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## The Effects of Mission Statement Design on Behavioral Intention

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The Effects of Mission Statement Design on Behavioral Intention

by

Jonathan D. West

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts  
Department of Mass Communication  
College of Arts and Sciences  
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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to determine whether the length and readability of a mission statement contribute to stakeholder behavior regarding the mission statement. The majority of studies in the mission statement literature have not attempted to find an empirical link between mission statement design and employee behavior. This study employed a 2 (length: long v. short) x 2 (readability: low v high) post-test only factorial design to test the relationship between message design and beliefs about the mission statement. Students at a large southeastern university ( $n=212$ ) were shown the one of four treatments and asked to report their reactions on a brief questionnaire. Results indicated a significant link between readability and beliefs about the functionality of the mission statement. Using the theory of planned behavior, the effects of readability on beliefs about the mission statement were shown to be linked to behavioral intention. The results of this study partially support the relationship between message characteristics of mission statements and the behavioral intention of employees, as well as supporting the TPB model.



## Chapter I

### Introduction

French playwright Moliere once said, “The duty of comedy is to correct men by amusing them.” The best comedy has a firm foundation in truth. Perhaps it should pique the interest of business communicators, then, that iconic parody musician “Weird Al” Yankovic recently released a track on the album *Mandatory Fun* entitled “Mission Statement.” In the song, Yankovic parodies the verbose and nonsensical wording of many organizational mission statements in the style of influential Canadian folk trio Crosby, Stills & Nash.

Amidst the soaring harmonies and simple acoustic melody, Yankovic croons: “We must all efficiently operationalize our strategies, invest in world-class technology, and leverage our core competencies in order to holistically administrate exceptional synergy. We'll set a brand trajectory using management philosophy, advance our market share *vis-à-vis* our proven methodology.” The song goes on about paradigm shifts, synergy, and solutions, and while Yankovic may not have an academic pedigree, his humorous critique begs an important question: Are organizations creating mission statements filled with complex and irrelevant words that cloud the meaning and potentially hinder effectiveness?

#### *The Mission Statement, Its Purpose, and Pitfalls*

The mission statement is a unique form of strategic communication. It is the touchstone message, and the foundation of strategic planning (Bart & Hupfer, 2004). The mission statement provides a common purpose for all members of an organization, and builds corporate culture by

outlining shared expectations (Baetz & Bart, 1996, p. 528). A good mission statement should “capture the hearts as well as the minds of managers, frontline employees, customers, and shareholders alike” (Bart, 1998, p. 64). However, some firms may find that their mission statements do not align with the day-to-day operations of their organization, in part because they are full of “high-sounding values” or are “unrealistic.” Such mission statements are “unreadable and uninspiring” (Desmidt & Heene, 2007, p.78).

Consider the mission statement of Medtronic, Inc.:

“To contribute to human welfare by application of biomedical engineering in the research, design, manufacture, and sale of instruments or appliances that alleviate pain, restore health, and extend life.

To direct our growth in the areas of biomedical engineering where we display maximum strength and ability; to gather people and facilities that tend to augment these areas; to continuously build on these areas through education and knowledge assimilation; to avoid participation in areas where we cannot make unique and worthy contributions.

To strive without reserve for the greatest possible reliability and quality in our products; to be the unsurpassed standard of comparison and to be recognized as a company of dedication, honesty, integrity, and service.

To make a fair profit on current operations to meet our obligations, sustain our growth, and reach our goals.

To recognize the personal worth of employees by providing an employment framework that allows personal satisfaction in work accomplished, security,

advancement opportunity, and means to share in the company's success.

To maintain good citizenship as a company” (One Company, One Mission, 2015).

At nearly 180 words, that mission statement says a lot. The statement provides a comprehensive guide for employees and managers, but is it memorable? Is it meaningful? Does it capture the imagination and spirit of the employees? If the answer to any of these questions is “no,” then the mission statement may be nothing more than what its critics view it as: an empty public relations statement, “disconnected from the true capabilities and strengths of the firm” (Analoui & Karami, 2002, p. 14).

Since the mission statement is viewed as “a very simple way to stay focused,” perhaps organizations should strive to keep it simple, and stay focused on values applicable to their stakeholders. Instead, *Harvard Business Review* asserts, “most are awash in jargon and marble-mouthed pronouncements. Worse still, these gobbledy-gook statements are often forgotten by, misremembered, or flatly ignored by frontline employees” (Hellweg, 2010, n.p.).

### *Statement of Problem*

Mission statements are supposed to have a number of important benefits for organizations, including guiding the strategic planning process (Ireland & Hitt, 1992; Bart & Hupfer, 2004) and positively affecting performance, both operationally (Bart & Tabone, 2000; Jing, Avery, & Bergsteiner, 2013) and financially (Hirota, Kubo, Miyajima, Hong, & Park, 2011). They are considered to be essential to a firm's survival (Toftoy & Chatterjee, 2004). While some previous authors have theorized about the effects of mission statements on employees and other stakeholders, few have directly studied this relationship. Even fewer have gone beyond looking at the effect the mere presence of a mission statement has on an organization, and examined the

textual content of the mission statement as a message variable in the communication process of organizational management. The purpose of this study is to test the effects of the length and readability of mission statements on members of the organization through experimental methods. The theory of planned behavior will serve as the theoretical base for the study, albeit an expanded model that includes elements of the situational theory of problem solving (Kim & J.E. Grunig, 2011).

### *Outline of Study*

The following chapter includes a review of the literature surrounding mission statements, their importance, and their use, as well as some potential pitfalls organizations face when designing the actual text of their missions. Additionally, Chapter II discusses the theory of planned behavior as the theoretical base for the study. The chapter concludes by presenting the purpose of the study and the hypotheses. Chapter III provides a review of the methods and procedures used to gather and analyze data for this study. The results of data collection are presented in Chapter IV. Discussion of these results takes place in Chapter V.

## **Chapter II**

### **Literature Review**

This chapter outlines the purpose and use of mission statements, as well as previous research related to mission statements. In addition, the theory of planned behavior, which provides the theoretical framework for the study, is reviewed. Finally, the purpose of the study is provided, and the research question and hypotheses for investigation are presented.

#### *Part One: Review of Literature*

##### **Significance of the Mission Statement**

Mission statements have become a staple of business. Recently, Desmidt, Prinzie, and Decramer (2011) noted, “Mission statements have become one of the most popular and widespread management tools.” Analoui and Karami (2002) confirm, “Mission statements...have become the management tool most used by senior executives over the last decade” (p. 13). Throughout the majority of the literature, mission statements are considered essential (Ireland & Hitt, 1992; Bart, Bontis, & Taggar, 2001; Baetz & Bart, 1996). Indeed, “mission statements appear to have evolved into a prerequisite of doing business” (Desmidt, Prinzie, & Decramer, 2011 p. 469).

Stone (1996) described the mission statement's role in strategy formulation as “vital” and something that “should never be neglected” (p. 31). Toftoy and Chatterjee (2004) demonstrated a link between mission statements and the success—and more importantly, sustainability—of small businesses in the Washington, D.C. area. “Unless [the] mistake of starting a venture

without a definite mission and proper planning is rectified soon,” they write, “many such firms will simply vanish.” Ireland and Hitt (1992) concur: “Failure to articulate a firm's focus through a mission statement may partially account for the fact that approximately 50 percent of start-ups fail in the first year of operation, whereas 75 to 80 percent fail within their first three to five years” (p. 37).

### **Importance of Content**

Most quantitative research done on the subject of mission statements falls into three categories: content, relationship to performance, and process of design. Much of the research on content focuses on the work of Pearce and David (1987) and David (1989), who laid out a framework for what should be included in a mission statement in the form of nine “recommended” elements: target market, importance of employees, value provided to customers, geographic markets, technology used, ethics and beliefs, desired public image, distinctive competencies, and strategies for growth and survival (see David & David, 2003, p. 12). In surveys of *Fortune* 500 (Pearce & David, 1987) and *Businessweek* 1000 (David, 1989) companies, it was found that higher-performing firms contained more of these elements than lower-performing firms.

Williams (2008) later corroborated these results in a similar survey of the *Fortune* 1000, finding that firms who included at least eight of the nine elements performed better than their peers (pp. 115-116). Although Pearce and David (1987) and David (1989) are seminal papers and their framework still widely used today, there are noted exceptions to the framework's impact on performance. Green and Medlin (2003) found that the “completeness” of a corporate mission—that is, the extent to which it includes the nine elements—has a small, positive effect on performance. Despite this finding, they denied the mission statement's effect on performance.

O'Gorman and Doran (1999) found that in small and medium enterprises, the recommended elements did not correlate with higher performance. The differences between smaller and larger companies may mean that different content is effective in each.

### **Relationship to Performance**

A few studies have attempted to provide an empirical link between the mission statement and organizational performance. Hirota et al. (2011) observed that firms with a strong focus on their mission had superior performance in terms of profitability (p. 1145). Jing, Avery, and Bergsteiner (2013) found positive relationships between the communication of mission statement information and performance, especially in terms of employee satisfaction and turnover (p. 613). Bart and Tabone (2000) found that healthcare organizations that truly followed their stated mission enjoyed improved performance. While the corporate and healthcare communities struggle to demonstrate a clear link between mission statements and performance, it seems easier to come by in the study of non-profits (Kirk & Beth-Nolan, 2010) and educational institutions (Palmer & Short, 2008).

### **Process of Design**

Other research has focused on the process each organization uses to design its mission statements. Mullane (2002) examined the mission drafting process of two corporations and found an employee committee led by concerned management to be the most effective approach. As simple as that sounds in theory, Ireland and Hitt (1992) point out, "Preparing an effective mission statement is not accomplished easily or quickly... Even writing a mission statement is time consuming. Each word must be selected carefully to ensure its consistency with directions sought by all stakeholders" (p.38).

A mission statement should be written by employees, for employees. Brabet and Klemm

(1994) found that mission statements created without employee involvement “tended to get lost as they moved down the organization, despite considerable fanfare and expenditure” (p. 89) and “the participative approach to developing a company mission was more effective in gaining employee commitment” (p. 93).

Williams, Smythe, Hadjistavropoulos, Malloy, and Martin (2005) agree, advising organizations to develop their mission based on the input of all of their internal stakeholders in order to “promote a sense of ownership and authenticity” (p. 313). Desmidt, Prinzie, and Decramer (2011) observed that the amount of internal stakeholder involvement in mission development has a significant, positive link to organization performance (p. 478). How an organization arrives at its mission statement may be just as important as what they choose to include in it.

### **Importance of Communication**

Klemm, Sanderson, and Luffman (1991) found that while a mission statement can communicate to both internal and external stakeholders, it is “most valuable in giving leadership and motivating staff.” A mission statement is “a symbol of leadership, and attempt to communicate central management's beliefs about the company's distinctive competencies to employees, and to indicate the standards of behavior expected from them” (p. 77). In other words, the mission statement “promotes a sense of shared expectations among all levels of employees,” from front line to top management (p. 78).

Cochran, David, and Gibson (2008) wrote that a mission statement, used correctly, facilitates decision making and planning, and serves to unite the employees of an organization toward a common goal. Similarly, Toftoy and Chatterjee (2004) asserted that a good mission “assures employees that their time, effort, and energy are worthwhile.” The mission statement is



a “decision tool” that should be made readily available to employees at every level (p.43). A mission statement that is not communicated and not used is a pointless waste of time (Lucas, 1998). It is therefore interesting that there is “an acknowledged widespread failure in the implementation of mission statements” (Desmidt & Heene, 2007, p. 78). To be worthwhile, the finished mission must be clearly communicated throughout the organization (Bart, Bontis, & Taggar 2001).

### **Importance of Clarity**

Complaints by employees about mission statement length and readability have been observed by researchers for many years. Sattari, Pitt, and Caruana (2011) found that many corporate mission statements were written at a college graduate reading level. While certainly a number of employees in management positions would have no problem navigating such statements, it is conceivable that some employees, especially at the front line, might have some difficulty with comprehension. Even those in management see a problem, though. Hooley, Cox, and Adams (1992) reported that among the CEOs who responded to their questionnaire, 24 percent indicated that they believed their mission statement to be too long. Of these 24 percent, one-fifth believed it to be too vague (p. 42). As a result, they concluded that “the most effective mission statements are those that are brief but specific” (p. 47).

Toftoy and Chatterjee (2004) noted that many mission statements belonging to the small businesses they studied “lack focus and are full of superlatives. Such statements are unrealistic and hardly create an impact on employees” (p. 42). Rajasekar (2013) advocated the use of shorter, more readable mission statements, but others have gone farther, suggesting that companies boil their mission down to a concise mantra of only a few words (Kawasaki, 2004). David and David (2003) provided clear, actionable advice to companies writing their mission

statement: “The mission statement needs to be longer than a phrase or sentence, but not a two-page document. And it should not be overly specific. That is, it should not include dollar amounts, percentages, numbers, goals, or strategies...better left to the strategic plan. Too much detail in a mission statement can alienate managers and stifle creativity” (p. 11).

### **The Problem of Frequency of Use**

Although it is universally agreed that the mission statement, used correctly, is meant to influence employees, almost no research has been done on whether or not employees actually use their mission statement, nor the factors affecting frequency of use. Desmidt, Prinzie, and Heene (2008) found that “the message of the mission statement is often not 'received' by the individual organizational members.” Most of their respondents did not use the mission statement and did not “internalize its message” (p. 1439). They concluded that it was a result of a failure to consider the perceptions of the receiver of the message, rather than the sender's intended meaning.

In sum, if organizations do not carefully consider the text of their mission statements to ensure that it will have a real effect on employee attitudes and behaviors, they may fail to gain the promised benefits of the tool.

### **Theoretical Foundation of Study**

The theory of planned behavior (TPB) (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) provides the theoretical framework for this study. The variables of the theory and their relationships are illustrated in Figure 1 below.

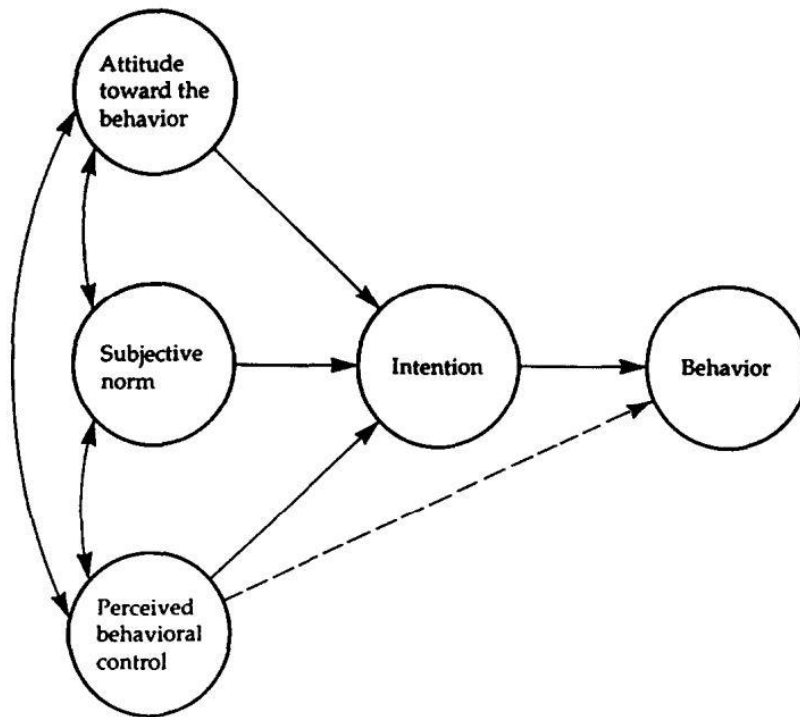


Fig. 1: Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991, p. 182)

The theory of planned behavior (TPB) extended from the theory of reasoned action (TRA), which was introduced and forwarded by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) and Ajzen and Fishbein (1980). The TRA posits that 1) *behavior* is determined by an individual's intention to engage in that behavior; 2) an individual's *intention* to engage in behavior is determined by their attitudes toward that behavior, as well as subjective norm; 3) an individual's *attitude* is determined by beliefs and evaluations of the possible outcomes of engaging in the behavior; and 4) *subjective norm* is determined by beliefs about normative influences, along with motivation to comply with salient referents. Furthermore, the theory assumes that people are rational, systematically processing this information to arrive at their final intention. These observations indicate that attitudes and behavior are related (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975).

Attitude is conceptually defined as a person's judgment about the favorability or unfavorability of performing a behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Attitude is based on the person's beliefs about the consequences of performing the behavior, their determination of whether those consequences are desirable or undesirable (Petty & Cacioppo, 1996). Subjective norm is a function of an individual's perceptions of what others around them (referents) would want them to do, and how much they are motivated to comply with the social pressures applied by these referents (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). "Generally, people will perform behaviors they find favorable and popular with others and will refrain from behaviors they regard as unfavorable and unpopular with others" (Petty & Cacioppo, 1996, as cited in Werder, 2015, p. 8).

The TPB adds to the TRA by accounting for instances where an individual feels that completing the behavior is out of his or her control (Ajzen, 1985). Although intention is often enough to suggest that the individual will engage in the desired behavior, there are times when they do not have volitional control, whether they are lacking the resources or lacking the opportunity (Ajzen, 1991, pp. 181-182). While it is self-evident that a person's limitations may affect whether or not intention leads to behavior, the TPB goes further, indicating that an individual's *perceptions* of his or her own limitations can affect whether or not he or she follows through. The TPB, then, adds another variable to the TRA model: *perceived behavioral control*, which is defined as the extent to which a person perceives their current abilities or knowledge will allow them to carry out the intended behavior (p. 183). The TPB has already been shown to be a strong predictor of behavior (Ajzen, 2001, pp.43-44) in studies of problems as varied as safe-sex (Boldero et al., 1999), smoking (Morrison et al., 1996), basketball (Arnscheid & Schomers, 1996), and protecting oneself from direct sunlight (Hillhouse et al., 1997).

Within the mission statement literature, the TPB has been used previously in Desmidt, Prinzie, and Heene's (2008) study of hospital nurses. Using the TPB to determine mission statement usefulness, they found that mission statement use depends on the following three factors: the extent to which 1) organizational members positively evaluate the mission statement; 2) feel pressure from others to use the mission statement; 3) are confident in their ability to understand and use the mission statement.

### *Part Two: Purpose of the Study and Hypotheses*

The purpose of this study is to determine whether the length and readability of a mission statement contribute to stakeholder behavior related to the mission statement. The theoretical framework used is the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Ajzen, 1985, 1991). According to TPB, whether or not an individual decides to engage in a behavior depends on three factors: behavioral attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Ajzen, 1985, 1991). “As a general rule, as the attitude increases in favorability, the subjective norm increases, and the perceived behavioral control increases, the individual's intention to show the concerned behavior strengthens” (Desmidt, Prinzie, & Heene 2008, p. 1435).

The content of organizational mission statements has long been an important topic of research (Pearce & David, 1987; David, 1989; Hooley, Cox, & Adams, 1991; Williams, 2008; Green & Medlin, 2003). Although the literature suggests that shorter, more readable missions are better suited to stakeholder needs and positive performance (Rajasekar, 2013; Campbell & Yeung, 1991; David & David, 2003; Desmidt & Heene, 2007; Sattari, Pitt, & Caruana, 2011), little research has been done to work toward a model for the ideal length and reading level of organizational mission statements. Simply put, length and readability of mission statements have

not been tested as independent variables related to the behavior of members of an organization.

### **Research Question**

This study asks the following research question:

RQ: Does the message content of a mission statement influence stakeholder perceptions and behavior related to the mission and the organization?

This study posits that two aspects of the message content of a mission statement (length and readability) influence stakeholder attitudes, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control, leading to acceptance of the mission statement, which is manifested in several desirable behaviors.

### **Hypothesis 1**

The TPB predicts that salient beliefs about the desired behavior contribute to the individual's likelihood of carrying out the desired behavior (Ajzen, 1991, p. 189). The first of these kinds of beliefs are *behavioral beliefs*. The behavioral belief posited to influence behavioral attitude in this study is the following: *This organization considers the same values important that I do*. Such a belief is posited to result in a greater feeling of inspiration, a sense of belonging, and a sense that the mission statement in question will be of use to the organizational members day-to-day.

Williams et al. (2005) wrote that “for a mission/value statement to be effective (i.e., to translate into action) it must articulate values” (p. 305). Campbell and Yeung (1991) found that there is a link between how closely an organization's values, as outlined in the mission statement, match those of its members, and those members' acceptance of the mission. They call this a “sense of mission,” described as “an emotional commitment felt by people toward the company's mission” (p. 17). At least in a corporate setting, “the commitment and enthusiasm among

employees seem to come from a sense of personal attachment to the principles on which the company operates” (p. 12). There is strong buy-in from members “when there is a match between the values of an organization and those of an individual...Each individual is making a judgment: 'Does this organization care about the sort of things I care about?'" (pp. 17-18). This sense of mission is important, because people “are searching for meaning and for an opportunity to transcend the ordinariness of day-to-day existence. Values give meaning” (p. 17).

There is more to an individual member's attitude toward the mission and the organization than conscious decision, although Campbell and Yeung (1991) confirm, “Mission is an intellectual concept that can be analyzed and discussed unemotionally” (p. 18). Vardi, Wiener, and Popper (1989) wrote that “the major determinants of commitment are the values, norms and beliefs that members hold, rather than immediate utilitarian considerations of costs and benefits” (p. 27). This study posits that the shorter and easier to read the mission statement is, the easier it will be for the subject to relate their personal values to those described in the mission. Additionally, the organizational member will have a clearer understanding of the content of the mission statement, as well as the values contained within. These will result in more positive situational beliefs about the mission statement.

H1: The message content of an organization's mission statement has an effect on the situational beliefs of the members of the organization toward the mission statement.

P1.1: The length of an organization's mission statement will have a significant, negative relationship to the organizational members' situational beliefs about the mission statement.

P1.2: The reading level of an organization's mission statement will have a significant, negative relationship to the organizational members' situational beliefs about the mission statement.

### **Hypotheses 2-4**

The TPB predicts that situational beliefs influence behavioral attitudes (Ajzen, 1991, p. 189). This link is tested by Hypotheses 2-4. Within this study, it is proposed that the desired behavioral attitudes are more positive attitude toward the organization's mission statement, the organization described in the mission, and missions in general.

H2: Beliefs about the content of the mission statement positively influence attitudes toward the mission statement.

H3: Beliefs about the content of the mission statement positively influence attitudes toward the organization described in the mission statement.

H4: Beliefs about the content of the mission statement positively influence attitudes toward mission statements in general.

### **Hypothesis 5**

Desmidt and Heene (2007) note that “mission statements are often unreadable and uninspiring, and articulate high-sounding values that are unrealistic or are not aligned with day-to-day organizational behavior” (p. 78). As a result, “a consistent theme running through the mission statement literature is an acknowledged widespread failure in the implementation of mission statements” (p. 78). This is because “most managers do not communicate the mission statement sufficiently...Most non-management staff members do not see how their objectives are driven by the mission statement and how they contribute to the overall goal of the organization”



(Desmidt & Heene, 2007, p. 84).

A mission statement that is not properly communicated, that is not clear to employees, fails to become a part of the culture of the organization. Day-to-day operations are not influenced by the mission statement, and so the actual values and practices of the organization cannot match the ideal laid out in the mission. Employees, therefore, do not feel pressured to follow the mission statement.

The length and readability of the mission statement, affecting member attitudes toward the mission statement, can act as barriers to full and correct implementation. Thus, the shorter and easier to read the mission statement is, it is more likely that the subject will see how the mission fits in with the actual values of the organization, and the more likely he or she will be to feel pressure from other members of the organization to buy-in to the mission statement. This will result in a higher subjective norm.

H5: Beliefs about the content of the mission statement positively influence subjective norm.

## **Hypothesis 6**

A mission statement, in order to be effective, must be useful to the members of the organization. Toftoy and Chatterjee (2004) found that the mission statement is a “decision tool” for employees at every level (p.43). Williams et al. (2005) write, “While mission statements are perceived by most management theorists as effective tools used to develop ethical organizational cultures, their effectiveness is contingent upon...the daily practice of all staff members” (pp. 304-305). Again, it is hypothesized that organizational members will find it more difficult to use the mission statement on a day-to-day basis when the statement is longer and more difficult to read, because it will be more difficult for them to recognize how they fit in to the mission statement.

Without that understanding, the individual will have a harder time figuring out how to act. It is posited that the shorter and less difficult the mission statement is to read, the easier it will be for a member to see how they fit into the operations of the organization, a belief that will positively affect that member's perceived behavioral control.

H6: Beliefs about the content of the mission statement positively influence perceived behavioral control.

### **Hypotheses 7-9**

All of these factors, according to the theory of planned behavior, should lead to a positive behavioral intention. This is tested in Hypotheses 7, 8, and 9.

H7: Attitude is positively related to behavioral intention.

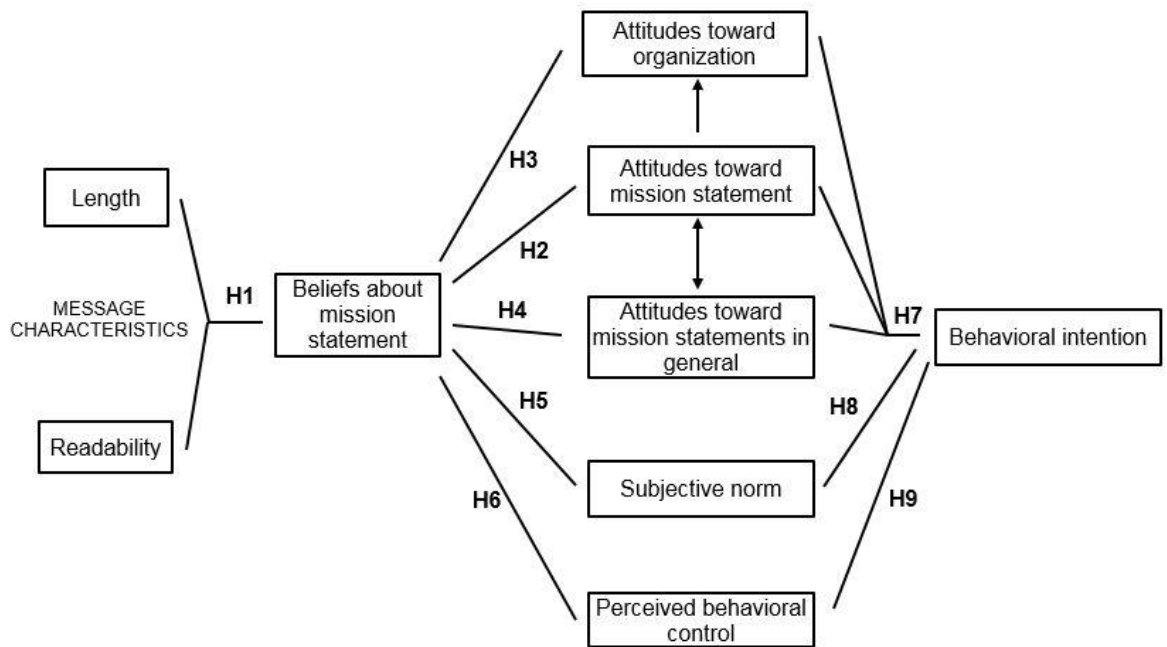
H8: Subjective norm is positively related to behavioral intention.

H9: Perceived behavioral control is positively related to behavioral intention.

### **Model**

The proposed model for this study is displayed in Fig. 2 (see page 19).

In the next chapter, the methods for data collection and analysis used for the study will be discussed, including the experimental design, participants used in the study, and the instrument used to gather data.



*Fig. 2: Relationship between message characteristics of mission statement and behavioral intention, based on the Theory of Planned Behavior*

## **Chapter III**

### **Methods**

The purpose of this study was to determine whether the length and readability of a mission statement contribute to stakeholder behavior regarding the mission statement. This study employed a 2 (length: long v. short) x 2 (readability: low v high) post-test only factorial design to test the following hypotheses and propositions:

H1: The message content of an organization's mission statement has an effect on the situational beliefs of the members of the organization toward the mission statement.

P1.1: The length of an organization's mission statement will have a significant, negative relationship to the organizational members' situational beliefs about the mission statement.

P1.2: The reading level of an organization's mission statement will have a significant, negative relationship to the organizational members' situational beliefs about the mission statement.

H2: Beliefs about the content of the mission statement positively influence attitudes toward the mission statement.

H3: Beliefs about the content of the mission statement positively influence attitudes toward the organization described in the mission statement.

H4: Beliefs about the content of the mission statement positively influence attitudes toward mission statements in general.

H5: Beliefs about the content of the mission statement positively influence subjective norm.

H6: Beliefs about the content of the mission statement positively influence perceived behavioral control.

H7: Attitude is positively related to behavioral intention.

H8: Subjective norm is positively related to behavioral intention.

H9: Perceived behavioral control is positively related to behavioral intention.

### *Participants*

Participants in this study were mass communication undergraduates at a large, southeastern university (n=212). Of these, 61 (28.8%) were freshmen, 47 (22.2%) were sophomores, 75 (35.4%) were juniors, and 25 (11.8%) were seniors. 136 of the participants (64.2%) were female, 68 (32.1%) were male, and 8 (3.7%) chose not to identify their gender.

In recent years, there has been a noted global shift toward privatization of universities, “shifting from a state-centered to a market-driven system of university education.” In an effort to “stimulate efficiency, innovation, and responsiveness,” views toward tertiary education are changing: many no longer consider it a public good, but a private one. Universities are no longer wholly public institutions, only answerable to the government that funds them and inelastic to the demands of their students as consumers (Kelsey, 1998, pp. 51-53). As a result, more studies are finding it appropriate to study universities using management theory and study students as stakeholders (Mainardes, Raposo, & Alves, 2012; Jongbloed, Enders, & Carlo, 2008; Stefanica, 2014). As this trend continues, universities are under greater pressure to stay in constant

communication with internal and external stakeholders, the most important of which is its students. Many universities are turning toward mission statements as a way of doing this (Jongbloed, Enders, & Carlo, 2008). In the same way that business success may depend on proper mission statement use (Ireland & Hitt, 1992; Toftoy & Chatterjee, 2004), “one may argue that the outcome of this process of stakeholder engagement will have important implications for the university's chances for survival” (Jongbloed, Enders, & Carlo, 2008, p. 304). While it may seem odd to use an institution of higher education as a testing ground for corporate management theory, in many ways the lines between these two formerly distinct worlds have blurred, as seen in studies like Palmer and Short (2008). As universities find themselves under more pressure from market forces and private interests, better business practices become more essential to continued success.

### *Manipulation of Independent Variables*

In an effort to reduce variables, all missions were written to be effective, including elements recommended by Pearce and David (1987) and David (1989) for corporations (see Chapter II: Review of Literature for a list of these), as well as elements suggested by Woodrow (2006) for educational institutions. According to Woodrow (2006), institutions of higher education should consider nine factors when drafting a mission statement: institutional history, educational philosophy, constituency, institutional strengths, uniqueness of offerings, brevity, precise words, and communication of the mission throughout the organization (pp. 317-320). All missions were written with the intent of being specific (Hooley, Cox, & Adams, 1992); motivating, outlining distinctive competencies and promoting shared expectations (Klemm, Sanderson, & Luffman, 1991); and meant to “unite employees toward a common goal” (Cochran, David, & Gibson, 2008).

The Fog Index has been in use since the 1940's as a guideline for clear and comprehensible writing. It was used previously by Rajasekar (2013) and Cochran, David, and Gibson (2008) to measure the readability of corporate mission statements. According to the Mid-Continent Comprehensive Center, a federally-funded educational aid organization, the Fog Index measures the reading level required to fully understand a sample of writing. Table 1 below displays the reading level for each value of the Fog Index.

Table 1	
Fog Index	
Fog Score	Reading Level by Grade
17	College graduate
16	College senior
15	College junior
14	College sophomore
13	College freshman
12	High school senior
11	High school junior
10	High school sophomore
9	High school freshman
8	Eighth grade
7	Seventh grade
6	Sixth grade

The first mission statement ( $n = 55$ ) was comparably short, just 2 sentences and 39 words. The wording of this mission statement was not complicated, with a Fog Index readability score of 13.95, the reading level of a college freshman. This was the *short/readable* example, seen below:

The mission of the Zimmerman School is to be known around the world for our exceptional and innovative research, teaching, and

service learning. Our faculty will engage in activities that contribute to the body of knowledge of mass communication.

The second mission statement ( $n = 54$ ) was short as well, at 4 sentences and 70 words. This mission statement had a Fog score of 17.86, the reading level of a college graduate. This was the *short/unreadable* example, seen below:

The mission of the Zimmerman School is to achieve national and international distinction in research, teaching, and service. We will promote innovative, exceptional education that prepares students for careers related to the mass media. Constituencies will be served by scholarly efforts designed to improve the understanding and practice of mediated communication. The faculty will engage in scholarly and professional activities that contribute to the body of knowledge of mass communications.

The third mission statement ( $n = 55$ ) was longer, at 4 sentences and 85 words. This mission statement had a Fog score of 15.08, the reading level of a college junior. This was the *long/readable* example, seen below:

The mission of the Zimmerman School is to be known around the world for our research, teaching, and service. We will provide innovative and exceptional education that prepares students for success in mass communication careers. Our students will serve the community, which will help them improve their understanding and practice of strategic communication.

The faculty of the Zimmerman School will contribute to the body



of knowledge of mass communications and the practice of the various specialties, drawing on their diverse backgrounds in industry and scholarship.

The fourth mission statement ( $n = 48$ ) was also long, at 5 sentences and 131 words. This mission statement had a Fog score of 21.17, beyond college graduate reading level. This was the *long/unreadable* example, seen below:

The mission of the Zimmerman School is to achieve national and international distinction in research, teaching, and service. To accomplish this mission, the Zimmerman School will advance high-quality, high-impact programmatic social scientific scholarship consistent with the mission of the College of Arts and Sciences and engage in innovative, exceptional undergraduate and graduate education that prepares students for careers related to the mass media and future scholarly success. Professional and public constituencies will be served by scholarly efforts designed to improve the understanding and practice of mediated communication.

The faculty of the Zimmerman School offer diverse backgrounds and experiences and include both scholars and industry professionals. They engage in scholarship, creative activity, and professional activities that contribute to the body of knowledge of mass communications and the practice of the various specialties.

The difference between “readable” and “unreadable” in the sample design was based on

Sattari, Pitt, and Caruana's (2011) observation that many mission statements were written at a college graduate reading level—in their interpretation, an undesirable outcome. Considering that the subjects of the experiment were current college students and one of the constituencies addressed in the mission statement samples was the students of the college, the graduate reading level seemed an appropriate place to draw the line between readable and unreadable.

### *Instrumentation*

After the subjects were shown the sample mission statements, they were presented with a 40-item questionnaire. The design of the questionnaire was based in large part on the design used in Werder (2015).

Eight items measured participants' beliefs about the mission statements they were shown, with a particular focus on the perceived compatibility between the participants' values and the values included in the organization's mission statement. This was to test the presence of a “sense of mission,” as discussed in Campbell and Yeung (1991). This belief, “This organization considers the same values important that I do,” is the behavioral belief proposed in this study as the most important belief leading to behavior. Item 1, “This mission statement is similar to the mission I would write for the Zimmerman school,” measures the “completeness” of the mission statement, as evaluated by the participant. Does the mission statement contain all of the desired values, or is something missing? Additionally, are these values given the same priority that the member would give them, were the mission statement designed by them personally? Together with Item 2, “This mission statement is missing something;” Item 3, “The Zimmerman School’s new mission statement is consistent with my personal values;” and Item 4, “Values that I find important are included in this mission statement;” this item is designed to test the values compatibility between the participant and the organization, as communicated through the mission

statement—a factor thought to play a role in the acceptance of the mission statement by members (Vardi, Wiener, & Popper, 1989; Williams et al., 2005). Campbell and Yeung (1991) found that the values of the members of an organization must be compatible with the values of the organization described in the mission statement, or those members will not accept the mission statement.

Item 5, “I am included in this mission statement,” and Item 6, “After reading this mission statement, I feel like I am a part of the Zimmerman School,” measure the relevance of the mission statement to the participant. If they do not feel like the mission statement directly affects them, they will have no reason to follow it. For a mission statement to be effective, it must directly address the members of the organization and be relevant to them (Brabet & Klemm, 1994; Ireland & Hitt, 2002). It is possible that the values of the organization are not clearly on display within the mission statement. Therefore, Item 7 measures whether the participant perceives the values of the organization within the mission statement, by asking them to measure their agreement to the following statement: “After reading this mission statement, I understand the values of the Zimmerman School better.” If the values of the school are not being clearly communicated within the mission, negative scores are expected for this item. Additionally, Desmidt, Prinzie, and Heene (2008) found that the values in the mission statement must reflect the values the members of the organization perceive the organization as actually having. To do that, they must possess an understanding of the values the organization is espousing within the mission statement.

Item 8 asks participants to state their beliefs about the following: “I think this mission statement is...” The item includes a seven point Likert scale along the following three metrics: USELESS-USEFUL; MEANINGLESS-MEANINGFUL; UNINSPIRING-INSPIRING. This,

too, is designed to test “sense of mission,” described by Campbell and Yeung (1991) as “an emotional commitment felt by people toward the company's mission” that gives meaning to participation in organizational activities (p. 17).

Thirteen items measured perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1985; Ajzen, 1991), specifically whether the subject found the sample statement useful or useless, clear or confusing. Item 9 specifically asks respondents to what extent they agree with the following statement: “I do not believe that I, personally, can use the Zimmerman School’s new mission statement.” Similarly, item 15 asks respondents to agree or disagree with the following: “The Zimmerman School’s mission statement is useful.” Items 10 and 11 asked respondents if they could see how they and others in the organization fit in to the mission statement. If they do not see a place for themselves within the mission statement, it is possible that respondents will feel that they cannot use the mission statement, and if they cannot see how others fit into the mission statement, they may not expect them to use it either. In that case, they may not consider the mission statement to be useful. Similar items had been used to measure perceived behavioral control in Desmidt and Heene (2007).

Item 12 measures whether or not the respondent feels that they have enough information about the mission statement to form an opinion. A respondent who feels they do not have enough information may decide not to support the mission statement because they do not trust their own attitudes toward it. Items 13 and 14 measure the clarity of the mission statement. The goal of shorter, more readable mission statements is to be easier to understand, allowing employees to make use of the mission statement, so these items are among the most important measures of participant perceptions. Another goal of shorter, more readable mission statements is to be easier to remember. Item 16 measures the participant's ability to remember the mission statement.

One of the desired behaviors in this study is for participants to communicate with others about the mission statement. Item 17 measures the perceived ability of the participant to communicate with others about the mission statement: “I am confident that I could explain this mission statement to someone else.” Item 18 measures the perceived ability of the participant to accomplish another desired behavior, which is supporting the mission statement: “I do not understand this mission statement well enough to support it.”

Items 19, 20 and 21 measure referent criterion, or whether or not the subject had previous experiences that might help them better understand the sample mission. Based on Kim and J.E. Grunig's (2011) situational theory of problem solving (STOPS), these are considered to compliment the perceived behavioral control found in the TPB. *Referent criterion* is an individual's recall of prior experience when presented with a problem and can affect the extent to which the individual participates in communicative action (p. 131). Here, referent criterion is used to measure the level of prior experience the participants have with mission statements. Those that have experience with mission statements in the past may feel greater ability to understand and act upon the mission statement. Item 19 measures whether or not the respondent has seen mission statements in the past. Item 20 measures the respondent's familiarity with the function of mission statements. Item 21 measures whether or not the respondent feels their past experiences with mission statements help them to understand the mission statement better.

Five items measured subjective norm, the influence of other people's opinions on the subject's attitudes about the mission statement. Item 22 directly asks the respondent whether or not they feel motivated by normative pressure: “Generally, I do what people who are important to me think I should do.” Items 23, 25 and 26 ask the respondent whether or not they feel that the other members of the organization care about the mission statement. If the respondent feels like

the other members care strongly about the mission statement, they might feel a greater inclination to have positive attitudes toward it, based on the TPB (Ajzen 1991). Similar items have previously been used by Desmidt, Prinzie and Heene (2008) to measure mission statement use, and by Werder (2015). Item 24 asks whether the respondent sees the mission statement as consistent with the actions of higher-ups within the organization. If faculty and administration are meant to serve as role models for the students as members of the organization, they are in a position to emit a great deal of normative pressure. However, if their actions are not consistent with those espoused by the mission statement, such pressure could actually dissuade desired behavior.

Three items measured specifically measured behavioral intention as a variable, although the model allows for behavioral intention to be a result of the interaction of the other variables. These items measured the intention of the respondent to engage in several specific, desirable behaviors. This approach had previously been taken in Werder (2015). Item 27, “I intend to communicate with others about this mission statement,” is based in part on Kim and J.E. Grunig's (2011) STOPS, and the desirable behavior of communicating with others as part of problem solving, as well as Desmidt, Prinzie, and Heene (2008), where a similar item was used to measure mission statement use. Item 28, “I will support the Zimmerman School’s new mission statement,” is a desirable behavior because it indicates that the respondent has accepted the mission statement. Item 29, “After reading this mission statement, I have a strong desire to continue my education at the Zimmerman School,” measures the mission statement's effect on the intention of the respondent to continue to be a member of the organization. While a person may choose to remain with an organization whose values are not aligned with their own, the literature suggests that they are more likely to remain if the values are aligned (Campbell &

Yeung, 1991; Vardi, Wiener, & Popper, 1989).

Three items measured attitudes about the sample mission statement, mission statements in general, and the organization. The respondent's attitudes toward the sample mission statement was measured in item 30, a measure which was thought to be antecedent to the variable behavioral attitude. A good mission statement will reflect positively on the organization, so attitudes toward the organization, with the mission statement in mind, were measured in item 31. It is possible that preconceived notions about mission statements in general could affect attitudes about the sample mission statement, so a measure for this was included in item 32. Conversely, Item 32 could also measure the effect of message design in a specific case on attitudes toward a specific kind of communication in a more general sense (i.e. whether the design of the sample mission statement, which is hypothesized to affect respondents' attitudes toward the mission statement in question, also affects respondents' attitudes toward mission statements in general).

Three items served as a manipulation check, to determine whether the samples were truly different from one another as intended. These measured whether the respondent felt the mission they were shown was too short, contained too much information, or too unreadable.

Five items collected basic demographic data, including age, academic level, number of years of college education, gender, and ethnicity.

The questionnaire was distributed in paper form and the participants were given 15 minutes to complete it.

### *Manipulation Check*

A one-way ANOVA was performed for responses to the three manipulation check questions to determine the reliability of the treatments. The results of this test are shown in Tables 2 and 3 below.

Table 2: One-Way Analysis of Manipulation Variables

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Q30 This MS contains too much info	Between Groups	27.452	3	9.151	3.004	.032
	Within Groups	606.183	199	3.046		
	Total	633.635	202			
Q31 This MS is too redundant	Between Groups	4.098	3	1.366	.450	.718
	Within Groups	607.314	200	3.037		
	Total	611.412	203			
Q32 This MS is difficult to read	Between Groups	34.763	3	11.588	4.574	.004
	Within Groups	504.193	199	2.534		
	Total	538.956	202			

Table 3: Analysis of Manipulation Variables: Least Significant Difference of Means

Dependent Variable	(I) Treatment	(J) Treatment	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Q30 This MS contains too much info	1	2	-.733 <sup>*</sup>	.342	.033
		3	-.598	.337	.078
		4	-1.013 <sup>*</sup>	.354	.005
	2	1	.733 <sup>*</sup>	.342	.033
		3	.135	.341	.692
		4	-.280	.357	.434
	3	1	.598	.337	.078
		2	-.135	.341	.692
		4	-.415	.352	.240
	4	1	1.013 <sup>*</sup>	.354	.005
		2	.280	.357	.434
		3	.415	.352	.240
Q31 This MS is too redundant	1	2	.183	.340	.591
		3	-.148	.335	.659
		4	-.178	.352	.614
	2	1	-.183	.340	.591
		3	-.331	.340	.332
		4	-.361	.356	.313
	3	1	.148	.335	.659
		2	.331	.340	.332
		4	-.030	.352	.933
	4	1	.178	.352	.614
		2	.361	.356	.313
		3	.030	.352	.933



Table 3 (cont.): Analysis of Manipulation Variables: Least Significant Difference of Means

Dependent Variable	(I) Treatment	(J) Treatment	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Q32 This MS is difficult to read	1	2	-.651*	.311	.037
		3	-.140	.308	.650
		4	-1.059*	.321	.001
	2	1	.651*	.311	.037
		3	.512	.312	.103
		4	-.408	.326	.212
	3	1	.140	.308	.650
		2	-.512	.312	.103
		4	-.919*	.323	.005
	4	1	1.059*	.321	.001
		2	.408	.326	.212
		3	.919*	.323	.005

The results of the ANOVA showed that for two items, “The mission statement contains too much information” and “The mission statement is difficult to read,” there were significant differences reported between treatments. The third manipulation check item, “The mission statement is too redundant,” failed to return a significant difference in mean across treatments. Treatments 1 and 3 returned statistically similar results for “too much information” and “difficult to read”, and treatments 2 and 4 had a similar relationship across these two significant variables. Based on these findings, treatments 1 and 3 were consolidated into a single treatment category, “readable,” and treatments 2 and 4 were consolidated into the singular variable “unreadable.” This was consistent with the original design of the treatments: treatments 1 and 3 were originally conceived as “readable” messages (1 being “short” and 3 “long”), and 2 and 4 conceived as “unreadable” messages (2 being “short” and 4 “long”). Included as a measure of perceived length, the failure of item 31, “The mission statement is too redundant,” to return significant results suggests that the differences in length between treatments was not enough to make a difference.

## *Data Analysis*

To test the hypotheses posited by this study, a variety of statistical procedures were used. To test H1, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to examine difference in mean scores for the variables of interest across the experimental conditions, as well as to test the effects of message design on beliefs. H2-6 predicted relationships between beliefs and subjective norm, perceived behavioral control, and toward the organization, its mission, and mission statements generally. H7-9 predicted that attitudes, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control were related to behavioral intention. To test the hypotheses about the relationships between the TPB variables, linear regression was used.

The next chapter presents the results of the study, and states the extent to which each hypothesis was supported or not supported by the data.

## **Chapter IV**

### **Results**

The purpose of this study was to determine whether the length and readability of a mission statement contribute to stakeholder behavior regarding the mission statement. This study employed a 2 (length: long v. short) x 2 (readability: low v high) post-test only factorial design to test the following hypotheses and propositions:

H1: The message content of an organization's mission statement has an effect on the situational beliefs of the members of the organization toward the mission statement.

P1.1: The length of an organization's mission statement will have a significant, negative relationship to the organizational members' situational beliefs about the mission statement.

P1.2: The reading level of an organization's mission statement will have a significant, negative relationship to the organizational members' situational beliefs about the mission statement.

H2: Beliefs about the content of the mission statement positively influence attitudes toward the mission statement.

H3: Beliefs about the content of the mission statement positively influence attitudes toward the organization described in the mission statement.

H4: Beliefs about the content of the mission statement positively influence attitudes toward mission statements in general.

H5: Beliefs about the content of the mission statement positively influence subjective norm.

H6: Beliefs about the content of the mission statement positively influence perceived behavioral control.

H7: Attitude is positively related to behavioral intention.

H8: Subjective norm is positively related to behavioral intention.

H9: Perceived behavioral control is positively related to behavioral intention.

This chapter will disclose the results of the study. First, descriptive statistics will be given as an overview of the responses to the questionnaires.

### *Descriptives*

Descriptive statistics were examined for the items measuring the variables of interest. The means and standard deviations for the dependent variables in the integrated model are shown in Tables 4-8.

*Table 4: Measures of Belief*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q1 Belief 1	211	1	7	5.00	1.385
Q2 Belief 2	212	1	7	3.94	1.736
Q3 Belief 3	211	1	7	5.06	1.299
Q4 Belief 4	212	1	7	5.36	1.158
Q5 Belief 5	212	1	7	4.70	1.665
Q6 Belief 6	212	1	7	4.27	1.496
Q7 Belief 7	209	1	7	5.15	1.408
Q8.1 Useless-Useful	210	1	7	5.27	1.350
Q8.2 Meaningless-Meaningful	210	1	7	5.06	1.427
Q8.3 Inspiring-Uninspiring	210	1	7	4.48	1.649
Valid N (listwise)	207				

*Table 5: Measures of Perceived Behavioral Control*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q9 PBC 1	212	1	7	3.56	1.687
Q10 PBC 2	211	1	7	3.12	1.561
Q11 PBC 3	212	1	7	4.48	1.556
Q12 PBC 4	212	1	7	2.80	1.649
Q13 PBC 5	211	1	7	2.64	1.648
Q14 PBC 6	212	1	7	4.28	1.858
Q15 PBC 7	211	1	7	4.53	1.556
Q16 PBC 8	211	1	7	3.02	1.537
Q17 Referent Criterion 1	212	1	7	5.54	1.874
Q18 Referent Criterion 2	212	1	7	5.92	1.402
Q19 Referent Criterion 3	211	1	7	5.15	1.401
Valid N (listwise)	210				

*Table 6: Measures of Subjective Norm*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q20 Subjective Norm 1	209	1	7	4.22	1.595
Q21 Subjective Norm 2	210	1	7	4.05	1.315
Q22 Subjective Norm 3	209	1	7	4.96	1.244
Q23 Subjective Norm 4	211	1	7	3.83	1.400
Q24 Subjective Norm 5	210	1	7	4.82	1.471
Valid N (listwise)	206				

*Table 7: Measures of Behavioral Intention*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q25 Behavioral Intention 1	210	1	7	5.04	1.348
Q26 Behavioral Intention 2	210	1	7	4.88	1.454
Valid N (listwise)	210				

*Table 8: Measures of Attitude*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q27.1 Attitude Toward This MS Negative-Positive	211	1	7	5.33	1.213
Q27.2 Attitude Toward This MS Bad-Good	211	1	7	5.33	1.303
Q27.3 Attitude Toward This MS Unfavorable-Favorable	211	1	7	5.08	1.472
Q28.1 Attitude Toward Organization Negative-Positive	209	3	7	5.63	1.044
Q28.2 Attitude Toward Organization Bad-Good	209	1	7	5.56	1.134
Q28.3 Attitude Toward Organization Unfavorable-Favorable	209	1	7	5.51	1.233
Q29.1 Attitude Toward MS In General Negative-Positive	209	2	7	5.29	1.215
Q29.2 Attitude Toward MS In General Bad-Good	209	2	7	5.26	1.261
Q29.3 Attitude Toward MS In General Unfavorable-Favorable	209	1	7	5.10	1.346
Valid N (listwise)	209				

### *Scale Reliability*

Analysis of the reliability of items measuring beliefs, perceived behavioral control, subjective norm, attitudes, and behavioral control revealed a few items that failed to return adequate coefficients: for measures of belief, Item 2 (“This mission statement is missing something”) and for measures of perceived behavioral control, Item 11 (“I have sufficient information about this mission statement to form an opinion”) and Item 15 (“I am confident that I could explain this mission statement to someone else”). These items were omitted, and the multi-item scales were collapsed to create 7 composite measures for hypothesis testing, measuring Belief, PBC, Subjective Norm, Attitude Toward this Mission Statement, Attitude Toward the Organization, Attitude Toward Mission Statements in General, and Behavioral Intention. These 7 composite measures generated a Cronbach's alpha of .737, an acceptable level of reliability. The reliability of the measures for all of the variables is shown in Table 9 below.

<b>Variable</b>	<b><i>N</i></b>	<b>Alpha</b>
Belief	9	.858
Attitude (This Mission Statement)	3	.940
Attitude (Organization)	3	.954
Attitude (Missions in General)	3	.948
Subjective Norm	5	.607
Perceived Behavioral Control	5	.789
Behavioral Intention	2	.779

## *Hypothesis Testing*

H1 posited that the message characteristics of mission statements (length and readability) influence situational beliefs. The dimensionality of the nine items used to measure beliefs was assessed using a maximum likelihood factor analysis. The results of this factor analysis are shown in Table 10 below. To begin, the factorability of the correlation matrix was assessed. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sample adequacy was .806, indicating that the sample was adequate. Additionally, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant at the .01 level (.000).

According to the procedures outline by Green, Salkind, and Akey (2000), the analysis was conducted in two stages. In stage one, factor extraction was conducted using principal components analysis. Four criteria were used to determine the appropriate number of factors to extract: 1) a priori conceptual beliefs about the number of underlying dimensions of the beliefs concept; 2) the latent root criterion; 3) the scree test; and 4) the interpretability of the factor solution. The latent root criterion and the scree test suggested a three factor solution, which was supported by the intended design of the instrument. Three factors were rotated using a Varimax procedure. The rotated solution yielded three interpretable factors. Three items loaded on factor 1, which accounted for 47.9% of the item variance (eigenvalue = 4.318). Four items (Items 1, 3, 4, & 7) loaded on factor 2, which accounted for 15.2% of the item variance (eigenvalue = 1.366). Two items (Items 5 & 6) loaded on factor 3, which accounted for 10.8% of the variance (eigenvalue = .968). The results of this factor analysis are shown in Table 10 below.



Table 10: Rotated Factor Matrix

	Factor		
	1	2	3
Meaningless - Meaningful	.851		
Inspiring - Uninspiring	.770		
Useless - Useful	.654		
Values that I find important are included in this mission statement.		.755	
This mission statement is consistent with my personal values.		.641	
After reading this mission statement, I understand the values of the Zimmerman School better.		.634	
This mission statement is similar to the mission I would write for the Zimmerman School.		.557	
I am included in this mission statement.			.972
After reading this mission statement, I feel like I am a part of the Zimmerman School.			.555

\* Factor loadings less than .4 are not shown.

Based on the factor analysis, the decision was made to collapse the items used to measure beliefs into three composite variables. Factor 1 was labeled Function (Item 8), and showed a Chronbach's alpha of .840, suggesting a strong internal consistency. Factor 2 was labeled Values Compatibility (Items 1, 3, 4, & 7) and also showed a strong internal consistency, with a Chronbach's alpha of .802.

The two items that loaded on factor 3 were assessed using Pearson's Correlation Coefficient and were found to have a strong correlation ( $r = .66, p \leq .001$ ). These two items were collapsed into a composite variable named Inclusiveness (Items 5 & 6).

Results of a one-way ANOVA indicated that a significant difference in situational beliefs about mission statement Function existed due to readability. There were no significant differences in beliefs about mission statement Inclusiveness or Values Compatibility due to readability. The results of this analysis are shown in Table 11 below.

Table 11: ANOVA (Measures of Beliefs Across Different Levels of Readability)

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
INCLUSIVENESS	Between Groups	2.061	1	2.061	1.010	.316
	Within Groups	428.397	210	2.040		
	Total	430.458	211			
FUNCTION	Between Groups	7.474	1	7.474	4.578	.034
	Within Groups	339.593	208	1.633		
	Total	347.067	209			
VALUES COMPATIBILITY	Between Groups	1.049	1	1.049	.966	.327
	Within Groups	224.770	207	1.086		
	Total	225.819	208			

Results of a one-way ANOVA indicated that no significant differences in situational beliefs about mission statement Function, Inclusiveness, or Values Compatibility existed due to the length of the mission statement. The results of this analysis are shown in Table 12 below. Based on these results, H1 is partially supported. Results of multi-way ANOVA indicated no significant interaction effects between length and readability on any of the beliefs sets.

Table 12: ANOVA (Measures of Beliefs Across Different Lengths)

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
INCLUSIVENESS	Between Groups	5.430	1	5.430	2.683	.103
	Within Groups	425.028	210	2.024		
	Total	430.458	211			
FUNCTION	Between Groups	.024	1	.024	.015	.904
	Within Groups	347.042	208	1.668		
	Total	347.067	209			
VALUES COMPATIBILITY	Between Groups	1.227	1	1.227	1.131	.289
	Within Groups	224.592	207	1.085		
	Total	225.819	208			

P1.1 posited that the length of the mission statement would have a significant, negative relationship to the situational beliefs of respondents. The results of one-way ANOVA shown in Table 12 do not support P1.1. The length of the mission statement did not have a significant relationship to beliefs about the Inclusiveness, Function, or Values Compatibility of the mission statement. Furthermore, the relationships were positive.

Similarly, P1.2 posited that the readability of the mission statement would have a significant, negative relationship to the situational beliefs of respondents. The results of one-way ANOVA shown in Table 11 do not support P1.2. The readability of the mission statement did not have a significant relationship to beliefs about the Inclusiveness or Values Compatibility of the mission statement, although there was a significant relationship between readability and beliefs about the Function of the mission statement. This relationship was not negative, however, but positive.

H2 posited that beliefs about the content of a mission statement positively influence attitudes toward the mission statement. Results of regression analysis indicated that nearly 61% of the variance in Attitude Toward the Mission Statement was due to the linear combination of beliefs about mission statement Inclusiveness, Function, and Values Compatibility [ $R^2 = .613$ ,  $\text{Adj. } R^2 = .608$ ,  $F(3, 202) = 106.9$ ,  $p < .001$ ]. Both Function ( $\beta = .562$ ,  $t = 10.275$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and Values Compatibility ( $\beta = .331$ ,  $t = .403$ ,  $p < .001$ ) made a significant, positive contribution to unique item variance. These results, shown in Table 13 below, partially support H2.

Table 13				
Results of Linear Regression Testing H2				
Predictor	$\beta$	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Function	.562	205	10.725	.000
Inclusiveness	-.015	205	-.293	.770
Values Compatibility	.331	205	5.890	.000

H3 posited that beliefs about the content of a mission statement positively influence attitudes toward the organization. Results of regression analysis indicated that 52% of the variance in Attitude Toward the Organization was due to the linear combination of beliefs about mission statement Inclusiveness, Function, and Values Compatibility [ $R^2 = .531$ , Adj.  $R^2 = .524$ ,  $F(3, 201) = 75.77$ ,  $p < .001$ ]. Both Function ( $\beta = .484$ ,  $t = 8.349$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and Values Compatibility ( $\beta = .330$ ,  $t = 5.33$ ,  $p < .001$ ) made a significant, positive contribution to unique item variance. The results for the regression analysis are shown in Table 14 below. H3 was partially supported by these results.

Table 14				
Results of Linear Regression Testing H3				
Predictor	$\beta$	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Function	.484	204	8.349	.000
Inclusiveness	.023	204	.400	.689
Values Compatibility	.330	204	5.329	.000

H4 posited that beliefs about the content of a mission statement positively influence attitudes toward mission statements in general. Results of regression analysis indicated that nearly 38% of the variance in Attitude Toward Mission Statements in General was due to the linear combination of beliefs about mission statement Inclusiveness, Function, and Values

Compatibility [ $R^2 = .385$ , Adj.  $R^2 = .376$ ,  $F(3, 201) = 42.02$ ,  $p < .001$ ]. Both Function ( $\beta = .483$ ,  $t = 6.987$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and Values Compatibility ( $\beta = .235$ ,  $t = 3.31$ ,  $p = .001$ ) made a significant, positive contribution to unique item variance. The results for the regression analysis are shown in Table 15 below. H4 was partially supported by these results.

Table 15				
Results of Linear Regression Testing H4				
Predictor	$\beta$	$df$	$t$	$p$
Function	.463	204	6.987	.000
Inclusiveness	-.001	204	-.018	.986
Values Compatibility	.275	204	3.310	.001

H5 posited that beliefs about the content of a mission statement positively influence subjective norm. Results of regression analysis indicated that nearly 22% of the variance in Subjective Norm was due to the linear combination of beliefs about mission statement Inclusiveness, Function, and Values Compatibility [ $R^2 = .227$ , Adj.  $R^2 = .215$ ,  $F(3, 198) = 19.4$ ,  $p < .001$ ]. Both Inclusiveness ( $\beta = .156$ ,  $t = 2.11$ ,  $p = .036$ ) and Values Compatibility ( $\beta = .382$ ,  $t = 4.82$ ,  $p < .001$ ) made a significant, positive contribution to unique item variance. The results for the regression analysis are shown in Table 16 below. These results partially support H5.

Table 16				
Results of Linear Regression Testing H5				
Predictor	$\beta$	$df$	$t$	$p$
Function	-.006	201	-.083	.934
Inclusiveness	.156	201	2.111	.036
Values Compatibility	.382	201	4.817	.000

H6 posited that beliefs about the content of a mission statement positively influence

perceived behavioral control. Results of regression analysis indicated that nearly 21% of the variance in Perceived Behavioral Control was due to the linear combination of beliefs about mission statement Inclusiveness, Function, and Values Compatibility [ $R^2 = .216$ , Adj.  $R^2 = .205$ ,  $F(3, 203) = 18.67$ ,  $p < .001$ ]. Only Values Compatibility ( $\beta = -.400$ ,  $t = -5.026$ ,  $p < .001$ ) made a significant, positive contribution to unique item variance. The results for the regression analysis are shown in Table 17 below. The items measuring PBC that were included in this test were written as negative scales, so these findings partially support H6.

<b>Predictor</b>	<b><math>\beta</math></b>	<b><i>df</i></b>	<b><i>t</i></b>	<b><i>p</i></b>
Function	-.095	204	-1.273	.204
Inclusiveness	-.014	206	-.189	.851
Values Compatibility	-.400	204	-5.026	.000

H7 posited that attitude is positively related to behavioral intention. H8 posited that subjective norm is positively related to behavioral intention. H9 posited that perceived behavioral control is positively related to behavioral intention. Results of regression analysis indicated that 46% of the variance in Perceived Behavioral Control was due to the linear combination of Attitude Toward This Mission Statement, Attitude Toward the Organization, Subjective Norm, and Perceived Behavioral Control [ $R^2 = .472$ , Adj.  $R^2 = .461$ ,  $F(4, 199) = 44.44$ ,  $p < .001$ ]. Attitude Toward the Organization ( $\beta = -.400$ ,  $t = -5.026$ ,  $p < .001$ ), Subjective Norm ( $\beta = -.400$ ,  $t = -5.026$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and Perceived Behavioral Control ( $\beta = -.400$ ,  $t = -5.026$ ,  $p < .001$ ) all made a significant, positive contribution to unique item variance. Attitude Toward This Mission Statement ( $\beta = -.400$ ,  $t = -5.026$ ,  $p < .001$ ) made a positive contribution that approached significance. These results partially support H7. H8 and H9 were both supported.

The results are shown in Table 18 below.

<b>Predictor</b>	<b><math>\beta</math></b>	<b><i>df</i></b>	<b><i>t</i></b>	<b><i>p</i></b>
Attitude Toward This Mission Statement	.182	203	1.901	.059
Attitude Toward the Organization	.209	203	2.164	.032
Subjective Norm	.364	203	6.265	.000
Perceived Behavioral Control	-.129	203	-2.310	.022

In the next chapter, these results and their implications will be discussed in detail.

## Chapter V

### Discussion

In this chapter, the results of the study will be discussed in detail. Conclusions will be drawn from these results, and a few practical applications will be given.

This study examined the relationship between message characteristics of mission statements, specifically length and readability, on stakeholder beliefs. It was posited that by influencing beliefs, the message characteristics would influence the attitudes, perceived behavioral control, subjective norm, and behavioral intention. These relationships, based on the TPB, are displayed in Figure 3 below.

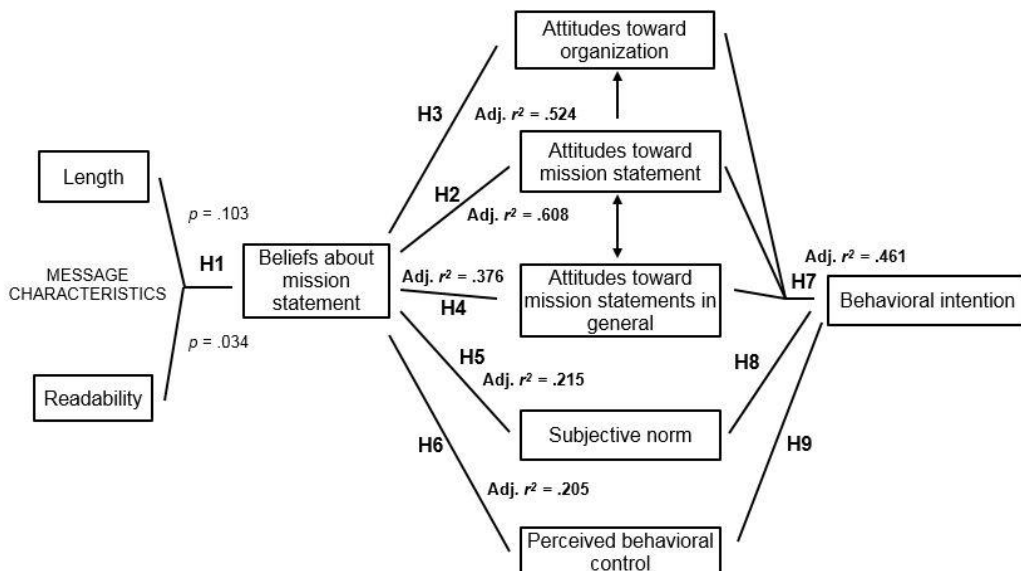


Fig. 3: Relationship between message characteristics of mission statement and behavioral intention, based on the Theory of Planned Behavior



### *Hypothesis 1: Relationship between Message Characteristics and Beliefs*

H1 predicted that message characteristics influence situational beliefs. This hypothesis was partially supported. Results of a one-way ANOVA indicated that a significant difference in situational beliefs about mission statement Function existed due to readability. No significant differences in situational beliefs about mission statement Function, Inclusiveness, or Values Compatibility existed due to the length of the mission statement, however.

The variable Function is a factor of three measures of belief: beliefs about the usefulness of a mission statement, its meaningfulness, and its ability to inspire. These results indicate that the mission statements that were more difficult to read produced perceptions of increased Function (increased usefulness, meaningfulness, and ability to inspire). It was expected from the literature that the exact opposite would be true, that the missions that were easier to read would be perceived as more useful, meaningful, and inspiring. P1.1 and P1.2 illustrate this expectation.

P1.1 posited that the length of the mission statement would have a significant, negative relationship to the situational beliefs of respondents. P1.2 posited that the reading level of the mission statement would have a significant, negative relationship to situational beliefs. In other words, it was proposed that the longer and less readable a mission statement became, the more negative the beliefs about it would become. Neither of these propositions were supported by the results. Not only did length and readability only make a significant difference in only one factor of belief (readability to Function), the positive relationships displayed by the results suggest that, if anything, the longer, less readable mission statements performed better than the shorter, more readable mission statements in terms of producing positive beliefs.

It appears that keeping a mission statement “short and sweet” does not have as great an effect on beliefs as the literature would suggest. It should be noted, though, that the length of the

mission statement treatments were not as dramatically manipulated as the readability of the treatments, which ranged from college freshman at the lowest level to well beyond college graduate at the highest level. Table 19 illustrates the differences between the treatments.

<b>Treatment</b>	<b>Number of Words</b>	<b>Number of Sentences</b>	<b>Fog Score</b>
1	39	2	13.95
2	70	4	17.86
3	85	4	15.08
4	131	5	21.17

There are two concerns that arise from this information. The differences in length between the short and long treatments was not very great, so it is possible that the difference was not perceptible enough to influence the beliefs of the participants. It is also possible that the longer treatments were not long, wordy, or redundant enough to capture the more negative aspects of many corporate mission statements today (David & David, 2003; Toftoy & Chatterjee, 2004). Even the longest mission statement was only 5 sentences contained in two paragraphs, probably not an intimidating, obtuse document for the average college student. These assessments are supported by the fact that it was readability, not length, which was found to be the variable of greatest importance to stakeholder perceptions of the organization.

It was thought that perhaps the participants had preconceived notions about what a mission statement was “supposed to look like,” which may have caused them to favor treatment 4. Were this the case, referent criterion (Items 17-19) would be a factor, or even a participant's familiarity with the organization's mission statement (Item 33). Results of linear regression analysis indicated that neither of these variables had a significant relationship to Belief, or even a

noteworthy one. Referent criterion explained only 4% of the variance in Belief, and familiarity with the school's mission statement only 1%. If preconceived notions were a factor in this experiment, it was not found in the results.

It was also thought that perhaps something was missing from the more readable mission statements (treatments 1 and 3) that was included in the less readable mission statements (2 and 4). Any differences in message content could have contributed to the perception of better functionality. Table 20 below shows a comparison of the four treatments based on their inclusion of the nine recommended mission statement elements (Pearce & David, 1987; David, 1989). A cell marked with an “X” indicates that the treatment includes that element.

<b>Element</b>	<b>Treatment 1</b>	<b>Treatment 2</b>	<b>Treatment 3</b>	<b>Treatment 4</b>
Target Market	X	X	X	X
Employees	X	X	X	X
Value to Customers	X	X	X	X
Geographic Markets	X	X	X	X
Technology Used				
Ethics/Beliefs	X	X	X	X
Desired Public Image	X	X	X	X
Distinct Competencies	X	X	X	X
Strategies for Growth			X	X

A second comparison analyzes the content of the four treatments for the nine elements recommended by Woodrow (2006) for the mission statements of colleges and universities. This comparison is shown in Table 21 below.

Table 21  
Comparison of Content of Message Treatments (Woodrow, 2006)

Element	Treatment 1	Treatment 2	Treatment 3	Treatment 4
History				
Philosophy	X	X	X	X
Constituency	X	X	X	X
Strengths	X	X	X	X
Uniqueness	X	X	X	X
Brevity	X	X		
Precise Words	X	X		
Longevity	X	X	X	X
Breadth of Communication				

These tables show that the four treatments were almost identical in terms of content. There was no category in which a readable and an unreadable mission statement did not have representation. Neither preconceived notions nor differences in message content appear to have been a factor in the relationship between readability and beliefs.

The most important finding resulting from the testing of H1 is that readability is a significant factor influencing beliefs about the functionality of a mission statement; that is, its usefulness, meaningfulness, and ability to inspire.

#### *Hypotheses 2-4: Relationship between Beliefs and Attitudes*

H2 posited that beliefs about the content of a mission statement would positively influence attitudes toward the mission statement. The results partially supported this hypothesis. Linear regression analysis found that beliefs about the Function and Values Compatibility of a mission statement were significant, positive predictors of Attitude Toward the Mission Statement. Furthermore, measures of belief accounted for over 60% of the variance in Attitude

Toward the Mission Statement.

Similarly, H3 posited that beliefs about the content of a mission statement would positively influence attitudes toward the organization described in the mission statement. The results partially supported this hypothesis. Linear regression analysis found that beliefs about the Function and Values Compatibility of a mission statement were significant, positive predictors of Attitude Toward the Organization, with measures of belief accounting for over half of the variance.

Finally, H4 posited that beliefs about the content of a mission statement would positively influence attitudes toward mission statements in general. This hypothesis, too, was partially supported. Linear regression analysis found that beliefs about the Function and Values Compatibility of a mission statement were significant, positive predictors of Attitude Toward Mission Statements in General, with measures of belief accounting for 38% of the variance.

In all three analyses, beliefs about the Function of the mission statement were the strongest predictors of attitude. The more positively an individual perceives a mission statement as useful, meaningful, and inspirational, the more likely they are to have a positive attitude toward the mission statement itself, and toward mission statements they may encounter elsewhere. Additionally, the more a mission statement creates positive perceptions of usefulness, meaningfulness, and ability to inspire, the better the organization it represents appears. This suggests that organizations should be aware of how stakeholders perceive mission statements, and take care to design the best message possible. If they fail to do so, it could possibly create negative perceptions about the organization. Also, these results suggest that an individual who sees an ineffective mission statement—one that fails to accomplish the very purposes it was designed to accomplish (Campbell & Yeung, 1991)—might judge all mission statements they

encounter based on that experience.

*Hypothesis 5: Relationship between Beliefs and Subjective Norm*

H5 posited that beliefs would positively influence subjective norm. This hypothesis was partially supported. Linear regression analysis found that beliefs about the Inclusiveness and Values Compatibility of a mission statement were significant, positive predictors of Subjective Norm, with measures of belief accounting for 21% of the variance.

While perceived functionality of the mission statement was the strongest predictor of attitudes, the results here show that the perceived Inclusiveness of the mission statement is the strongest predictor of Subjective Norm. Based on the operational definition of subjective norm, this finding makes sense. The more an individual feels included in the message of a mission statement, feels that the mission statement contains a message relevant to them, the more they will feel included in the culture of the organization. This finding indicates that organizations should consider tailoring the messages of their mission statements to be as relevant to stakeholders as possible, if the goal of creating a mission is to build a strong organizational culture.

While this finding does have practical application, it interestingly has nothing to do with the length and readability of the mission statement. Neither length nor readability were shown to make a significant difference in beliefs about the Inclusiveness of the mission statement (see Tables 11 & 12 in Chapter IV).

*Hypothesis 6: Relationship between Beliefs and Perceived Behavioral Control*

H6 posited that beliefs about the mission statement positively influence perceived behavioral control. Linear regression analysis found that beliefs about the Values Compatibility of a mission statement were significant, negative predictors of Perceived Behavioral Control,

with measures of belief accounting for about 21% of the variance. However, since the items used to measure PBC were negative, this negative relationship indicates that, as beliefs about the compatibility of an individual's values with those contained in the mission statement grow more positive, PBC increases. This result partially supports H6.

It would seem that beliefs about mission statement Function, that is, perceived usefulness and meaningfulness, ought to be a predictor of PBC, since such beliefs would appear to give an individual greater perceived ability to make use of the mission statement. The results here do not support that. Instead, Values Compatibility was found to be the only predictor of PBC. There are a couple of inferences that can be made from this result. One, an individual may feel more comfortable making use of a message that represents their own priorities, values, desires, etc. Two, a mission statement without values may remain unused by stakeholders. These inferences are consistent with the literature (Campbell & Yeung, 1991; Williams et al., 2005). After all, “the major determinants of commitment”—read this as *behavior*—“are the values, norms and beliefs that members hold” (Vardi, Wiener, & Popper, 1989, p. 27). In getting “buy-in” from stakeholders, values matter.

### *Hypotheses 7-9: Relationship to Behavioral Intention*

H7, H8 and H9 posited that each of the three TPB variables (attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control) were positively related to behavioral intention. Linear regression analysis found that Attitude Toward the Organization and Subjective Norm were significant, positive predictors of Behavioral Intention. Perceived Behavioral Control was a significant, negative predictor of Behavioral Intention. However, since the measures of PBC were worded as negative measures, the results indicate that PBC actually acts as a positive predictor of Behavioral Intention. Attitude Toward This Mission Statement approached

significance as a positive predictor of Behavioral Intention ( $p = .059$ ). These four variables accounted for 46% of the variance in Behavioral Intention. The results partially support H7, and support H8 and H9.

These results are consistent with the theory of planned behavior, displayed again in Figure 4 for reference.

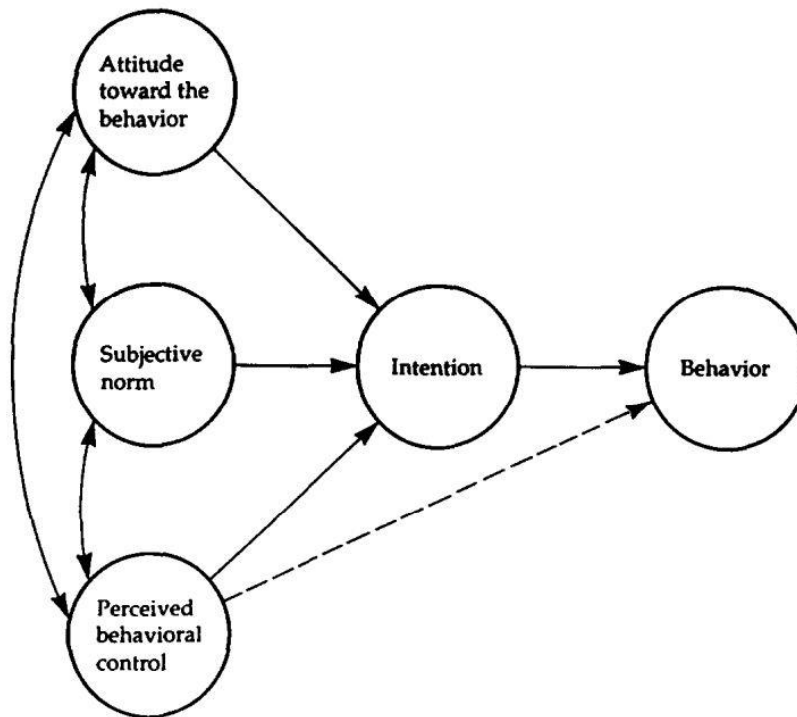


Fig. 4: Theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991, p.182)

As predicted by the TPB, attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control all influence behavioral intention. One measure of attitude, Attitude Toward This Mission Statement, did not have a significant influence on Behavioral Intention, while another, Attitude Toward the Organization, did.

These results also provide a link between message characteristics and behavioral intention. Readability influences beliefs about the functionality of the mission statement, as shown in Chapter IV, Table 11. Analysis also found that beliefs about Function positively



influence attitudes. Here, it is shown that Attitude Toward the Organization positively influences Behavioral Intention.

The results from this study lead to the following inference: when an organization attempts to use a mission statement to influence stakeholder behavior, that organization should definitely consider the way that mission statement will influence their organizational culture. Message characteristics were shown to be a factor in influencing attitudes through beliefs about the mission statement's usefulness, meaningfulness, and ability to inspire, but were not shown to be a factor in influencing either PBC or subjective norm, which was the most important predictor of behavioral intention. Instead, these variables were influenced by different factors of belief.

For subjective norm, beliefs about the Inclusiveness of the mission statement had the greatest influence. For PBC, beliefs about Values Compatibility had the greatest influence. In both cases, these beliefs were not a function of the message characteristics of the mission statement, or even the perceived usefulness, meaningfulness, or ability of the message to inspire. Instead, the values represented in the message and the extent to which it was relevant to the individual made the most difference. Even the variable Attitude Toward the Organization was found to be a significant predictor of Behavioral Intention, over Attitude Toward This Mission Statement. When it came time to decide behavioral intention, the extent to which the individual felt a connection to the organization through the message mattered most.

The next chapter provides a discussion of the results of this study. It includes a review of major findings, as well as an overview of the limitations of the study. A few practical applications based on the results are given, then the chapter concludes with suggestions for further research.

## **Chapter VI**

### **Conclusion**

This chapter will discuss the major findings of the study and their implications. A few of the limitations of the study will be discussed, and suggestions for future research will be made.

#### *Major Findings*

All of the hypotheses examining the TPB model were supported by the results of this study. This is not surprising. As previously discussed in Chapter II: Literature Review, the TPB has consistently been shown to be a reliable theoretical model across a variety of behavioral studies. The results of this study will add to the body of literature supporting the TPB.

Length of the mission statement was not found to make a significant difference in the beliefs of participants, and so could not be linked to behavioral intention. A few factors could have contributed to this result. The message treatments did not have much variance in total number of words or number of sentences. Instead of a long, obtuse message, the longer treatments might have seemed shorter than was intended, especially without a shorter message as a reference point.

The results did indicate that the readability of the mission statement made a significant difference in participants' beliefs, specifically beliefs about the Function of the mission statement (its usefulness, meaningfulness, and ability to inspire). Beliefs about Function was found to positively predict Attitude Toward the Organization, which positively predicted Behavioral Intention. In this way, a link between readability and behavioral intention was supported by the

results of the study.

Interestingly, this link was the opposite of what was expected from the literature. As reading level increased, so did measures of belief. In other words, the less readable mission statements performed better than the more readable mission statements in terms of increasing perceptions of the mission statement's usefulness, meaningfulness, and ability to inspire. No preconceived notions or differences in content were found that would explain this result. All that can be concluded is that, at least within this study, the more complex wording a mission statement contains, the more it is perceived as functional and the more the organization can expect positive behavioral intention.

The results of the study also indicate that organizations should be most concerned with the way their mission statement affects their culture when designing the message. When an organization attempts to use a mission statement to influence stakeholder behavior, that organization should definitely consider the way that mission statement will influence their organizational culture. Message characteristics were not shown to be a factor in influencing subjective norm, the most important predictor of behavioral intention. Attitudes had much less influence. The extent to which the participant believed that the mission statement was relevant to them made the most difference when it came time to decide whether or not to engage in desirable behaviors, and this was unrelated to length and readability.

### *Limitations and Suggestions for Future Study*

Most of the mission statement literature discussing the importance of length and readability approach the topic with qualitative methods, such as interviews with managers, instead of quantitative methods. Is it possible that the importance of keeping mission statements "short and sweet" is simply accepted wisdom, without proper testing done to check if it is fact?

With so little empirical research done on this specific element of mission statement design, let alone quantitative analysis, there is certainly need for more studies like this one to test this notion.

While it is considered advisable for universities to view the students as stakeholders (Mainardes, Raposo, & Alves, 2012; Jongbloed, Enders, & Carlo, 2008; Stefanica, 2014), the students themselves may view their relationship to the school differently. Instead of viewing themselves as consumers, as in Kelsey (1998), they might have an entirely different concept of their role in the school's structure. As a result, they may view the mission statement as irrelevant to their own educational experience. Many of the responses tended to be lukewarm, expressing somewhat indifferent attitudes that may indicate a certain apathy toward the scenario provided by the study.

Moving the study to a corporate context could contribute to more clear-cut results. Employees could have a better concept of themselves as stakeholders, and thus have stronger feelings about their mission statement. Although they have uses for universities, mission statements are commonly seen as a tool for corporate culture, and setting an empirical study similar to this one in a more traditional setting might yield more actionable results.

To conclude, in this study, the message characteristic of readability influenced behavioral intention of stakeholders through their salient beliefs about the usefulness of the mission statement, which led to more positive attitudes toward the organization. However, in the end, message characteristics did not have as great an effect as an individual's perceptions of how they fit into the organization's culture, and the extent to which their values matched those of the organization.

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