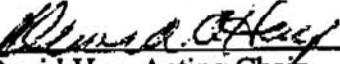
**BSC#:** 03-1130

**DATE:** September 11, 2003

The University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board has reviewed the Application for Ethics Approval for your study "Patterns of Psychological Contracts Among Rural Saskatchewan Vice-Principals" (03-1130).

1. Your study has been APPROVED.
2. Any significant changes to your proposed method, or your consent and recruitment procedures should be reported to the Chair for Committee consideration in advance of its implementation.
3. The term of this approval is for 5 years.
4. This approval is valid for five years on the condition that a status report form is submitted annually to the Chair of the Committee. This certificate will automatically be invalidated if a status report form is not received within one month of the anniversary date. Please refer to the website for further instructions: <http://www.usask.ca/research/behavrsc.shtml>

I wish you a successful and informative study.

  
Dr. David Hay, Acting Chair  
University of Saskatchewan  
Behavioural Research Ethics Board

DH/ck

APPENDIX C

Letters of Transmittal

Jim Propp  
313 Anderson Crescent  
Saskatoon, SK  
S7H 4A2

August 29, 2003

[Address]

Dear Director

I am a Saskatchewan principal completing my Master's of Education degree at the University of Saskatchewan. As partial fulfillment of the program, I am proposing to conduct research involving all rural vice-principals in Saskatchewan. To enable this study, I will be using a commercially prepared survey instrument and a self-designed interview schedule. The study is intended to explore and describe the patterns of psychological contracts among rural Saskatchewan vice-principals. I am contacting all directors of rural Saskatchewan school divisions to inform them of this study and provide some information regarding the research.

The scholarly research speculates that the vice-principal position is essential to the efficient and effective operation of rural schools, however, there is little research available related to a distinctly rural Saskatchewan context. The investigation of vice-principals' psychological contract is a way to explore and describe perceptions of the unwritten employee-employer reciprocal obligations. The identification of patterns of psychological contract provides a lens with which to describe the present reality of rural vice-principals and possibly lay the groundwork for professional development activities and future examination of the vice-principal role. I assure you that all survey responses data will be completely anonymous. Although interviews are not anonymous, every effort will be made to avoid identification of any school division, school, or vice-principal by interview results.

If you have any concerns or would like additional information, you may contact my research advisor, Dr. Pat Renihan, at 966-7620 or myself at 652-1359. If you prefer to respond in writing my address is 313 Anderson Crescent, Saskatoon, SK, S7H 4A2. If you prefer email, my address is sj.propp@sk.sympatico.ca.  
Thank you for your time and consideration of this research study.

Sincerely,

Jim Propp

Jim Propp  
313 Anderson Crescent  
Saskatoon, SK  
S7H 4A2

September 18, 2003

[Address]

Dear colleague:

I am currently completing my Master's of Education degree in Educational Administration. As partial fulfillment of this degree at the University of Saskatchewan, I am conducting research to describe patterns of psychological contract among vice-principals in Saskatchewan's rural schools. With this letter I am requesting your assistance.

To facilitate this study, I will be using a commercially prepared survey instrument that is intended to describe vice-principals' perceptions of the unwritten and reciprocal employee-employer workplace obligations. The identification of patterns of psychological contract provides a lens with which to describe the present reality of rural vice-principals and possibly lay the groundwork for professional development activities and future examination of the vice-principal role. I will also be selecting three vice-principals to participate in an interview. Your participation in the survey and/or the interview is completely voluntary. I can also assure you that all replies to surveys will be kept anonymous and that every effort will be made to avoid identifying you, your school and/or your school division from the results.

I have included consent form that should be completed and sent back to me in the self-addressed-stamped envelope no later than September 24, 2003. If you have any concerns or would like additional information, you may contact my advisor, Dr. Pat Renihan, at 966-7620 or me at 652-1359. If you prefer to write, my address is 313 Anderson Crescent, Saskatoon, SK, S7H 4A2. If email works better, reply to sj.propp@sk.sympatico.ca sj.propp@sasktel.net after September 23, 2003). Thank you for your time and consideration of this research study.

Sincerely,

Jim Propp

APPENDIX D

Consent

## CONSENT FORM

*You are invited to participate in a study entitled, "Patterns of psychological contract among rural Saskatchewan vice-principals." Please read this form carefully, and feel free to ask questions you might have.*

**Researcher(s):** Jim Propp, Department of Educational Administration, University of Saskatchewan. Contact numbers: 652-1359 or 717-3253.

**Purpose and Procedure:** The purpose of this study is to generate data regarding vice-principals' own perception of their reciprocal obligations with their employer, fulfillment levels of this exchange and perception of employment contract as a transactional or relational contract.

**Potential Risks:** There are no known risks for participating in this study. **All participants will be informed as to the purpose and the nature of the study, the time frame, his or her role in the study and other relevant information. Included will be a letter of formal consent for each participant to sign and return.** Participants may withdraw at any time. Confidentiality and anonymity will be ensured, as far as possible, through the use of pseudonyms in reference to the participants and the school divisions involved in this study. Findings will be reported in aggregate form only.

**Potential Benefits:** The potential benefits of this study may be to create new knowledge regarding the rural vice-principal position, facilitate staff development plans, to further the understanding of the employment relationship and enhance human resource administration, however, no guarantees are expressed or implied.

**Storage of Data:** Participants in this study will respond in writing to the survey instrument (PCI). Interview participants will respond orally to questions about their vice-principalship experiences. The researcher will document these responses. **Only aggregate data will be reported. Consent forms will be stored separately (from materials used) to avoid association of names to any given set of responses. All data, written questionnaires and interview tapes will be securely stored and retained at the University of Saskatchewan for five years, until 2008, in accordance with the University of Saskatchewan guidelines.**

**Confidentiality:** Names of participants in this interview, their respective schools or school division will not be divulged. **All information acquired from the interview process will be kept confidential and will be available for use in the final document with written consent from the interviewee. Confidentiality and anonymity will be ensured, as far as possible, through the use of pseudonyms in reference to the participants and school divisions involved in this study. To ensure anonymity:** The results of the interview will be reported in aggregate form. Any direct quotations will be referenced to a pseudonym. **Any reference to school divisions, school sites, or**

**individual vice-principals will be deleted from quotations. After your interview, and prior to the data being included in the final report, you will have the opportunity to review the transcript of your interview and add, alter or delete information as you see fit.**

**Right to Withdraw:** You may withdraw from the study for any reason, at any time, without penalty of any sort (and without loss of relevant entitlements, without affecting academic or employment status). If you withdraw from the study at any time, any data that you have contributed will be destroyed. In the case of **survey and interview** questions, you may refuse to answer individual questions. **In addition, before authorizing release of interview data for use in my thesis, you will be provided an opportunity to review the transcript and add, alter or delete information from the transcript as you see fit.**

**Questions:** If you have any questions concerning the study, please feel free to ask at any point; you are also free to contact the researcher **at the numbers provided** above if you have questions at a later time. The University of Saskatchewan Behavioral Sciences Research Ethics Board has approved this study on ethical grounds on September 11, 2003. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Office of Research Services (966-2084). The researcher will email participants the aggregate results of the interview if so requested.

**Consent to Participate:** I have read and understood the description provided above; I have been provided with an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered satisfactorily. I consent to participate in the study described above, understanding that I may withdraw this consent at any time. A copy of this consent form has been given to me for my records.

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(Signature of Participant)

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(Date)

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(Signature of Researcher)