

# When Richer is Poorer: Understanding the Influence of Channel Richness and Presence on the Introduction of a Mission Statement

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## ABSTRACT

Developing and implementing mission statements continues to be a widely used managerial strategy. This study tests a model incorporating the immersion and transportation dimensions of presence and media richness for evaluating the effectiveness of two commonly used strategies (paper versus video) for introducing a mission statement to members of an organization. Outcomes include participants' recall of the statement, involvement with the statement, and perceived importance of the statement. Results suggest: (a) channel richness does not directly impact the three outcomes, (b) the richer video channel resulted in less presence, and (c) greater presence positively impacted all three outcomes. The implications of these results are discussed for both future presence research and organizational practitioners.

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Keywords: *presence, immersion, transportation, media richness, mission statement*

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## 1. Introduction

Presence has emerged as a critical concept for understanding how people respond to both media form and content. It has been studied in a wide range of disciplines ranging from computer science to art. To date, presence has mostly been examined in media contexts such as video games (Bracken & Skalski, 2009), film (Bracken, Lombard, Neuendorf, Denny, & Quillan, 2004) and television (Bracken, 2005;

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Lombard, Reich, Grabe, Bracken, & Ditton, 2000). Scholars (e.g., Lee, 2004) have argued that this exclusivity needlessly limits the scope of the potential explanatory power of the concept, and have called for studies which apply presence to alternative questions and contexts. This study continues to explore the impact of media form on presence, but expands the investigation to examine organizational messages as content to aid our understanding of the processes through which mission statements are introduced to members of an organization.

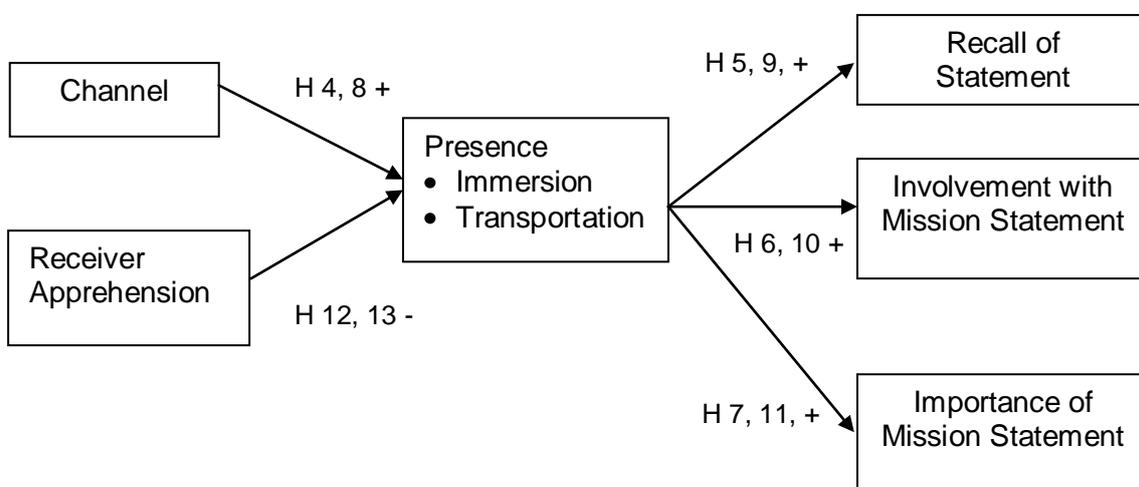
### **1.1 Organizational Mission Statement**

Organizational mission represents the purpose, strategy, values, and behavioral standards of an organization. It identifies the organization's aim, purpose, or reason for being (Harrison, 1987) by answering the question 'why are we here?' (Fairhurst, Jordon, & Neuwirth, 1997). Organizations often formalize these issues by developing a written mission statement. "Why do we exist?' 'What is our purpose?' and 'What do we want to achieve?' are some of the fundamental questions that a mission statement aims to answer" (Bart & Tabone, 1999, p. 19). They often incorporate values encouraged by the organization (Ledford Jr., Wendenhof, & Strahley, 1995) and specify both the organization's and its members' primary duty or way of behaving (Campbell, 1989; Cummins & Davies, 1994; Forehand, 2000; Tabone, 1999). Pearce and David (1987) characterize mission statements as "the operational, ethical, and financial guiding lights of companies." (p. 110).

Developing and implementing mission statements continues to be a widely used managerial strategy in all types of organizations (Williams, 2008). Bart (2000) reported nine out of 10 executives had used a mission statement in the past five years. A 1995 survey showed six out of ten large U.S. firms had developed statements (Ledford Jr., et al., 1995). Types of organizations utilizing mission statements include health care providers (Scott, 2001), public school systems (Ehrenhalt, 1997), libraries (Stover, 1997), philanthropic organizations (Sheehan, 1996), nonprofits (Forehand, 2000; Lewis 2005), government agencies (Weiss & Piderit, 1999), accounting firms (Bart, 1998), and universities (Lang & Lopers-Sweetman, 1991; Varlotta, 1997). Mission statements have been identified as a means for guiding environmentally responsible corporate behavior (Payne & Raiborn, 2001), and strategic managers often view a mission statement as the first step in the strategic management process (Pearce, 1982; Stone, 1996). Readers of this study need only briefly peruse their organization's website or walk down the hall to find a mission statement.

Notwithstanding the vast financial and intellectual resources spent towards developing and implementing mission statements, “A consistent theme running through the organizational development literature on corporate Mission Statements is an acknowledged widespread failure in their implementation” (Fairhurst, Jordan, & Neuwirth, 1997, p. 243). One particular neglected area concerns our lack of understanding of the relative efficacy of strategies for introducing a mission statement to the members of an organization. Researchers and practitioners agree that the strategy used to introduce the mission statement into an organization is critical to its success or failure (Bart & Baetz, 1998). Two widely used strategies are videotaping a recognized leader introducing the statement or developing a written introduction from a respected source. Studies are needed that systematically evaluate the effectiveness of implementation strategies that use different channels or modalities of communication while utilizing appropriate theories and concepts to provide explanations for findings.

We begin to address this need by examining the effectiveness of using video versus written channels for introducing a mission statement. More specifically, first, a conceptual model is presented that uses information richness theory and the concept of presence to predict which strategy for introducing the mission statement of an organization will be more effective, and hypotheses deduced from the model are introduced; Figure 1 summarizes our model. Since no previous studies have examined this issue, this section starts by identifying outcomes we use to evaluate the effectiveness of the two strategies. Next, a study that tests the hypotheses is described. Lastly, the results of the study are summarized and discussed.



**Figure 1.** Model of Hypothesized Relationships  
Signs next to each H (Hypothesis) indicate direction of predicted relationship.

## 1.2 Model of the Effectiveness of Strategies for Introducing Mission Statements

*Outcomes for Assessing Channel Effectiveness.* Our analysis will examine whether the following three outcomes systematically vary between strategies for introducing a mission statement: (a) accuracy of recall of the statement; (b) personal involvement with the statement; and (c) evaluation of the importance of the statement. The first outcome, *recall* of the statement, indicates the extent to which members were able to remember the major elements or themes in the statement. The second outcome is members' *personal involvement* with the statement. Involvement is a frequently used concept in marketing and advertising research that signifies arousal or interest (Munson & McQuarrie, 1987) and assesses whether a message is relevant or important to the receiver of the message. Higher personal involvement with the mission statement would indicate a more effective strategy, since this would suggest a more positive response to the statement. The third outcome, evaluation of the *importance* of the statement, indicates the extent to which members felt the elements of the statement reflected represent significant or meaningful activities the organization should be engaged in.

*Richness of Communication Channel.* Media richness theory proposes that media with certain characteristics are more effective for communicating complex messages (Daft & Lengel, 1986; Lengel & Daft, 1988; Trevino, Lengel, & Daft, 1987). Specifically, communication channels that: (a) allow immediate feedback; (b) facilitate the use of multiple communication cues (e.g., verbal and nonverbal); (c) make available the use of natural language; and (d) are able to convey a personal focus (Trevino et al., 1987) have greater richness. Richness theorists suggest that channels may be placed on a richest-to-poorest continuum based on their combination of the four characteristics (Daft & Lengel, 1986), with face-to-face communication considered the richest channel and impersonal correspondence such as memos or bulletin board postings the poorest. Managers and practitioners exhibit effectiveness when they select a channel that is appropriate to the ambiguity or equivocality of a specify problem or context, with richer being effective for complex messages and situations.

A strategy that incorporates a video introduction of a mission statement is utilizing a richer channel compared to a paper strategy for several reasons. First, video allows the multiple cues of spoken words, vocal inflections, dress, and gestures for emphasizing main points and communicating enthusiasm, while the paper modality relies mainly on written words. Second, video allows the speaker to utilize more natural language that matches his/her personal style, while the paper strategy allows zero adaptation. Since

organizational mission statements are complex messages when first introduced to members of organizations that often incorporate jargon-filled phrases and lengthy sentences, media richness theory suggests the video strategy would be the appropriate choice. Further, the multiplicity of cues and natural language may help increase the level of attention of those receiving the message. This suggests the following:

H1: Members who are introduced to the mission statement with a richer channel (video) will be more likely to remember the statement than those introduced to the statement with a leaner channel (paper).

H2: Members who are introduced to the mission statement with a richer channel (video) will be more likely to have greater personal involvement with the statement than those introduced to the statement with a leaner channel (paper).

H3: Members who are introduced to the mission statement with a richer channel (video) will be more likely to report the statement as being important than those introduced to the statement with a leaner channel (paper).

*The Mediating Role of Presence.* One problem with richness approaches is that they neglect the psychological experience of media in a continuously changing multiple channel environment. These approaches are deterministic in that they assume characteristics of the communication channel directly affect outcomes of exposure when this more likely depends on how a given strategy is experienced by users. Similar concerns have been raised by organizational researchers seeking to understand the influence of technology in organizations (e.g., Carlson & Zmud, 1999; Fulk, Steinfeld, Schmitz, & Power, 1987; Schmitz & Fulk, 1991). To overcome this problem, scholars suggest considering technology from a user perspective rather than a hardware perspective (Steuer, 1995), and the concept of presence provides the mechanism through which this can happen.

The International Society for Presence Research (2000) defines presence as “a psychological state or subjective perception in which even though part or all of an individual's current experience is generated by and/or filtered through human-made technology, part or all of the individual's perception fails to accurately acknowledge the role of the technology in the experience.” It includes the sensations of feeling “in” a media environment (or spatial presence; Wirth et al., 2007) and “with” mediated others

(or social presence; Biocca, Harms, & Burgoon, 2003), among several possible dimensions (see Lee, 2004; Lombard & Ditton, 1997; Lombard & Jones, 2007). In general, definitions of presence share in common the assumption that the form of the message impacts how mediated communication is perceived. As a result, presence serves as a crucial mediating variable in media research that can account for more variance and help better explain modality effects (Bracken & Skalski, 2010). Prior research has examined how media form variables such as television screen size (Lombard et al., 2000; Slater & Steed, 2000) and television image quality (Bracken, 2005), among others, relate to presence. Steuer (1995) suggested that audio-visual media like television should have a stronger impact on presence than print media as a function of vividness, or “the ability of a technology to produce a sensorially rich mediated environment” (p. 10). Steuer’s conceptualization of vividness aligns it with information richness approaches and suggests that a “richer” channel should make aspects of the source and message environment more “there” with the recipient of a mission statement. Skalski and Tamborini (2005) argued that sensations of presence toward the source of a message make source cues more prominent in memory, leading to an increase in source-based judgments affecting attitude. To test this, they conducted an experiment varying the vividness of source information by having subjects view a message in print form or through one of three video screen sizes. They reported presence was higher in the video conditions than through print, and it affected both source and message information processing leading to attitude. These findings demonstrate that the manner in which information such as a mission statement is presented can have differential effects on presence, and that more vivid modes tend to lead to greater presence and may also affect further outcomes of media exposure via presence.

Immersion has been identified as an essential aspect of the experience of telepresence (Witmer & Singer, 1998) which results when a media user feels perceptually surrounded (Blascovich et al., 2002). Lombard and Ditton’s (1997) immersion conceptualization emphasizes both perceptual and psychological components. Perceptual immersion (Biocca & Delaney, 1995) is the extent to which a participant’s perceptual systems are incorporated in a media experience, while psychological immersion refers to feelings of engagement or absorption (Quarrick, 1989). Tamborini (2000) argues that media high in vividness should evoke more immersion due to their ability to engage multiple user senses. Since the video

presentation in this study will incorporate both audio and visual components, (or two perceptual components, hearing and eyesight), we suggest:

H4: Immersion will be higher in response to a mission statement introduced through video than the same message presented in print form.

The senses of presence message recipients experience should relate to the outcomes of mission statement exposure discussed earlier. Although presence is typically viewed as an intensifier of effects, with higher levels of presence leading to greater outcomes (Bracken & Skalski, 2010), this may not be the case for all dependent variables. Skalski, Tamborini, Glazer and Smith (2009), for example, found that presence in response to an anti-drinking PSA impeded message recall, presumably because it reduced message elaboration. However, this study used a humorous message, and humor likely served as a peripheral cue in this case that was made more salient by presence. The combination of humor and presence, in essence, distracted from the message. The same should not be true for a serious message such as a mission statement delivered through video. Our thinking is that the video condition will stimulate greater presence as immersion in the statement itself, but not so much that the experience becomes a detriment to the information processing involved with learning about and reacting to a mission statement.

H5: Greater immersion will relate positively to recall of the mission statement.

H6: Greater immersion will relate positively to personal involvement with the statement.

H7: Greater immersion will relate positively to evaluations of the importance of the statement.

A related stream of research has looked at the power of print media to “transport” readers to other places (Green, Brock, & Kaufman, 2004). Transportation Imagery Model (TIM) attempts to explain how media users can be transported in to the world of the story or narrative. Green et al. (2004) explain that the presentation of a story or narrative can distract media users from engaging in critical processing of the story content. While the concept was originally studied with printed stories, it has also been

applied to audio-visual content (Escalas, 2004). Ironically, this is in contrast to Lang's recommendation that television is poor channel for conveying complex information. According to the Limited Capacity of Motivated Media Messages Processing (LC4MP) (Lang, 2006), the continuous changing of the audio and visual information on television distracts media users from the actual message. Since mission statements are still frequently introduced in print form, the current study examines the reception of the mission statement across different media forms (video or print); no studies to date have connected the two, but the presence literature suggests that an audio-visual presentation will be more engaging; therefore, we posit the following:

H8: Transportation will be higher in response to a mission statement introduced through video than the same message presented in print form.

To the extent transportation results in enjoyment (Green et al., 2004), this too will tend to lead to a more positive response to the statement itself. Finally, given that most work on presence has treated it as a positive influence, the following hypotheses do so as well. For transportation, the influence will be driven by participants being able to visualize themselves living experiences that enact the mission statement content. Thus, we suggest:

H9: Greater transportation will relate positively to recall of the mission statement.

H10: Greater transportation will relate positively to personal involvement with the statement.

H11: Greater transportation will relate positively to evaluations of the importance of the statement.

Our final hypotheses examine the role of individual differences in the experience of presence, specifically receiver apprehension. This trait-like disposition has been the focus of several investigations in the communication literature (Beatty, 1994) and refers to "the fear of misinterpreting, inadequately processing, and/or not being able to adjust psychologically to messages sent by others" (Wheeless, 1975, p. 263). Receiver apprehension has particular relevance to the experience of presence because both deal with people's psychological responses to communication. Although no studies to

date have empirically examined this connection, it makes sense that message recipients high in receiver apprehension would experience less presence due to the anxiety they have about decoding and processing messages. The opposite should also be true—recipients low in receiver apprehension should be more likely to experience presence because they more readily accept communication content. Our analysis will examine this relationship due its particular relevance to mission statements, which are a strong, message-centric type of content. Linking receiver apprehension to presence also answers the call for more research on media user variables determining presence (Lombard & Ditton, 1997). The following final hypothesis is therefore advanced:

H12: Members with higher receiver apprehension will experience less immersion.

H13: Members with higher receiver apprehension will experience less transportation.

## 2. Methods

The experiment took place at a large mid-western U.S. university located in an urban environment. The university president was approached, and he agreed to participate in the study by being videotaped introducing the mission statement of the university. The researchers developed two separate introductions. The first gave a general description of the university and then specified the mission. The second was identical to the first, but added three additional paragraphs that provided examples illustrating the major themes of the mission statement.<sup>1</sup> For the video condition, the university president was taped introducing the statement, and began by saying 'Hello, I'm Xxx, president of Xxx University. For the paper condition, the introductions were printed on a letterhead from the Office of the President, and the president's name clearly appeared at the top of the page. The mission statement of the university is:

*Our mission is to encourage the development of human and humane knowledge in the arts, sciences, humanities and professions through scholarship, creative activity and research while providing an accessible and contemporary education to all individuals. We are here to serve and engage the public and prepare our students to lead productive, responsible and satisfying lives in the region and global society.*

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<sup>1</sup> Analysis not included in this manuscript focuses on the possible influence of these differences. Since participants were randomly assigned to the experimental conditions, any effects will be distributed evenly here.

## **2.1 Sample and Procedures**

A total of 262 persons enrolled in a variety of communication courses were recruited to participate in the study, of which 236 were full time students. Forty (15.3%) were freshmen, 34 (13%) were sophomores, 88 (33.6%) were juniors, 81 (30.9%) were seniors, 14 (5%) were graduate students, and five (2%) either did not report their class rank or were not taking the course for credit as a college student. One hundred eighty three (69.8%) participants were white, 48 (18.3%) were black, four (1.5%) were Asian, eight (3.1%) were Hispanic, and 19 (7.3%) were other or did not report their ethnic origin. One hundred two (38.9%) were male, and the average age was 24.50 years (ranging from 18-47). Additionally, 218 participants reported working in addition to being a college student an average of 23 hours a week. This sample is appropriate for several reasons. First, students at this university are both older than traditional college students and most have considerable work experience outside their academic pursuits, and thus have experience with managerial strategies such as mission statements. Second, these students frequently are either paying their own tuition or taking out their own student loans, and have tremendous expectations of getting value for their investment. Third, universities are increasingly concerned with branding themselves in their marketplace and view current students as important agents for communicating the brand external audiences. Finally, universities recognize that positive experiences by current students aid retention rates and future financial contributions after graduation. Mission statement strategies are appropriate for addressing these issues.

Upon entering a room, participants sat at a table and were first given an informed consent form to sign, followed by a survey. Page one of the survey asked whether the participant knew the mission statement of the university (yes or no). Of the study participants, only one reported knowing the statement, and her results were not included in any analysis. Participants were then asked to move to one of two additional rooms; to ensure randomness, every other person was directed to each respective room. In the first room, there was a table that had the paper introduction to the statement. Participants were asked to read the introduction, and to return to the other room when completed. In the second room, participants were asked to sit in front of a flat screen color television, and asked to return to the first room when a video was finished. A researcher then started the video of the mission statement introduction. When participants returned to the first room, they returned to their seat, and completed the survey.

## 2.2 Instrumentation

*Dependent Variables.* The first dependent variable, immediate recall of the mission statement, was measured using the following procedures. First, the initial question on the outcome survey asked participants to provide the mission statement of the university. Each response was coded for the presence of the three main themes of: (a) providing an accessible and affordable education, (b) creating knowledge through faculty research and activities, and (c) engaging and supporting the surrounding community. Two researchers independently coded for the presence of each of these themes. The lead author calculated the Cohen's Kappa intercoder reliability for each of the three categories, where agreement was defined as when both coders indicated the presence of the respective theme, and disagreement was defined as when one coder indicated the presence of a theme and the other did not. The reliability for the three themes was .90, .83, and .77. In all cases where disagreements occurred, the coders met and resolved the differences. Recall was taken as the number of the three main themes that a given participant reported and ranged from zero to three.

The second dependent variable, level of personal involvement with the statement, was measured with the Personal Involvement Inventory (Zaichkowsky, 1985). This instrument is a 20-item semantic differential scale with seven points between the bipolar items. Participants are asked to judge the item being evaluated (in this case, the mission statement) against 20 descriptive scales according to how they perceive the item. Examples of the bipolar scales include: Important-Unimportant; Valuable-Worthless; Trivial-Fundamental; Significant-Insignificant; and Boring-Interesting. Further information on the reliability and validity of this instrument along with the complete scale may be found in Rubin, Palmgreen and Sypher (1994). Cronbach's alpha for the scale was .96.

The third dependent variable, evaluation of the importance of the mission statement, was measured using three seven-point Likert scales. Participants were asked for their level of agreement that each of the three main themes in the mission statement was important, where one indicated they strongly disagreed the theme was important and seven indicated strong agreement with the importance of the theme. Responses for these items were averaged to provide an indication of how participants evaluated the importance of the mission statement. Cronbach's alpha for the scale was .86.

*Independent Variables.* Immersion presence was measured using items from the Temple Presence Inventory (TPI) developed by Lombard and Ditton (2000), which is composed of seven-point Likert statements where participants indicate the extent to

which their experience reflected each item. Examples of the items include “To what extent did you feel mentally immersed in the experience?” and “How completely were your senses engaged?” Cronbach's alpha for the immersion scale was .89. Transportation presence was measured with a scale developed by Green and Brock (2000), where participants indicate the extent to which their experience reflected each item. Examples of the items include “The events in the narrative are relevant to my everyday life.” and “I could picture myself in the scene of the events described in the narrative.” Cronbach's alpha for the transportation scale was .76.

Receiver apprehension was measured using a 20 item scale developed by Wheelless (1975), which is composed of a series of five-point Likert statements assessing the tendency of respondents to feel anxiety or uncertainty in response to messages. Sample items are “Receiving new information makes me feel restless” and “It is often difficult for me to concentrate on what others are saying.” The scale was coded so that a higher average indicated higher receiver apprehension. Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .88.

### **3. Analysis**

Hypotheses one, two, and three predicted that participants who were introduced to the mission statement with the richer video strategy would be more likely to remember the statement, have greater personal involvement with the statement, and evaluate the statement as being important. Hypotheses four and eight predicted that immersion and transportation would be greater in the richer video condition. These hypotheses were tested two ways. First, a series of t-tests were run, with communication channel (paper versus video) as the grouping factor. Second, a dummy code for channel was used in a Path Analysis, which is described below.

Hypotheses five, six, and seven predicted that greater immersion would positively relate to recall of the mission statement, personal involvement with the mission statement, and perceived importance of the mission statement, while hypotheses nine, ten, and 11 predicted that greater transportation would positively relate to the three outcomes. Finally, hypotheses 12 and 13 predicted the trait of receiver apprehension would relate negatively with immersion and transportation. These hypotheses were tested through Path Analysis using the least squares method. Two separate analyses were run, each of which included either immersion or transportation. Path Analysis

involves estimating the sizes of the model parameters and testing the overall model fit. Parameter size was estimated by regressing each endogenous variable onto its causal antecedent, and model fit was tested by comparing estimated parameter sizes to the reproduced correlations (see Hunter & Gerbing, 1982, for a more complete description of this analysis procedure). In short, a model that is consistent with the data is one which: (a) has substantial path coefficients, (b) has differences between parameter estimates and reproduced correlations (errors) that are no greater than what would be expected through sampling error, and (c) passes a test of overall model fit, as indicated by a non-significant chi-square goodness of fit result. For a model to be judged consistent with the data, it had to pass all three of the above criteria. The PATH program was used to determine if the model advanced in this study met these criteria. Note that all correlations were corrected for attenuation due to measurement error during the analysis procedure, and that communication channel was coded so that the paper condition equaled one and the video condition equaled two. Thus, as was mentioned previously, hypotheses one-four and eight were tested a second time in this model, but with either immersion or transportation presence as a mediating variable.

#### 4. Results

Table 1 provides the correlations amongst the variables of the study, with the exception of the categorical communication channel variable. These results provide some preliminary support in favor of our model. First, as expected, immersion was positively correlated with the three dependent variables of mission statement recall ( $r = .12, p < .05$ ), personal involvement with the mission statement ( $r = .53, p < .05$ ), and importance of the mission statement ( $r = .33, p < .05$ ). Second, as expected, transportation was positively correlated with all three dependent variables: (a) recall ( $r = .19, p < .05$ ); (b) personal involvement ( $r = .59, p < .05$ ); and (c) importance ( $r = .32, p < .05$ ). Third, as predicted, receiver apprehension was negatively associated with both immersion ( $r = -.22, p < .05$ ) and transportation ( $r = -.19, p < .05$ ).

Hypotheses one-four and eight were tested with both t tests (with communication channel) as the grouping factor and using Path Analysis with a dummy code for channel. The results were contrary to expectations. Hypothesis one predicted those in the video group would be more likely to recall the statement; there was no significant difference ( $t = 1.41, ns$ ). Hypothesis two predicted those in the video group would be

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1 Mission Statement Recall	-	.20**	.16*	.12*	.19**	-.02
2 Personal Involvement with Mission Statement		-	.41**	.53**	.59**	-.17**
3 Importance of Mission Statement			-	.33**	.32**	-.06
4 Immersion				-	.70**	-.22**
5 Transportation					-	-.19**
6 Communication Apprehension						-

\*  $p < .05$

\*\*  $p < .01$

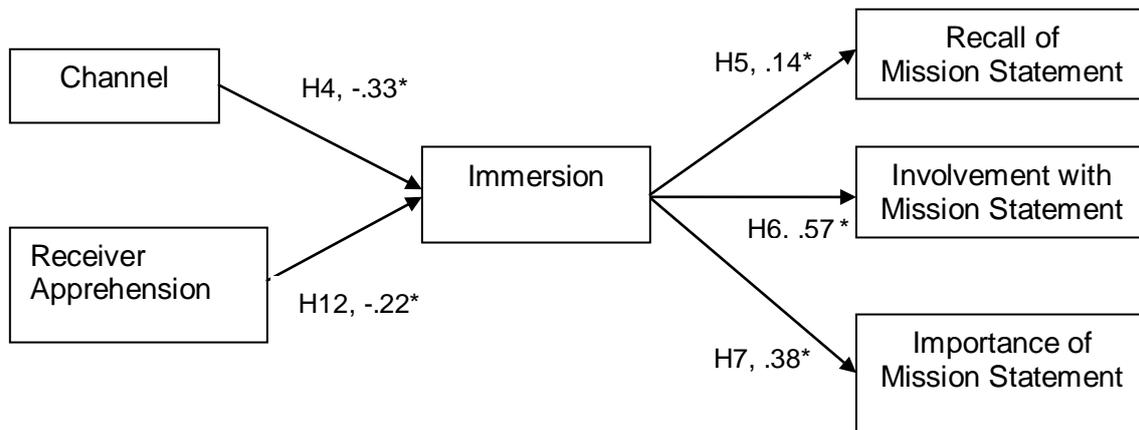
**Table 1.** Correlations.

more likely to have greater personal involvement with the mission statement; the difference approached significance in the opposite direction as predicted ( $t = 1.91$ ,  $p < .10$ ). Hypothesis three predicted those in the video group would be more likely to report the mission statement as being important; there was no significant difference ( $t = -.62$ , ns). Hypothesis four predicted greater immersion for those in the video condition. Contrary to expectations, immersion was greater in the paper condition ( $t = 5.55$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Hypothesis eight predicted greater transportation for those in the video condition. Contrary to expectations, transportation was greater in the paper condition ( $t = 4.01$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

For our Path Analysis, channel was coded so that the paper condition equaled 1 and the video condition equaled 2. Figure 2 summarizes the results for the model with immersion, while Figure 3 presents the results for the model with transportation. There were no significant path coefficients between channel and the three dependent variables in either of the models. Consistent with the t-tests and contrary to expectations, there was less presence for those in the video condition compared to the paper condition (immersion model path coefficient =  $-.33$ ,  $p < .05$ ; transportation model path coefficient =  $-.26$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

Hypotheses five-seven predicted greater immersion would have a positive impact on the outcomes of the study, while hypotheses nine-11 did the same for transportation. Hypotheses five and nine predicted immersion and transportation respectively would increase recall of the mission statement; these were supported (immersion model path coefficient =  $.14$ ,  $p < .05$ ; transportation model path coefficient =  $.15$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Hypotheses six and ten predicted immersion and transportation respectively would increase personal involvement with the statement; these were supported (immersion

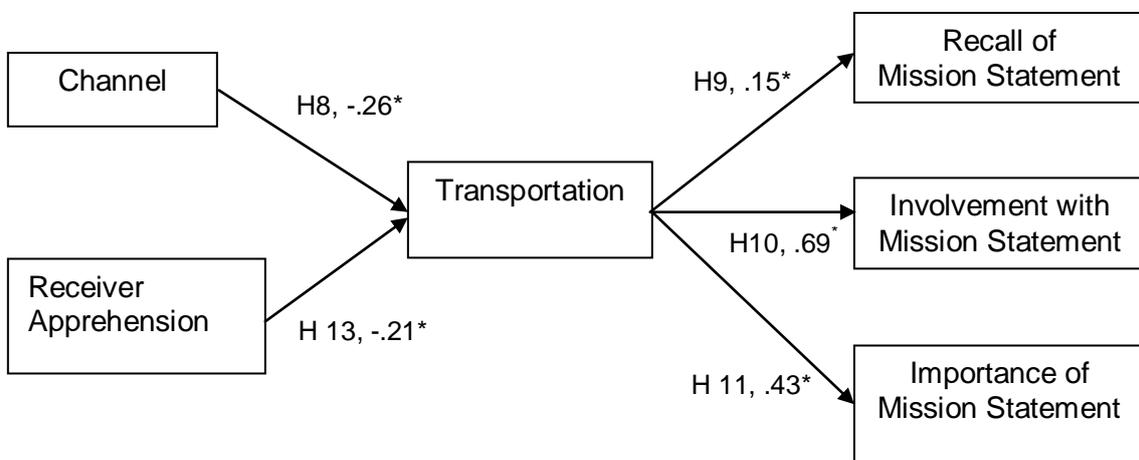
model path coefficient = .57,  $p < .05$ ; transportation model path coefficient = .69,  $p < .05$ ). Hypotheses seven and 11 predicted immersion and transportation respectively would increase the perceived importance of the statement; these were supported (immersion model path coefficient = .38,  $p < .05$ ; transportation model path coefficient = .43,  $p < .05$ ). Hypotheses 12 and 13 predicted participants with greater communication apprehension would be less likely to experience presence; these were supported (immersion model path coefficient = -.22,  $p < .05$ ; transportation model path coefficient = -.21,  $p < .05$ ).



**Figure 2.** Path Analysis Results for Immersion Model

\* = significant at  $p < .05$   
 $\chi^2 (9) = 15.28, p = .083.$

In addition to having substantial path coefficients, the models passed the second and third tests for model evaluation. The differences between predicted and obtained correlations for all unconstrained bivariate relationships were examined, and none were



**Figure 3.** Path Analysis Results for Transportation Model

\* = significant at  $p < .05$   
 $\chi^2 (9) = 10.05, p = .346$

significantly different than what would be expected through sampling error except for the links between involvement and importance, which is trivial because they are dependent variables that would be expected to interrelate somewhat.

Furthermore, the models passed the global test of goodness of fit (immersion model  $\chi^2(9) = 15.28, p = .083$ ; transportation model  $\chi^2(9) = 10.05, p = .346$ ). Thus, the analysis of the models shows significant path coefficients, no major errors, and passed global tests of goodness of fit.

## **5. Discussion**

This study had two primary motivations. First, we wished to respond to a practical problem--the ongoing frustration of a broad audience with mission statement development and implementation efforts. Despite the continued extant importance of this organizational strategy, communication and media scholars have provided little insight into understanding these processes. Second, we sought to utilize and build upon the burgeoning presence literature to inform our insights into this area, thereby extending the scope of the applications of presence. Thus, we directly compared the relative efficacy of two commonly used strategies (paper versus video) for introducing a mission statement to members of an organization, while incorporating immersion and transportation presence into our model to allow the possible importance of the participant experience to emerge while avoiding a technologically deterministic position.

Our results were both interesting, and in some cases unexpected. Contrary to expectations, the richness of the channel utilized for introducing the mission statement did not positively influence statement recall, involvement with the statement, or evaluations of the importance of the statement. Further, those exposed to the richer video experienced less immersion and transportation presence compared to those who were introduced to the mission statement using the paper strategy. These results are similar to those reported by Jones (2008) who also found printed materials (comic books) elicited stronger presence responses for participants than when the same comic story was viewed as a film. Consistent with expectations, greater immersion and transportation did increase recall, personal involvement, and evaluations of importance.

### 5.1 Channel Richness

There are multiple possible reasons for the channel richness findings. The first concerns the nature of the message. In the video condition, participants were introduced to the statement at the pace of the speaker, in this case the university president. Media richness theory suggests that richer modalities are appropriate for more complex and ambiguous situations. In this case, the message itself was relatively complex, but the situation was essentially one of information distribution. It may be that the pace of the introduction on the video created an information overload situation. Conversely, participants who read the introduction were able to cognitively process the materials at their own pace, allowing greater presence. This result is consistent with Lang's suggestion that complex information may suffer from audio/visual presentation such as video (2006). It is also consistent with work on the transportation concept, much of which has focused on the power of print messages to transport readers. Second, there may be underlying variables in addition to presence mediating this relationship. For instance, Chaiken and Eagly (1983), in one of the first studies on how modality affects persuasion, presented subjects with a message delivered by either a likable or unlikable communicator through one of three modalities: print, audiotape, or videotape. The likable communicator was found to be more persuasive in the audio and video modalities than in print, whereas the unlikable communicator was more persuasive in the print modality than through audio or video. Applied to this study, these results suggest incorporating variables such as likeability into future studies. A third and related reason concerns the quality of the introduction provided on the video, in that the president's preferred presentation style is reading from a manuscript. While the delivery was professionally executed, many study participants commented that they expected a University president to introduce the mission statement without reading. Thus, there was a type of 'boomerang' effect of richness in that multiple cues, rather than serving as a means for being more involving, became a distraction and detracted from the experience. The content being presented and the credibility of the source of the message always are important to initiatives such as introducing a mission statement; this finding suggests the credibility of the source may serve to increase expectations of the audience for the overall video quality. Future research should examine this issue.

## **5.2 Presence**

This study begins to answer the call by scholars (e.g., Lee, 2004) to extend the application of presence to contexts beyond media studies alone. We found that immersion and transportation both served a significant role in stimulating participants' remembering the mission statement, having feelings of personal involvement with the statement, and evaluating the statement as being important for the organization. This suggests that practitioners must be concerned not only with the logistics of efforts to implement mission statements, but also must recognize the nature of the experience is critical to positive outcomes as well. Participants who more engaged in the experience (immersion) and feel like they traveled to the place where the mission statement was being presented (transportation) had more positive outcomes. These results support the claim by Bracken and Skalski (2010) that sensations of presence mediate outcomes, since the inclusion of presence as a variable often creates a connection and provides an explanation linking independent and dependent variables. More recent technological advances that help place users in virtual environments (e.g., Second Life) may be readily applied to contexts such as the implementation of mission statements. Future research should explore whether such efforts do in fact increase presence and ultimately improve outcomes beyond the current and less costly alternatives. Additionally, researchers should also be open to examining the predictive role of immersion and transportation in other contexts. In the current study, participants who reported higher levels of receiver apprehension experienced less immersion and transportation. This suggests simple nervousness may act as an impediment to creating a high presence situation. It also contributes to Lombard and Ditton's (1997) call to identify individual differences important to the experience of presence.

The dimensions of immersion and transportation were highly correlated in this study ( $r = .70$ ). Additionally, when both scales were combined, the Cronbach's alpha was .88. For the sake of thoroughness, we combined these dimensions into one presence scale and reran our analysis. The results did not qualitatively change, but they are available from the authors upon request, and they suggest the need for further work examining the structure and relationship of presence dimensions. Based on the tendency for dimensions of presence to be highly correlated in empirical studies, along with our results demonstrating the value of presence for understanding media effects in alternative contexts, we suggest future scholarship should also continue to explore a more nuanced view of form variables when applying the presence concept. For example, Bracken and Botta (2010) reported that when viewers disliked media content,

they reported very low sensations of presence regardless of media form (e.g., large or small television screens). Additionally, Pettey, Bracken, Rubenking, Buncher and Gress (2010) have found that when media users are able to select the media presentation form, the viewing context will be more likely to induce presence sensations, and that media users consider content when making such decisions. Applying these findings to this study would suggest members of organizations be given varying options for learning of a mission statement.

### **5.3 Strengths, Limitations, and Conclusion**

One strength of this study was the willing participation of the university president. This both provided us with an extremely credible source for introducing the statement, and allowed for a more realistic set of conditions. A factor that potentially limits the generalizability of results is that our sample was composed of students. While we argued previously that this sample was appropriate, future research using similar methods in a university setting should attempt to include faculty and staff. These findings should also be examined in non-university settings as well. Greater attention should also be given to the types of presence that may impact the reception and evaluation of mission statements. Although this study found consistent relationships between a mission statement message and the immersion and transportation dimensions of presence, future work should consider other potentially important presence outcomes, such as social presence (Biocca, Harms, & Burgoon, 2003; Lee, 2004), to see if this consistency is maintained. We also recognize that applying presence to this alternative context required us to also extend the conceptualizations of presence beyond where some may be comfortable with, but suggest that such extensions have frequently occurred in this rapidly expanding area and that our extensions are inherently consistent with the spirit of the extant literature.

Overall, this study contributes to the literatures on both mission statements and presence by empirically demonstrating presence as an important consideration for organizations wishing to communicate mission statement information to members. It also returns presence scholarship to its organizational communication and media richness roots (e.g., Short, Williams, & Christie, 1976) by considering its role in a particular type of message transmission important in an organizational context. Future research should continue to explore opportunities to leverage the presence concept to facilitate our understanding of alternative processes to everyone's mutual benefit.

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