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Pepperdine University  
Graduate School of Education and Psychology

AN EXPLORATION OF THE INFLUENCE OF THE PSYCHOLOGICAL  
CONTRACT AS AN EXPLICIT AGREEMENT IN EXECUTIVE TEAMS IN  
MEXICO

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Education in Organization Change

by

Alejandro J. Molina Bortoni

October, 2011

Kent Rhodes, Ed.D. — Dissertation Chairperson

This dissertation, written by

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under the guidance of a Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment to the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES .....	vi
DEDICATION .....	vii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	viii
VITA .....	ix
ABSTRACT .....	x
Chapter One: Background of the Problem .....	1
Statement of the Problem .....	6
Purpose of the Research .....	8
Research Questions .....	8
Assumptions of the Study .....	8
Significance of the Study .....	9
Definition of Terms .....	10
Summary .....	11
Chapter Two: Literature Review .....	12
The Psychological Contract .....	12
Executive Teams .....	16
Common Problems and Challenges in Executive Teams .....	19
Considerations to Improve Performance and Success in Executive Teams. ....	23
Summary .....	29
Chapter Three: Methods .....	31
Rationale .....	31
Sample Selection.....	34
Data Collection .....	36
Protection of Human Subjects .....	40
Data Analysis .....	42
Internal Validity .....	43
The Process of Developing the Psychological Contract as an Explicit Agreement Within an Executive Team.....	46
Summary .....	50
Chapter Four: Results .....	51

Participants' Demographic Data .....	51
Core Categories and Other Findings .....	52
Summary .....	70
Chapter Five: Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations .....	71
Purpose of the Study .....	72
Methodology Used for the Study .....	72
Discussion of the Findings .....	74
Conclusions From Analysis of the Research Question.....	84
Practical Implications.....	86
Limitations of the Study.....	86
Recommendations for Future Research .....	88
Closing Comments.....	90
REFERENCES .....	92
APPENDIX A: Invitation to Participate .....	98
APPENDIX B: Types of Interviewing Questions .....	99
APPENDIX C: IRB Approval Letter.....	100
APPENDIX D: Interview Guide.....	102
APPENDIX E: Participant Letter of Consent.....	104

## LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 1. Participants' Demographic Data .....	52
Table 2. Frequency of Mentions for Each Category .....	53
Table 3. Frequency of Mentions Regarding Collaboration .....	54
Table 4. Frequency of Mentions Regarding Communication.....	58
Table 5. Frequency of Mentions Regarding Interpersonal Relationships.....	61
Table 6. Frequency of Mentions Regarding Commitment .....	62
Table 7. Frequency of Mentions Regarding Trust .....	64
Table 8. Frequency of Mentions Regarding Conflict .....	65
Table 9. Frequency of Mentions Regarding Disposition to Change.....	67
Table 10. Frequency of Mentions Regarding other Categories .....	68

## DEDICATION

I first dedicate this effort to my beloved wife Ari,

living with you is the best part of my life.

Thank you for your outstanding support, patience, strength, encouragement, and love; without you none of this would have been possible. We made this project together.

To Alex, Ana Pau, and María; you are my everyday inspiration and joy.

I also want to dedicate this to my parents, Juan and Sylvia, thank you for all the love and encouragement through my life that made me the person that I am.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To my dissertation chair, Dr. Kent Rhodes thanks for your support, advice, and availability.

To my committee members, Dr. Kay Davis for being always helpful and also a good friend, and to Dr. Susan Nero for your valuable insights, which helped me finish this project.

To Joaquín Sáinz, a true friend, a genuine caring human being, and an example to follow.

To Rogelio Martínez who motivated me to study at Pepperdine.

To my professors, especially to Dr. Ed Kur and Dr. Kent Murrell, you are extraordinary examples of committed and passionate change agents in the world.

To the Lima, Cuatro, and Sita cohort students, thanks for a wonderful learning experience; especially to Foster Mobley for his important support during difficult times and to Jim Pepitone for his excellent contributions during the program.

To Dr. René León, thank you for your disposition help during the process of data analysis.

To my team of Revitalización Organizacional, thank you for being supportive and patient.

To the participants who have participated in my study; I would like to thank them for their time and contributions to this research.

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions of members of executive teams in Mexico regarding the influence of the psychological contract as an explicit agreement within their teams. This study was conducted with members of executive teams who have participated in the process of making a psychological contract explicit in a 6-step model the researcher created. The research question is: What is the perception of members of executive teams in Mexico regarding the influence of the psychological contract as an explicit agreement within their teams? The related findings are presented in this research and conclusions, implications, and recommendations described.

The phenomenological approach within qualitative research was selected in order to identify the perceived influence of the psychological contract in executive teams. The sampling was defined by a purposeful sampling strategy; 10 executives were selected and participated in the interviews. The recordings obtained from the interviews were transcribed and analyzed on the QSR NUD\*IST 6 (Nonnumerical Unstructured Data Indexing, Searching and Theorizing Software).

The important results of this study are that the categories most influenced by the psychological contract were: (a) collaboration, (b) communication, (c) interpersonal relationships, (d) commitment, (e) trust, (f) conflict, and (g) disposition to change.

The conclusions emerging from the findings of this study are that in all of the cases, there are perceived benefits of making explicit the psychological contract in a Mexican executive team. Second, executive teams avoid facing conflict. This 6-step model is an effective tool to address conflicts and disturbing situations in Mexican executive teams. Third, it is possible to establish that the psychological contract as an

explicit agreement is not enough of an influence for changing behaviors; Mexican executive teams need other kind of support such as coaching in order to develop their abilities and behaviors expected. Finally, the psychological contract as an explicit agreement creates a frame of reference to improve the behaviors of Mexican executives, but it is necessary to find the alternatives for follow up and to consider it as a living document that needs to be renewed on an ongoing basis.

## **Chapter One: Background of the Problem**

The psychological contract has been a known concept for a few years and has been applied mainly to the relationship between leaders and subordinates. The concept of psychological contract concerns an individual's beliefs regarding the terms and conditions of a reciprocal exchange agreement between that person and another party (Rousseau, 2004). Changes in employee attitudes and behavior are explained through the process of reciprocation: Conway and Briner (2002) state that employees weigh their employment deals and respond to employer contributions by adjusting their attitudes and behaviors.

Rousseau (1995) and her coworkers suggest a more specific definition of the psychological contract. They suggest that the psychological contract is characterized not only by expectations, but also by promissory and reciprocal obligations. The way people expect to be treated, and how they are actually treated can have an enormous impact on the way they work. Rousseau and Schalk (2000) state, "A psychological contract is an individual's interpretation of (a) an exchange of promises that is (b) mutually agreed on and voluntarily made (c) between two or more parties" (p. 284). Hiltrop (1996) also states that psychological contracts serve two key functions: defining the employment relationship and managing mutual expectations.

Regarding the importance of the psychological contract, Schein (1994) states, "I would like to underline the importance of the psychological contract as a major variable of analysis" (p. 99). It is his central hypothesis that whether people work effectively, whether they generate commitment, loyalty, and enthusiasm for the organization and

achieve their goals depends on two conditions: (a) The degree to which their expectations of what the organization will provide to them and what they owe the organization in return matches what the organization's expectations are of what it will give and get in return; and (b) the nature of what is actually to be exchanged (assuming there is some agreement). Bringing together these aspects in the context of executive teams could bring benefits for exploring how they relate and work together.

It is already known that a good psychological contract also helps to improve the disposition to influence change. Macguire (2002) states, "Psychological contracts give employees the feeling that they are able to influence their destiny in the organization since they are party to the contract and because they can choose whether to carry out their obligations" (p. 167). Garrow (2004) also states that the psychological contract can produce a more stable atmosphere for change. Even in difficult situations when expectations have been clarified, members of an organization can deal better with the conflicting situation. Furthermore, Garrow adds, "psychological contracts increase predictability and control in the workplace, and research to date suggests that a healthy psychological contract is one that is clear and transparent. However during times of change this is not always easy or possible" (p. 8).

For Robinson, Kraatz, and Rousseau (1994), the importance of the psychological contract cannot be overestimated. Breaches of the contract may have considerable effects on both the individual and the organization; they have shown these breaches are more common than might be expected. Also, according to Niehoff and Paul (2001), "To build or restore trust, more attention must be paid to defining and attending to psychological contracts. To date, there are no comprehensive guidelines that address this critical

function for practitioners” (p. 2). These are important facts about the need to explore and develop a practical approach to deal with the psychological contract.

As it has been described, the psychological contract can contribute to, build or, restore trust; generate commitment, loyalty, and enthusiasm; and even help employees work more effectively; the psychological contract can produce a more stable atmosphere and disposition for change. All these are aspects related to the performance of an executive team.

According to S. Hart (1997b):

CEO's realize that making their businesses thrive requires more than hiring a group of talented individual contributors and securing investment capital. It takes even more than being personally committed to doing whatever it takes. It takes a team. The CEO has to have the leadership skills and knowledge of the psychology of interpersonal dynamics to change the top executives from a group to a team. (p. 1)

Executive teams usually live and work in a fast-paced environment, undertake a lot of duties, and face change challenges. It is common for executives to make assumptions about how others should behave as a team and get the results the organization is expecting; most of the time, other members of the team do not share these assumptions. Makin, Cooper, and Cox (1996) state, “Very rarely, however, is the psychological contract of the process of change discussed....It is difficult, if not impossible, to begin to cope with change if the nature of the change is unknown” (p. 355).

Executive team members think implicit norms are obvious, that is why they usually start working right away with the planned objectives and the targets. It is fundamental to consider an alternative to convert the unwritten agreement into an explicit psychological contract that could help construct a frame of reference for team members.

Garrow (2004) states, “Whether re-negotiating or building a new psychological contract from scratch, an understanding of the nature of promises and obligations that make up the unwritten agreement is essential in avoiding later disappointments” (p. 11).

The purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions of members of executive teams in Mexico regarding the influence of the psychological contract as an explicit agreement within their teams. In the context of this research, the psychological contract could be defined as the behavior expectations among the executives team and the commitments they make in order to achieve the goals of the executive team.

The importance of the use of the psychological contract in an executive team lies in the need for mutual commitment, because through this agreement, the people involved in a process of change are more willing to collaborate. Macguire (2002) considers that commitment is often operationalized in terms of attachment or pride in the organization and also as a belief in the organization’s goals and values.

The psychological contract creates a behavioral model, it defines the relationships, provides a stable understanding of what to expect in the future, and guides efficient action and direction. Rousseau (2004) states, “While substantial benefits accrue when worker and employer perspectives are in agreement, mutuality cannot be assumed, and fulfillment of both sides of the psychological contract is a work in progress in the employment relationship over time” (p. 124). Rousseau (1995) describes that it is typically efficient to create mental models or schemas that organize experiences so that many actions are governed by automatic processes. “Once mental models are formed yielding anticipated rewards, they become relied on and resist revision. Contracts are



stable and enduring mental models” (p. 6). This could reinforce the idea of having an explicit agreement as a guide for the behavior of the members of the executive team.

Another important issue about defining the frame of reference for the behavior expected is that it could decrease disruptive behaviors. As Gage (1999) states:

Some like to think that collaboration just happens. Often, however, shared decision making is hard work because executives have different skills, talents, personalities, and styles. They value different things, and sometimes their personal values are incongruent with those of the organization. Often, executives find innovative ways to go around or undermine their colleagues. (p. 1)

There are general patterns that differentiate how workers and employers behave toward each other. If the members of an organization are capable of seeing their behavioral patterns and are able to propose common alternatives to reinforce or modify them, they could work more efficiently and in a better atmosphere. Definitely one of the most critical factors for an organization’s success is the frame of reference in which employees work. Robbins and Finley (2000) state, “Misunderstandings often occur for the simple reason that the individuals involved are communicating on two different wavelengths” (p. 64).

Finally, it is important to consider working with the psychological contract as early as possible; the objective is to prevent or solve the differences among executives. Boddy (2000) states, “The early identification of growing gaps in expectations assists remedial action and negotiation between the two parties before any irreversible damage occurs to the relationship” (p. 11).

To make the psychological contract an explicit agreement implies that an executive team establishes a formal agreement about how its members should be working together, how the members’ relationships should be, or any other issues concerning

attitudes or behaviors related to the inner dynamics of the team members. Rousseau (1995) states, “Mutually binding promises or contracts can be expressed explicitly to motivate people and focus their efforts in support of business goals and strategy” (p. 26). The process of making explicit the psychological contract is explained at the end of Chapter Three.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In his book, *The Fifth Discipline*, Senge (1990) refers to “the myth of the management team” (p. 24). He explains that all too often, teams in business tend to spend time fighting for turf, avoiding anything that will make them look bad personally, pretending that everyone is behind the team’s collective strategy, and maintaining the appearance of a cohesive team. This appearance is a common issue in executive teams.

There is evidence in the field that executive teams often fail to realize their potential for collaborative, high-impact action; they do not function optimally and avoid dealing with interpersonal conflict. If there were enough evidence that executive teams were not performing at their best, how would making explicit the psychological contract affect them? How making explicit the psychological contract influence executives in their teams?

In other words, this study is looking to see what influence making explicit the psychological contract will have on Mexican executive teams, and by doing so, explore the perceived effects. It does not seek to modify the psychological contract with employees, subordinates, consultants, or any other area related to them; it specifically studies these employees’ mutual expectations within the Mexican executive team. As has been previously cited, executive teams could increase their level of performance with the

development of a psychological contract as an explicit agreement and respond more efficiently to the changes of the organization.

Schein (1994) considers the psychological contract to be an unwritten set of expectations. “The notion of the psychological contract implies that there is an unwritten set of expectations operating at all times between every member of an organization and the various managers and others in the organization” (p. 22). The psychological contract implies expectations and reciprocity, and, specifically for the executive team, it is important to explore the possible benefits in its members’ performance by carrying these unwritten set of expectations to an explicit mutual commitment.

Executive teams face the opportunity to be more than just a group of professionals working together in order to become functional and capable of performing with more cohesion and efficiency. According to Makin et al. (1996), it is possible for groups, such as departments or informal working groups, to develop their own psychological contracts. The authors consider that the nature of the contract will be strongly influenced by the existing contracts in the organization; the process for teams could be more effective if the psychological contract is also used to increase performance and to regulate the interaction among their members. As Reynolds (1997) states in his book, *The Trust Effect*, “It is the relationships between people, not the people themselves, which distinguish a great organization from a mediocre one. The quality of relationships can mean the difference between success and failure” (p. 5). There is no research on how the psychological contract as an explicit agreement influences a Mexican executive team; therefore, this study advances the literature.

## **Purpose of the Research**

In this study, an alternative to cope with the different assumptions about the executive team behavior is explored by making explicit the psychological contract. The purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions of members of executive teams in Mexico regarding the influence of the psychological contract as an explicit agreement within their teams.

## **Research Questions**

This study is conducted with members of executive teams who have participated in the process of making a psychological contract explicit. Aligned with the purpose of the study, the following Research Question was defined:

- What is the perception of members of executive teams in Mexico regarding the influence of the psychological contract as an explicit agreement in their teams?

The findings relating to the research question are presented in Chapter Four and conclusions, implications, and recommendations are presented in Chapter Five.

## **Assumptions of the Study**

According to Creswell (2007), phenomenology requires at least some understanding of the broader philosophical assumptions, and the researcher should identify them:

- Explicit psychological contracts in executive teams, may improve performance.
- Introducing a process to make a psychological contract explicit in an executive team might create benefits because it will be monitored.

- The executive team members benefit by being involved solving their own challenges and to have a process they can use to influence the behaviors among them.

### **Significance of the Study**

Research is needed to learn how psychological contracts influence Mexican executive teams and to understand under which conditions it contributes to the processes of performance improvement. Organizations are beginning to realize that the management of psychological contracts is a critical component to successful functioning (Rousseau, 1995). While most of the research has focused on psychological contract violation and employees' subsequent attitudes and behavior, there has been limited research on how executive teams establish and develop their contracts.

The researcher developed a six-step model in order to make explicit the psychological contract in an executive team (explained in Chapter Three). Through this research about the perceived influence of the psychological contract as an explicit agreement, there will be implications and recommendations about how it influences Mexican executive teams. Furthermore, this could be applicable not only in Mexico but in Latin America because of the similarities among the different cultures.

Practitioners will benefit from the knowledge this study generates in that they will garner understanding of the influence of the psychological contract as an explicit agreement in executive teams. Scholars will benefit from using the knowledge this study generates through (a) understanding the complexities of the psychological contract and the personal dynamics in executive teams, and (b) using the knowledge to research additional variables of the development of the executive teams.

### **Definition of Terms**

**Executive Team:** Top groups have been defined numerous ways in the management literature. Conceptually, the top groups include those at the highest level of the organization (Michael & Hambrick, 1992). Murray (1989) described top groups as “those responsible for formulating strategic and structural responses” (p. 125). There appear to be a number of synonyms for the term top group or top management team, including executive teams and senior management teams. Hambrick (1995) objects to the use of the term top management team to describe groups of top managers. He suggests that many of these collections of senior managers are not truly teams because they do not function together as interdependent, united groups that accomplish their work together. As a result, he prefers the term top management group. Further, Ancona (1989) offers several factors that seem to differentiate top management groups from other work teams. They suggest that the intensity and simultaneous qualities of these factors are central in separating top management groups from other work groups. For this study, the term used to describe top groups will be executive team.

**Phenomenological Research:** Creswell (2007) states, “Phenomenology is not only a description, but it is also seen as an interpretative process in which the researcher makes an interpretation of the meaning of the lived experiences” (p. 59). Rudestam and Newton (2001) state, “In this type of process, the researcher helps create the narrative generated through interviewing to analyze the language data” (p. 39).

**Psychological Contract:** Rousseau (2004) defines psychological contracts as “beliefs, based upon promises expressed or implied, regarding an exchange agreement between an individual and, in organizations, the employing firm and its agents” (p. 121).

Rousseau and Schalk (2000) state, “A psychological contract is an individual’s interpretation of (a) an exchange of promises that is (b) mutually agreed on and voluntarily made (c) between two or more parties” (p. 284).

Qualitative Research: Polkinghorne (2005) states that qualitative research, “Is an umbrella term under which a variety of research methods that use language data are clustered” (p. 137). Creswell (2003) proposes five different strategies: ethnographies, ground theory, case studies, phenomenological research, and narrative research.

### **Summary**

Executive teams face demanding challenges that require better performance on their part. Evidence seems to point that an explicit agreement on the psychological contract could be helpful for enhancing functioning among executive team members. This first chapter introduced the problem addressed in this study, presented the statement of the problem, a brief summary of the importance of the psychological contract, and the possible positive influence it could have in executive teams. The research question defined for this study was presented in this chapter. Finally, this chapter defined terms and the significance of the study.

## **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

A literature review has the function of clarifying and focusing the research problem. In this chapter, the literature relevant to the study is reviewed and covers: (a) the concept of the psychological contract, (b) common problems and challenges in executive teams, and (c) considerations to improve performance and success in executive teams.

### **The Psychological Contract**

As mentioned in the prior definitions, there are basic social findings relevant to contracts. According to Rousseau (1995), there are four issues concerning this matter:

1. **Voluntariness:** No one can be forced to make a contract. Commitments must be freely made. Voluntariness promotes contract fulfillment.
2. **Incompleteness:** It is virtually impossible to spell out all details at the time a contract is created. The subjective, informal nature of the psychological contract makes it virtually impossible to spell out all of the mutual obligations. Employees fill in the blanks regarding what one can expect to receive in terms of, say, benefits, promotion, or career opportunities on the basis of environmental cues and signals, such as peer comparison.
3. **Reliance losses:** Because contracts are created to benefit their parties, changes can create losses. Contract-related activities focus largely on reducing losses.
4. **Automatic processes:** Once contracts are established, they create enduring mental models that resist change. Mental models can actually keep people from noticing changes that do occur. (p. 7)



According to Louis and Sutton (1991), individuals typically rely on habits of mind to guide interpretation of any event. For Rousseau (2001), the psychological contract schema serves as a cognitive shortcut that helps employees manage the terms of the exchange relationship.

All these social findings are important factors to consider when the psychological contract is made. For Rousseau and Wade-Benzoni (1994), it is important to distinguish that psychological contracts can include transactional and relational aspects.

Transactional contracts are described as those containing terms of exchange, which have monetary value, are specific, and of limited duration. The relational contracts, in contrast, contain terms that may not be readily valued, and that broadly concern the relationship between the individual employee and the organization. In these terms, the relational contract component implies commitment, loyalty, and trust. They should be considered as the key factors for success in the relationship between the individual and the organization, and this will be the issue concerning the evaluation of the psychological contract in executive teams.

Another critical aspect to consider in relation to organizational agreements is clarifying whether a promise is a spoken or written assurance made to somebody else or conditions that create expectations for somebody else. If the psychological contract is implicit, promises could be misunderstood and generate problems in performance. Rousseau (2001) states, "It is important that neither words nor actions in and of themselves convey a promise, but rather the words or actions taken in context signal that a commitment is made. This connection between context, words, and actions creates meaning" (p. 519). Constant dialogue is needed in order to clarify mutual expectations

and new meanings created in the relationship. The problem is even bigger if the organization doesn't deliver what was promised. The process of change would be affected by the attitude of the people who feel like they're being betrayed. Beer and Eisenstat (1996) consider that companies that are failing to get the benefits promised by reengineering are getting the results of cynicism and lowered commitment to change. Also, Martin, Staines, and Pate (1998) found a similar effect: "The frequent introduction of programs of change, such as revised mission statements, team working, continuous improvement and health improvement seemed to lead to high levels of cynicism amongst supervisory and shop floor employees" (p. 491). The gaps that exist between what the organization expects and what the individual delivers, or between what the individual expects and what the organization delivers will be costly for the performance and results of the organization.

As mentioned before, psychological contracts are sets of beliefs about what both employee and employer are entitled to receive and obligated to give in exchange for the other party's contribution (Levinson, Price, Munden, Mandl, & Solley, 1962). These beliefs about entitlements are subject to a number of cognitive tendencies that distort perceptions in self-serving ways (Rousseau, 1995). Thus, over time the psychological contract changes. The self-serving bias, common in human nature, results in an overestimation of one's own contributions and an underestimation of others' contributions (Robinson et al., 1994). This cognitive process sets the stage for a perception of unfulfillment. When either employee or employer perceives that the other has failed to fulfill one or more of the entitlement beliefs of the psychological contract, there is a breach of contract.

If the breach is significant, it constitutes a violation (Morrison & Robinson, 1997). Thus, violation is cognitive in nature, and based on calculation of the equity between what is received and what is believed to have been promised. When the psychological contract is violated, employees may experience anger, distrust, reduced loyalty and commitment, and increased propensity to leave the organization (Lambert, Edwards, & Cable, 2003).

Most of the previous research on psychological contracts has examined how sets of mutual obligations and responsibilities with the organization create strong incentives for employees to remain. Organizational commitment is a stabilizing force that binds individuals to organizations (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001). According to Allen and Meyer (1996), affective commitment refers to employees' emotional attachment to, involvement in, and identification with their employers. It suggests that reciprocity is an important characteristic. When individuals perceive that they are valued and respected, they are likely to reciprocate with trust and emotional engagement in exchange. Thus, when organizations demonstrate care and support for employees by promising them favorable or satisfying contracts, employees are likely to reciprocate with stronger affective feelings toward their organizations. On the other hand, when employees perceive that employers are only minimally interested in meeting their needs, they are likely to respond with lower loyalty and trust and fewer contributions to the organization. Perceptions of psychological contracts will directly affect employees' organizational commitment.

Power issues are also involved in the development of psychological contracts. Traditionally, in the field of Organizational Development, there was a tendency to believe

that many problems in organizations were the result of both a use of power and a leadership approach that were based on intimidating people. The psychological contract's objective is not to help people to be liberated from power. It is rather to develop patterns for performance and collaboration within the culture of the organization. According to Anderson and Ackerman (2001), people cannot gain power and complete control over reality:

They can only be in relationship to it and, through their relationship, work with reality to facilitate outcomes. Instead of being controllers and managers of the great machine, people are co-creators with the living system of which they are a part. (p. 119)

In this sense, the psychological contract is aimed at establishing the possible boundaries for the power within executive teams and the organization. Because psychological contracts have been viewed primarily as social exchanges between participants within an organization, executive teams have not paid attention to psychological contracts. The critical aspects mentioned such as expectations, reciprocal obligations and exchange of promises, the meaning created by commitments, the effects of reciprocity, and the need for boundaries around power also influence the relationships and behaviors of executive teams.

### **Executive Teams**

Most of the research done on teams has tended to be with manufacturing or knowledge-worker teams. Few studies have looked at groups at the top of the organization. Furthermore, the study of top groups has primarily taken place in the management discipline. Recently, in the management literature, there has been an increase in the number of studies investigating top management teams or top management groups and senior executives (Hambrick, 1995).

An executive team is more than a set of individuals working together; it is a truly interdependent, interacting team. This means that team members have a sense of identity; they perceive themselves as a unit; they are interdependent; they depend upon each other to produce their output; and they have joint outcomes. The core defining characteristic is that a group of people collectively provides strategic, operational, and institutional leadership.

According to Ancona (1989), the fundamental rationale for establishing any team, including an executive team, is to create synergy to increase coordination across functions and activities so that the performance of the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. The authors state:

Synergy is realized when the added value of the team is greater than the process loss, or overhead incurred through coordinating the collective work. This capacity to implement collaborative effort and create added value is at the core of designing and managing executive teams. (p. 2)

They also consider that effective teamwork is reflected in the quality of strategic and operational decisions made, in the ability of the team to translate decisions into actions, and ultimately in the quality of organizational performance.

Because those at the top layers of organizations are in a position to lead organizations in a number of directions, interest has grown concerning the functioning of these top groups. Given the many types of groups one could study in organizations, why study executives in top groups? From an academic perspective, there is a profound need for understanding executive teams and it would be a great benefit for the organizations.

There are, in fact, significant differences between executive teams and other teams. These differences are important because team members are often unprepared for

the dynamics they encounter at the executive level. For Ancona (1989), there are eight significant differences:

1. **Salience of the External Environment:** External forces as customers, competitors, competitors, financial markets, board of directors and shareholders influence the executive team.
2. **Complexity of the Task:** The executive teams deal with many things at the same time; internal operations management, external relationship management, institutional leadership and decision making.
3. **Intensified Political Behavior:** Exercising power effectively is a very important role for the executive team. Issues about politics are more pronounced and more frequent than in other teams.
4. **Fixed Pie Rewards:** The ultimate reward for executive team members is succession, that creates a zero sum game, and thus a perception of a fixed pie of rewards. When one person wins, other loses.
5. **Increased Visibility:** Others watch action and dynamics from the executive team carefully because they are a symbolic source of institutional leadership.
6. **Composition:** Executive team members have a high need for power and individual achievement, rather than achievement through teamwork.
7. **Special Meaning of Team Membership:** The meaning of membership or belonging in the executive level is much more important than in other teams. The process of becoming a member, how members are initiated and the meaning of losing membership is also crucial. Inclusion is a relevant issue for many teams, but at the executive level, it has special meaning and status.

8. **Unique Role of the CEO as Team Leader:** The role that the CEO plays in these teams is also unique. He is usually the one who determines rewards, including succession. There is usually no recourse beyond the CEO, so maybe this opens a gap between the leader and the other members. The social distance is usually bigger than in other settings.

Other interesting characteristics of the executive teams are what S. Hart (1997a) considers the universal internal need of every executive, which can be conceptualized in the next six concepts:

1. **Integrity.** They each require a sense of importance, value, and respect from their peers.
2. **Connection.** They need to be integrated, included, and to feel a sense of belonging and union with others on the team.
3. **Interplay.** They need involvement in a communicative, collaborative, responsive environment that allows safe openness and feedback.
4. **Impact.** They need to make a difference, an investment, a unique personal contribution of productive output.
5. **Approval.** They need positive response, personal recognition, and acknowledgment for their contributions.
6. **Self-Efficacy.** They need power and control over a distinct-bounded territory of responsibility and accountability. (p. 2)

These kinds of needs are intimately related with the psychological contract and could be addressed in the process of making it explicit. The unique characteristics of an executive team and their internal needs have been revealed, and their common problems and challenges are described in the following section.

### **Common Problems and Challenges in Executive Teams**

The sometimes unfulfilled promise of the executive teams remains something of a

mystery to many people. After all, these teams are usually composed of successful, smart, hard-working executives who have been effective in their own spheres. And these are typically the same executives who exhort their people to break down barriers, practice teamwork, and learn together. Nevertheless, the senior groups of which they are a part often fail to realize their potential for collaborative, high impact action (E. Hart, 1995).

This challenge is illustrated in Hambrick's (1995) study of CEOs who identified fragmentation of the executive teams, acting in silos with minimal communication and collaboration, as one of their most significant problems. Low levels of executive team alignment appear to have a potentially negative impact on the executive team's ability to make decisions, react to change, and effectively implement strategic priorities.

Child (1972) initially recognized the value of an effective executive team as having strong organizational influence through the process of strategic choice in which power-holders make decisions about different courses of strategic action the organization will pursue. The increased pace of globalization and technological change combined with increasing competition and more ambiguous market environments is requiring greater levels of executive teams effectiveness (Childress, 2000).

S. Hart (1997b) stated that a common problem among CEOs is:

Their team members may avoid dealing with interpersonal conflict, thinking the issues will go away. Yet, executives who fear confrontation actually end up causing more trouble because small problems are like little fires. When they're not dealt with, they can easily grow and get out of control. (p. 2)

Among the different challenges that executive's teams have within the organization's results, is how well they function. A Lefton and Buzzotta (1987) survey shows that top-level teams do not function optimally. The survey asked each team member to rate himself or herself on each of 10 activities: (a) coordination within the



team, (b) profitability and cost awareness, (c) communication, (d) handling conflict, (e) meetings, (f) organization and control, (g) problem solving and decision making, (h) goal setting and planning, (i) coordination with other units, and (j) critique and feedback. The results are consistent with the conclusions of other authors previously mentioned. “The results of our study, limited though they are, are sobering. They make it evident that the most successful teams in American business have a long way to go before they approximate the ideal team” (p. 19).

For Hequet (1994), the challenge for the organization intent on teaming at the top is to persuade a group of ambitious individuals to forswear their rugged individualism after it has served them well for a long time. That’s the challenge of the top level team—seeing the big picture while gaining a deep understanding of all other functions represented in the team.

According to E. Hart (1995), most senior groups simply do not know themselves as a group. They are not conscious of how they think together and consequently cannot recognize and avoid the barriers to group learning that they repeatedly encounter. E. Hart wrote:

But they rarely create views of the future, articulate strategy, chart ways to align and mobilize people, or build a framework that will keep them on the path to the future. In short, they put out fires but seldom light any. (p. 2)

Team effectiveness is predicated on the team’s ability to develop a shared understanding of strategic priorities (Cohen, Mohrman, & Mohrman, 1999). To succeed, top executives must excel at team play, but to be effective collaborators implies hard work and determination to develop a way the team learn together. The idea that just by being excellent independent executives they will form a team is far from reality. The

ability for the members of the executive teams to act in alignment with one another in order to implement strategic priorities is critical to achieving desired business results (Beer, 2001).

According to Moskal (1995), for senior management teams to be effective, they must build trust among team members. First, team members must believe that everyone will act consistently and follow through on team decisions. If team members don't do as they promised, they will lose credibility. Team members must also understand their role on the team and accept their accountability to one another. Second, team members must believe that active participation will benefit them, their staffs, and the organization. Each team member, working with other members, must be able to answer the question: What's in it for me? They must be able to recognize the value of their input and the positive effects it has on the organization, their peers, and their staff members by improving working relationships or advancing organizational objectives or philosophies.

Argyris (1966) states, "The actual behavior of top executives during decision making meetings often does not jibe with their attitudes and prescriptions about effective executive action" (p. 84). He continued stating, "The gap that often exists between what executives say and how they behave helps create barriers to openness and trust, to the effective search for alternatives, to innovation, and to flexibility in the organization" (p. 84). Dougherty (1992) found similar issues where team members from different functional areas often lack a shared understanding of critical issues that in turn impedes collaboration and innovation.

Beside the challenges they have, according to Kiefer (1998), an executive team will likely have four difficulties in learning:

1. For the executive team member, life is more a zero sum game than ever before. Earlier in the executive's career, he or she could get ahead without winning at the expense of another team member.
2. On the executive team, there is generally no appellate court, no tiebreaker, or higher court of last resort. In most other teams, if an individual is in conflict with the boss or the team, the team leader's boss can provide a third-party perspective.
3. The makeup of the executive team, in and of itself, is a challenge. Typically, executive teams are populated by aggressive movers who are used to getting what they want and getting things done. Group maintenance skills may be less developed, ironically, than they are elsewhere. Such skills are typically much less rewarded on executive teams.
4. Most executive teams operate in an unforgiving environment. The organization still longs for heroic leadership. People are intolerant when executives make mistakes, or when the executives fall short of their efforts to model teamwork. (p. 2)

As described, executive teams often fail to realize their potential for collaborative, high-impact action; they do not function optimally; they avoid dealing with interpersonal conflict; and they are usually not conscious of how they think together. Trust must be build among their members in order to succeed. There is evidence in the field of how these executive teams could improve performance and it is described in the next paragraphs.

### **Considerations to Improve Performance and Success in Executive Teams**

Most executive teams need alternatives to improve performance. This study looks at the influence of the psychological contract as one possibility; there are other practical proposals in the field to develop distinct aspects involved in the performance of executive teams. They are described in the next paragraphs with the aim of considering them within the development and context of the psychological contract as an explicit agreement.

Ideally, an executive team should be something more than the sum of its parts,

because teamwork is multiplicative, not additive. However, in practice, many executive teams never synergize, while many others do so less than they might. Lefton and Buzzota (1987) state, “What happens on some teams is not only not multiplicative, it’s subtractive: the group produces results less valuable than its members are likely to have produced had they worked separately” (p. 7). They suggest five team goals for changing attitudes on an executive team:

1. Getting the boss to stop promotional leadership: For the authors it means that the leader advances his own ideas by leaking them to his subordinates without a chance for the subordinates to disclose theirs.
2. Becoming more proficient probers: Using questions and short statements in order to confirm one’s understanding of information helps to overcome barriers to communication.
3. Managing conflict: Teams don’t know how to face conflict. Encouraging teams to learn how to manage it should be one of their primary goals.
4. Broaching touchy subjects: “If conflict is to be encouraged and controlled, managers must feel and must be able to do it without arousing animosity or defensiveness” (p. 18).
5. Conducting resultful meetings: In the study of Lefton and Buzzota (1987) all teams without exception agreed to have meetings that couldn’t be justified by their results. They were not well prepared and couldn’t be classified as presentations or information exchange.

Gage (1999) suggests using scenario planning to help executives minimize surprises and think about how they will deal with one another when the unexpected

happens. The initial step is having each person list all the crucial decision points that the team could face. The group members combine their lists and brainstorm additional items. They consider alternative strategies, then they create guidelines for the future. Through this process, they learn about how they would react to difficult situations. What steps are companies taking to ensure that their executive teams collaborate effectively? Some use an informal approach of setting aside time to explore expectations and work out mutual understandings related to roles and responsibilities. Others engage in a more formal process that puts agreements in writing. Expectations and misunderstandings frequently trigger conflict. Executives are challenged to bring into the open—often for the first time—and examine what they expect and want individually, for the team, and for the company.

Kiefer (1998) gives five suggestions to design a team learning agenda for executive teams:

1. Have a heart-to-heart talk within the team about what sincerely everyone wants in terms of business results and how they want to work together. Talk about what is really important to each of the executives.
2. Have an open and honest discussion about the current reality. Don't limit themselves to the problems; include the positive aspects.
3. Identify team knowledge or capacity deficits and create methods for learning in these areas.
4. Determine whether the team has an appetite and commitment for learning. If so, look for ways to reconstruct things that they are doing to make them learning activities. View problems, mistakes, and shortfalls as moments with learning potential.
5. Develop some behavioral pledges to keep the team on track. (p. 2)

For E. Hart (1995), a change in attitude or increased motivation on the part of the

individual is necessary, but not a sufficient condition for success. That is why many self-awareness or team-building efforts fail, despite the increased motivation they create.

First, they must learn to recognize the most common executive group learning disablers that are peculiar to the group, and teams must learn to think about their thinking. That is the beginning of the journey toward group self-knowledge. Second, they must learn to characterize in a word or phrase the disabling patterns, processes, practices, and pathologies they encounter. Name the demons. Develop useful shorthand that encapsulates and recalls the often complex dynamics that underlie various learning disablers. Third, teams must exorcise the demons each time they appear. That means invoking their names in order to banish them.

According to Hequet (1994), on a well-functioning top-level team, members share a common vision, which includes doing what is best for the entire business. They learn to confront each other candidly on issues, not personalities. They learn to listen and draw on each other's expertise. Teams at the top focus more on issues outside the organization than other teams. Executive teams must deal with the organization's toughest problems—those that cannot be solved by teams elsewhere in the organization.

For S. Hart (1997a), the success of a business is dependent on the quality of the interpersonal relationships among the members of the executive team. Perhaps a classic concept of a successful company might be one that steadily progresses toward increasing its market share by focusing on the goals of selling bigger, better, cheaper, and faster-to-market products. But the common denominator requirement for successful competition in the marketplace is teamwork. S. Hart wrote:

CEO's who value and respect their executives as individual people, and not just symbols of their roles, are often able to support and implement methods of

creating good interpersonal relationships on their executive teams. They understand the specific interpersonal psychological needs of the members of their teams, and they have developed the ability to meet those needs. (p. 1)

For Moskal (1995), quality and productivity are by-products of people working well together. On a senior management team, the focus of energy needs to be on people. To build the one-on-one relationships necessary for successful teamwork, team members must take the time to learn about one another's desires, values, visions, and work styles.

Lefton and Buzzotta (1987) have four suggestions for improving teamwork at this level:

1. Get the team together for the express purpose of examining how it operates in key areas (e.g., internal coordination, profitability and cost control, communication, handling of conflict, meetings, organization and control, problem solving and decision making, goal setting and planning, coordination with other teams, and critique and feedback).
2. Have the team set improvement objectives. At this point these will probably be soft objectives lacking in specificity. Still and all, they're important.
3. Have the members of the team exchange feedback on what each of them can do, individually to improve teamwork.
4. Make sure the team engages in an important activity that will enable it to act upon what it learned in the first three steps. For instance, have the team draft a new mission statement or set long- and short-range goals. (p. 19)

Katzenbach (1998) also provides an approach that helps distinguish the importance of teamwork on an executive team and the propose that it is essential to know when the executive team needs team efforts and when a nonteam opportunity arises. It is counterproductive to try to force a group of top executives to become a team; however, there are some occasions and compelling reasons when a top-team effort is essential to capture performance potential. The key is to differentiate between team and nonteam opportunities and to shift into whichever mode is best for the task at hand. Katzenbach

uses three tests in order to define whether a group is functioning as a real team: (a) mutual accountability for group results; (b) collective or joint work products of clear performance value; and (c) a sharing or shifting of leadership roles among members.

Snow and Mulrooney (2002) consider five strategies for success for effective top teams:

1. Establish a clear, compelling direction. High performing individuals need clearly communicated goals and direction. (p. 23)
2. Create an appropriate structure. Once the direction is firmly established, you must put in place an appropriate structure for the team, which involves setting team size and boundaries. (p. 24)
3. Select the right people. Selecting team members with the appropriate expertise is important; however, bringing the right people to the table is critical to team effectiveness. (p. 24)
4. Support the team. The team leader plays a key role in supporting the team by seeing to it that members are adequately rewarded for their efforts and that they get training. (p. 25)
5. Provide opportunities for development. The CEO should hold meetings to discuss how the team is performing, what it is doing best, what it is doing poorly, and what the team and its members have learned. (p. 25)

For Ancona (1989), the executive team performance is directly influenced by the quality, effectiveness, and appropriate shaping of three core processes:

1. Work Management Process: This includes how the team shares information, makes decisions, sets the work agenda and coordinates their activities.
2. Relationship Management Process: The important issue regarding this process imply the degree of openness between members, the kind of support expressed among them, the cohesiveness of the group, how conflicts are resolved and the



level of trust. It also includes how to manage relationships given the political and succession factors.

3. External Boundary Management Process: This factor is especially important for executive teams. It implies the definition and management of boundaries. It may focus in such actors outside of the organization as competitors, key customers, media, financial markets and governments. (p. 24)

For these authors, executive team effectiveness is determined by how well these three processes are managed.

### **Summary**

It can be said that there are many options concerning performance and success in executive teams—solutions could be oriented to share a common vision and clear direction, leadership, dealing with expectations, motivation, feedback, conflict, mutual accountability, identifying team knowledge, commitment for learning, collective work products, and opportunities for development. All these factors related to performance represent the inner dynamics of the executive teams, and they could be addressed by the mutual commitments within the psychological contract. As stated, the focus of energy to succeed needs to be on people.

As far as we can reflect on the ideas and findings on the field, the need for research and develop alternatives to cope with problems and challenges of executive teams is more than evident. Executives rarely possess a complete understanding of psychological contracts, thus, the importance for it to be explored as an explicit agreement.

In this chapter, the concept of the psychological contract was defined. Topics

regarding expectations, reciprocal obligations, and exchange of promises were explored. The executive teams were differentiated from the rest of the teams in an organization; their common problems and challenges were disclosed and considerations to improve performance and success were described. The literature reviewed supported the objectives of this study. Chapter 3 examines the most appropriate process followed to define the methodology for this investigation.

### **Chapter Three: Methods**

This chapter defines the methods that were best suited for this research after reviewing the existing literature on the psychological contract and other studies on executive teams. As has been previously explained, the purpose of this study was to explore the influence of the psychological contract as an explicit agreement in executive teams in Mexico. These executives have participated in the process of making psychological contracts explicit as previous clients of the researcher. For these purposes, the psychological contract could be defined as the behavior expectations among the executive team members, the support they need, and the commitments they make in order to achieve the goals of the executive team.

The phenomenological approach within qualitative research was selected in order to identify the influence of the psychological contract on executive teams. This approach allows the transference of these executive perceptions and produce new knowledge.

Phenomenology asks for the meaning, structure, and essence of a lived experience. In this case, the phenomenon studied includes the executives who made the psychological contract as an explicit agreement within their teams. This individual experience refers to the perception of how this action influences the executive team. At the end of the chapter, the process of making explicit the psychological contract on an executive team is described.

#### **Rationale**

The research question for this study is especially suited for a qualitative research design because the issue is exploratory and a qualitative method allows for the identification of variables for future research. The perceived influence of the

psychological contract as an explicit agreement within an executive team is a phenomenon not studied before, and as Creswell (2003) states, “Choose a qualitative study because the topic needs to be explored. The variables cannot be identified, theories are not available to explain behavior of participants or their population of study and theories need to be developed” (p. 35). Strauss and Corbin (1998) state that this research is qualitative in that it “produced findings not arrived at by statistical procedures or other means of quantification” (p. 50).

The focus of this study is primarily on processes and meanings that are not experimentally examined or measured in terms of quantity, amount, intensity, or frequency (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Creswell (2003) describes the,

...qualitative approach as one in which the inquirer often makes knowledge claims based primarily on constructivist perspectives (i.e., the multiple meanings of individual experiences, meanings socially and historically constructed, with an intent of developing a theory or pattern) or advocacy/participatory perspectives (i.e., political, issue-oriented, collaborative, or change oriented) or both. (p. 18)

Also, according to Maxwell (2005):

Qualitative researches study a relatively small number of individuals or situations, and preserve the individuality of each of these in their analyses, rather than collecting data from large samples and aggregating the data across individuals or situations. Thus, they are able to understand how events, actions, and meanings are shaped by the unique circumstances in which these occur. (p. 22)

As described before in this study, the researcher explored the perceived influence of the psychological contract as an explicit agreement within executive teams in Mexico.

Morse and Richards (2002) mention that qualitative methods are the best, and sometimes the only way of addressing some research questions. These authors comment on several cases, two of which fit with the purpose of this study:

- If the purpose is to learn from the participants in a setting or process that way they experience it, the meanings they put on it, and how they interpret what they experience, you need methods that will allow you to discover and to do justice to their perceptions and the complexity of their interpretations. (p. 28)
- If the purpose is to understand the phenomena deeply and in detail, you need methods for discovery of core concerns. (p. 28)

Other reasons to do this study as qualitative research are supported by Corbin and Strauss (2008), who stated that it allows researchers to get at the inner experience of participants, to determine how meanings are formed through and in culture, and to discover rather than test variables.

For Creswell (2007), there are five qualitative approaches to inquiry. These are narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study. They all have contrasting characteristics about focus, type of problem best suited for design, discipline background, unit of analysis, data collection forms, data analysis strategies, and written report. After reviewing the five approaches, the most adequate for the purpose of this study is the phenomenology approach.

Also, Creswell (2007) states that phenomenological study describes the meaning of several individuals' lived experiences of a concept or phenomenon.

"Phenomenologists focus on describing what all participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon" (p. 57). The inquirer then collects data from persons who have experienced the phenomenon, and develops a composite description of the essence of the experience for all of the individuals. The description consists of what they experienced and how they experienced it (Moustakas, 1994).

This is a qualitative study using a phenomenological approach that focus on the research question by seeking the understanding of the essence of the experience. The type

of problem explored needs to describe the essence of a lived phenomenon, the discipline background is psychology, and the unit of analysis is studying several individuals that have shared the same kind of experience.

The data collection method uses primarily interviews with individuals, the data analysis method uses open coding and selecting coding and finally, the written report will describe the essence of the experience. Therefore, the selection of the phenomenological approach within its qualitative research was based in the fact that it offers a better possibility to investigate, in a deep and thorough way, this study's research question.

### **Sample Selection**

It is important to keep in mind that Patton (2002) said qualitative inquiry is full of ambiguities. There are purposeful strategies instead of methodological rules. There are inquiry approaches instead of statistical formulas. This type of inquiry seems to work best for people who have a high tolerance for ambiguity. This ambiguity becomes more evident in the matter of sample size. In other words, there are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry. Patton (2002) emphasizes, "The size of the sample depends of what you want to find out, why you want to find out, how the findings will be used, and what resources (including time) you have for the study" (p. 244).

Patton (2002) states that the validity, meaningfulness, and insights generated from qualitative inquiry have more to do with the information richness of the cases selected and the observational-analytical capabilities of the researcher than with the sample size. In this study, a purposeful sampling method will be used. The logic and power of purposeful sampling greatly depends on selecting information-rich cases for an in-depth study. Information-rich cases are those that can provide a great deal about issues of

central importance to the purpose of the inquiry. Considering the author's observations, special attention was put on selecting those cases that would best serve the purpose of this study.

Other authors such as Morse and Richards (2002) established that qualitative researchers look for a valid representation with sampling techniques such as purposeful sampling, in which the investigator selects participants based on their characteristics. Good participants are those who know the information required, are willing to reflect on the phenomena of interest, have the time, and are willing to participate. "Setting and sample are purposively selected. This may involve choosing the best, most optimal example of the phenomenon and the setting in which you are most likely to see whatever it is you are interested in" (p. 67).

This study's executives were selected from 10 organizations that have been involved in the process of making explicit their psychological contracts in the past 5 years in Mexico. They are all former clients of the researcher. According to Creswell (2007), "The participants in the study need be carefully chosen to be individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon in question, so that the researcher, in the end, can forge a common understanding" (p. 62).

In this study, the sampling was defined by a purposeful sampling strategy; its intent was to find individuals who experienced the phenomenon. This is a criterion sample, according to Creswell (2007), because it was composed of team executives who experienced the process of making explicit their psychological contract.

The participants were selected from the respondents who accepted the invitation to participate (see Appendix A). Interviews were scheduled with the 10 executives agreed

to participate. This number was targeted, as it could most likely result in data saturation. This process occurs when the researcher no longer hears new information after interviewing the last participant.

The requirements to participate in the study were:

- To be an executive team member (Not the CEO).
- In this study, the researcher was trying to explore the influence of the psychological contract as an explicit agreement in executive teams; the perception of the CEO as the leader might be different from the peers of an executive team. This phenomenon could be addressed for future research.
- Organizations should be operating in Mexico.
- The executive team member should be willing to take part in the interview of approximately 90 minutes.

### **Data Collection**

As mentioned, data were collected from the individuals who have experienced the phenomenon of making explicit the psychological contract in executive teams in Mexico. Once the participants were identified, the interviews were carried out in order to collect data relevant to the research question.

It is important to mention that the use of the interview as a research method is sufficiently supported by different authors. For instance, Kvale (1996) states:

An interview is a conversation that has a structure and a purpose. It goes beyond the spontaneous exchange of views as an everyday conversation, and becomes a careful questioning and listening approach with the purpose of obtaining thoroughly tested knowledge. (p. 6)

Also, Patton (2002), writing about interviewing, stated, “We interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe” (p. 340).



According to Patton (2002), there are different types of interviews:

1. Informal Conversation Interview—unstructured interviewing.
2. Interview Guide—there is a list of questions or issues, and the interviewer is free to explore, probe, and ask questions. The interviewer is free to build conversation within a particular subject area, spontaneously, and establish a conversational style focusing on the subject that has been predetermined.
3. Standardized Open-Ended Interview—the exact wording and sequence of questions are determined in advance. This alternative is the best type for dissertation purposes.
4. Combined Approach—the standardized open-ended interview approach “is used in the early part of an interview, leaving the interviewer free to pursue any subjects of interest during the latter parts of the interview” (p. 347).

For this study, a combined approach was used in order to have the combination of a structured, organized plan that would cover the most important points with all the subjects, but also with the possibility of including additional issues or items according to the flow of information. An interview guide was prepared to ensure that the same basic lines of inquiry were pursued with each person interviewed.

Collective data by interviewing are not a passive process; rather, it is a cognitive process that requires an enormous investment on the part of the researcher. Kvale (1996) mentions some criteria that should be met in order to conduct quality interviews: (a) the extent or spontaneous, rich, specific, and relevant answers from the interviewee; (b) the shorter the interviewer’s questions and the longer the subjects answers, the better; and (c) the degree to which the interviewer follows up and clarifies the meaning of the relevant

aspects of the answers. Being aware of the importance of having quality interviews, the researcher will take these criteria under consideration before, during, and after the interview process. The interview questions had been designed to take into account Kvale's typology, as presented in Appendix B. It is important to mention that besides the permission to take notes, the participants also agreed to have the interview recorded; it was necessary to have a reliable mechanism to register all the information generated during the interviews.

The logistics of this data collections process were:

1. After receiving authorization from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to proceed with this study (see Appendix C), two pilot tests were done using the interview guide (see Appendix D). The idea was to clarify the flow and sequence of the questions, the time frames, and the quality of the audio recording.
2. Once the pilot tests had been performed, 20 e-mail messages were sent to HR directors of Mexican organizations that had participated in the process of making explicit the psychological contract within their executive teams. The researcher received answers from 10 HR directors granting access to recruit participants for the interviews.
3. Then, 75 invitations to participate (see Appendix A) in this study were sent to executives of 10 different teams, representing the 10 HR directors' initial consent; one of each was chosen, looking for maximum variability on the sample as stated previously.
4. Once the candidates agreed to participate in the study, they were contacted in

order to confirm their participation, to confirm the next steps, to answer any questions that the participants might have had, and finally to thank them in advance for their participation.

5. Each participant was interviewed separately between March 10, 2011 and March 17, 2011. The face-to-face interview sessions included a brief introductory grounding and relationship building with the participants, then the purpose was defined and format of the interview explained. Participants were asked if they needed additional information concerning the study. After responding to the questions, they were requested to sign the Participant Letter of Consent (see Appendix E). The personal identities of the executives and their organizations were not disclosed; they are only identified as P and a number then follows this identifier from 1 to 10 assigned in the order of their interview.
6. The interviews followed the questions presented in Appendix D, but the researcher allowed free-flow dialogue in order to capture as much information as possible. The interviews were recorded using an Olympus Digital Voice Recorder and each averaged about 90 minutes.
7. Immediately after each interview was concluded, the quality of the recording was verified, and the participant was thanked for his or her contribution to this research.
8. Digital recordings of the interviews were listened to several times during the transcription. Once transcribed, the data were then proofread repeatedly in order to determine accuracy.

9. Interviews were conducted and transcribed in Spanish and then translated into English with the help of an independent translator, honoring their original content, syntax, and structure.
10. The transcriptions were sent to an expert on the QSR NUD\*IST 6 (Non-Numerical Unstructured Data Indexing, Searching and Theorizing Software) that was used to expedite the analysis of the large amount of data collected. This software assisted in managing, coding, analyzing, and the interpreting the data in light of the purpose of this study.

### **Protection of Human Subjects**

Given that this investigation involved the participation of human beings, it is very important to protect them against any type of negative effect derived from their participation in this study. United States Federal guidelines establish research involving human subjects must consider how subjects are being protected from harm (Hall & Feltner, 2005). Therefore, Federal regulations (45 CFR 46.112) demand that all research involving human subjects, irrespective of funding, must be reviewed and approved by the designated IRB.

Patton (2002) states that procedures to protect human subjects are now an affirmation of our commitment to treat all people with respect. Creswell (2003) confirms that researchers have the ethical obligation to protect and show respect to the participants of any research. The author goes on to say that IRB committees exist on campuses because of federal regulations that provide protection against human rights violations. For a researcher, the IRB process requires assessing the potential for risk such as physical, psychological, social, economic, or legal harm to participants in a study.

Pepperdine's IRB guidelines (as cited in Hall & Feltner, 2005) define minimal risk as "the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research are not greater in and of themselves than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests" (p. 10). This study was evaluated and approved.

All participants received a written document on which they gave their voluntary consent to participate in this study. This document (see Appendix E) provided more information regarding: (a) the purpose of the study; (b) methods being used; (c) the reason for selection of participants; (d) benefits of the study; (e) potential risks, if any; (f) the required time commitment; (g) confidentiality; and (h) a statement indicating that participation was voluntary and that participants may withdraw during the process. After reviewing these elements, the researcher made sure that none of the subjects expressed discomfort with sharing his or her perceptions and maintaining the confidentiality of the identity of the participants.

This exploration involved no risk to human subjects and met criteria established in the federal guidelines as being exempt from full or expedited IRB review. The IRB granted approval as exempt research (see Appendix C). This study offers potentially important benefits to the participants and organizations generally because it provides important discussions regarding the psychological contract in executive teams and it is conducted with volunteers who have agreed to participate. For each one of them, the purposes and benefits of this study were explained, and assurances were offered regarding the minimization of risk to human subjects by eliminating all individual identification from the data. Subject interest was received via e-mail through the

invitation to participate (see Appendix A), and a participant letter of consent was shared with them and signed (see Appendix E). The participants understood the purposes of the interviews and that their data free of any identifying information would be used in the process of completing the researcher's doctorate of education in Organization Change and published within his dissertation.

### **Data Analysis**

Once the researcher had the 10 interviews done and the recordings transcribed, all the information was organized. Patton (2002) suggests that in order to start the analysis, all the interviews need to be transcribed. This is in order to facilitate the process of data analysis delineated by the purpose of this study.

As a guide in this investigation, the researcher used the six generic steps that Creswell (2003) suggests qualitative researchers should follow throughout the process of data analysis. These steps are:

1. Organize and prepare the data for analysis. This involves transcribing interviews, optically scanning material, typing up field notes, or sorting and arranging the data into different types depending on the sources of information.
2. Read through all the data. A first step is to obtain a general sense of the information and to reflect on its overall meaning.
3. Begin detailed analysis with a coding process. Coding is the process of organizing the material into chunks. It involves taking text, segmenting sentences into categories, and labeling those categories with a term, often a term based on the language of the participant.

4. Use the coding to generate a small number of themes or categories. These themes are the ones that appear as major findings and are stated under separate headings. They should display multiples perspectives from individuals and be supported by diverse quotations and specific evidence.
5. Advance how the description and themes will be represented in the qualitative narrative. The most popular approach is to use a narrative passage to convey the findings of the analysis.
6. A final step in data analysis involves making an interpretation or meaning of the data. What were the lessons learned? It captures the essence of this idea.

The main approach in analyzing the data was content analysis. Richards and Richards (1997) created the QSR NUD\*IST 6. This software allowed the researcher to do the following: (a) create categories that took into account both the theory included in the literature review in Chapter Two and the research question of this study; (b) edit the document text without disrupting the coding; (c) view the coding in a variety of ways; (d) browse and refine the coding in a live node browser, and, most importantly; (f) search the data for text patterns and auto-code keywords.

The large amount of captured information was segmented into hundreds of text units. For the purpose of this analysis, the following command was chosen as a criterion for text unit identification: Look for any sentence or groups of sentences that convey a complete idea and that start with a capital letter and ends in a period. After completing this process, the data were studied in order to find some initial response patterns.

### **Internal Validity**

Patton (2002) stated that in a qualitative research,

...the researcher is the instrument for validity, because the credibility of the work relies to a great extent on the skill, competence and rigor of the person doing the fieldwork...as well as the things that are going on in a person's life that might prove a distraction. (p. 14)

According to Morse and Richards (2002), "The researcher's skills ensure the quality and scope of data, the interpretation of the results, and the creation of the theory" (p. 168). Another author, Kvale (1996), reaffirms this by stating, "Validation comes to depend on the quality of craftsmanship during investigation, continually checking, questioning, and theoretically interpreting the findings. The craftsmanship and credibility of the researcher become essential" (p. 241). Validity in qualitative research implies moral integrity on the researcher's part, and is fundamental to the quality of the knowledge produced.

Creswell (2007) established the standards he would use to assess the quality of a phenomenological study with the next questions:

1. Does the author convey an understanding of the philosophical tenets of phenomenology? According to Creswell (2007) the philosophical assumptions rest on some common ground: the study of the lived experiences of personas, the view that these experiences are conscious ones, and the development of descriptions of the essences of these experiences, not explanations or analyses.
2. Does the author have a clear phenomenon to study that is articulated in a concise way?
3. Does the author use procedures of data analysis in phenomenology, such as the procedures recommended by Moustakas (1994)?
4. Does the author convey the overall essence of the experience of the participants? Does this essence include a description of the experience and the



context in which it occurred?

5. Is the author reflexive throughout the study?

These standards Creswell (2007) created initially represented a challenge for the researcher. Moustakas (1994) procedures of data analysis founded in Creswell's *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design* had been reviewed by the researcher and also Creswell's questions were deeply reflected upon and studied.

In order to ensure internal validity, the following steps were taken:

1. The general interview guide and its corresponding questions were carefully designed based on the purpose of this study.
2. The purpose and methodology of this research were reviewed by other two Mexican colleges with doctoral degrees in order to obtain their feedback and insights.
3. A professional with experience in qualitative research and interview design reviewed the general interview guide and its corresponding questions before its application.
4. Two pilot tests were made for the interview in order to verify that the questions were clear, had the correct flow, and would obtain the information required for this study. Also, feedback was received from professional in this process.
5. The interviews were performed in an appropriate meeting room, avoiding any type of distractions. Privacy and concentrations for the task were obtained.
6. Before concluding the visit, participants were asked if they would like to change, modify, or add any opinions to the issues discussed.

Another important process that contributed to the reliability of this study was the researcher's conscious and constant effort to be aware of personal bias and to eliminate personal involvement with the subject material—that is, eliminate or at least gain clarity about preconceptions. Since the consultant and the researcher are the same, the participants' experiences could be similar and the researcher was aware of it.

According to Creswell (2007), reliability can be enhanced if the researcher obtains detailed field notes by employing a good-quality tape recording and by transcribing the tape. The researcher used digital recording to ensure high quality data capture. Also, the audio tapes were transcribed to indicate the trivial, but often crucial, pauses and overlaps. Once the initial coding of data was completed, an independent rater was asked to review the coded data and inquire as to the placement of specific text within categories or representing themes. Some modifications were made following the independent rater's review, and conversations continued until consensus was achieved regarding the interpretation and coding of transcribed interview text.

### **The Process of Developing the Psychological Contract as an Explicit Agreement Within an Executive Team**

The researcher developed a process to make explicit the psychological contract within executive teams. According to Moskal (1995), a typical systematic approach to team development that prescribes rigid techniques and time frames will not be effective with senior management teams; rather, it will delay productive outcomes and likely create dissension by creating unnecessary limits. In consideration of this concern, this process is open for discussion and validation with each executive team prior applying it. A code category was the described approach taken by the executives.

Based on the experience of the researcher and trying to adapt what has been published in the field related to the psychological contract, the process to make it explicit within executive teams is proposed in six steps. These steps were not used as a coding category; they are described in order to explain how the executive teams made explicit their psychological contracts.

Step 1: Define the executive team situation at the present time. These aspects should be in relation with the particular situation or gap in performance that the team is facing, it does not encompass the purpose of the executive team in the organization, it takes into account the particular situation team members have at that moment. Usually this includes stating clearly what the main issues are in the organization; most of the time they are related to business results and processes of change. The question to be answered is: How are we to behaving as an executive team in order to accomplish our goals? Boddy (2000) states, “Gaps in expectations can grow to serious proportions before they are brought into the light because many expectations are unwritten, ill-defined and liable to change” (p. 11).

Step 2: Engage in a dialogue to generate stories about the executive team and how those situations have helped or affected its performance. In this step, the executive team is invited to communicate situations that need to be realigned or behaviors that are disrupting the executive team’s success. In this process, the participants break into three or four small groups in order to create a dialogue and discuss the main issues affecting the executive team performance and, if it is possible, to identify the source of the behavior. When executive team members start telling stories about performance and observe their behavior, they surprisingly discover that quite a few issues need to be

discussed and reframed. According to Guest and Conway (2002), “The evidence suggests that the importance of communication is acknowledged in most organizations and many now engage in a wide range of communications practices” (p. 32). The results of their investigation suggested that managing the process of communicating the psychological contract is highly complex and organizations in which this is left to chance will be likely to have poor relationships. In this phase, the proposal is to create a dialogue about the unspoken issues of the team.

Step 3: Identify the agreements needed. According to what they have already described, the team members—still divided in small groups—are asked to propose behaviors and attitudes required to accomplish the current objectives. In this part of the process, the role of the facilitator is to help the team define in one or two sentences how the behavior expected should be defined so everybody can understand what is expected and have the same performance indicators. The psychological contract could be useful to address those indicators. Dabos and Rousseau (2004) state, “Because structural equivalent individuals occupy similar roles in the social system, they are likely to be exposed to similar information and social demands, and therefore to develop similar attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs” (p. 1).

Step 4: Present those agreements for the team to discuss. At this moment, every little group has its own propositions about performance; it is recommended to ask the group to define no more than five or six. Executives tend to have better attitude and performance when all parties agree on expectations; through this process, usually they are open enough to listen and have a dialogue in order to define what the behaviors and attitudes expected will be. Rousseau (2004) wrote:

Agreement between the members of the team on what each owes the other is critical to the team relationship's success. A major feature of a psychological contract is the individual's belief that an agreement is mutual; that a common understanding binds the parties involved to a particular course of action. (p. 124)

In this phase of the process, it is important to consider that the main limitation to establish a contract is neither moral nor ethical but a cognitive one. According to Miller (as cited in Rousseau, 1995), at any one time, a person can consider on average about seven bits of information, down to five in some cases or as great as nine bits in others. It is convenient to communicate this information to the people doing the psychological contract in order to establish the agreements in these terms; five to nine issues are the optimal number for considering the follow up for each agreement.

Step 5: Create the final document and sign it. It is recommended that every member of the team sign the psychological contract. According to Friedkin (1998), a formal commitment ritual with the team helps create something tangible that could be used as a follow-up alternative to reinforce behavior by putting it in a visible place for every participant in the process. When the opinion of members becomes manifest, it promotes agreement and commitment.

The paper should be signed and, depending on the team preference, it can be made a pocket-sized document or placed in a frame in order to put it at the participants' desks or on the wall in the office.

Step 6: Follow up. Once the psychological contract is made, follow up is vital to evaluate individual and team performance. It is necessary to do this process in an open dialogue. At this time, the evaluation of the psychological contract should be revised in order to adapt it to the current situation. This will be the time to adapt it and include other possible issues influencing team performance. Rousseau (2004) states, "Given that the

business conditions facing most firms continue to evolve rapidly, psychological contracts must also be flexible enough to allow the company to adapt” (p. 126). By creating the psychological contract, executive team members are more conscious of their situation and it would be easier to resolve inner conflicts. “Psychological contracts motivate people to fulfill their commitments because they are based on the exchange of promises in which the individual has freely participated. Explicit voluntary commitments have more powerful effects on behavior than implicit ones” (p. 122).

### **Summary**

This chapter presented the rationale for using a qualitative strategy for inquiry and the research method of the phenomenological approach. It presented information about the sample collection, the data collection process, the data analysis techniques, the importance of the protection of human subjects participating in this study, the internal validity and reliability, limitations of the study, and finally, the process of developing the psychological contract as an explicit agreement in an executive team. Chapter 4 presents results of the study.

## **Chapter Four: Results**

Chapter 3 provided information concerning the methodology employed for this research; the purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions of members of executive teams in Mexico regarding the influence of the psychological contract as an explicit agreement within their teams. The research question is: What is the perception of members of executive teams in Mexico regarding the influence of the psychological contract as an explicit agreement within their teams?

This chapter provides answers to the research question. Ten subjects participated in this study. After a brief presentation of demographic information, this chapter presents the data gathered during this study and an analysis of those data.

Analysis of the descriptive narratives demonstrates a consistency in themes observed across all participant interviews. As stated in Chapter 3, it is in consistency and transcendence of theme that the phenomenological inquiry seeks to understand participant experiences by answering the research question. A summary is included at the end with the most relevant findings in data presented, which will serve as the basis for the conclusions in the final chapter.

### **Participants' Demographic Data**

This section describes the participant demographics. These include age, gender, educational level, position, tenure, industry type, and number of members in the executive team.

In order to constitute a maximum variation sample for this study, the participants with a wide range of characteristics were chosen. As seen in Table 1, the participants' ages ranged from 36 to 45 years old with the median being 40.8 years. Seven of them are

male and three are female.

Table 1

*Participants' Demographic Data*

Participant	Age	Gender	Education Level	Position	Tenure	Type of Industry	Members	Year of intervention
P1	41	F	Bachelors	Sales	10	Education	15	2010
P2	40	M	Bachelors	HR	19	Manufacturing	8	2009
P3	39	F	Bachelors	Operations	18	Financial	15	2009
P4	54	M	Masters	HR	33	Financial	12	2009
P5	37	M	Bachelors	Marketing	14	Logistics	13	2010
P6	38	M	Masters	Operations	18	Commercial	12	2009
P7	45	F	Masters	Operations	23	Services	15	2009
P8	36	M	Bachelors	Legal	15	Services	11	2010
P9	39	M	Masters	Finance	16	Construction	7	2009
P10	39	M	Bachelors	HR	17	Services	15	2010

In educational level, six participants have a bachelor's degree, while four of the participants had master's degrees. The executives were from the areas of finance, three from Human Resources, Legal, Marketing, and three of Operations and Sales. Participants' years of tenure ranged from 10 years to 23, with the median being 18.3 years. The type of industry was commercial, construction, education, two from financial and logistics, and three from manufacturing and services; the number of members on the executive teams ranged from 10 to 20 with the median being 11. The year they made explicit their psychological contract was in 2009 for six of them and in 2010 for four of them.

### **Core Categories and Other Findings**

As discovered in this study, there is richness in participants' lived experiences and from which to draw elements to describe the perceived influence of making a psychological contract explicit within executive teams in Mexico. Such description includes the categories emerging from analysis of the perceptions of the separate experiences of all 10 participants.



The results obtained from the data analysis are described next. In order to facilitate the comprehension of these results, they are presented under the main categories ascertained. Each of these categories was analyzed in relation to the perception of the executives in the context of their teams before and after the psychological contract was made explicit.

Through analysis of participant perceptions, the following seven categories emerged by analyzing the data: (a) collaboration, (b) communication, (c) interpersonal relationships, (d) commitment, (e) trust, (f) conflict, and (g) disposition to change (see Table 2). These are the factors most perceived as influenced by the psychological contract explicit within executive teams in Mexico. At the end of the chapter, other categories are analyzed, although they were mentioned only by few of the executives. Analysis confirms that these themes do not stand separate from one another but overlap and intertwine thus supporting their interdependent natures.

Table 2

*Frequency of Mentions for Each Category*

Categories	Mentions by all the Participants
Collaboration	29
Communication	20
Interpersonal Relationships	12
Commitment	10
Trust	9
Conflict	6
Disposition to Change	5
Other Categories	14
Total Mentions	103

In the following categories, participants' perceptions, are divided into two components: the answers related to their perception before making the psychological

contract explicit within their executive teams, and the perception of the participants after making it explicit. Also, tables describing frequency of mentions by participant are included.

**Category 1: Collaboration.** As seen in Table 3, all participants described either a moment or a series of moments in their experiences when they considered they were challenged to improve collaboration.

Table 3

*Frequency of Mentions Regarding Collaboration*

Participant	Before	After	Total Mentions by Participants
P1	1	1	2
P2	2	1	3
P3	1	1	2
P4	2	1	3
P5	3	1	4
P6	2	2	4
P7	1	1	2
P8	1	1	2
P9	2	1	3
P10	2	1	3
Total Mentions	17	11	28

Examples of these comments are contained in the following excerpts:

We were simply disconnected, not wanting to belong to the team, with lack of communication, lack of integration, lack of desire to belong and collaborate. (P1, personal communication, March 10, 2011)

We had many power struggles that didn't help at all the business at all. (P2, personal communication, March 11, 2011)

The main problem was lack of collaboration between each other, the atmosphere was disruptive and we had problems of territoriality. We had a leadership where we worked in silos and the perception was of being at war between us. We were perfect strangers. It was not considered that we had more value together. (P3, personal communication, March 11, 2011)

There were a variety of priorities, everyone wanted their own objectives of area above the other, we lacked focus and everyone went their own way. We needed to improve the level of maturity of the team to increase collaboration. (P4, personal communication, March 14, 2011)

The main problem was lack of collaboration between each other, everyone looked after their personal interests or area, and we could not attain a common goal. A disruptive situation of misaligned territoriality prevailed. (P5, personal communication, March 15, 2011)

There was no teamwork, everyone worked independently, there was no collaboration or synergy, and there were no clarity in the rules of the game so we had conflicting interpersonal relationships. (P6, personal communication, March 15, 2011)

There was no collaboration, we were lacking initiative, we were not sharing information, and the team was perceived angry. (P7, personal communication, March 16, 2011)

There was too much individuality, the most experienced in the team wanted to impose, there were constant feelings that, at any moment, another executive could put you into trouble. (P8, personal communication, March 16, 2011)

We lacked conviction about creating a common way of working together; each one worked in their own way and saw the business in their own way. We didn't have a shared vision and everyone lived in his or her own silo. We had individual talent but there was uncertainty about whether the team could work or not. Each had its own way of doing their work, their reports, many subcultures, each person reported their financial statements as they liked. (P9, personal communication, March 17, 2011)

Behavioral guidelines were missing, everyone worked according to their experiences and we had not clearly defined objectives. Very little work was shared. (P10, personal communication, March 17, 2011)

All the participants in this study perceived that these situations were happening in their executive teams: moreover, they were aware that there were important challenges to improve collaboration. This was observed in the comments from the participants.

There was no integration, low level of synergy because the objectives of each area were completely disconnected from each other. There were situations where each area pursued different objectives so they affected other areas of business and they even not respected some corporate policies. (P2, personal communication, March 11, 2011)

We were out of focus; each one defined their work its own way. Because we work in a matrix structure, there were many different visions, should I listen to the local or the international leader? (P4, personal communication, March 14, 2011)

We did not share our work; we were divided, we did not agree on the main strategic lines of where to move the business. We didn't have a serious relationship of collaboration and work. (P5, personal communication, March 15, 2011)

The team was poorly structured, lacking alignment and had a lot of hypocrisy. (P6, personal communication, March 15, 2011)

Also, perspectives about collaboration related to teamwork were described:

It was necessary that we all saw toward the same goal, we lacked interpersonal integration and there was no teamwork. (P5, personal communication, March 15, 2011)

There was no teamwork, each people worked independently which did not promote collaboration and even less commitment. There was no alignment in the team. (P6, personal communication, March 15, 2011)

We had individual talent but we didn't know if we could work as team. There was much uncertainty about the ability of the team. Each had its own way of doing their work, their reports, there were many subcultures, each person reported their financial statements as each wanted. (P9, personal communication, March 17, 2011)

The level of competition within us was very aggressive, we didn't have behavioral guidelines and everyone worked according to their professional experiences. (P10, personal communication, March 17, 2011)

Regarding the perception of the influence of making the psychological contract explicit and its relation to collaboration, these were the perceptions of the executives:

It gave me a little more order and clarity of what to expect from my executive team; I realized that when you do a psychological contract, the responsibility to accomplish the agreements is not only of the leader but also of the entire team. The contract gives coherence and direction to the team. It motivated the team. (P1, personal communication, March 10, 2011)

In 8 years that I've been in this organization, this is the first time that the directors sat down to make agreements. We created a team spirit and a sense of belonging, the rest of the company saw us working together as a team on the basis of a common goal. Through the psychological contract, significant changes were

noted in aligning the objective of generating synergies. Agreements could be reached without thinking we had a hidden agenda or a power struggle. We searched for the interrelationship of objectives between the areas and communicate it across the organization. (P2, personal communication, March 11, 2011)

A helpful factor is that we agreed behaviors that allow us to be in synchronicity, we started to look to certain behaviors in the same way. (P3, personal communication, March 11, 2011)

The executive team was better aligned, more cohesive and integrated. (P4, personal communication, March 14, 2011)

The appeal of working together stayed in the collective consciousness of the executive team. (P5, personal communication, March 15, 2011)

The psychological contract was a key to demand excellence in our work. Actually, for our team it was a virtuous upward spiral that began with the psychological contract. I saw two kinds of attitudes regarding on the contract, the orthodox, which would say, "you are not behaving according point two," and the people-oriented, who did not know in which part of the contract said what; however, they were perfectly clear in context and aligned with the agreements. (P6, personal communication, March 15, 2011)

The psychological contract works very well when there is a disconnection within the people, when there is no communication between them. (P6, personal communication, March 15, 2011)

It's been hard to meet all the agreements of the psychological contract. It is a good a good start but the new behaviors are not habits yet. (P7, personal communication, March 16, 2011)

Making the psychological contract has helped us because we have in mind the agreements that we have as a team. (P8, personal communication, March 16, 2011)

Making the psychological contract helped us to declare how we would collaborate as a coordinated team. After the psychological contract was made, we wanted to be and appear as a united team to the rest of the organization. It is an excellent organizational tool that helps to define the groundwork for dialogue. (P9, personal communication, March 17, 2011)

A commitment to total support to each member of the executive team and their specific needs was established. Priorities between us were established and we started follow up. We also assumed an absolute commitment to the strategic objectives of the group. (P10, personal communication, March 17, 2011)

**Category 2: Communication.** As seen in Table 4, all participants described issues regarding communication.

Table 4

*Frequency of Mentions Regarding Communication*

Participant	Before	After	Total Mentions by Participants
P1	1	1	2
P2		1	1
P3	1	2	3
P4	1	1	2
P5		2	2
P6		1	1
P7	1	2	3
P8		2	2
P9		2	2
P10		1	1
Total Mentions	4	15	19

Some participants perceived that communication constitutes a key component in the influence of the psychological contract. The following is what was observed in the interviews about the perception of the communication on the executive team before it made the psychological contract explicit:

We spoke bad things of both the team and the company to people outside us, instead of solving the problems internally. Disintegration, lack of communication, and disconnection between us was perceived. There was a time that we talked about a problem that was within the company and it was discussed outside the company and caused many problems. Also, if something happened in the team or someone didn't like a situation, it was commented to another person and that person to another, and to another, until this information was communicated to the leader. Communication passed through many filters instead of speaking directly with those involved. (P1, personal communication, March 10, 2011)

Everyone felt that they owned the information and we didn't share it. (P3, personal communication, March 11, 2011)

There was not any listening among us. (P4, personal communication, March 14, 2011)

Everyone had his or her own individual way and there was no communication. (P7, personal communication, March 16, 2011)

About the perceived influence of the psychological contract explicit in relation to communication within the executive team, these observations were founded:

We agreed to stop the negative comments within the team; I think we're better now but we can improve because there have been times when people do not feel the strength to stop these comments; I think it's more about personal growth, they are aware that they should stop it but do not feel they have the ability to do so. But anyway, we have now a better atmosphere. We begin to express the needs when necessary and appropriate, we know that there is openness for communication. In the past, we learned that someone was complaining about something that he did not get but neither asked for, now, we're constantly reminded that when people need something, they should ask for it, this has been stated explicitly. (P1, personal communication, March 10, 2011)

Communication improved a lot. Direct and real communication started. You can say things directly, face to face. (P2, personal communication, March 11, 2011)

We agreed to listen and give feedback on the feasibility of solution and listen to their requirements, but we have not been successful, we still feel as experts in our issues. The language changed, it was standardized by the agreements made. We are more tuned because we call things the same way. Standardize language seems trivial, but we learned to communicate more effectively. (P3, personal communication, March 11, 2011)

We began to get to know and share our programs and identifying our responsibility to each one of them. (P3, personal communication, March 11, 2011)

The vast majority of the psychological contract is about communication, listening, processing, and providing feedback. (P4, personal communication, March 14, 2011)

We agreed that any opinion issued from a person should be made when he or she is present. This has neither changed, the history of the organization is of rumors, and it takes time to modify it so it is still happening. (P5, personal communication, March 15, 2011)

It has become mandatory that relevant information is available to all. (P5, personal communication, March 15, 2011)

It began to encourage timely feedback that fostered learning and development.

This influenced the results and the team worked better, it even affected the working climate. As a result of what has been learned with the psychological contract, we developed new policies, procedures, and tools for effective communication. What caught my attention from making the psychological contract is that I notice people become more eager for feedback. Maybe it's their need to stay better connected. (P6, personal communication, March 15, 2011)

We understood that we must all share our information; this has already become a habit in the team. As for the way we communicate, we are working on that as a real tool, fast, empathic, polite, timely, caring, and respectful for each person; we need to maintain the information flowing. As a result of course, we started to be more empathic and communicate better. (P7, personal communication, March 16, 2011)

We began giving feedback but it could have been done in a much better way, because it was not given regularly. What we noticed most is that we begin solving problems in an assertively nonjudgmental way. (P7, personal communication, March 16, 2011)

We have been improving on identifying the conduct for dialogue, find the optimal time and the forum to do so, to assertively communicate and avoid the grid or gossip. Focus on direct and honest dialogue; everyone is clear about the importance of openness, respect, and to discuss things directly. (P8, personal communication, March 16, 2011)

We still have a little trouble receiving feedback about things that we do not like, but there is openness to hear it. It helped to have this issue of a different kind of dialogue clear and present. (P8, personal communication, March 16, 2011)

We are more open; information flows more; we decided to communicate directly, openly, respectfully, with openness and support. (P9, personal communication, March 17, 2011)

I think it is important to comment that sometimes we abused the feedback. We went from not having to suddenly wanting it for every difficulty among us. (P9, personal communication, March 17, 2011)

Before, we didn't have an open dialogue. We intended to treat us as equals, to promote an open dialogue between us and we have achieved it (P10, personal communication, March 17, 2011).

**Category 3: Interpersonal relationships.** As seen in Table 5, eight participants described situations regarding interpersonal relationships.



Table 5

*Frequency of Mentions Regarding Interpersonal Relationships*

Participant	Before	After	Total Mentions by Participants
P1		1	1
P2			
P3		1	1
P4			
P5	1	1	2
P6	1	1	2
P7	1	2	3
P8		1	1
P9		1	1
P10		1	1
Total Mentions	3	9	12

The perceptions of the interpersonal relationships in the executive team before the psychological contract was made explicit were observed in the following comments:

Achieving your goals in the area often depended on the personal relationship between team members. (P5, personal communication, March 15, 2011)

There were huge interpersonal issues and conflict between the team members. Even hypocrisy, everyone blamed the other for the problems, they didn't assumed each one's matters because the problems were treated outside; we spent long time fixing those interpersonal issues. (P6, personal communication, March 15, 2011)

There was lack of interest among us and the actions taken were criticized. (P7, personal communication, March 16, 2011)

Concerning the perceived influence of the psychological contract explicit in relation to interpersonal relationships, these were the perceptions shared:

Regarding the relationship between team members, it has improved greatly, even toward the leader because the openness was evident from the moment that the psychological contract was made, so the climate is warmer and more open. (P1, personal communication, March 10, 2011)

Now we try to recognize and solve interpersonal problems in a mutual way, and this has improved because there were too many interpersonal problems. The truth is that over time some of these problems came back, but we still talk to each other in a more respectful way. (P3, personal communication, March 11, 2011)

We agreed that any opinion issued from a person should be made when he or she is present. This has neither changed, the history of the organization is of rumors; it takes time and is still happening. (P5, personal communication, March 15, 2011)

An agreement was established to create an atmosphere of respect for ideas, people, and work, creating the best working environment and avoiding conflict. One thing that was visible in the working environment surveys was a lot of improvement in the executive team. The ratings went up from 80% to 90%. This is better than most companies in this kind of industry. (P6, personal communication, March 15, 2011)

When someone pointed us, it was very disturbing, now, when something is not meeting the expectations of others, we try to solve it respectfully. (P7, personal communication, March 16, 2011)

We have a greater interest in the activities of others; I could say that we have a friendly attitude all day long. We started to promote monthly integration activities to generate exchange of experiences, news, and update business matters. (P7, personal communication, March 16, 2011)

People today are more careful of not speaking behind the back of others. (P8, personal communication, March 16, 2011)

Before making any statement that may affect other areas, people involved speak and seek a common solution. (P9, personal communication, March 17, 2011)

We agreed to protect us above any group within or outside the organization, to deliver a message that shows a strong and compact group. We are doing it pretty well. We made a commitment of total support to each member of the executive committee and their specific needs as a reciprocal priority. (P10, personal communication, March 17, 2011)

**Category 4: Commitment.** As seen in Table 6, seven participants described issues regarding commitment.

Table 6

*Frequency of Mentions Regarding Commitment*

Participant	Before	After	Total Mentions by Participants
P1	1	1	2
P2	2	1	3
P3		1	1

*(table continues)*

Participant	Before	After	Total Mentions by Participants
P4		1	1
P5	1		1
P6	1		1
P7			
P8			
P9			
P10		1	1
Total Mentions	5	5	10

These perceptions were observed in the following comments:

In some activities, people were not committed to take forward projects but simply to finish them and get them over with, they were not really committed; they did it to carry it out, that's it. (P1, personal communication, March 10, 2011)

In terms of goals, we perceived a total disconnection. (P2, personal communication, March 11, 2011)

There were situations in each area to pursue different objectives; this affected other areas of the business and even not respecting some corporate policies. (P2, personal communication, March 11, 2011)

There was no compromise in some members of the team. (P5, personal communication, March 15, 2011)

There was no commitment in part of the team. This generated two groups and it was very harmful for the organization. (P6, personal communication, March 15, 2011)

On the subject of the perceived influence of the psychological contract explicit in relation to commitment, this was observed in some of the interviews:

You can feel a much better environment. I think they have more clarity of what is being asked and are more committed; we work with more enthusiasm. Another aspect is that we generate a common front in the team, defending and maintaining confidentiality. (P1, personal communication, March 10, 2011)

For the first time in 8 years that I've been in the team, I notice that we agree on this sort of things that apparently cannot be seen. (P2, personal communication, March 11, 2011)

Team spirit was created. I perceive that we increase ownership about the team challenges; we began to take risks together. (P3, personal communication, March 11, 2011)

The corporate offices began to see us improve and let us align ourselves; before that, they were kind of worried about our performance. The executive team was better aligned, more integrated, and cohesive. (P4, personal communication, March 14, 2011)

A commitment to total support for each member of the executive team and their specific needs was established. We assumed an absolute commitment to the strategic objectives of the group. (P10, personal communication, March 17, 2011)

**Category 5: Trust.** As seen in Table 7, seven participants described issues regarding trust.

Table 7

*Frequency of Mentions Regarding Trust*

Participant	Before	After	Total Mentions by Participants
P1		1	1
P2		1	1
P3			
P4			
P5	1		1
P6			
P7	1	1	2
P8	1		1
P9	1	1	2
P10		1	1
Total Mentions	4	5	9

On the topic of trust before the psychological contract was made explicit, these were observed in the following interviews:

We had a low level of credibility among us. We tend to question the action of the others. (P5, personal communication, March 15, 2011)

There was a high level of mistrust among us; everyone defended his or her own interests. (P7, personal communication, March 16, 2011)

I can tell you that besides the mistrust, there was also fear between some members of the team. (P8, personal communication, March 16, 2011)

It was a dysfunctional team because there was no confidence in the ability that the others had to respond to their functions and business challenges. (P9, personal communication, March 17, 2011)

Concerning perception of the influence of the psychological contract explicit in relation to trust, the following comments were made:

Another aspect that I perceive was that we generate a common front as a team, to be honest with us and maintain confidentiality. (P1, personal communication, March 10, 2011)

It definitely changed the confidence level; it improved a lot. (P2, personal communication, March 11, 2011)

In some ways the prejudice and mistrust is still there, we have not been able to end with the lack of confidence completely. (P7, personal communication, March 16, 2011)

We see that we are all responsible for the success of the team through solidarity. (P9, personal communication, March 17, 2011)

All the team members agreed that we would maintain the information of the agreements with absolute confidentiality. (P10, personal communication, March 17, 2011)

**Category 6: Conflict.** As seen in Table 8, five participants described issues about conflict.

Table 8

*Frequency of Mentions Regarding Conflict*

Participant	Before	After	Total Mentions by Participants
P1			
P2	1		1
P3			
P4		1	1
P5		2	2
P6			

*(table continues)*

Participant	Before	After	Total Mentions by Participants
P7		1	1
P8	1		1
P9			
P10			
Total Mentions	2	4	6

Comments related to these topics were observed in the following interview

statements:

There were conflicts between the different areas of the team, which generated in addition poor interpersonal relationships. (P2, personal communication, March 11, 2011)

We were living a sense that you could have another conflict at any moment by another executive. (P8, personal communication, March 16, 2011)

About the perceived influence of the psychological contract explicit in relation to conflict within the executive team, these were the comments:

Before, we could not talk about controversial issues, but once that was established in the psychological contract, it was promoted having a one-to-one interview in any conflict. (P4, personal communication, March 14, 2011)

The psychological contract is a valuable tool to talk about our situation and to solve our common conflicts. (P5, personal communication, March 15, 2011)

We haven't resolved all our conflicts; some of us are more passionate than others and we still have tough discussions; maybe we need additional support like coaching. (P5, personal communication, March 15, 2011)

We use the contract as a tool of influence, "I remember we agreed to something. Let's review it in order to solve this conflict". (P7, personal communication, March 16, 2011)

**Category 7: Disposition to change.** As seen in Table 9, five participants described issues regarding disposition to change.

Table 9

*Frequency of Mentions Regarding Disposition to Change*

Participant	Before	After	Total Mentions by Participants
P1			
P2		1	1
P3	1		1
P4	1		1
P5			
P6		1	1
P7			
P8			
P9	1		1
P10			
Total Mentions	3	2	5

Perceptions about change before the psychological contract was made explicit were observed in the following interview comments:

We were facing a time of change, there was a new leader, and the way we were doing things were modified; and even so, we did not worked to integrate the group because it was not considered important. There was skepticism because issues about teamwork were severely damaged. (P3, personal communication, March 11, 2011)

It was a very strong challenge because we expected for Human Resources department to be able to generate a change in the organization. How we were going to behave in this effort to integrate? Would it help to be practical and actionable? Could all members of the team be pleased? (P4, personal communication, March 14, 2011)

It was a part the team of people over age 50 with good training and some young people wanting to promote change, they were two ways of looking at things. (P9, personal communication, March 17, 2011)

After the psychological contract was made explicit, these are the comments that were observed:

We were about to face a big time for change so these agreements were very much needed; we had to improve the synergy between us. It was very helpful as we were aware that we needed to assume together the responsibility for change. (P2, personal communication, March 11, 2011)

There were people that didn't change attitudes, neither behavior, actually they didn't respect the psychological contract. This was one of the reasons they left the organization. (P6, personal communication, March 15, 2011)

**Other categories.** Other categories were mentioned as seen in Table 10.

Table 10

*Frequency of Mentions Regarding Other Categories*

Participant	Decision Making		Recognition		Service		Others		Total
	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After	
P1									
P2		1		1					2
P3				1				1	2
P4		1							1
P5						1		1	2
P6								1	1
P7								1	1
P8		1						1	2
P9		1				1			2
P10				1					1
Total Mentions		4		3		2		5	14

Comments centering on decision making after making the psychological contract explicit are described next:

We began to take risks and support common decisions as a team. It was very satisfying to see us agreeing. (P2, personal communication, March 11, 2011)

The executive team was better aligned, more cohesive, and integrated. It was perceived that we talked more and we accomplished agreements easier. (P4, personal communication, March 14, 2011)

The decisions are for the common good and for the business; we are working in not taking it personally. (P8, personal communication, March 16, 2011)

We are committed to respect and support the team's decisions keeping the communication open and controlling the execution of those agreements. (P9, personal communication, March 17, 2011)



On the subject of recognition, these comments were observed about the influence of the psychological contract explicit:

We created team spirit and a sense of belonging based on recognition. (P2, personal communication, March 11, 2011)

We began to capitalize the good actions and celebrate our achievements. This was something new and part of the culture in which we have seen the importance of recognizing our accomplishments. We speak well of what we do well. (P3, personal communication, March 11, 2011)

We began to recognize us within the group when we have individual and/or group successes. (P10, personal communication, March 17, 2011)

Comments about service were also observed in relation to making the psychological contract explicit:

We started to pay attention closely to our peers; we decided it should be done within the next 24 hours and preferably over the phone. We definitively increased the level of service within us. (P5, personal communication, March 15, 2011)

We foster a culture of service on all team members. (P9, personal communication, March 17, 2011)

Other aspects that could affect the impact of making the psychological contract explicit were selected from the following opinions:

We need more involvement from the CEO in the psychological contract; he has been reviewing it, but more commitment could make a real difference. (P5, personal communication, March 15, 2011)

Some need coaching to help them to be able to accomplish all the agreements; they simply do not have the maturity expected. (P7, personal communication, March 16, 2011)

Finally, comments about the perceived importance of making the psychological contract explicit within in executive teams are described:

The psychological contract was a key to help demand excellence in our work. (P3, personal communication, March 11, 2011)

It helped for more than two or three occasions that we returned to it as a reference to see what was on the executive team. Even to take the document to discuss and review some of the points. (P6, personal communication, March 15, 2011)

The psychological contract was the foundation for the initiation of a cultural change, it gave identity to the team; before doing it, we had many ways of doing things that weren't aligned among us. (P8, personal communication, March 16, 2011)

## **Summary**

This chapter presented the findings of the study related to the perception of the influence of the psychological contract as an explicit agreement within executive teams in Mexico. Findings with specific quotations from the participants cover the key content areas of the research question. The data were rich and descriptive. Chapter 5 examines conclusions drawn from the core categories. A summary of interpretations, conclusions, and recommendations are presented in the next chapter.

## **Chapter Five: Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations**

Executive teams deal with new demands of organizations everyday; there is a need to increase their performance in order to respond in a better way to these challenges. The researcher has special interest in the development of the psychological contract within executive teams as an explicit agreement because of his experience working in the field as a consultant in organizations in Mexico.

According to Rousseau (2004) in this study's literature review, "psychological contracts are beliefs, based upon promises expressed or implied, regarding an exchange agreement between an individual and, in organizations, the employing firm and its agents" (p. 120). Rousseau and Schalk (2000) state, a psychological contract is an individual's interpretation of (a) an exchange of promises that is (b) mutually agreed on and voluntarily made (c) between two or more parties" (p. 284).

As it has been described, executive teams usually live and work in a fast-paced environment, with a lot of duties and face change challenges. As busy as they are, it is common that they make assumptions about how others should behave to work as a team and get the results the organization is expecting from them; most of the time other members of the same team do not share these assumptions. Makin et al. (1996) state, "Very rarely, however, is the psychological contract of the process of change discussed....It is difficult, if not impossible, to begin to cope with change if the nature of the change is unknown" (p. 355).

Chapter One described the statement of the problem, the purpose of the research, and the significance of the study. Chapter Two presented the literature that is most significantly related to this theme. Chapter Three addressed the methodology that was

used in order to explore the research question, and Chapter 4 provided a summary of the data that was obtained through interviews and observations. The purpose of Chapter Five is to discuss the findings related to the experiences and themes discovered through analysis of recordings and written transcriptions of participant interviews in answering the research question and problem this study investigates.

To discuss the undertaking, this chapter covers eight areas, including: (a) Purpose of the Study, (b) Methodology Used for the Study, (c) Discussions of the Findings, (d) Conclusions From Analysis of the Research Question, (e) Practical Implications, (f) Limitations of the study, (g) Recommendations for Future Research, and (h) Closing Comments.

### **Purpose of the Study**

As mentioned in Chapter One, the purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions of members of executive teams in Mexico regarding the influence of the psychological contract as an explicit agreement within their teams. The information generated by this study is important because, to this date, there is no prior research about the influence of the psychological contract as an explicit agreement within executive teams in Mexico.

### **Methodology Used for the Study**

Qualitative data gathered from oral recordings, coupled with analysis of written transcripts and notes of interviews with 10 executives, provided the phenomenological approach for this study. All participants described individually their perceived influence of the psychological contract as an explicit agreement within their executive teams. The

researcher founded richness in the lived experiences of participants from which to describe the phenomena of this study.

The research question addressed in this study was: What is the perception of members of executive teams in Mexico regarding the influence of the psychological contract as an explicit agreement in their teams?

In order to investigate the research question of this study in a deep and thorough way, a qualitative methodology was used. More specifically, a phenomenological approach was selected in order to identify the perceived influence of the psychological contract as an explicit agreement within executive teams. This is a phenomenon not studied before, and as Creswell (2003) states, “Choose a qualitative study because the topic needs to be explored. The variables cannot be identified, theories are not available to explain behavior of participants or their population of study and theories need to be developed” (p. 35). To gather such data, it was necessary to conduct interviews with executives who have participated in the process of making explicit the psychological contract within their teams. Ten executives were interviewed using the 11 open-ended questions attached in Appendix D.

Based on the suggestions of Patton (2002), a maximum variation sampling strategy was applied. In this study, the participants were purposefully selected to construct a sample that had a wide range of variation of interest.

The process of analyzing and coding the information was done by creating a series of categories from the emerging patterns observed during the data analysis. In order to minimize researcher’s bias and to gain validity and reliability in the data analysis process, a colleague researcher with proven experience reviewed the thematic coding and

the consequent interpretation. The observations and modifications that emerged from this review were discussed and properly applied to the study. The analysis followed acceptable methods as described by Kvale (1996) in order to ensure internal validity for this qualitative data.

### **Discussion of the Findings**

I believe that the executives interviewed have a clear awareness of the challenges of the executive teams in their organizations, although they had not found a solution for their conflictive issues before the psychological contract was made explicit; therefore, they have been working with the ongoing situations already mentioned affecting their performance. It is certain that they also know that this situation requires new behavioral approaches.

A summary of the findings and conclusions related to the research questions of this study are presented next. In order to facilitate the comprehension of these findings, they will be presented following the same order as the categories. The researcher, in an attempt to make sense of the interviews, refers to commonalities among the perceptions of the executive teams regarding each of the categories.

**Category 1: Collaboration.** As stated, all participants described either a moment or a series of moments in their experiences when they considered they had challenges to improve collaboration. Some of the perceptions of the executives were related to attitudes within the team: not wanting to belong, not having a desire to collaborate, or a sense of disconnection.

Also, there were perceptions about being individualistic, working independently, not sharing information, not having clarity of the rules. In other words, behavioral

guidelines were missing and the team was poorly structured; its members were working in silos and consequently a lack of integration and initiative was present.

Difficulties for setting priorities were also reported, some wanted their own objectives to be considered above the others because they were not attuned to a common goal or clearly defined objectives. There were comments about not having a shared vision, being out of focus, and disagreeing on the main strategic lines of the business.

Other perceptions illustrated more conflictive situations, describing a disruptive atmosphere, territoriality, and an aggressive level of competition, like being at war, with power struggles that the most experienced team member wanted to impose. Even hypocrisy could be perceived. There were comments describing a lack of conviction for creating a common way of working together.

These kinds of results of the research are consistent with what different authors have found as common challenges in executive teams. According to E. Hart (1995), most senior group members simply do not envision themselves as part of a group. They are not conscious of how they think together and, consequently, cannot recognize and avoid the barriers to group learning that they repeatedly encounter.

Hambrick's (1995) study stated that CEOs interviewed identified fragmentation of executive team members to be one of the most significant problems they face. "Fragmentation is characterized as their members operating with minimal collaboration or communication and pursuing their own agendas in silos" (p. 84). Dougherty (1992) found similar issues when team members from different functional areas often lack a shared understanding of critical issues that, in turn, impedes collaboration and innovation.

For Hequet (1994), the challenge for the organization intent on teaming at the top is to persuade a group of ambitious individuals to forswear their rugged individualism after it has served them well for a long time. That's the challenge of the top-level team: seeing the big picture while gaining a deep understanding of all other functions represented in the team.

Concerning the perception of the influence of making explicit the psychological contract and its relation to collaboration, the executives during the interviews describe a sense of belonging. They stated that the team was more cohesive and integrated. The executives were willing to work together because they created a collective consciousness of collaboration.

Something reported by all the participants is that the psychological contract helped them to sit down to make agreements and to have common goals; it gave order and clarity in what to expect, coherence and direction, and it helped them to define the groundwork for dialogue. There were significant changes aligning the behavior of the executive team because it clarified how they would collaborate as a coordinated team. Making the psychological contract explicit helped members keep in mind the agreements made. It also generated motivation for some of the executive teams and increased the level of responsibility. Some executives reported increase of synergy and synchronicity. Others explained that it increases the commitment in order to demand excellence in their work; it could also be defined as an organizational tool.

In regard to the relation between making the psychological contract explicit and collaboration, there is enough evidence to state that it increases collaboration; participants of executive teams that were disconnected manifested a sense of belonging, established



common agreements, and showed a better disposition to work together. According to the participant's opinions, the teams were facing demanding situations that were not solved until they made explicit their psychological contract.

**Category 2: Communication.** The second category is communication, and as described in Chapter Four, all the participants perceived that communication was a key component in the influence of the psychological contract. The same importance is considered by authors such as Robins and Finley (2000), who state, "Misunderstandings often occur for the simple reason that the individuals involved are communicating on two different wave-lengths" (p. 64).

The main difficulties regarding communication in executive teams prior to making explicit their psychological contract were poor listening, communication passed through many filters instead of speaking directly with those involved, some spoke bad things of both the team and the company to people outside, and the information was not shared within the team. In spite of the importance of communication, Amason, Thompson, Hochwarter, and Harrison (1995) state that effective teams had more open communication than less effective teams:

Effective teams enjoyed the culture that allowed their members to speak freely and challenge the beliefs and viewpoints of others without the side effects of anger, resentment, or retribution. Open communication was at the core of effective teams as they obtained heartfelt involvement from team members. This feeling enhanced decision quality and reinforced team consensus and acceptance. Less effective teams seemed to have less open communications. (p. 27)

After the psychological contract was made explicit, communication improved in all the cases reported. Actually, one of the executives described that the vast majority of the psychological contract was about communication, listening, processing, and providing feedback. Other executives state that the language changed; it was standardized

by the agreements made. They perceive themselves as more tuned because they view things the same way.

There are reports of open communication, honest dialogue, direct and real exchanges, more empathic feedback, saying things face to face, solving problems in an assertively nonjudgmental way, and halting the negative comments within the team. There is one participant who perceives that the negative comments are still happening.

Different situations were observed relating to feedback. Three executives perceived that even after the agreement of promoting feedback was done, they haven't accomplished it successfully. The first reason expressed is that they still felt they were experts on their issues and didn't want to receive feedback; a second reason is that feedback has not been given regularly; and the third issue is that there is still some trouble receiving feedback about things some executives don't like. Two of the executives reported something singular about feedback. One noticed individuals become more eager to receive it and, according to him, this could be related to the need to be connected. Another explained that they sometimes went from not having any feedback to suddenly wanting it for every difficulty among them. There are comments referring to the importance of having the relevant information available to all and keeping it flowing; they have stated agreements for sharing programs, and developing policies, procedures, and tools for effective communication.

Enough evidence was found in the participants' testimonies to establish that communication also improved; nevertheless, it is important to state that to be consistent through time, the executive teams need to work on developing abilities for communicating and feedback. Through the psychological contract, they can establish an

agreement to communicate, but, as shown in the opinion of the executives, it is not enough to form new habits.

**Category 3: Interpersonal relationships.** From the third category emerges the finding that their interpersonal relationships are related to their results. Authors such as S. Hart (1997b) state that the success of a business is dependent on the quality of the interpersonal relationships among the members of the executive team. Also Moskal (1995) relates that quality and productivity are by-products of people working well together.

The perceptions of the interpersonal relationships on the executive team before the psychological contract was made explicit are that achieving goals often depended on personal relationships. Huge interpersonal issues existed, as did conflict and criticism among team members, and even blaming others. They had to spend a long time fixing those interpersonal issues. There was a lack of interest among the team members.

After the psychological contract was made explicit, perceptions of executives are that they improved greatly. Even perceptions about the leader changed because openness was evident from the moment that the psychological contract was made, so the climate is warmer and more open. Five executives reported the importance of not speaking behind the back of others; people involved in any problem should speak and seek a common solution, and try to solve it respectfully.

One of the participants reported that interpersonal relationships started improving but the problems came back after a while, although they talk about them in a more respectful way. Another participant stated that any opinion issued about a person should be made when he or she is present, and over time that has not changed. Other comments

relate that agreement was established in order to create an atmosphere of respect for ideas, people, and work, creating the best working environment and avoiding conflict. There are comments about having a friendly attitude and having monthly integration activities.

Other commitments made in order to improve interpersonal relationships were to protect above any group within or outside the organization, to deliver a message that shows a strong and compact group, and to support to members of the executive team and their specific needs as a reciprocal priority. Finally, one executive reported improvement among the executive team was visible in the working environment, where ratings went up from 80% to 90%.

**Category 4: Commitment.** According to Allen and Meyer (1996), perceptions of psychological contracts will directly affect employees' organizational commitment. S. Hart (1997b) states that CEOs realize that making their businesses thrive takes more than being personally committed to doing whatever it takes.

In relation to commitment before making explicit the psychological contract, two participants commented that people were not committed to common projects and, in terms of goals, a total disconnection was perceived. Another three participants confirmed that there was no commitment on the part of the team.

Once the psychological contract was made explicit, there were comments about perceiving a much better environment, seeing more commitment, generating a common front among the team members, and supporting each member's position; one participant perceives an increase in ownership in the team's challenges and another stated that an absolute commitment to the strategic objectives of the group was achieved. The observed

participant descriptions of behaviors related to commitment could be considered an improvement, but descriptions were not unanimously in agreement.

**Category 5: Trust.** Participants admit that trust is also an important issue regarding their executive teams. According to Moskal (1995), trust must build among team members. Argyris (1966) states, “The gap that often exists between what executives say and how they behave helps create barriers to openness and trust, to the effective search for alternatives, to innovation, and to flexibility in the organization” (p. 84).

Niehoff and Paul (2001) established a relationship between trust and the psychological contract; they stated that to build or restore trust, more attention must be paid to defining and attending to psychological contracts. Regarding trust before the psychological contract was made explicit, the behaviors observed were low level of credibility and high levels of mistrust where everyone defended his or her own interests. One participant even described fear between some members of the team.

After the psychological contract was made explicit, two participants mentioned that the executive team improved maintaining confidentiality, generated a common front as a team, and began being supportive. One participant reported that it definitely changed the confidence level, while other executives reported that they have not been able to break with the lack of confidence completely. Few participants admit that trust increased, but there is no uniform view of this. The researcher infers that trust needs to be more in evidence among the executive members in order for them to acknowledge it.

**Category 6: Conflict.** For S. Hart (1997b), a common problem among CEOs has been that their team members may avoid dealing with interpersonal conflict. Lefton and

Buzzotta (1987) state that to change attitudes within an executive team, conflicts should be addressed. Many executive teams avoid dealing with this.

Regarding the participants' perceptions prior the psychological contract being made explicit, there were three comments stating that there were conflicts among the different areas of the team, that there was a sense that any member could have a conflict with other executive at any time, and they could not talk about controversial issues.

After the psychological contract was made explicit, there were comments stating that members promoted one-on-one interviews in order to solve any conflict; one participant thinks that the psychological contract is a valuable tool to solve common conflicts. Another stated that the psychological contract was used as a tool to remember the contract's agreements in order to solve conflicts. One executive that explained that all their conflicts haven't been resolved, and suggested coaching as an alternative. Referring to the participants' descriptions, conflict has been influenced positively by the psychological contract as an explicit agreement.

**Category 7: Disposition to change.** As mentioned in Chapter Two, a good psychological contract helps create disposition to influence change (Macguire, 2002). Garrow (2004) also states that the psychological contract can produce a more stable atmosphere for change. Hambrick (1995) found that fragmented executive teams are likely to react slowly to environmental changes, with significant lag occurring before there is any agreement on the nature and impact of changes.

Participants described change situations before the psychological contract was made explicit. Some report facing a time of change, others had a new leader but that leader did not work to integrate the group because it was not considered important; there

was skepticism because teamwork was severely damaged. Others reported that there was a strong challenge because they expected the human resources department to generate a change in the organization.

After the psychological contract was made explicit, one participant expressed that these agreements were needed very much since they were facing a big change. Another stated that there were people who changed neither their attitudes nor behavior. This participant stated that others didn't respect the psychological contract and that was one of the reasons people left the organization. As observed in theory and participants' descriptions, the psychological contract as an explicit agreement produces good disposition for change.

**Other categories.** Ancona (1989) considers that effective teamwork is reflected in the quality of strategic and operational decisions made, in the ability of the team to translate decisions into actions, and ultimately in the quality of organizational performance. Also regarding this, Gage (1999) shared that "decision making is hard work because executives have different skills, talents, personalities, and styles. They value different things, and sometimes their personal values are incongruent with those of the organization" (p. 1).

Referring to decision making after the psychological contract was made as an explicit agreement, one of the executives perceived the team taking risks. Two executives perceived more support for common decisions, and a fourth executive perceived that they talked more and accomplished agreements easier.

In relation to recognition, after making explicit the psychological contract, one executive perceived better team spirit and a sense of belonging. Another participant

stated that team members began to capitalize on good actions and celebrate their achievements.

Comments about service were also observed in relation to the psychological contract being made explicit; one executive acknowledged that team members started to pay closer attention to peers; they decided service should be done within the next 24 hours and preferably over the phone. Another participant stated that team members foster a culture of service. There are a few descriptions that show decision making, recognition, and service were influenced positively by the psychological contract as an explicit agreement. Although they were not as important as other categories, they should be considered for further analysis.

### **Conclusions From Analysis of the Research Question**

The findings of the study reveal the perceived influence of the psychological contract as an explicit agreement. These findings emerge from the 10 participant interviews as they recounted their lived experiences within their executive teams. In the next paragraphs, the findings about the assumptions and the conclusions from the study will be addressed.

The first assumption was that explicit psychological contracts in executive teams may improve performance. As research showed, the perceptions of all of the participants were that collaboration and communication were positively influenced.

A second assumption was that introducing a process to make the psychological contract explicit in an executive team could create benefits because it would be better monitored. The benefits were created, but it is relevant to mention that two of the



executives explained that those benefits were visible just at the beginning, and that eventually, team members returned to the behavior they exhibited previously.

The third assumption was that the executive team members benefit by being involved in solving their own challenges, and by having a process with which they can influence the behaviors among them. Since communication was one of the categories most affected, this assumption was definitively supported.

After processing all the data obtained from the interviews and the literature research, it was possible to establish some conclusions. The first conclusion emerging from the findings of this research question is that in all the cases, there are perceived benefits of making explicit the psychological contract in a Mexican executive team. As stated, collaboration, communication, interpersonal relationships, commitment, trust, conflict, and disposition to change improved.

Second, as described by the existing literature and supported by this research, executive teams avoid facing conflict. Furthermore, they keep working without exploring it. This six-step model is an effective tool to address conflicts and disturbing situations in Mexican executive teams.

Third, it is possible to establish that the psychological contract as an explicit agreement is not enough of an influence for changing behaviors. Mexican executive teams need other kinds of support such as coaching in order to develop the abilities and behaviors expected.

Finally, the psychological contract as an explicit agreement creates a frame of reference to improve the behaviors of the Mexican executives, but in order to increase its

impact, it is necessary to find the alternatives for follow up and to consider it a living document that needs to be renewed on an ongoing basis.

### **Practical Implications**

There are several practical implications of the findings of this investigation. The results of this study could be used as a basis for professional development on executive teams. The results could inform programs that would include the process of making explicit the psychological contract in order to increase performance through better collaboration, communication, improved interpersonal relationships, trust, commitment, conflict, disposition to change, and any other variable affecting executives' performance.

For the participants, the results of this study helped them to increase their level of awareness about their executive teams. They discovered the importance of looking at their behaviors within their executive teams, to generate the time and space to create a dialog about them, and to make commitments to solve them.

Finally, another practical implication of this study is directly associated to the consultants and academicians in the field of Organizational Change. The psychological contract as an explicit agreement could be a useful resource in other teams and could help to improve their performance.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Because of the nature of qualitative research, there are several limitations of this study. First, is the external validity or its restricted generalizability. The executive teams studied only considered Mexican executive teams. Further analysis will be necessary to determine the differences among other executive teams that operate in different regions and-or cultural environments. Though accepted practices of quality research were used,

including the concept of saturation, it is possible that the participants of this study do not represent the point of view of other members of executive teams. Even considering that the concepts involved in the research have been studied mainly in United States, according to Diaz and Whitherspoon (as cited in Rousseau & Schalk, 2000), major cultural differences won't exist. As the authors stated, "In general, psychological contract theory as understood in the United States is applicable in the Mexican context, due to the proliferation of American management practices in Mexican organizations and the great influence of American companies operating in Mexico" (p. 173). The authors conducted a survey among 26 human resource managers in Mexico and they believe that for the next 10 years, teamwork, creativity, and communication skills will be increasingly viewed as desired employee qualities in Mexico. These topics are definitely related to the analysis of the influence of the psychological contract as an explicit agreement in executive teams that was developed in this study.

Second, the data collected was qualitative data. Qualitative data are appropriate for collecting limited data from a small number of respondents. Because this study sought to establish preliminary data to a specific population, this approach was thought to be appropriate.

Third, only leaders from for-profit organizations were considered. Leaders in nonprofit organizations and in government-owned organizations were not considered as possible subjects.

Fourth, a limitation to this study exists because the information was obtained exclusively from executives who were selected, invited, and agreed to participate. Because the researcher is a consultant, the respondents may have experience bias.

Fifth, the time elapsed since the psychological contract was made explicit and the interviews of this study could represent a significant variable because it influences the participants' perceptions. Finally, another limitation of this study involves the potential risks of interpreting qualitative data. There is a potential risk that exists because the researcher had to interpret the qualitative data. All the recommendations and accepted practices for qualitative investigations were taken under consideration during the data analysis. To support the accuracy of the interpretation, a colleague researcher participated in the analysis and interpretation process as means to minimize the potential influence of bias.

According to Paton (2002), interview data has limitations because of distorted responses. The author states, "Include possibly distorted responses due to personal bias, anger, anxiety, politics, and simple lack of awareness since interviews can be greatly affected by the emotional state of the interviewee at the time of the interview" (p. 306). Paton also states that interview data are subject to recall error, to the reactivity of the interviewee, to the interviewer, and to self-serving responses. "The quality of the information obtained during an interview obtained is largely dependent on the interviewer" (p. 341).

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Considering the exploratory nature of this study, the following four important suggestions for future research are proposed. First, the findings from this study have interesting implications for the development of a new orientation for executive teams, and thus for additional research on executive team development.

Second, given that this investigation was performed exclusively with executives

from Mexican-based organizations, the next step should be to attempt to use a larger sample in order to internationalize the sample. This research could be replicated in other countries in order to determine whether the same perceived influence of making the psychological contract explicit found in this study occurs in other places. Conclusions from the replication of this study in other nations might even produce data that would contribute toward creation of a general theory of how to improve the process of making explicit the psychological contract. This kind of finding would certainly validate the results of this study.

Third, for future research, a qualitative study is recommended to examine not only the performance of the executive team but the teams formed by their direct reports. This study could use the categories identified from the present research as the basis for a more in-depth investigation later. It would be an opportunity to interview different organizational levels and gain a deeper understanding of the effects of the psychological contract as an explicit agreement in other teams.

Fourth, some executives could be working well within their executive teams, but not as much with other teams in the organization. An area for future research is the characteristics of executives capable of working with any kind of team.

Fifth, another recommendation could be further analysis of the data and review of the stories of the executives who participated in this research. Sixth there are other relevant issues described in the literature review that were not found in this research. Topics such as the influence of overestimation of one's own contributions and underestimation of others' contributions, reliance losses and automatic processes of the psychological contract, and issues about power should be addressed in future research.

Finally, another phenomenon to explore is the influence of the CEO in the process and follow-up of the psychological contract made explicit. Theory in the field and observations of the participants must drive new research in this crucial area for the success of executive teams.

The implications for further research are not absolute, since there may always be more possibilities to consider. There is still much to explore and discover from the perceived influence of the psychological contract as an explicit agreement on executive teams.

### **Closing Comments**

The challenge to increase performance has always been a variable to explore in teams and organizations. The importance of executive teams is crucial more than ever because of changing and global competition. Their leadership as cohesive integrated teams is necessary to drive organizations toward better results.

Furthermore, executives who have shown their capacity to succeed individually in their careers should model collaboration with their peers in order to create a better working atmosphere and to accomplish strategic objectives. In order to increase collaboration in a complex situation, the psychological contract as an explicit agreement helps to align the behaviors of executive teams, as has been shown in this study.

For Latin America, there is a need to strengthen executive team performance and to expand research into developing better organizations, since most of the literature research is Western based. There is great potential to be explored in human interaction such as in the ways we relate to each other and what can be achieved as a result of behavioral agreements.

This research is a small contribution to the body of knowledge about executive teams in Mexico. I hope this research inspires new studies and help executive teams to succeed. Finally, I would like to manifest my passion for human and organizational development. There is a need to keep looking at patterns in order to contribute new solutions for the way human beings organize and synergize in order to create a better society.

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## APPENDIX A

## Invitation to Participate

Date:  
Mr./Ms. (Executive Team Member's Name):  
Company Name  
Address

Dear Mr./Ms \_\_\_\_\_

My name is Alejandro Molina, and I am conducting a study of the perceived influence of the psychological contract as an explicit agreement in executive teams in Mexico. This research is being conducted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for my doctoral degree in Organization Change at Pepperdine University, Los Angeles, CA, under the supervision of Dr. Kent Rhodes.

You have been asked to participate in this investigation because you have experienced the process of making explicit the psychological contract in your executive team.

Your participation is voluntary and confidential, and prior to engaging in any proceedings regarding this study, all potential candidates will be provided instructions and appropriate forms to sign in order to ensure proper and accurate understanding of the process.

Your participation in this research consists of a semi-structured interview. This will take place in your office and it will last approximately 90 minutes.

I am the principal researcher of this study and I can be contacted by mail at [REDACTED] or by phone at [REDACTED]

If you are interested in participating in this research, please reply to this e-mail.

I appreciate your consideration.

Respectfully,

Alejandro J. Molina

## APPENDIX B

## Types of Interviewing Questions

*Kvales's Interviewing Questions Typology*

Type	Examples
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introducing Questions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can you tell me about...?</li> <li>Do you remember an occasion when...?</li> <li>What happened in the episode you mentioned?</li> <li>Could you describe in as much detail as possible a situation in which learning occurred for you?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Follow-up Questions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The subjects' answers may be extended through a curious, persistent, and critical attitude of the interviewer. This can be done through direct questioning of what has just been said or a simple nod.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Probing Questions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Could you say something more about that?</li> <li>Can you give me a more detailed description of what happened?</li> <li>Do you have further examples of this?</li> </ul> <p>(Note: the interviewer pursues the answers, probing their content, without stating what dimensions are to be taken into account).</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Specifying Questions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What did you think then?</li> <li>What did you actually do when you felt a mounting anxiety?</li> <li>How did your body react?</li> <li>In an interview with many general statements, the interviewer can attempt to get more precise descriptions by asking: Have you also experienced this yourself?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Direct Questions</li> </ul>	<p>Interviewer directly introduces topics and dimensions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have you ever received money for good grades?</li> <li>When you mention competition, do you then think of a sportsmanlike or a destructive competition?</li> </ul> <p>(Note: these should preferably be postponed after the subjects have given their own spontaneous descriptions).</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Indirect Questions</li> </ul>	<p>These are projective questions such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How do you believe other pupils regard the competition for grades?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Structuring Questions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When a theme has been exhausted, the interviewer can guide a change by stating: I would now like to introduce another topic.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Silence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The interviewer can employ silence to further the interview by allowing pauses in the conversations. This way, the subject will have time to associate and reflect and then break the silence himself/herself with significant information.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interpreting Questions</li> </ul>	<p>This can be accomplished through paraphrasing, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You then mean that...?</li> <li>Is it correct that you feel that...?</li> <li>Does the expression...cover what you have just expressed?</li> </ul>

Note. Compiled from *Interviews: An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing* (pp. 133–134) by S. Kvale, 1990. Copyright 1990 by Sage Publications.

## APPENDIX C

## IRB Approval Letter

# PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY

## Graduate &amp; Professional Schools Institutional Review Board

March 3, 2011

**Protocol #: E0111D03****Project Title: *An Exploration Of The Influence Of The Psychological Contract As An Explicit Agreement In Executive Teams In Mexico***

Dear Mr. Molina:

Thank you for submitting the revisions requested by Pepperdine University's Graduate and Professional Schools IRB (GPS IRB) for your study, *An Exploration Of The Influence Of The Psychological Contract As An Explicit Agreement In Executive Teams In Mexico*. The IRB has reviewed your revisions and found them acceptable. You may proceed with your study. The IRB has determined that the above entitled project meets the requirements for exemption under the federal regulations 45 CFR 46 - <http://www.nihtraining.com/ohsr/site/guidelines/45cfr46.html> that govern the protections of human subjects. Specifically, section 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2) states:

(b) Unless otherwise required by Department or Agency heads, research activities in which the only involvement of human subjects will be in one or more of the following categories are exempt from this policy:

**Category (2) of 45 CFR 46.101**, research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless: a) Information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and b) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

Your research must be conducted according to the proposal that was submitted to the IRB. If changes to the approved protocol occur, a revised protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB before implementation. For any proposed changes in your research protocol, please submit a **Request for Modification Form** to the GPS IRB. Because your study falls under exemption, there is no requirement for continuing IRB review of your project. Please be aware that changes to your protocol may prevent the research from qualifying for exemption from 45 CFR 46.101 and require submission of a new IRB application or other materials to the GPS IRB.

A goal of the IRB is to prevent negative occurrences during any research study. However, despite our best intent, unforeseen circumstances or events may arise during the research. If an unexpected situation or adverse event happens during your investigation, please notify the GPS IRB as soon as possible. We will ask for a complete explanation of the event and your response. Other actions also may be required depending on the nature of the event. Details regarding the timeframe in which adverse events must be reported to the GPS IRB and the appropriate form to be used to report this information can be found in the *Pepperdine University Protection of Human Participants in Research: Policies and Procedures Manual* (see link to "policy material" at <http://www.pepperdine.edu/irb/graduate/>).



Please refer to the protocol number denoted above in all further communication or correspondence related to this approval. Should you have additional questions, please contact me. On behalf of the GPS IRB, I wish you success in this scholarly pursuit.

Sincerely,

A large black rectangular redaction box covers the signature and name of the sender. The redaction is composed of several overlapping horizontal bars of varying lengths, creating a solid black area.

cc: Dr. Lee Kats, Associate Provost for Research & Assistant Dean of Research, Seaver College  
Ms. Alexandra Roosa, Director Research and Sponsored Programs  
Dr. Yuying Tsong, Interim Chair, Graduate and Professional Schools IRB  
Ms. Jean Kang, Manager, Graduate and Professional Schools IRB  
Dr. Reyna Garcia-Ramos  
Dr. Kent Rhodes  
Ms. Christie Dailo

## APPENDIX D

## Interview Guide

PART I. 1<sup>st</sup> contact with subjects

- Thank the person for accepting this meeting.
- Clarify and remember the participant experience of making explicit the psychological contract in his/her executive team.
- Explain the purpose of this study.
- Invite the person to participate and explain the process.
- Present IRB guidelines.

PART II. 2<sup>nd</sup> contact with subjects

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender: \_\_\_\_\_

Academic Level: \_\_\_\_\_

Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Seniority: \_\_\_\_\_

Organization's Profile \_\_\_\_\_

Number of members in the executive team \_\_\_\_\_

Date of interview: \_\_\_\_\_

Place of interview: \_\_\_\_\_

- I. Introduction: Review the purpose of this interview:
  - a. To gather information about the influence of making explicit the psychological contract in your executive team.
  - b. Your name will be changed and a participation number will be given to you for processing data.
  - c. Do you have any questions before we start?

## II. Questions:

- a. How was the perception of the team leader prior the psychological contract was made explicit?
- b. What have you experienced in terms of the psychological contract made explicit?
- c. What contexts or situations have typically influenced or affected your experiences of the psychological contract made explicit?
- d. Did you have any expectations before doing the psychological contract?
- e. Can you tell me about how the making explicit of the psychological contract has influenced your executive team?
- f. Can you share some experiences of what happened with you before and after the psychological contract was made explicit?
- g. Do you have further examples of this?
- h. Which were the main situations that changed -related to the way you work and the relationships- after the psychological contract was made?
- i. Which have been the changes you have made since you have made explicit the psychological contract in your executive team?
- j. What are your perceptions of the impact of making explicit the psychological contract?
- k. Is there anything that I did not ask, that you would like to add about the influence of the psychological contract as an explicit agreement in your executive team?

Thank you.

## APPENDIX E

## Participant Letter of Consent

Date:

Mr./Ms. (Executive Team Member's Name):

Company Name

Address

Dear Mr./Ms \_\_\_\_\_

I am sending this letter to provide more detailed information regarding your participation in my research study, please ask any questions you may have agreeing to participate in this study.

At present I am studying a doctoral program at Pepperdine University's Graduate School of Education and Psychology – Organization Change Program – Education Division, and I am in the process of preparing my final dissertation under the direction of Dr. Kent Rhodes.

The purpose of this study is to explore the perceived influence of the psychological contract as an explicit agreement in executive teams in Mexico. The psychological contract is an individual's interpretation of an exchange of promises that are mutually agreed on a voluntarily made between two or more parties. The study focuses seeing the perceived influence of making explicit these interpretations in executive teams.

These findings will be valuable since they will explain some important personal dynamics within executive teams. The benefits of this study are based on the hope that the information garnered will add to the base of knowledge and provide insights into the development of executive teams in Mexico.

You have been asked to participate in this investigation because you have experienced the process of making explicit the psychological contract in your executive team.

Your involvement in this investigation will not present any potential risks for your health, and it will not produce any psychological stress. It is also important to mention that there will be no direct benefit to you, nor will there be any compensation, financial or otherwise from your participation in this study. However, your contribution may help in the generation and understanding of information that could later be useful in other executive teams. If you are interested in the results, you will receive a copy of the findings of this study.

Your participation in this research consists of a semi-structured interview. This will take place in your office and it will last approximately 90 minutes.

It is relevant to inform you that the audio from this interview will be recorded and later transcribed for further analysis. You will be assigned a participant number and these recordings will be kept password protected in my personal computer, which will be stored in a locked file cabinet. Furthermore, no information gathered from you participation in this study will be released to others without your permission, unless such a disclosure is required by law. This data will be destroyed after the completion and defense of the dissertation process.

It is important to mention that you have the right to refuse to participate in, or withdraw from, the study at any time without any negative consequences. You also have the right to refuse to answer any questions you choose not to answer.

I hope that this study will benefit both scholars and practitioners of the Organizations Change field, and your desire to share your wisdom is greatly appreciated.

Please feel free to contact me anytime by phone at [REDACTED]. Thanks in advance for your participation.

Respectfully,

Alejandro J. Molina Bortoni  
Principal Investigator

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Your Signature as Participant

Date

Note: This letter was translated into Spanish