STORY-SELLING:

THE PERSUASIVE EFFECTS OF USING STORIES IN UNIVERSITY RECRUITMENT

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Story-Selling:

The Persuasive Effects of Using Stories in University Recruitment

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this dissertation was to examine the persuasive effects personal stories have on the university recruitment process. Specifically, this study explored how Fisher's (1984) concepts of narrative probability and fidelity influenced Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behavior model using a four-staged quasi-experimental study. Jablin's (1982) anticipatory socialization phase of organizational assimilation theory acted as a context for this applied dissertation.

This study evolved over four stages while working with the North Dakota State University Office of Admission. The first stage provided qualitative data exploring students' opinions of using story-based recruitment material. Focus groups also revealed what types of stories would be helpful for prospective students during the college admission process. Stage two developed and tested the narrative probability and fidelity scales based on Fisher's (1984) narrative paradigm. These newly created scales were used to determine the level of narrative probability and narrative fidelity in each of the experimental conditions. Stage three consisted of the creation and testing of the recruitment videos used in each experimental condition. The final stage tested the story-based recruitment and control videos on prospective students visiting North Dakota State University.

The results of this dissertation were obtained using a series of ANOVAs, regression analyses, and path model testing techniques. Overall, the results suggested that high levels of narrative probability and narrative fidelity do positively influence prospective students' attitudes toward choosing a university and have a less powerful, but still positive, influence on their subjective norms beliefs and perceived

behavioral control of choosing a university. The theory of planned behavior model

was also supported by this data. The results of each stage of this study produced

theoretical and practical implications. This dissertation concludes with a discussion

of the results, implications, limitations, and future research opportunities.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine the persuasive effects personal stories have on prospective students' choice of college. More specifically, this research uses a quasi-experimental[1] design to compare the effects of three recruitment videos with varying levels of narrative probability and narrative fidelity and how these different videos influence prospective students' attitudes toward a university and their behavioral intention of choosing that university. The goal of this research is to determine if using current students' personal stories to recruit high school students is more persuasive than using facts and figures about the university. Stories are believed to influence human behavior and decision-making as long as the stories match the values and expectations of the receivers (Slater & Rouner, 2002). This study not only measures the persuasive effects of stories, but also provides practical empirically-based advice for university admission offices about recruiting the Millennial generation (people born later than 1981) (Kohut et. al, 2010).

Therefore, this chapter first addresses the changing state of university recruitment and the challenges admission offices are currently encountering. I briefly discuss how personal stories and narratives may be the missing communicative element needed to take on current admission challenges with recruitment and retention. This chapter also describes the conceptualization of my dissertation, it admits to delimitations, and provides definitions of major key terms used throughout the study. This chapter concludes with a description of the current study's purpose and rationale and an overview of the remaining chapters. This dissertation is both a

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[1] I use the term *quasi-experimental* because the participating organization disallowed randomization.

theoretical and applied examination of the persuasive effects stories have on organizational recruitment. This research extends theory while providing practical advice that can be adapted to any university or organization.

Current State of University Recruitment

Undergraduate admission offices are challenged with not only promoting tangible items like class sizes and majors, but also the abstract element of a university being a place to not only go to school, but a place to live, flourish, and call home (Anctil, 2008a; 2008b; Chafee & Tierney, 1985). Universities spend a significant amount of time and resources on creating and promoting its culture, sense of community, and the students' brilliant future as a result of their higher education (Becher, 1981; Chaffee, 1984, Chaffee & Tierney, 1985). These intangible concepts and potential opportunities are not particularly easy for high school seniors to understand (Anctil, 2008a). Going to college is no longer a decision solely based on what students want to study and their future career goals (Boyer, 1990). Universities now also sell an anticipated social experience. This social experience and the idea of college or higher education can be are unfamiliar concepts to high school students. This unfamiliarity creates the marketing problem of selling an intangible idea to prospective students (Anctil, 2008a).

In recent years, however, increases in cost to attend a university have created tangible problems for students and their families to overcome. The struggling economy has forced students to take longer on their college decisions not because they are unsure where they want to attend, but because they are concerned whether their families will be able to afford college because of rising unemployment rates and

tuition costs (Hoover, 2011). Hoover (2011) explained that more students are struggling with choosing a university because of state-budget cuts crippling public universities' funding, which forces higher education to substantially raise the price of tuition and fees. This increase in cost causes students and their families to worry about being able to make payments.

Rising tuition cost also has made online universities a more attractive option to many students (Clark, 2009). According to Clark (2009), online university enrollment has increased by 20% since the start of the recession. Students can save thousands of dollars each year by living at home while still earning their degree rather than moving to campus. Online universities provide an affordable option that allows students to take courses that can conveniently fit into any schedule (Clark, 2009). Online universities are now major players in higher education and every traditional university's newest competitor (Clark, 2009).

An online university also does not have to spend time or money marketing an intangible experience like a traditional university does. The cost comparison between online and traditional higher education is tangible, easy for people to understand, and a powerful marketing tool. The current economic state complicates any recruitment message about the intangible college experience and provides admission offices with more motivation to find ways to promote the importance of traditional higher education in a more tangible way. In spite of a troubled economy, admission recruiters must demonstrate that the results of higher education and the college experience are worth the burgeoning costs. Using personal stories and student

narratives may be the key to providing a more tangible and persuasive reason for attending a traditional college despite the expense.

An estimated 17 million students attend an American college or university every year (US Census Bureau, 2008) all of which choose their university for various reasons. The college experience affects nearly every aspect of a person's life including learning, health, relationships, and value systems (Paskarella & Terenzini, 2005). These aspects of life are all ideas that admission offices try to describe and portray while recruiting. Admission offices are currently working with the most technologically savvy generation of students yet, the Millennial generation (Kohut et. al 2010). University admission teams are challenged with finding ways to stay "connected" to these students via technology and finding ways to use technology to make their version of college more tangible or appealing than the competitor's version.

The Millennial generation, also referred to as Generation Next, is anyone born in 1981 and later and have made his or her passage into adulthood during the new millennium (Kohut et. al, 2010). According to the PEW Research Center's 2010 report titled "Millennials: A Portrait of Generation Next," this generation is confident, self-expressive, liberal, upbeat, and open to change. Along with these personal qualities Millennials are also the most connected generation; they completely embrace technology and social media. Seventy-five percent of all Millennials use social networking websites, 88% text message using their cell phones, and 62% use wireless Internet while away from their home on a regular basis (Kohut et al., 2010).

This technologically driven generation takes a positive view of technology with 74% believing that technology has made life easier. Fifty-four percent of Millennials believe that technology brings people closer together rather than making them more isolated (Kout et. al, 2010).   This generation has become the poster-children for social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, and MySpace. PEW found that 55% of Millennials check their social networking sites' profiles at least once a day, and 29% admit to checking their profiles several times a day (Kohut et al., 2010). Admission offices are challenged to stay up-to-date with constantly evolving technology and trends to reach Millennials while still dealing with budget cuts. New technology is expensive, and finding ways to exploit technology efficiently is something all university admission teams must constantly consider.

Rising costs and a changing generation are just a few of the challenges admission offices across the United States are experiencing. These challenges do not even include the individual pressures students experience transitioning to college and the need for messages that reduce uncertainty and anxiety. Finding ways to manage rising costs and budget cuts while still being on the cutting edge of recruitment invites an investigation of possible solutions for universities. The possible solution I am exploring is not necessarily high-tech, but the narrative mode is a form of communication that has persisted since humans gained articulate speech.

Sharing stories and narratives is a natural communication process that has crossed cultures and generations (Fisher, 1984). Narratives not only allow people to envision an idea, but can also influence their behaviors (Slater & Rouner, 2008). Finding ways to improve communication with prospective students does not always

mean finding the newest channel, but finding a way to send the most appropriate and tangible message to create a feeling of rightness. Sharing stories may be a way admission offices can make college a more tangible idea to prospective students and is possibly a more persuasive approach to university recruitment.

Purpose of the Current Study

The primary goal of this dissertation is to use a quasi-experimental design to determine if using personal stories in university recruitment enhances prospective students' attitudes toward a particular college and their behavioral intention of choosing a particular college. The secondary goal of this dissertation is to create a theoretical link between the rhetorical theory of narrative paradigm (Fisher, 1984) and the social scientific study of persuasion. I am exploring the possible causal relationship between narrative-based recruitment material and persuasion, specifically changes in attitudes and behavioral intention toward a university.

Fisher's (1984) narrative paradigm and Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behavior serve as the theoretical lens for the study. This study also provides an examination of the current state of university recruitment and socialization through the lens of Jablin's (1982) anticipatory phase of organizational assimilation which helps solidify the challenges admission offices are currently experiencing. This study is not only a theoretical examination of the persuasive effects of stories, but also an applied examination that provides practical insight and advice that can be adapted to any university or organization recruiting new members.

I have conceptualized my dissertation from an applied prospective from the beginning, and application remains a common thread throughout the entire study.

This applied perspective has allowed me to examine a problem and test a possible solution based on the needs and context of the problem rather than a specific epistemology. The challenges facing admission offices require an analysis that benefits from both a rhetorical and social scientific point-of-view. Both rhetoricians and social scientists have researched persuasion and narratives, but neither group recognizes both bodies of research. My dissertation merges these two bodies of research for the first time, to my knowledge, and highlights how both inform and complement one another.

I also see the current study acting as a narrative in itself. The study takes place at a university's admission office in a land not too far away, its characters (the current students) come to life through their adventures on campus, and the moral of the story is provided by the prospective students' attitudes and behaviors. My goal is for this narrative to advance theory and practice.

Conceptualization of Study

The idea for this dissertation was inspired after reading two *New York Times* articles written by education journalist Jacques Steinberg (2009; 2010). Steinberg discusses how universities were adapting their campus visit programs to better meet the needs of the Millennial generation. In an article titled, "Colleges Seek to Remake the Campus Tour," Steinberg (2009) describes how Hendrix College in Littlerock, Arkansas, encouraged their guides to "purge their memories of all those dates from the college's history in favor of personal anecdotes" (p. A12). The article explains how visitors liked this un-rehearsed tour because it felt "real" and that visitors were not

remembering facts and figures, but they were remembering the tour guides' stories from the eating in the cafeteria with friends on theme night (Steinberg, 2009).

Steinberg (2010) wrote a follow-up article about the changes in recruitment specifically looking at Yale's attempt to adapt to what Yale calls the "High School Musical Generation." Steinberg (2010) describes how Yale now showcases the university experience through a musical theater-based video rather than simply stating boring facts and statistics. Both of these articles highlighted the changing generation and universities' challenges to stand out among the thousands of colleges from which students get to choose from.

Steinberg's (2009; 2010) reports caused me to ask the question if these narrative and flashy changes were actually effective and more persuasive than the traditional recruitment material? I began reviewing literature on the use of stories in organizational recruitment and stories' effects on persuasion and realized that little research has been done on the topic. However, the research that has been conducted ranged from rhetorical to social scientific studies, but the results and explanations from these studies paralleled one another despite what end of the epistemological spectrum they were anchored.

To properly test the claims from the *New York Times* articles and provide advice for admission offices, I conceptualized a dissertation that would follow a series of stages over two years. Stage one consisted of a qualitative pilot study examining students' opinions on using stories for recruitment and what type of stories and media they prefer. Stage two of my dissertation was developing an instrument to measure narrative probability and narrative fidelity to properly test the messages in

stage three. Finally, stage four was the actual main study answering the initial question of whether stories are more persuasive than facts and figures in the context of university recruitment. To conduct this research in a valid manner I needed to work with a university's admission office to test these messages on prospective students; however, working with an organization involves institutional and organizational challenges that created delimitations for this dissertation.

Delimitations of the Study

All research studies have delimitations, but when working with an organization some delimitations cause research choices that are not ideal for the study, but are necessary to meet the needs, goals, and restraints of the organization. Many of these delimitations can lead to limitations after the results are determined. I was fortunate enough to work with the Office of Admission at North Dakota State University where I was given remarkable access to recruitment material and prospective students for data collection. However, to ensure my research did not hinder visitors' experience, I had to adapt the stages of my study to the Office of Admission's visitation programs and schedules. I often had to make last-minute changes to the original research plan based on concerns from the organizational members as data collection periods approached. I describe four primary delimitations in this section that impacted the entire study. Other minor delimitations occurred with each stage of the study, but are described in chapter three.

The primary delimitation for this study was the amount of time I would be given to collect data and what events I would be given access to for different stages of the dissertation. Due to limited time to collect data at admission events, the Office of

Admission could only allow me to collect data from prospective students during stage four, the experiment. The original plan included testing all four messages (stage three) during a large visit program, but at the last minute the organization decided that time was insufficient to show all four videos. Because the dates of the admission events where the main study data collection was to occur could not be changed, I was unable to make arrangements in time to test the videos on high school students. Due to this change of plans, I decided testing the videos on first semester first-year students at NDSU would be the best alternative for the situation. This delimitation may have caused the problems I experienced with the message testing results described in chapter three. The possible limitations that resulted from this delimitation are described in chapter five.

A second delimitation that occurred from working with the organization was that the survey could not take more than 15 minutes to complete. Keeping the survey under 50 items while still properly measuring the constructs was a difficult task and limited how the scales were created. Ideally other variables would have provided more insight to this phenomenon and would have provided more explanation of the results, but I was limited to collecting data only on the essential variables. This delimitation created limitations related to the type of data I could collect and measurement challenges after completing confirmatory factor analyses during stage four of this dissertation.

The third delimitation of the study was that the Office of Admission asked to determine which video was shown at each event so they could show the video that fit best with that particular program. Data were collected over three months and,

showing some videos earlier in the application process may have yielded different results because students' typically are closer to making a decision on what university to attend at the later events. This delimitation may have created limitations related to the sample of this study that are described in chapter five.

The final primary delimitation for this study as a result from working with an organization is limiting whom I could collect data from. NDSU's Office of Admission requested that I only collect data from prospective students and not their parents to save time during the visitation events. Not collecting data from parents and legal guardians of visiting high school students limits my findings and explanations of the models to only one group of people involved in the college decision process. Understanding whether personal narratives are persuasive to parents as well as students would have provided more insight to my study and for practitioners. However, this delimitation creates ample opportunity for future research opportunities, which are also outlined in chapter five.

Overall, my experience working with the NDSU Office of Admission was a positive one. The delimitations described above were the primary hurdles I had to overcome, but I do not believe any of these delimitations devalued the study or created major validity issues. The research plan was created based on literature and proper social scientific research standards and then methodically adapted to the organization's needs and expectations. The delimitations described above were far worth the access the office of admission granted me, and the knowledge and results this dissertation produced.

Definitions of Key Terms

To help navigate this dissertation I provide definitions of key terms that are used throughout the study. When I refer to the *university recruitment process,* and this term refers to all of the steps involved in choosing a university to attend: researching universities, narrowing down colleges to visit, visiting campuses, applying to colleges, and making the final matriculation decision. *Prospective students* are high school students visiting and considering North Dakota State University.

Throughout this dissertation I use the words *narrative* and *story* interchangeably. Fisher (1984) describes narratives and stories as "symbolic actions—words and/or deeds—that have sequence and meaning for those who live, create, or interpret them" (p. 2). Stories act as a framework in which people view events (Fisher, 1984). *Narrative probability* and *narrative fidelity* are qualities a good story possesses (Fisher, 1984). *Narrative probability* is defined as the consideration of fact, consistency of the plot or characters actions, and freedom from internal contraction (Fisher, 1987). *Narrative fidelity* is whether a story rings true to the receiver, the degree of relevance the story has on a situation, and if the narrative strikes a response chord in the life of the receiver (Fisher, 1987). Together narrative probability and narrative fidelity make up what Fisher (1984) refers to as narrative rationality.

The theory of planned behavior (1991) also plays a vital role in this dissertation. The components of the theory act as the primary dependent variables and are worth defining to better navigate the remaining chapters. When I use the word *behavior,* the behavior I am referring to choosing a university. *Attitude toward*

the behavior is defined as an individual's judgment that performing a particular behavior is good or bad (Ajzen, 1991: Perloff, 2003). Theory of planned behavior also describes people being influenced by *subjective norms*, which are the social pressure the individual feels to perform or not to perform a behavior (Ajzen, 1991; Perloff, 2003). Ajzen's (1991) also describes a person's behavior being influenced by his or her perceived behavior control to perform the behavior. *Perceived behavioral control* is defined as a person's perception of how much control he or she has over a particular behavior (Ajzen, 1991; Perloff, 2003). The final component of theory of planned behavior is *behavioral intention*, which is an individual's plan or intent to actually perform the behavior (Ajzen, 1991; Perloff, 2003).

I define several other terms defined throughout each chapter, but the terms defined above are needed to best understand the primary goals of this dissertation. These key terms link the subsequent chapters together and provide direction for the reader. All of these terms are also thoroughly explained in chapter two.

Conclusion and Overview of Subsequent Chapters

To examine the persuasive effects of stories on university recruitment, this chapter has introduced the challenges university admission offices are currently encountering and the major purposes of the study and theoretical lens guiding its conceptualization. This chapter also explained the conceptualization and delimitations of this dissertation and provided definitions of key terms that were used throughout the study.

The subsequent chapters provide a thorough examination of the persuasive power of stories. Chapter two presents a review of literature linking the rhetorical

research of stories based on narrative paradigm (Fisher, 1984) with social scientific research on persuasion. Chapter three describes the research methodology of the dissertation that is based on the results of the previously mentioned pilot study. The third chapter also provides a description of the experimental design, manipulation check, and the development of the Narrative Probability and Narrative fidelity Scale. Chapter four provides an explanation of the statistical analysis and results of the study. Chapter five highlights the theoretical and practical implications of the research results, the limitations of the current study, and possible future research opportunities for studying the persuasive effects of stories

CHAPTER 2. BLENDING OF THEORIES & REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This dissertation uses the rhetorical work of Fisher (1984) and the social scientific work of Ajzen (1991) to test the persuasive effects of narratives while being framed within Jablin's theory of organizational assimilation. Though these theories are from different communication paradigms, they provide practical insight on how humans communicate and are influenced. This chapter provides an explanation and argument for how and why the narrative paradigm and theory of planned behavior (TPB) can and should be blended to social scientifically study the persuasive effects stories can have on people's behavior. This dissertation's primary argument cannot be made without thoroughly examining the three theories and explaining how these theories are theoretically linked. The blending of these theories provides the primary literature basis for the hypotheses and research questions being tested. Scholars have studied the persuasive power and effects of stories, and a review of literature supports the theoretical links between organizational assimilation, the narrative paradigm and TPB.

Though this dissertation tests a model using the tenets of the narrative paradigm and TPB, this chapter begins with an examination of the organizational socialization process through the lens of Jablin's (1982) theory of organizational assimilation. The anticipatory phase of assimilation is the primary focus because it frames the university recruitment process and explains why stories may influence our behaviors. Understanding the transition from high school to college provides a context for how narratives may be able to positively influence the early stages of this process.   The chapter continues with an overview of the transition from high school

to college and how this turbulent time relates to the anticipatory phase of assimilation and how stories may help ease this stressful yet exciting experience. The chapter then introduces the other primary theories guiding this dissertation: Fisher's (1984) narrative paradigm and Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behavior. Though these theories are rooted in different communication paradigms, they all provide valuable insight in how stories may influence the process of choosing a college. Next, I explain how a rhetorical theory's argument provides insight to possible variables influencing a social-scientific model and review literature that has focused on storytelling and persuasion. Researchers have studied narratives social scientifically for years; however, social scientists have not recognized the value of Fisher's narrative paradigm in their research. This chapter concludes with a description of the goals of this dissertation and the theoretically-based hypotheses and research questions being tested.

Assimilating to College Life

Organizational Assimilation

Students starting college experience many similar feelings to someone who is starting at a new job. Students, like new employees, are learning their new roles and expectations through communication. *Socialization* is defined as the process by which a person learns the norms, values, and behaviors to become an organizational member (Van Maanen, 1975). Transitioning from high school to college is an example of socialization. Students, like employees, must learn the norms, values, and expected behaviors within a new organization (university). Students experience stress and challenges with academics and choosing a major (Ronan, 2005) while juggling new

relationships and social demands (Love, 2003). At the same time, students are also searching for ways their university can satisfy their own needs, which is a process known as *individualization* (Porter et al., 1975). Jablin (1982) synthesized the processes of socialization and individualization through four distinct interrelated phases of organizational assimilation that demonstrate how communication influences these processes. The four phases are: anticipatory socialization, encounter phase, metamorphosis, and exit (Jablin, 1982; Jablin & Kramer, 1998).

The phases of organizational assimilation provide insight into the challenges and stress experienced by college students while transitioning to their life on campus until they graduate. This dissertation, however, is only concerned with the first stage of the organizational assimilation process, anticipatory socialization, because of its focus on recruitment of new students. The *anticipatory socialization* phase occurs when an individual forms expectations about what life will be like inside an organization prior to actual entry into the organization. The individual seeks, receives, and evaluates information about the organization (Jablin, 1982; 1984; Jablin & Krone, 1987). During anticipatory socialization, the newcomer builds a vision of what he/she believes the organizational reality will be. This phase is representative of the college admission process. Students and their families begin researching colleges by going to their websites, visiting campuses, and asking students and alumni about the university. The college admission process allows students to form opinions and ideas of what life is really like at particular universities and to began comparing and contrasting their options.

Research has shown that the matching of the individual's expectations built in anticipatory socialization with reality of the organization is the single most important factor in determining the newcomer's identification and acculturation into the organization (DiSanza, 1995; Jablin 1984; Jablin & Krone, 1987; Myers, 2005). If the expectations from anticipatory socialization are not met, an individual is more likely to exit the organization because identification more than likely did not occur (DiSanza, 1995; Gibson & Papa, 2000; Jablin, 1982; 1984; Myers, 2005). These findings support why college admission work is vital to a university's livelihood because the expectations built in the beginning set the tone for the rest of the college transition process. If expectations set forth in the admission process are not met after starting at that university, the risk of students transferring or leaving school is possible. A well-assimilated student not only stays at a university, but may also become a giving alumnus after graduation.

Admission offices are challenged with portraying the university in an attractive manner while still creating realistic expectations that will be experienced in the later phases of assimilation. Many college students report positive changes because of college; for example: better personal and practical competence, increased cognitive complexity, and academic skills (Kuh, 1993). However, how does a university show these personal internal changes to prospective students? The anticipatory socialization phase should act as the starting point to helping students ease the stress and anxiety related to going to college by explaining the positive outcomes they could experience in a tangible manner. Reducing the uncertainty and creating a vision of

what life is like on campus is how the admission counselor aids in helping students adjust to college life. Creating this vision could be done via narratives.

Transitioning from High School to College

The challenges and changes experienced by students when learning their new roles are all subjects university admission offices focus on when recruiting students. Balancing academic and personal life, choosing financial aid options, living away from home, and making healthy decisions are all topics that prospective students are thinking about (Kuo, Hagie, & Miller, 2004; Roderick & Carusetta, 2006) and topics admission advisors address. Choosing and attending college is a turbulent yet important step toward adulthood for high school students (Montgomery & Cote, 2005). Many scholars have studied the transition to college life, and their research has produced numerous findings describing how students change during their first year (e.g., Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Louie, 2007; Nazione, LaPlante, Smith, Cornacchione, Russel, & Stohl, 2011). The transition from high school to the university setting is particularly stressful because both the environment and their lifestyle changes, creating new expectations and responsibilities most college students have not encountered (e.g., Ashmore, Griffo, Green, & Moreno, 2007; Demick, 1996; Kim, Goto, Bai, Kim, & Wong, 2001; O'Donnell & Tobbell, 2007; Ramsay, Jones, & Barker, 2006). Choosing a college is stressful, and many students report a desire for support during their college search process (Montgomery & Cote, 2005).

Universities have a responsibility to help students adjust during their first year, and this adjustment begins from the moment they first apply to a university. New college students experience what Schaller (2005) refers to as "random

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exploration," or the sense of exuberance to independently experience themselves and the environment in new ways. Random exploration helps students become self-aware and identify with their campus, which is sometimes a difficult process (Schaller, 2005). Chickering's (1969) student development model also explains how the adjustment to college affects students emotionally, socially, physically, and intellectually because it is a time students are forming their identity (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Chickering's model represents a cognitive process of student development that can produce stressful experiences while finding one's self during the first year of college. New organizational members experience similar stress as they assimilate into their new organizational culture. Communication research has also found that messages from many different sources play a vital part in this socialization process by assisting students in overcoming challenges, adapting to their new environment, and dealing with stress (Nazione et al., 2011).

Nazione et al. (2011) found that communication in the form of memorable messages motivates students to change their behaviors or attitudes about college or specific negative situations they have experienced. These findings about memorable messages and random exploration call for a need to understand how students use and interpret communication while they are transitioning into college life. These memorable messages could come in the form of stories during the recruitment process. Fisher's (1984) narrative paradigm describes the characteristics of a "good" story and using stories with high levels of narrative probability and narrative fidelity to recruit students may provide lasting and persuasive memories that motivate students to choose a particular university. The studies mentioned provide excellent

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insight to what influences and motivates college students; however, they only focused on students after they have gotten to campus rather than when they are beginning the process of choosing a university. Stories may provide direction for admission offices to help ease the transition by creating a more concrete or tangible description of what a prospective student's life will be like on that particular campus.

Making the Intangible Tangible

How does an admission office successfully create messages that make the intangible college experience more tangible while reducing the anxiety and increasing prospective students' confidence? Recruitment material and campus visits shape student opinions about a university and the organizational culture of that campus. Making these messages more tangible and personal may be the place to begin. The early messages are what guide the anticipatory socialization phase of assimilating into college life and create the students' expectations. As described in chapter one, admission offices are challenged with promoting an anticipated social experience and positive social and academic outcomes that are delayed until months or years later, but expected from students. Anctil (2008a) argues admission offices that can communicate the concept of higher education in the most tangible manner will have an advantage over those universities simply presenting facts and figures. Any way to make organizational culture and values clearer for members will ease the stress experienced during anticipatory socialization.

Selling these intangible ideas requires what Anctil (2008b) calls the strategic marketing plan for universities: relationship marketing. *Relationship marketing* requires admissions offices to have long-term relationships with students rather than

focusing on each interaction as an independent transaction. A constant reminder of how an institution will meet their needs academically and socially builds identification and a feeling of "rightness" (Anctil, 2008b). Anctil's idea parallels the importance of the anticipatory socialization phase outlined by Jablin (1982) because this initial interaction sets the tone for the rest of the college or organizational assimilation process. Universities need not only to build these expectations about the college experience and higher education; they also need to carry them out, which Jablin argues occurs during the second phase of organizational assimilation: encounter. Using current students in the recruitment process provides evidence of how expectations will be met in the encounter phase. Using current students and their stories may help prospective students visualize themselves fitting in at that campus, maintain their feeling of rightness, and help the idea of college become more tangible (Anctil, 2008b).

Universities can build a plan that follows Anctil's (2008b) relationship marketing ideals; however, these plans must be adjusted over time to keep up with changing technology, student needs, and students themselves. Universities are currently dealing with the Millennial generation, and online recruitment is becoming more popular (Zinch & Cappex, 2007). The campus tour now begins at home with videos, virtual tours, social network updates, and instant message sessions (Rhodes, Sherwin, & Smith, 2006; Zinch & Cappex, 2007). The amount of information available to students prior to visiting campus is allowing students to arrive with preconceived ideas of life at that university. Recruitment material has become more important than ever.

Applied research can provide universities with empirically-based suggestions on implementing and using relationship marketing successfully. Knowing how to build a message or argument that meets students' needs provides direction for university admission offices. Many of Anctil's (2008b) suggestions for selling higher education (building relationships, meeting needs, visualizing social experiences, and creating a feeling of rightness) parallel the natural communication process and purpose of storytelling. Nazione and her colleagues' (2011) findings support the use of memorable messages to motivate students to change attitudes and behaviors about college. These memorable messages, if provided in the form of a story, may not only motivate high school students to choose a particular university, but also create a connection with the university and create a more tangible idea of what college life is like. The possible benefits of using personal stories in recruitment material can be understood through Fisher's (1984) narrative paradigm.

The Narrative Paradigm

The *narrative paradigm* is a rhetorical theory based on the premise that all human communication can be seen fundamentally as stories regardless of culture, history, or character (Fisher, 1987; 1989). Fisher (1984) believed that humans create reason through stories. Humans make sense of the world using stories, and people use stories as supporting evidence for particular decisions (Fisher, 1984). The narrative paradigm explains how humans cognitively use stories by referring to stories as a framework in which people view events. If we are "homo-narrans" as Fisher (1984) argues, then using stories to recruit and assimilate students seems like a natural fit.

Several scholars before Fisher studied how humans use stories, but where Fisher and these scholars differed was in their use of narration as a mode rather than a paradigm of communication (Fisher, 1984). Fisher (1984) defines *narration* as, "symbolic actions—words and/or deeds—that have sequence and meaning for those who live, create, or interpret them" (p. 2). He did not see narration as always being fictive composition with propositions that may or may not be true; narration provides a framework or model in which we interpret communication (Fisher, 1984). This universal model or common interpretive lens is why Fisher used the word *paradigm* to describe his theory. Fisher referred to the *narrative paradigm* as an alternative view to the rational-world paradigm and based the notion on the idea that human beings are natural storytellers who use stories as a basis for all human communication.

Fisher (1984) argued that the rational-world paradigm launched by Aristotle's *Organon* and reinforced by the scientific revolution has been dominant for millennia. The rational-world paradigm assumes that: (1) people are essentially rational; (2) humans make decisions on the basis of argument; (3) the argument is ruled by the situation; (4) rationality is determined by subject matter knowledge; and (5) the world is a set of logical puzzles that we can solve through rational analysis. Fisher critiqued the rational-world paradigm by claiming it excludes the non-qualified person from making public decisions and does not recognize the everyday interaction or argument. Fisher believed rational-world paradigm to be limiting because it assumes being rational means being competent in argument, which is a learned skill rather than a natural awareness and is based in epistemology. The narrative

paradigm, on the other hand, is philosophically founded in ontology because it explains how humans realize their nature as reasoning-valuing animals (Fisher, 1984).

Fisher (1984) proposed the structure of the narrative paradigm as: (1) people are essentially storytellers; (2) humans make decisions on the basis of good reasons which vary in form among communication situations, genres, and media; (3) the production and practice of good reasons is ruled by history, biography, culture, and character, (4) narrative rationality (way to evaluate the worth of stories) is determined by the narrative probability and narrative fidelity of our stories, and (5) the world is a set of stories from which we choose, and thus constantly re-create. Where the rational-world paradigm is an ever-present part of our consciousness, the narrative paradigm is a part of our very being because it is a natural part of our socialization and crosses time and culture (Fisher, 1984). Humans naturally possess the ability to judge the worth of a story through its narrative probability and fidelity.

Fisher (1984; 1987; 1989) argued that narrative rationality (narrative fidelity and probability) is the way in which humans judge a story. *Narrative rationality* provides a structure for determining whether the narrative will be considered true through narrative probability and fidelity. *Narrative probability* is the consideration of fact, consistency of the plot or character actions, and freedom from internal contradiction (Fisher, 1987). *Narrative fidelity* refers to the idea of the story ringing true, the degree of relevance the story has with the given situation, and if the narrative strikes a responsive chord in the life of the listener (Fisher, 1987). Narrative rationality is different from traditional rationality because it offers a

descriptive understanding of any instance of human choice and action, where traditional rationality is limited to a hierarchical system of rules that only the qualified can reason (Fisher, 1984). Narrative probability and narrative fidelity are inherent in all humans because humans, no matter their background, they live and learn through stories and know the difference between a good and a bad story.

All human communication is essentially a series of stories, which makes the application of this theory a possible solution for the challenges admission offices are encountering. Researchers have used the narrative paradigm to help explain news coverage, myths, magazine articles, speeches, or anything with a narrative as its source (Burns, 2009; Cloud, 1996; Garner, Sterk, & Adams, 1998; Hollihan & Riley, 1897; Kawai, 2002). Research has used the components of narrative to illustrate how stories can shape society and perceptions of reality. Narratives provide realistic settings and characters to which audiences can relate (Fisher, 1984). Stories invite audiences to identify with the characters used and the characters encourage imitation (Burns, 2009; Garner, Sterk, & Adams, 1998).

The components of the narrative paradigm can be used to illustrate how stories can shape perceptions and reasoning of specific situations like the college admission process. Narratives provide realistic settings (college campuses) and characters (students) audiences can relate to and visualize (Fisher, 1984). Stories invite audiences to identify with the characters (current students) used and the characters encourage imitation, which can affect decision-making (Garner, Sterk, & Adams, 1998). Narratives provide a call to action and closure, important elements in any good story (Rosteck, 1992) and in any good university relationship-marketing

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plan (Anctil, 2008b). Using stories that have high levels of narrative fidelity and narrative probability may help prospective students better visualize themselves at a particular institution, which may then influence their decision to attend that university. Stories will enhance the anticipatory socialization phase of assimilation by crating a more tangible idea of what organizational reality is like at that particular university. These outcomes are exactly what Anctil (2008b) calls for when developing university recruitment material.

The narrative paradigm argues that all communication is fundamentally stories and that humans use stories to make sense of the world (Fisher, 1984). A good story with narrative probability and narrative fidelity is a powerful means of persuasion because stories provide context for decision-making (Fisher, 1984). Persuasion requires change. A change of attitude or behaviors can result from storytelling as Highhouse, Hoffman, Greve, and Collins (2002) found when studying the effects storytelling has when communicating company values to new recruits (anticipatory socialization). Recruits who were told stories were more likely to apply for company positions (Highhouse et al., 2002). Understanding this behavior change would help universities develop recruitment material that persuasively uses stories to change attitudes about a school and the behavior of choosing that particular school. The theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991) and the narrative paradigm complement one another because theory of planned behavior provides a cognitive and behavioral outcome of narrative rationality, while the narrative paradigm explains how stories can enact the change Ajzen's (1991) theory predicts.

Theory of Planned Behavior

Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behavior (TPB) is a socio-psychological theory that communication scholars borrow from the social psychology field. TPB argues three factors guide human behavior: behavioral beliefs, normative beliefs, and control beliefs (Ajzen, 1991). These beliefs predict outcomes (attitudes toward a behavior, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control) that influence behavioral intention, which in turn predicts actual behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Essentially, Ajzen's (1991) model assumes that people calculate the costs and benefits of engaging in a behavior by thinking carefully how others will view the behavior and considering the amount of control they have over the behavior. Widely used, TPB has been powerful in predicting behavior (Hale, Householder, & Greene, 2002). TPB focuses on attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral control and how these three factors influence behavioral intention. My dissertation focuses on a student's intention to attend a particular university. The narrative paradigm provides persuasive evidence of how stories may impact students' attitudes toward a school, the importance of peers in the college selection process, and whether a student believes he or she can handle the transition from high school to college.

To note the lineage of TPB is important. TPB is an extension of Fishbein and Ajzen's (1975) theory of reasoned action (TRA) and TRA was born from Fishbein's (1963) expectancy value approach. The expectancy value approach argued that beliefs and evaluations could estimate attitudes towards a topic or behavior. Fishbein (1962) continuously found weak correlations between attitudes and behaviors with the expectancy value approach, prompting him to consider attitudes of both

individuals and others and their correlations with behavioral intention rather than actual behavior (Hale, et al., 2002). Adding subjective norms and behavioral intention to the model provided the missing link of the expectancy value model, creating TRA. TRA, though successful, was haunted by the limitation of not accounting for behaviors in which people do not have complete volitional control over (Ajzen, 1991). TPB added the dimension of perceived behavioral control to strengthen the predictive power of the theory and successfully counteracted TRA's primary limitation (Ajzen, 1991). This background information will provide a foundational understanding for each of the TPB model components described below.

According to TPB, three kinds of considerations guide human action. The first consideration is *behavioral beliefs*, which are the beliefs about the likely outcomes of the behavior and the evaluations of these outcomes (Ajzen, 1991; Ajzen, 2002; Hrubes, Ajzen, & Diagle, 2001). These beliefs about the outcomes and the evaluations produce a favorable or unfavorable *attitude toward the behavior* (Ajzen, 1991; Perloff, 2003). Attitude toward the behavior is a person's individual judgment that performing a particular behavior is good or bad (Perloff, 2003).

The second model component is normative beliefs. *Normative beliefs* are ideas about the expectations of others concerning a particular behavior and the motivation to comply with others' expectations (Ajzen, 1991; Ajzen, 2002; Hrubes et al., 2001). Normative beliefs result in perceived social pressure or *subjective norms* (Ajzen, 1991; Perloff, 2003). Subjective norms are the social pressure the individual feels to perform or not perform a behavior (Perloff, 2003).

The third consideration and the factor that TPB uses to extend TRA is control

beliefs (Ajzen, 1991). *Control beliefs* are the beliefs about the presence of factors that

may facilitate or impede performance of the behavior and the perceived power these

factors have over the behavior (Ajzen, 1991; Ajzen, 2002; Hrubes et al., 2001). Beliefs

about the factors influencing the performance of behavior form an individual's

perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991; Perloff, 2003). Perceived behavioral

control is a person's perception of how much control he or she has over the behavior.

All three factors predict behavioral intention; however, perceived behavioral control

can also have a direct impact on actual behavior depending on its strength.

Behavioral intention is defined as an individual's plan or intent to actually

perform the behavior and is the strongest predictor of behavior (Ajzen, 1991; Perloff,

2003). Attitudes toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral

control form a person's behavioral intent rather than the actual behavior (Ajezen,

1991; Ajzen, 2002; Hrubes et al., 2001). However, as mentioned before, perceived

behavioral control, depending on its strength, can have a direct correlation with

behavior as well. TPB argues that the more favorable the attitude and subjective

norms and the greater the perceived behavioral control, the stronger a person's

behavioral intention will be (Ajzen, 1991).

Research has produced several applications of this theory, and these three

factors all typically predict behavioral intention; however, the strongest predictor of

behavioral intention depends on the situation, behavior, past experiences, and even

timing (Bracchitta, 2006; Doukas, Localio, & Li, 2004; Fingerson, 2005; Ham, 2006;

Johnston & White, 2003; Tabak & Ozon, 2004). TPB research has found that

understanding an audience's behavioral, normative, and control beliefs allows for practitioners to adapt their messages to the theoretical component that has the most influence on a person's behavioral intention (Perloff, 2003).

TPB has been studied in several contexts and has had much success in the field of health communication because of the importance communication has on promoting healthy behaviors. Communication influences attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral control, and I argue communication is what essentially builds and holds these factors together. University recruitment would provide a perfect non-health context in which to test TPB because actual behavior can be measured by seeing if the student enrolled at the university, which would provide results based on more than behavioral intention.

The components of TPB also represent important factors for students when choosing a university. For example, for a favorable attitude about the university to be formed immediately is important when a prospective student visits the campus. Many students are also influenced by subjective norms such as friends who attend or plan on attending the university or family members who are alumni. Though attitude and subjective norms may seem to be what admission offices focus on the most, perceived behavioral control is also represented in factors such as financial aid and academic standards for admittance. If perceived behavioral control is strong, then attitude and subjective norms could provide the final push (Doll & Ajzen, 1992).

Finding ways to influence a student's behavioral intention to choose a particular university could be done through stories that focus on the components of TPB. The communication that forms behavioral intent is part of the assimilation

process into college. Recruitment material represents the anticipatory socialization phase of organizational assimilation theory (Jablin, 1982). The recruitment process sets up students' expectations about what their lives will be like while at college. Using personal stories may be one tactic admission offices can use to help make these expectations about the college experience more tangible, which could influence prospective student attitudes and behaviors causing students to choose that university. Fisher (1984) claims storytelling is a natural communication process that creates understanding for humans; therefore, narrative paradigm provides a starting point for message creation, and TPB provides variables to measure.

Linking Organizational Assimilation, Narrative Paradigm, and Theory of Planned Behavior

Applied research often uses theories from a variety of research paradigms. This dissertation uses an interpretive theory (organizational assimilation), a rhetorical theory (the narrative paradigm), and an objective theory (TPB) to provide insight to the changing world of college admissions. Many would argue that because these theories do not line up ontologically or epistemologically they cannot inform one another. However, when persuasion research is examined more closely there are many similarities and gaps in the research that can be explained by crossing ontological borders. The social scientific study of persuasion has been indirectly using and testing Fisher's (1984) tenets of narrative paradigm for years; researchers have simply not articulated the connection between social science research and narrative paradigm. This section provides explanation of how the narrative paradigm informs the social scientific study of persuasion both theoretically and contextually.

The goal of this section is to provide a stronger literature-based reason for this dissertation than simply reviewing any literature that that has empirically tested the use of stories.

Organizational assimilation provides the framework in which the narrative paradigm can inform TPB in the context of university recruitment. Understanding the framework of assimilation theory allows for better navigation of the conceptual mapping between the narrative paradigm and TPB. The context and framework in which a problem is positioned (in this case anticipatory socialization) often dictates the path of applied research.

Choosing a college represents the anticipatory socialization phase of assimilation because the recruitment process is when prospective students begin to seek and evaluate information about the universities (organizations) that interest them. Jablin (1982) argues that during the anticipatory phase people build a vision of what organizational life is like. Building a vision of what campus life is like is one of the main goals of a university admission office. Recognizing what people experience during anticipatory socialization creates a need for effective messages that will create positive attitudes toward a university, which may increase one's behavioral intention of choosing that particular university.

Assimilation theory explains the importance of the messages being communicated during the anticipatory socialization phase and their impact on our impression of the organization. TPB research tells us that our attitudes toward a behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control created through communication dictate our behavioral intention. However, neither assimilation nor

TPB provide us with concrete direction on how to create these important messages. Narrative paradigm and its explanation of human cognition through storytelling fills this void of direction and provides guidance on how messages can be created to develop a positive vision of organizational reality that will influence a person's behavioral intention to join that organization. Using stories to create a clear positive image of a university will ease the stress experienced during anticipatory socialization while also influencing the TPB variables that play a role in determining our behavioral intention.

Fisher (1987) did not see the narrative paradigm as a traditional rhetorical theory, but rather a reflection of ideas, "shared in whole or in part by many scholars from diverse intellectual disciplines" (p. 85). Fisher argues that all genres including interpretive and objective research are episodes in the story of life, because human communication is a series of stories. Therefore, using narratives may meet admission offices' anticipatory socialization goals of creating accurate representations of university life because all humans already communicate and create meaning through stories.

Fisher (1987) described the narrative paradigm's relationship with social scientific theories by explaining that both his theory and social scientific theories seek to account how human communication guides behavior. The narrative paradigm is "productive of description, explanation, and even prediction— in the sense that if one's character can be determined and if one's story in regard to a particular issue can be ascertained, one can predict a person's probable actions" (Fisher, 1987, p. 87). The narrative paradigm provides social scientific theories with an assessment of values

through narrative rationality in which one can determine whether to accept a story as a basis for a decision or action (Fisher, 1987). Fisher argues humans rationalize through stories; therefore, a story may influence person's attitudes or control beliefs toward a behavior and their impression of organizational life. A story's narrative probability and narrative fidelity determines whether a story may or may not influence an action or belief.

The narrative paradigm forces social scientific theories to recognize that reasons are expressed by elements of communication that are not always clear-cut (Fisher, 1987). People adopt stories for different reasons based on whether they see a story as having high narrative probability and fidelity. Fisher (1987) argues, "Any individuated form of human communication may constitute a good reason if it is taken as a warrant for accepting or adhering to the advice fostered by that communication" (p. 89). This argument connects the narrative paradigm to social scientific persuasion theories, such as TPB, because the advice provided by human communication (narratives), if accepted, can explain and possibly predict the impact communication has on TPB's three primary predictive constructs (attitude towards a behavior, normative beliefs, and perceived behavioral control). A story with narrative rationality helps prospective students rationalize why they should or should not choose a particular university because a good story provides an idea of what organizational reality looks like on that campus. The narrative paradigm's complementary qualities to organizational assimilation theory are obvious and vital to the context of university recruitment, but conceptual mapping of Fisher's (1984)

five tenets to the model of TPB provides the major foundation for the tested models of my dissertation.

Mapping the Narrative Paradigm to Theory of Planned Behavior

Fisher (1987) claims narrative rationality is what pushes the narrative paradigm beyond social scientific theories because narrative probability and narrative fidelity provide considerations for judging the merits of stories and reason for decision making. I would argue that rather than pushing the narrative paradigm beyond social scientific theories, narrative rationality connects the power of stories to social scientific theories and opens more possible routes of research on stories' impact on human communication and behavior. The narrative paradigm rejected the rational world paradigm by introducing five new tenets of its structure: (1) people are essentially storytellers; (2) humans make decisions on the basis of good reasons which vary in form among communication situations, genres, and media; (3) the production and practice of good reasons is ruled by history, biography, culture, and character; (4) narrative rationality (way to evaluate the worth of stories) is determined by the narrative probability and narrative fidelity of our stories; and (5) the world is a set of stories from which we choose, and thus constantly re-create (Fisher, 1984). Each of these structural elements can be conceptually linked to TPB and provide reason why stories may influence the behavioral, normative, and control beliefs influencing a prospective student's behavioral intention of choosing a university.

Fisher (1984) first claimed that people are essentially storytellers, or homo-narrans. If all human communication is essentially stories, then it can be argued that

communication influences our attitudes and behaviors. Research using TPB has

found different types of messages geared toward either attitudes toward a behavior,

subjective norms, or perceived behavioral control have influenced the likelihood of

changing behaviors (Ajzen, 1991). These messages can come in many forms,

including stories. Social scientists have studied the use of stories and TPB already but

referred to the narratives as personal testimonials (Braverman, 2008; Hagen, Gutkin,

Wilson, & Oats, 1998; Walker, Field, Gildes, Armenakis, & Bernerth, 2009; Wit, Das,

Vet, 2008). The narrative paradigm provides a basis for arguing that stories may also

act as the communication forming these pre-established beliefs and add a new

element to the existing model of TPB. Students arrive with pre-conceived beliefs

about college life and a particular university that were created through stories and

information they gathered during the anticipatory socialization phase of

organizational assimilation.

Fisher's (1984) second element of the narrative paradigm argues humans

make decisions based on "good reason" formed from stories, which varies in form

among different communication, situations, genres, and media. TPB research has also

found that humans' behaviors vary based on different beliefs that are heavily

dependent on the situation and circumstances (Bracchitta, 2006; Doukas, Localio, &

Li, 2004; Fingerson, 2005; Ham, 2006; Johnston & White, 2003; Tabak & Ozon, 2004).

Good reason for decisions is determined by the information gained from the story or

communication interaction. The information provided acts as evidence or good

reason to maintain or change your attitude, for example. The predictive power of the

TPB elements varies depending on the situation or media being used; therefore the

stories or communication used to influence behavior must be adapted to best fit that situation. Stories used to recruit prospective students must be adapted to the situation and expected form of media to provide "good reason" or evidence of why choosing a particular university is the best choice.

The third component of Fisher's (1984) narrative paradigm says that good reason is ruled by history, culture, character, and biography. These elements are similar to how TPB argues behavioral, normative, and control beliefs are developed. The strongest predictor of behavioral intention depends on the situation, behavior, past experiences, and even timing (Bracchitta, 2006; Doukas, Localio, & Li, 2004; Fingerson, 2005; Ham, 2006; Johnston & White, 2003; Tabak & Ozon, 2004), elements that are all part of Fisher's narrative paradigm. The stories about college (attitudes), expectations parents have communicated with their children (subjective norms), and our past performance in school (perceived behavioral control) all influence good reason to choose or not to choose a university.

The strongest tenet of narrative paradigm is Fisher's (1984) idea of narrative rationality. As stated above, Fisher (1987) believes narrative rationality is the narrative paradigm's strongest connection to social scientific theory. Humans are all equipped with the ability to evaluate stories through narrative probability (reliability of story) and narrative fidelity (does the story ring true) (Fisher, 1984). TPB predicts behavioral intention by understanding people's attitude toward a behavior, how their peers and family feel about the behavior, and whether or not they believe they can perform the behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Narrative rationality provides people with criteria to make judgments on whether the information communicated provides good

reason for a decision. Stories with high levels of narrative probability and narrative fidelity and well-adapted to the situation and experiences of these people may influence or change their attitudes, their peers' beliefs, or even their confidence in their ability to perform.

If a story makes sense and rings true, Fisher (1987) argues behavior and action are more likely to change. A story with high narrative probability and narrative fidelity can enact the behavior TPB is trying to predict by providing good reason for positive or negative changes in behavioral, normative, and control beliefs. Narrative rationality provides blueprints for how to create communication interactions that are best adapted to the strongest TPB variable for a given behavior, but narrative rationality also provides explanation for the pre-established beliefs people have about a behavior. The narrative paradigm provides an opportunity to study how TPB's independent variables are constructed and influenced in the first place, and as Fisher (1987) argued, bringing human values into the social scientific study of communication.

This dissertation is focusing on the anticipatory phase of organizational assimilation in the context of choosing a university. This phase of assimilation recognizes pre-conceived notions about an organization. Measuring the narrative probability and narrative fidelity of stories used in recruitment during anticipatory socialization will allow for more predictive ability of whether a student will choose to attend a university they have visited.

The final element of the narrative paradigm states the world is a set of stories we choose and continue to re-create (Fisher, 1984). Humans choose which stories to

embrace and ignore based on narrative rationality and typically tend to re-create and learn from similar stories that are based on their past experience and culture (Fisher, 1984). TPB argues that behavioral intention is determined by past experience and what people are comfortable and confident about doing (Ajzen, 1991); therefore creating stories that ring true and match past experiences gives opportunities for the past stories to be re-created and provide good reason for a decision (Fisher, 1987). Recruitment material that provides prospective students with stories that are similar to what they already know and expect and match their beliefs will foster their perceived behavioral control. Prospective students will be more likely to choose a particular university because it will be an easier adjustment because they know how the story already ends. Familiar stories will make the adjustment to college less stressful because the situation becomes less uncertain.

The narrative paradigm is typically used as a rhetorical theory but because it weighs values through narrative rationality it is able to consider questions of fact, relevance, consequences, consistency, and transcendent issues and cross research paradigms (Fisher, 1987). Fisher's (1984) theory provides a structure to investigate how attitudes toward a behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control are established and influenced by stories. Narrative probability and narrative fidelity have never been studied in conjunction with TPB and, to the author's knowledge, have only been looked at as measureable variables in one other communication study (Baesler, 1995). This dissertation is attempting to open the door to more social scientific use of narrative paradigm in the study of message creation and effects. However, the persuasive powers of stories and messages resembling stories

(testimonials) have been studied and provide empirical evidence to support Fisher's

(1984; 1987; 1989) claim that a story with high narrative probability and narrative

fidelity has the ability to persuade. Examples of these empirical studies that have

indirectly used the tenets of narrative paradigm are described in the following

section. This dissertation points out that researchers from both the social scientific

and rhetorical paradigms are making similar arguments and by recognizing where

their research complements one another both sides would only strengthen their

arguments.

The Persuasive Power of Stories

Humans use stories to justify the decisions they make about their own lives

because narratives provide a call to action, a change or reinforcement of attitude, or

sense of closure (Hollihan & Riley, 1987; Rosteck, 1992). These effects are what

provide narratives with persuasive power. Slater and Rouner (2002) argue that

narratives are capable of influencing people's behaviors because people are able to

identify with characters (current students), transport themselves into the world

created by the story (college life), visualize themselves in the setting or situation

(campus), and can block counter arguments (other institutions) from forming as long

as the story matches personal values and beliefs through narrative fidelity and

probability. These narrative influences help people assimilate and are similar to what

undergraduate admission offices are trying to do when recruiting students. Though

the social scientific study of stories from the narrative paradigm perspective is

minimal, several researchers have studied the persuasive effects of stories, and

though not stated, elements of narrative probability and narrative fidelity are present.

This section describes past research that provides evidence that using stories to recruit students may indeed be persuasive and impact the constructs of TPB and how the narrative paradigm's tents have indirectly been supported by this research.

Social psychologists have studied the effects of stories from the perspective of regulatory fit. *Regulatory fit* is conceptualized as the level of motivational intensity to pursue a predetermined goal or action after being exposed to persuasive information that "feels right" (Aaker & Lee, 2006). Social psychologists argue that transportation (a person's level of vividness), imagery, and emotional involvement (attention to feelings during a specific situation) can occur via narrative if stories have a regulatory fit or a feeling of rightness with receivers (Vaughn, Hesse, Petkova, & Trudeau, 2008). Regulatory fit, in turn, creates a persuasive effect caused by the narrative.

Vaughn and colleagues (2008) found that people who were exposed to stories that were congruent with their goal orientation were more persuaded by a story's message and experienced regulatory fit. Stories increased their motivational intensity to pursue that goal or action because regulatory fit generates feelings of personal rightness or wrongness towards a story. These feelings help people determine how to judge a narrative, which predicts how motivated they are, or are not, to pursue a goal or take action based on regulatory fit (Aaker & Lee, 2006; Vaughn et al., 2008).

Regulatory fit seems to parallel Fisher's (1984) ideas of narrative fidelity and probability, but is never mentioned in regulatory fit research. Humans know when a story seems to feel right or when it is easy to relate to. Creating stories about a university that have narrative probability and narrative fidelity may create a feeling of rightness for students, allowing them to transport or see themselves as fitting in on

a particular campus. Relationship marketing also has this same goal (Anctil, 2008b).

If this transportation or emotional involvement occurs via narrative, students may be

persuaded to apply and attend a particular university.

Researchers have conducted persuasion research that focuses on personal

testimonials in both organizational and health contexts and have operationalized

testimonials to include the use of personal stories (Braverman, 2008; Hagen, Gutkin,

Wilson, & Oats, 1998; Walker, Field, Gildes, Armenakis, & Bernerth, 2009; Wit, Das,

Vet, 2008). Research on organizational recruitment has shown that the use of

personal stories or testimonials has impacted new recruits' levels of attractiveness

toward the organization, and the information presented in the recruitment material

was also viewed as more credible (Walker et al., 2009). However, Walker et al. (2009)

did not recognize the role narrative rationality plays in the explanation of why stories

influenced levels of attraction toward an organization. The testimonials must have

been viewed with high levels of narrative probability and fidelity. These findings also

support the idea that stories with high levels of narrative probability and narrative

fidelity impact a person's attitudes towards and organization during the anticipatory

socialization phase of assimilation, and therefore, may influence attitudes toward

choosing a university.

TPB posits attitudes toward a behavior as one of the main predictors of

behavioral intention. Highhouse et al. (2002) found that attitudes about

organizations were positively changed and the likelihood of a person applying to a

position increased when narratives were used in recruitment messages. The

behavioral intention of applying for a job is representative of the behavioral intention

of applying to a university and the anticipatory socialization phase of organizational assimilation. Using stories to recruit employees has been successful; therefore, it may also work for admission offices. Using narratives to present evidence also has shown to increase the ease for message recipients to imagine an event or construct a scenario because of the availability heuristic (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974).   Fisher (1984) would argue, as homo-narrans stories are a logical choice for companies to help build positive images about their organization. Therefore, using stories may make college seem more tangible to prospective students because they will more easily imagine themselves at that particular university especially if these stories have high levels of narrative probability and fidelity.

Ajzen (1991) argues that perceived behavioral control is conceptually no different than Bandura's concept of self-efficacy; these two concepts are just operationalized differently. Hagen et al. (1998) found that using vicarious experience and verbal persuasion all enhanced the self-efficacy of pre-service teachers. Sharing past experiences of teachers often occurred in form of personal stories or testimonials using stories (Hagen et al., 1998). Hagen et al. found that stories impact people's beliefs they are capable of a teaching, which supports the idea that stories may also strengthen a person's belief that they can attend college. These findings would have been strengthen and more thoroughly explained through the lens of Fisher's narrative paradigm because he argues that we are constantly re-creating stories to navigate situations we are a part.

As mentioned above, along with increased levels of positive attitudes, Highhouse et al. (2002) found that behavior was also impacted by the use of personal

stories in recruitment material. Wit et al. (2008) found similar results when comparing objective statistic based messages with personal testimonial-based messages and their impact on risk perception and intention. Men were more likely to obtain a vaccination for hepatitis B when exposed to personal stories rather than statistics (Wit et al., 2008). Though this research was conducted in the health context, universities also present statistical based information to prospective students and families, which does not support the idea of regulatory fit (Aaker & Lee, 2006), relationship marketing (Anctil, 2008b), and most importantly narrative probability and narrative fidelity (Fisher, 1984; 1987). Statistics are important when choosing a college, but messages should be supplemented with personal stories based on the research presented above.

This section provided a strong foundation for why stories may influence a prospective student's attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control of going to college and therefore influencing the behavioral intention of choosing that university. This section also pointed out how the narrative paradigm could have provided explanation for many of these social scientific results and that researchers have already began to examine the use of stories during the anticipatory socialization phase of organizational assimilation. Creating research silos has created isolation among scholars and often results in a lack triangulation. Showcasing how the narrative paradigm can be studied in conjunction with TPB and how both theories where enhanced by the framework of organizational assimilation creates opportunities for new areas of research that will expand the boundaries for both rhetorical and social scientific theory and practice.

Goals of this Dissertation

The use of stories as persuasive tools to recruit prospective students to universities (anticipatory socialization) may be the key to improving the university recruitment process. The primary goal of this dissertation is to study the persuasive effects narrative-based recruitment material have on the process of choosing a university. Using the narrative paradigm (Fisher, 1984) and theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991) I will test the impact stories with high narrative probability and narrative fidelity have on prospective student's attitudes toward their behavior of choosing a university, their subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control of going to college, and how these variables impact behavioral intentions of choosing that particular university.

Theory of planned behavior is a well-established persuasive model that has proven its validity in several contexts, but research on the manipulation of the model's independent variables through the use of stories with high narrative probability and narrative fidelity has yet to be studied. The narrative paradigm provides an opportunity to study how the use of stories may establish our behavioral, normative, and control beliefs during the anticipatory phase of socialization to college. I am testing both the model of TPB (see Figure 1) and the proposed model (see Figure 2) that also includes the exogenous variables of narrative probability and narrative fidelity and how these variables influence attitude towards a behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. The secondary goal of this study is to showcase how the narrative paradigm can be used in social scientific research (Fisher, 1987) by establishing its connections with TPB through the framework of the

anticipatory socialization phase of organizational assimilation theory. The final goal of this dissertation is to take an applied research approach to provide practical implications and advice for organizations, especially university admission offices, on how to recruit the millennial generation. The following hypotheses and research questions will be tested and explored:

H1a: Narrative probability will positively influence attitude toward choosing a

    particular university to attend.

RQ1a: How will narrative probability influence subjective norm beliefs of

    prospective students choosing a university to attend?

H2a: Narrative probability will positively influence perceived behavioral

    control of choosing a university to attend.

H1b: Narrative fidelity will positively influence attitude toward choosing a

    particular university to attend.

RQ1b: How will narrative fidelity influence subjective norm beliefs of

    prospective students choosing a university to attend?

H2b: Narrative fidelity will positively influence perceived behavioral

    control of choosing a university to attend

H3: The theory of planned behavior model will be supported by this data

    (Figure 1).

H4: The model with additional exogenous variables (narrative probability and

    fidelity) is a better fit for the data (Figure 2).

Conclusion

This chapter blended the theories of organizational assimilation, narrative paradigm, and theory of planned behavior to explain how stories may influence a prospective student's choice of university. The literature explaining the links between the narrative paradigm and TPB acts as the foundation for the hypotheses and research questions I am testing in my dissertation. However, the framework of organizational assimilation strengthens the theoretical connections between the narrative paradigm and TPB because the context of university recruitment functions within the anticipatory socialization phase of assimilation. While a variety of research has been conducted on the persuasive effects of stories, the effects of narrative probability and narrative fidelity have yet to be tested with TPB's model. The review literature on using narratives to influence attitudes and behaviors described in this section provides supplemental support for the argument created to support the blending of the narrative paradigm and TPB within the anticipatory socialization phase and the testing of the proposed model described in the hypotheses. Both rhetorical and social scientific scholars are studying the persuasiveness of narratives, but neither group has recognized how theories from opposite research paradigms may provide stronger explanation of their results. The next chapter will provide an explanation of the methods used in this four-phased dissertation to test the proposed hypotheses and research questions merging three theories from three different research paradigms.

Figure 1. *Hypothesis 3 Model (theory of planned behavior model)*
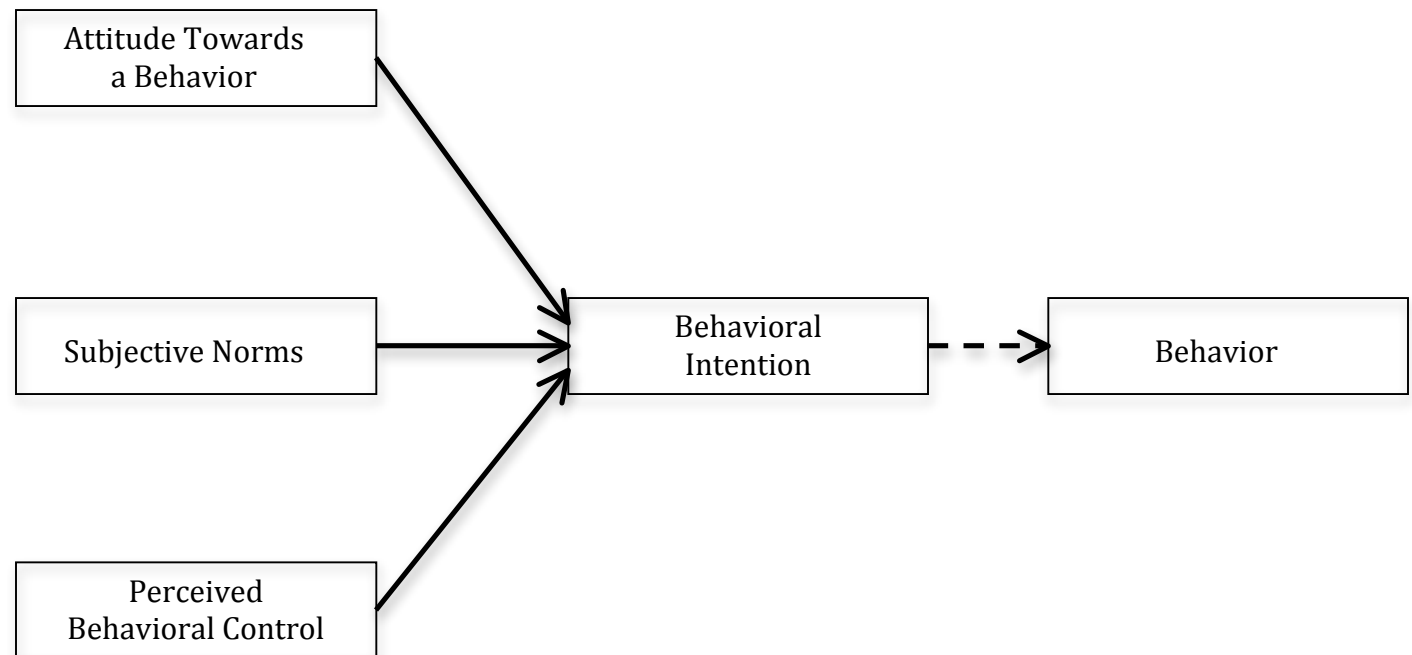
Figure 2. *Hypothesis 4 Model (theory of planned behavior model with narrative probability and narrative fidelity variables)*
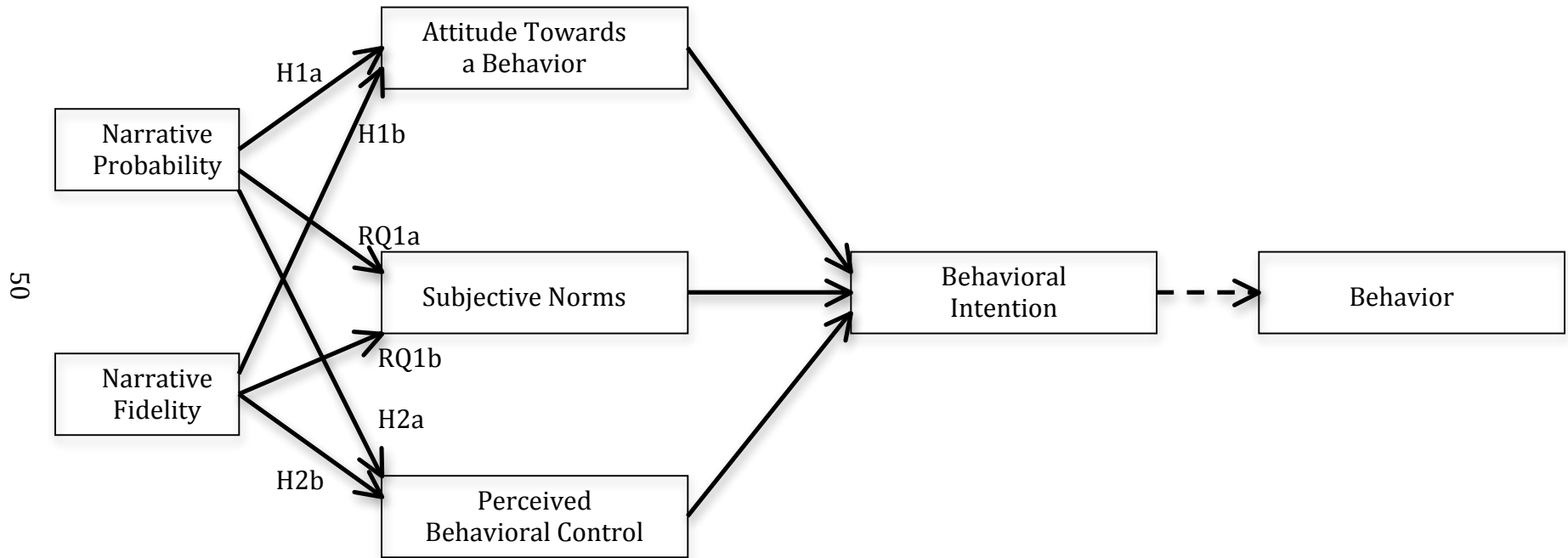
CHAPTER 3. METHOD

This chapter describes the research methodology and stages of this dissertation. I conducted my dissertation research over four phases (three pre-studies and the experiment). This chapter describes the research process in chronological order and explains how each stage acted as a step toward conducting the dissertation study. I describe each stage in detail including a description of participants, procedures, measures, data analysis, and results leading to the next study. I explain the experimental methodology in this chapter with detailed descriptions of the participants, procedures, measures, and data analysis. Chapter four describes the results of the dissertation study. This dissertation began with a qualitative pilot study (stage 1), which led to a scale development study (stage 2) that provided the measures for a message testing study (stage 3). These three early stages provided theoretically based messages and scales for this dissertation's main study (stage 4).

Stage 1: Pilot Study

Before testing the effects stories may have on students' choice of college, I needed to know some background information: how are students currently choosing colleges, what do they want to know about college life, and what are their opinions about students' personal stories presented by admission offices. I conducted a pilot study that not only examined students' insight on stories, but also analyzed students' perceptions of four universities already using personal stories in recruitment

material: Oswego State University, Hendrix College, Ohio University, and Kent State University[2].

This qualitative phase of my dissertation used focus groups to provide data because focus groups encourage participants to feel comfortable self-disclosing personal information in a natural environment (Krueger & Casey, 2000). Focus groups allowed for an in-depth exploration of the use of stories in university recruitment material. These conversations provided me with rich and informative interactions that provided opportunities for participants to play off and build upon each other's ideas (Krueger & Casey, 2000). I wanted to create an environment that would encourage conversations about the phenomenon that were representative of how participants might discuss the process of choosing a college.

Participants

I conducted six focus groups with five to seven participants (n=40). Focus group participants were undergraduate students recruited from the basic communication course at a midsize Midwestern university. Participants received course credit for participating. Twenty-four of the participants were male and sixteen were female. The sample consisted of 14 freshmen, 15 sophomores, and 11 juniors. The participants' ages ranged from 18 to 22 years and all were enrolled full-time at the university. College students were the ideal sample for this study because they recently went through the college admissions process and have already made their final decisions on what university to attend. Having already chosen a university

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[2] The four schools represent both private and public institutions and vary in size. After reviewing 51 universities' websites, I chose these four colleges because they were the only schools that used personal stories in their recruitment materials.

provides participants opportunity to speak about what they saw as persuasive during their college search.

Procedures

As approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB), focus groups were one hour in length and held over a one-week period of time. I moderated each of the focus groups. Each focus group was recorded and audio files were transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy. Transcription produced 77 pages of single-spaced text for analysis. Before focus groups began, participants read a consent form explaining the study, and if they agreed to participate, they were given a three-item survey asking demographic information (age, sex, and class rank).

Before questioning began, participants were shown actual recruitment information that was being used by four different universities (Oswego State University, Hendrix College, Ohio University, and Kent State University). I selected a total of four texts, one representing each university. I also selected two blogs and two videos both of which were available to the public on these universities' undergraduate admissions' websites. Both the blogs and the videos used personal stories about current students at their respective universities as part of their recruitment materials. These universities were chosen after looking at 51 universities' recruitment material online. The four universities chosen were the only universities of the 51 that used personal stories of students on their admission websites.

Both schools (Oswego State & Hendrix College) using blogs as recruitment material allowed student employees to have personal access to these blogs and

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updated them periodically. These blogs were chosen for the pilot study because Oswego State's blog featured an academic program (study abroad) and Hendrix College represented campus life and social activities (opening weekend events). They provided two types of stories for participants to discuss. Both blogs had one single-spaced printed page of text and two pages of photographs.

The two videos represented two different themes and styles. The first video was from Ohio University and told the story about a favorite professor through the perspective of one student. This video was a formal interview with very well-edited cuts and transitions and used long camera shots. The video was slower paced with relaxing classical music in the background. The second video was from Kent State and represented the opposite end of the spectrum and highlighted several students telling short stories about their favorite college memories. Examples of these stories included athletic events, concerts, personal relationships, and the wildlife on campus. The second video was informal with short cuts and was shot in different locations on campus. The second video was fast-paced with upbeat music in the background. Both videos were just over two minutes in length.

Each focus group saw the blogs first followed by the videos. The blogs and videos were presented in the same order to each focus group starting with Oswego State, continuing with Hendrix College, then Ohio University, and ending with Kent State. After participants were finished reading and watching the texts, they were asked a series of questions about their perceptions, reactions, and thoughts about the stories used in each of the texts. Overarching questions guided the conversations that touched on how students understand and are influenced by stories in recruitment

material, how persuasive they find narratives, and how the content of the stories affects their perceptions of the respective university. Participants also were asked about personal stories that may have affected their decisions to choose the university they did and what kind of stories they would share about their current university.

Data Analysis

I read all transcripts to develop a comprehensive understanding of the data. Focus group transcripts were then re-read and analyzed for potential categories, which created themes through open coding (Strauss, 1987). The study used a constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987), which allowed for axial coding to occur after the open coding; to combine related categories. Five interrelated themes about the use of stories as recruitment tools emerged after axial coding. These themes focused not only on the persuasiveness and content of stories, but also the channel and visual aspect of how these stories were presented.

Results and Descriptions of Themes

Though the themes from the pilot study were defined in chapter one, this section provides examples from the focus groups that represent each of the themes. Data from the focus groups yielded five key themes and six sub-categories that characterize how universities should use personal narratives to recruit students and what makes these stories persuasive. I provide examples from the focus group responses for the following key themes: (1) achieving closure on choosing a university, (2) students' daily experiences, (3) videos preferred to blogs (4) balancing academic information with non-academic information, and (5) unique stories about the university. The first two themes represent a macro-perception of the use and

persuasiveness of using stories as recruitment tools. The final three themes represent a micro-level interpretation of what specifically makes a "good" or "persuasive" story and the types of stories students think should be told. Sub-categories of the five themes are also defined and described with examples in this section.

Achieving closure on choosing a university. This theme confirmed that using stories in university recruitment material is persuasive, but only after students have narrowed down their list of colleges to their final choices. When asked about how stories played or would have played a role in deciding on a university, one participant responded by saying:

> A story is not something that will be the main reason I go somewhere [college]. If I was on the fence between one of these and another, reading, watching these, or looking at pictures and all the different things the campus has going on would push me in the direction because of the stories.

This theme also consisted of two sub-categories: primary reasons for consideration and maintaining interest.

Primary reasons for considering a university were things like financial support, cost, location, and whether the university had a specific academic program. Participants explained that after they found schools that fit in those categories then the personal stories would begin to play a role in their decision-making process. Participants described this by saying: "You have to be already considering it for stories to matter. I looked for schools that were in-state and had my program first off."

After explaining what the primary reasons are for considering a university, participants then explained when and why stories would be useful to providing the

final push. One commonality that came out in five of the six focus groups was that stories help maintain interest or keep attention. Participants said that the blogs and videos they watched would help keep those schools at the top of their lists because cost and location were very similar at their final choices. One participant, Joey, said "When I was deciding, the stories I heard were always in the back of my mind. I kept finding more things I liked about this school from people, and the more I found out the more I thought about it."

Students' daily experiences. This theme revealed that using student narratives as recruitment tools may make the idea of higher education and college-life more tangible as long as the stories are realistic and representative of life on that particular campus. Participants said they wanted to know what a normal day for the average student was like.   Laura explained this by saying, "I liked the Kent video because it seemed like a normal day on campus.   It made me think this is what my life would be like if I went there."   When asked what "normal" or "everyday" activities were, participants mentioned things like students' daily schedules, living in the dorms, hanging out and eating in the dining hall, and even having conversations late at night with roommates.   One participant named Tyler said, "Knowing all the awards and rankings are cool I guess, but I want to know what my life will be like if I go there. I want to know if I'll fit in and what I'll be doing every day."

This theme was also comprised of two sub-categories: "I can see myself there" and similar experiences. Participants explained that seeing what their life would be like once they arrived to that college was an important aspect that the Kent State video and Hendrix blog portrayed because they knew if they would fit in there. When

asked why, the majority of participants responded with statements like "I can just see myself there" or "it helps me picture myself at that school." Participants pointed out how the stories about times in the dining hall or in the dorms made them feel as if they would fit in at that school. Kristi said, "reading or watching people talk about their day seems boring on the surface, but really it makes me see what college is really like, and it would make me feel better about my decision [choosing that college]."

Participants in all of the focus groups pointed out that the stories in the texts that reminded them of past personal experiences made those schools seem more appealing. When asked why hearing about familiar experiences made them more interested in the school, participants responded with comments about "fitting in" or "having an easier transition." Josh said,

> The whole time I watched these [recruitment stories] I thought about them through my experiences. We see these stories through our experiences he had so far, if it matches that school would move up on my list.

In response Jenna said, "Yeah, those kids reminded me of my friends, so I thought I would totally make friends with those people. It seemed welcoming because I do the same things with my friends."

Videos preferred to blogs. Every participant in all six focus groups strongly stated that videos are more persuasive and more effective at keeping attention than the student blogs. Examples include: "videos are just cooler and easier to understand than blogs" (Kate), "blogs aren't credible they're just stupid "(Michelle), and "videos give more emotion and made me jacked to go to that school, the blogs are just boring and who wants to really read more" (Keith). This theme was broken down to two sub-categories: visual stimulation and dislike towards reading.

Most of the participants discussed how they like visuals and need some sort of visual stimulation to remain interested. Imagery came across as why the videos were more effective than the blogs; however participants did like it when the blogs that included photographs.   A participant named Ben said "I just like being able to watch the conversation because it feels like it is happening between friends, it is putting a face to the story." The second sub-category describing the video preference was based on the fact that the majority of participants stated they "don't like to read" (John), and the blogs required "too much thinking and reading" (Keith). Whitney described her preference for the videos over the blogs by saying "reading a blog seems more like a task, and you have to do tasks all the time in school. I'd much rather just watch a video because it seems more personal and fun."

Balancing academic information with non-academic information. Pilot study results revealed that students want to hear a mix of academic and non-academic stories because the social aspect of college is just as important to them as the academic aspect. Both the Ohio University video and Oswego State blog talked primarily about academics, and the Kent State video and Hendrix College blog talked about the social side of college. Participants agreed that neither extreme was good because the academics and social things should complement each other. Dane said, "Just face it, we are all a little bit nerdy if we're going to college, so seeing the academic stuff should be somewhat mentioned, but hidden through the social cool stuff you can do." Jenna said, "Showing a diverse group of people with a good mix of academics and fun stuff would make me feel like I made good choice."

Unique stories about the university. The pilot study participants' favorite stories from the four universities used in the study were the unique or quirky stories about that particular college. During each focus group participants were asked about the stories that stood out from the examples shown. Surprisingly every focus group had a long discussion about the black squirrels at Kent State. Unique or "quirky" stories like the black squirrels, dancing robots, and meeting a girl in jazz pants who eventually became a student's fiancé all created a major talking point for participants and had an overwhelmingly positive effect on the groups. Kent State was the only school that provided these "quirky" stories, and many participants said these off-beat stories were the reason why they believed Kent State had the best recruitment materials. Whitney said,

> At first I thought black squirrels? Really? But the more I thought about it I remembered that school and thought it must be cool if that girl talked about it when asked what's her favorite memory.

Tyler responded with, "You're right, and who doesn't want to come to college and meet their future wife in jazz pants?" These unique stories provided a light-hearted fun fact that made the Kent State experience stand out.

These five themes and sub-categories provided insight for the remaining stages of my dissertation. Understanding what stories seemed to have the most probability and fidelity provided direction for the creation of the videos used in the main study along with ideas on how to operationalize probability and narrative fidelity based on Fisher's (1984) narrative paradigm.

Stage 2: Scale Development

This dissertation required the operationalization of narrative probability and fidelity to choose the proper messages for the main studybased on the results of study one and also to test the proposed models for the experiment. Baesler (1995) took the first steps in the development of the a narrative probability and fidelity scale and found promising results that required further development and validity testing through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Baesler's original Measure of Narrative Coherence and Narrative fidelity included 21 items, nine representing narrative coherence (probability) and 12 representing narrative fidelity. Baesler does not report results of a factor analysis and claims predictive validity by using persuasion as the criterion variable. The original scales yielded some acceptable Cronbach's α reliability coefficients ranging from .63 to .77 for narrative probability and good reliability coefficients ranging from .82 to .87 for narrative fidelity. Thirty-five additional items were added to Baesler's original 21 and tested to develop a CFA testing measurement. After a series of CFAs this study resulted in an eight-item narrative probability and four-item narrative fidelity scale both of which borrow items from Baesler's original scale.

The new items and Baesler's (1995) items for the narrative probability scale were developed based on Fisher's (1987) three types of narrative coherence he uses to explain narrative probability: structural coherence, material coherence, and characterological coherence. Structural coherence is defined as the organization and sequence of ideas within a narrative (Fisher, 1987). Fisher describes material coherence as comparing and contrasting stories told in other discourses and

determining if there is internal consistency, if facts have been omitted, if counterarguments are ignored, or if ideas have been distorted. Characterological coherence is defined as reliability of characters, actors, narrators, and decisions and how believable these actions are (Fisher, 1987). Seven items representing each type of coherence were created. Nine of the 21 narrative probability items were from Baesler's (1995) narrative coherence scale.

The new narrative fidelity scale items and Baesler's (1995) narrative fidelity items were developed based on the five truths Fisher (1987) uses to define narrative fidelity. These five truths are: factual values, relevance, consistency, consequence, and transcendental (Fisher, 1987). Factual values are defined as the clarity and explicitness of the story and the explicit and implicit values embedded in the narrative (Fisher, 1987). Fisher defined the truth of relevance as the values the appropriateness of the values based on the nature of the decision that the message bears upon the receiver. Relevance is represented by the concern for omitted, distorted, and misrepresented values (Fisher, 1987). The truth of consistency represents the values or lessons confirmed or validated in one's personal experience, in the lives or statements of others whom one admires and respects, or in the conception of the best audience a narrator can conceive (Fisher, 1987). Consequence is defined as the effects adhering to the values or the applicability of the story to the self, relationships, and everyday life (Baesler, 1995; Fisher, 1987). Fisher describes the final truth, transcendental, as the burden of proof established through the values the message offers that constitutes the ideal basis for human conduct. Baesler describes transcendental truth as whether the story should be taught or shared to

others. Seven or eight items for each truth were created for a total of 35 narrative fidelity items. Twelve of the 35 items were from Baesler's narrative fidelity scale.

The items for both the narrative probability and fidelity scales were operationalized based on the theoretical definitions and dimensions described by Fisher's (1984; 1987) narrative paradigm. Fisher's theory provides clear description and examples of each type of coherence and truth, which allowed for the careful creation of scale items representing both narrative probability and fidelity. The narrative paradigm's clearly stated tenets allowed for CFA testing to determine which items best represented both narrative rationality factors: narrative probability and narrative fidelity.

Participants

A total of 560 people participated in stage two. Two hundred and four (36.4%) were male and 321 (57.3%) were female. Thirty-five (6.3%) participants did not report their sex. The participants' ages ranged from 18-66 years with 73.9 percent of participants ranging from 18-25 years. All participants reported completing a degree of some sort other than the 35 (6.3%) who did not complete this question. Three hundred seventy-three (66.6%) participants reported a high school diploma or GED as their highest degree earned, 68 (12.1%) completed a bachelor's degree, 66 (11.8%) completed a master's degree, 18 (3.2%) completed a degree higher than a master's degree, and 35 (6.3%) did not report completing a degree. The majority of the participants where white (84.6%). Eleven (2%) reported being black, 12 (2.1%) were Hispanic, 23 (4.1%) reported being Asian, and 40 (7.1%) participants did not complete this question.

Procedures

Participants completed a 103-item online survey measuring narrative probability, narrative fidelity, narrative transformation, narrative engagement, need for cognition, and demographic information. The responses to the 56-items pertaining to narrative probability and narrative fidelity (see Appendix A) were the only responses used for this dissertation. The scales were all in reference to one of two stories participants were randomly assigned when they clicked on the web link for the survey. The two stories used were Ernest Hemingway's *A Very Short Story* (Lane, 2011) and Raymond Carver's *Little Things* (Carver, 2011). I chose these stories because they are used in a freshmen-level literature course at the university where I am conducting this research, and the stories are under two pages in length.

The surveys and stories were approved by the IRB. All participants were asked to read the standard IRB consent form after clicking on the survey link produced by surveymonkey.com, and if they agreed to participate, they were asked to click the accept option to continue to the survey. The consent form, stories, and scales were spread over nine screens to avoid listing all information on one screen. Reading the stories and answering the survey questions took approximately 20-25 minutes to complete. After completing the survey I thanked participants and provided them with my contact information.

Participants were recruited in two segments. The first set of participants was recruited using a snowball sample via Facebook status updates and email. Participants were asked to pass the link to their friends and family after completion. The first round of recruitment yielded 195 responses. The second set of participants

was recruited using a convenient sample from a basic communication course at a medium sized Midwestern university. Students enrolled in this course are required to participate in two research opportunities over the semester and if they completed this survey they were given credit toward their course requirement. The second round of data collection yielded 365 responses.

Measures

Narrative probability and narrative fidelity. The purpose of this study was to develop and test validity for measurements of narrative probability and narrative fidelity based on Fisher's (1984) narrative paradigm's idea of narrative rationality. The first version of these scales was comprised of two factors (narrative probability and narrative fidelity) and made up of 56 items total between the two scales (see Appendix A). Twenty-one items measured narrative probability and 35 items measured narrative fidelity. Sample items for narrative probability include, "The story was confusing" and "The parts of the story logically fit together." Sample items for narrative fidelity include, "The lesson learned from this story should be followed by everyone" and "The story's lesson if applied to my life would result in better relationships." As mentioned earlier in this chapter, I borrowed 21 items from Baesler's (1995) attempt at developing a narrative coherence (probability) and fidelity measurements and created 35 new items.

Data Analysis

Confirmatory factor analyses were used to validate the development of the narrative probability and fidelity scales used in stage three and four of this dissertation. The CFA process was used to narrow down the items that best

represented both narrative probability and fidelity. The 56-items were submitted to

four rounds of CFA to determine what items best factor into the two scales without

crossloading. Crossloading acted as the first indicator of which items to remove

during the CFA process. The first CFA with all 56 items specifying a two-factor

solution (χ^2 [1540, N = 561= 73186.50, p<.01, NFI = .88, CFI = .90, IFI = .90, GFI = .55,

AGFI = .51, RMSEA = .12) resulted in poor fit. The modification indices specified by

LISREL suggested that multiple items were crossloading to both latent constructs.

Ten narrative probability items and 19 narrative fidelity items were removed.

The remaining 25 items representing the two factors were submitted to a

second CFA (χ^2 [276, N = 561= 14500.78 p<.01, NFI = .92, CFI = .94, IFI = .94, GFI = .84,

AGFI = .81, RMSEA = .084), which also resulted in poor fit because of cross loading.

Seven items cross-loaded and were removed based on LISREL's modification indices.

All seven items were from the narrative fidelity dimension.

The remaining 18 items were then submitted to a third CFA (χ^2 [136, N = 561=

10224.77, p<.01, NFI = .95, CFI = .96, IFI = .96, GFI = .89, AGFI = .86, RMSEA = .084)

and also resulted in poor fit because of crossloading. Five items, three narrative

probability and two fidelity, were removed based on LISREL's modification indices.

A fourth CFA was conducted on the remaining 15 items (χ^2 [66, N = 561=

7188.22, p<.01, NFI = .96, CFI = .96, IFI = .96, GFI = .91, AGFI = .86, RMSEA = .099)

resulting in adequate fit. Two scales (eight narrative probability items and four

narrative fidelity items) with no cross loading were the result of the final CFA. The

narrative probability and narrative fidelity scales formed from this final CFA were

used in the remaining stages of this study (see Appendix B). The Cronbach's α

reliability coefficient was .91 for narrative probability and .81 for narrative fidelity.

Fisher (1984) defines narrative probability using three types of coherence:

structural coherence, material coherence, and characterological coherence. He

defines narrative fidelity using five types of truths: factual values, relevance,

consistency, consequence, transcendental. The original 56 items were also submitted

to a CFA with an eight-factor solution (χ^2 [1540, N = 561= 73186.50, p<.05, NFI = .91,

CFI = .93, IFI = .93, GFI = .65, AGFI = .62, RMSEA = .093), which resulted in poor fit.

After careful consideration I determined a two-factor CFA representing two scales

provided more valid measurement of narrative probability and fidelity.

Results

The results of study two provided valid scales for the message testing in stage

three to occur along with model testing in stage four. The results of stage one provide

guidance for message development and the results of stage two provide a means to

test for differences between the messages to ensure that the recruitment videos with

the highest and lowest narrative probability and narrative fidelity were used in the

main study (stage four).

Stage 3: Message Testing

The goal of stage three was to develop and test four recruitment videos to

determine which three would be used in the main study (stage four). This stage used

the five themes found in stage one to develop the story-based recruitment videos and

the scales developed in stage two to test these messages to ensure levels of narrative

probability and fidelity. I conducted this stage in conjunction with the North Dakota

State University Office of Admission in two parts: video development and video testing. Each of these parts is discussed separately in this section.

Video Development

I gained permission from the North Dakota State University Office of Admission to act as the primary source of data collection for the main study (stage four). The admission office agreed to show newly-developed videos created for this dissertation to prospective students visiting NDSU as long as the videos were professionally made and met the standards set by the university. This study determined which videos would be used in the main study based on each story's level of narrative probability and fidelity.

I led a team of nine undergraduate students through the production process of creating the main study videos for my dissertation. I created a three-credit-hour undergraduate free-lance video production course that would work with the NDSU Admission Office as a client to create four recruitment videos: three videos based on the results of stage one and a single video only using facts rather than personal stories (control video). Only three videos total would be used in the actual experiment. The students enrolled in the class had already been trained in filming and editing. The course learning outcomes focused on working with a client (NDSU Office of Admission) to create a product that meets their needs while using the results of the pilot study as market research to guide the creative process. IRB approved this study and IRB certified all nine undergraduate students. I was qualified to teach this production course because of my previous professional experience working for a national news network.

Participants. Thirty-seven undergraduate students enrolled at NDSU were recruited to participate in personal interviews about their experiences at NDSU. The students ranged in age from 18-26 years. Seventeen students were male and 20 students were females. Twenty-seven of the participants were white and ten participants were of a different race (seven African Americans and three Asians). The sample consisted of nine freshmen, six sophomores, 19 juniors, and three seniors. Since the main study required personal stories from students (as specified in the pilot study results), I was required to use real stories from NDSU students. This sample provided hundreds of stories about student experiences at NDSU select for the videos.

Procedures. After receiving IRB approval, I conducted 30-minute personal interviews with each of the 37 participants over a two-week period of time. Before interviews began, participants read a consent form explaining the study and asked if they would be interested in possibly appearing in a recruitment video for NDSU sharing some of the stories from their interview. I moderated each of the interviews while one class member took notes on stories that stood out and participants who seemed camera friendly. The team recorded each interview and audio files were transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy. Transcription produced 191 pages of single-spaced text for analysis.

The interviews were held in classrooms on the NDSU campus. The questions asked during the interviews were based on the three themes from stage one that described the types of stories students look for in recruitment material: students' daily experiences, balancing academic information with non-academic information, and unique stories about the university. Participants were asked to describe their

daily routine on campus, dorm life, student organization involvement, their favorite memories from their time at NDSU, etc. The purpose of these interviews was to find students who would be comfortable on camera sharing their stories, but who also provided stories that met the standards set by the NDSU Office of Admission and the results of stage one of the dissertation.

The interview transcripts were first separated into two groups: students who were willing to be appear in the videos and students who were not willing. The stories provided by the participants who were willing to participate in the videos were given to the nine undergraduate students enrolled in the production course to act as guides for creating videos that followed the findings of the pilot study (stage one). The nine students were split into three groups of three and each group worked to find the stories that they wanted to use in their video and matched the results on stage one. The three groups then compared notes and made a list of all the stories they wanted to have students share on camera while I created one filming schedule to split evenly among the groups. All film footage was placed on a shared hard drive open for any group to use. Each group was responsible for creating one of the story-based videos, and one member of each group was required to work on the fact video.

Videos. All the videos were required to be approved by the Admission Office and the three story-based videos had to follow the results of stage one. The videos also had to follow specific criteria to control for possible intervening variables that may influence how people perceive the videos. All four videos had the same number of men and women students (seven males and seven females) and the same number of white students (12) and students of different races (two). The four videos also

used upbeat music chosen from the same free-domain music website under the same category of "happy" music. All four videos were three minutes in length and were edited with same film editing software. The students also used the same fast cut transitions between scenes and faded in at the beginning and faded out at the end of the videos.

The three story-based videos use many of the same students throughout all three videos, all of which use short personal stories from each student. Each video, however, takes a different approach in the overall message told about NDSU and the arrangement of the personal stories gathered from the interviews and shared on camera. Video one's theme showcased a tour of campus with students sharing their personal stories that represent each geographical location of the tour. One student in a chemistry lab tells the story of her mother and father meeting in that lab where she had class her freshmen year. Video two was titled "Things NDSU" and had students sharing their favorite things about NDSU and the story why. For example, one student describes eating at the dining hall and how the Oreo cookie salad is her favorite NDSU "Thing" because it reminds her of the fun times she had with her friends at meal times. Video three centers around telling the story of a student's freshmen year by having students share their stories from their first year starting with moving into the resident halls and ending with finals week. Though I use many of the same students and stories the narrative organization and themes differed in all three videos.

Video four, the control video, consisted of students saying facts about NDSU. The facts were retrieved from the NDSU website and did not provide any personal insight to any of the students sharing the information. The facts consisted of

information about the number of students attending NDSU, the number of majors, campus facilities, etc. The facts did not follow any logical order; they were randomly edited together. The video opened with the students delivering facts saying, "Welcome to NDSU" and concluded with the same students saying "See you around campus."

The NDSU Admission Office viewed and approved all four videos. No videos were shown to the public on the university's website until the data collection began during study four. The videos were given to the Admission Office for free use after the main study was completed.

Video Testing

Once the videos were created and approved by the Office of Admission each video's level of narrative probability and narrative fidelity was tested to choose which two videos had the highest and lowest levels of narrative probability and narrative fidelity. The first goal of this portion of the study was to determine which story-based videos had the lowest and highest narrative probability and narrative fidelity and eliminate the video that fell in the middle. The second goal was to ensure that the fact video was indeed different than the story-based videos and could successfully act as the control group video.

Participants. Due to time circumstances the NDSU Office of Admission was unable to provide an opportunity during campus visits for prospectus students to watch all four videos despite this being the original plan.   This delimitation occurred at the last minute not providing enough time for an IRB amendment to use other pre-scheduled admission events later that week. Waiting to test all four videos at other

events after IRB approval was also not an option because data collection dates for the

main study were determined by the large visitation days already scheduled months in

advance by the NDSU Office of Admission. Since the organization was unable to act as

the data collection site due to time restraints, I used first-semester traditional-aged

freshmen students enrolled at NDSU. I believed that first semester freshmen would

act as the best alternative to prospective students since they recently went through

the college admission process. Plus, the goal of this study was to only ensure levels of

narrative probability and fidelity, which can be determined by any human (Fisher,

1984), and not to prove any outcomes. A total of 54 people participated in the video

testing portion of stage three. Twenty three (42.6%) were male and 31 (57.4%) were

female. The participants' ages ranged from 18-19 years with 74.1% of participants

reporting they were 18 years old. The majority of the participants where white

(87.1%). Three participants (5.5%) reported being black and four (7.4%) reported

being Asian.

Procedures. Participants were recruited using a convenient sample from a

basic communication course at a medium-sized Midwestern university. Students

enrolled in this course are required to participate in two research opportunities over

the semester, and if they completed this survey they were given credit toward their

course requirement. The email recruitment letter specified that only first-year first-

semester students qualified for this study. Students scheduled a time that was

convenient for them to come to a specified classroom to watch all four videos and

answer a 27-itemed scale (see Appendix C) for each video and three demographic

questions (sex, age, and race) before starting. The videos were played in a random

order for each participant. Once a video was completed I paused the video and allowed time for the participant to answer the 27 questions about that specific video's narrative probability and fidelity. All videos were played using the same audio and video equipment and in the same room. The process took 25-30 minutes for each participant to complete.

Measures. The goal of this stage of the dissertation was to determine the levels of narrative probability and narrative fidelity for all four videos. The Narrative Probability and Narrative Fidelity Scale developed in stage two was used to test the four videos. Though the final CFA described in stage two provided a two-factor scale with a total of 12 items (eight items measuring narrative probability and four items measuring fidelity), 15 items from the original 56-item scale (Appendix A) were added back to the measure. Adding some of the original items allowed me to verify the results from study two to ensure the 12 remaining items from the CFAs were indeed the best items to measure narrative probability and fidelity. The narrative probability scale reported a Cronbach's α of .89 and the narrative fidelity scale reported a reliability score of .86.

Data analysis. I ran ANOVA tests of differences in narrative probability and fidelity among the four videos. The ANOVAs were run using only the 12 items from the successful CFA in stage two and also with the additional 15 items that were added from the original 56-itemed scale. The results from both ANOVAs were very similar with no significant differences in the level of narrative probability and narrative fidelity based on using the 12-item scale or the 27-itemed scale. The results reported for this study are the results from the ANOVA using the 12-item scale developed from

the final CFA in stage two. An ANOVA was run on both the narrative probability and fidelity of the four videos.

Results. My analyses revealed a significant main effect in narrative probability only between the fact video (M = 6.24, SE = .12) and tour video (M = 5.68, SE = .13), F (3, 215) = 3.34, p <.05, η^2 = .04; however in the opposite direction than expected. I did not find a significant main effect in narrative fidelity between the fact (M = 6.02, SE = .14) and tour video (M = 5.70, SE = .14), F (3, 215) = 1.34, p =.26, η^2 = .02. The fact video (control video) reported a higher level of narrative probability than the story-based tour video.

No significant difference was discovered between any of the other videos for both narrative probability (NP) or narrative fidelity (NF): welcome home video (NPM= 5.97, SE= .12; NFM = 5.96, SE = .14) X facts video, narrative probability F (3, 215) = 3.34, p =.75, η^2 = .04 and narrative fidelity, F (3, 215) = 1.34, p = 1.00, η^2 = .02 ; welcome home video X tour video narrative probability, F (3, 215) = 3.34, p =.66, η^2 = .04 and narrative fidelity, F (3, 215) = 1.34, p = .99, η^2 = .02 ; welcome home video X things NDSU video (NPM= 5.91, SE= .12; NFM = 5.77, SE = .14) narrative probability F (3, 215) = 3.34, p =1.00, η^2 = .04 and narrative fidelity, F (3, 215) = 1.34, p = 1.00, η^2 = .02; facts video X things NDSU video narrative probability, F (3, 215) = 3.34, p =.37, η^2= .04 and narrative fidelity, F (3, 215) = 1.34, p = .97, η^2 = .02; tour video X things NDSU video narrative probability, F (3, 215) = 3.34, p =1.00, η^2 = .04 and narrative fidelity F (3, 215) = 1.34, p = 1.00, η^2 = .02.

Table 1. *Video Means & Standard Errors*

	Facts	Tour	Welcome Home	Things NDSU
Narrative Probability				
M	6.24$_A$	5.68$_A$	5.97	5.91
SE	.12	.13	.12	.12
Narrative Fidelity				
M	6.02	5.70	5.96	5.77
SE	.14	.14	.14	.14

The results of this stage of the dissertation were unexpected and in some cases completely the opposite of the intended results. However, the story-based videos with the lowest and highest means for narrative probability and narrative fidelity were still chosen for stage four (experiment). The two story-based videos chosen for the main study were the welcome home video (high narrative probability and fidelity) and the tour video (low narrative probability and fidelity). The fact video, despite reporting the highest level of narrative probability and fidelity, still acted as the control video since no stories were included in the video.

Many reasons are possible for these surprising outcomes in narrative probability and narrative fidelity from stage three. The most obvious reason may be that the sample was not prospective students, but students who have already chosen NDSU. They were already committed to the university. Since a commitment was already made these stories would, at most, only reinforce their decisions to go to NDSU. The stories also may not even have been relevant to the freshmen participants because they have already made their own stories and memories of NDSU. The fact

video information may have actually provided participants with more useful information since they were already past the anticipatory socialization phase and in the process of metamorphosis.

The second reason for these unexpected results in the way the survey was worded. All of the scale items asked about the video rather than the "stories" in the video. Essentially the scale measured the narrative probability and narrative fidelity of the videos rather than the narrative probability and narrative fidelity of the stories within the videos. The scale used in study did not actually measure the messages within the video. The scale was adapted for the main study to measure "the stories in the video" and also added an option for participants to choose that stated "there were no stories in this video." These changes were done to ensure the focus of the participants in the main study would be on the stories told in each video rather than the video as a whole.

Stage 4: The Main Study

The main focus of this dissertation is the main study. The three previous stages provided both a theoretical and methodological foundation for conducting the experiment. The goal of the main study is to test the proposed models outlined in the hypotheses and research questions in chapter two to determine if using story-based recruitment material with high levels of narrative probability and narrative fidelity positively influences prospective students' choice of university. The main study was conducted with the NDSU Office of Admission on visiting prospective students over six data collection periods. This section will describe the participants, procedures, measures, and data analysis used to conduct the experiment.

Participants

      The main study participants were prospective students visiting NDSU. All of the students were high school students who showed an interest in NDSU by scheduling a formal visit to the university through the NDSU Office of Admission. A total of 237 prospective students participated in one of the six phases of data collection. One hundred seven (45.1%) participants were male, 127 (53.6%) were female, and three participants did not report their sex (1.3%). The students ranged in age from 16-19. The majority of students were 17 (55.3%) years of age. Seventy-seven (32.5%) participants were 18 years old, 19 (8.0%) participants were 16 years old, six (2.5%) participants were 16 years old, and four (1.7%) participants did not report their age (M=17.31, SD=.68). Two hundred thirteen (89.9%) of the participants were white, five (2.1%) were African American, two (.8%) were Asian, four (.1.7%) were Hispanic, one (.4%) was Pacific Islander, and six (2.5%) participants were Native American. Six (2.5%) participants did not report their race.

      Data collection 1. A total of 112 prospective students were part of this particular visitation day. A total of 104 of these students participated in the first data collection yielding a response rate of 92.9%. Forty-nine (47.1%) participants were male and 55 (52.9%) were female. The students ranged in age from 16-18 years old. The majority of students were 17 (64.4%) years of age. Twenty-seven (26.0%) students were 18 years old, nine (8.7%) were 16 years old, and one participant did not report his or her age (M=17.17, SD=.57). Ninety-five (91.3%) of the participants were white, one (1%) was African American, one (1%) was Asian, one (1%) was Hispanic, one was Pacific Islander, two (1.9%) were Native American, and three

(2.9%) did not report their race. Fifty-two (46.4%) of the 112 visiting students had already been accepted to NDSU and 60 (53.6%) had not applied to NDSU as of the visit date (November 19, 2011).

Data collection 2. A total of 40 prospective students were part of this particular visitation day. A total of 35 of these students participated in the second data collection yielding a response rate of 87.5%. Seventeen (48.6%) participants were male and 18 (51.4%) were female. The students ranged in age from 16-19. The majority of students were 18 (48.6%) years of age and 16 (45.7%) were 17 years old. One (2.9%) student was 16 years of age and one (2.9%) student was 19 years of age (M=17.51, SD=.61). Thirty-one (88.6%) of the participants were white, three (8.6%) were African American, and one (2.9%) was Hispanic. Thirty (75%) of the visiting students had already been accepted to NDSU and ten had not applied to NDSU as of the visit date (January 28, 2012).

Data collection 3. A total of 19 prospective students were part of this particular visitation day. A total of 12 of these students participated in the third data collection yielding a response rate of 63.2%. Six (50.0%) participants were male, five (41.7%) were female, and one (8.3%) student did not report his or her age. The students ranged in age from 17-19. The majority of students were 17 (58.3%) years of age, three (25.0%) students were 18 years of age, one (8.3%) student was 19 years of age, and one (8.3%) student did no report his or her age (M=17.55, SD=.93). Ten (83.3%) of the participants were white, one (8.3%%) was Hispanic, and one (8.3%) participant did not report his or her race. Sixteen (84.2%) of the visiting students had

already been accepted to NDSU and three had not applied to NDSU as of the visit date (February 11, 2012).

Data collection 4. A total of 12 prospective students were part of this particular visitation day. A total of eight of these students participated in the fourth data collection yielding a response rate of 66.7%. Four (50.0%) participants were male and four (50.0%) were female. The students ranged in age from 17-18. Half of students were 17 (50.0%) years of age and the other half were 18 (50.0%) years of age (*M*=17.50, *SD*=.54). Six (75.0%) of the participants were white, one (12.5%) was African American, and one (12.5%) participant was Hispanic. Eleven (91.6%) of the visiting students had already been accepted to NDSU and one had not applied to NDSU as of the visit date (February 15, 2012).

Data collection 5. A total of 15 prospective students were part of this particular visitation day. A total of ten of these students participated in the fifth data collection yielding a response rate of 66.7%. Four (40.0%) participants were male and six (60.0%) were female. The students ranged in age from 16-19. Four (40.0%) of the students were 17 years of age, four (40.0%) were 18 years of age, one (10.0%) was 16 years of age, and one (10.0%) was 19 years of age (*M*=17.60, *SD*=1.08). Nine (90.0%) of the participants were white and one (10.0%%) participant was Asian. Eight (53.3%) of the visiting students had already been accepted to NDSU and seven had not applied to NDSU as of the visit date (March 3, 2012).

Data collection 6. The final phase of data collection represents the data collected during Friday individual visits during the month of January and February 2012. A total of 68 prospective students participated in the individualized data

collection over the two months. Twenty-seven (39.7%) participants were male, 39

(57.4%) were female, and two (2.9%) participants did not report their sex. The

students ranged in age from 16-19. The majority of students were 17 (48.5%) years

of age, 22 (32.4%) participants were 18 years of age, eight (11.8%) were 16 years of

age, three (4.4%) were 19 years of age, and two (2.9%) participants did not report

their ages (M=17.30, SD=.74). Sixty-two (91.2%) of the participants were white, six

(5.9%) were Native American, and two participants did not report their race. There

was no way to track the acceptance status and application process for each student

who participated in the individualized data collection. The Office of Admission did

not want me to ask the students application status information while they were

visiting because it would threaten the confidentiality of the survey and identify which

students participated and which students did not to the admission counselors (a

violation of the IRB protocol).

Procedures

The main study was conducted over six phases of data collection. Five data

collections occurred at planned large visitation events hosted by the NDSU Office of

Admission. All five events are held annually. The sixth phase of data collection

occurred every Friday during the months of January and February 2012. The Friday

data collection occurred on an individual basis rather than at a large group setting.

Visitors at the events and at Friday individual visits watched one of the three videos

(welcome home, tour, or fact) chosen from stage three and completed a 45-itemed

survey (see Appendix D and E) after viewing the video. The survey measured

attitudes toward choosing to attend NDSU, influence of subjective norms on choosing

a university, perceived behavioral control of choosing a university, behavioral intention of choosing to attend NDSU, and narrative probability and fidelity.

All five large visitation events took place on a Saturday starting at 10:00 a.m. and began with the same large presentation about NDSU given by an NDSU admission counselor. Before the large presentation began the admission counselor introduced the study first by explaining NDSU's commitment to students and research and explained the survey was for my dissertation. The admission counselor read the same script introducing the research for all five events. The admission counselor also introduced either my advisor[3] or me to explain the study, recruit the participants, show the video, and collected the surveys from the students who chose to participate. Both my advisor and I read the same recruitment script at all five large visitation events. The events all took place in the same ballroom located in the NDSU Student Union. I chose to have the data collection occur at the very beginning of the event before other variables (campus tour and department information sessions) related to the event itself could impact their survey responses.

The welcome home video (high narrative probability and fidelity) was played at the first event, the fact video (control) was played at the second and fourth events, and the tour video (low narrative probability and fidelity) was played at the third and fifth events. The NDSU Office of Admission determined which videos would be shown at each event. Light food and beverages were served during check-in at all five events.

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[3] My advisor, Dr. Paul Nelson, conducted the first data collection due to a scheduling conflict I encountered. I conducted the main study in the remainder of the data collections.

The sixth phase of data collection was the Friday individual visits. The NDSU

Office of Admission gave permission for me to collect data from prospective students

who arrived early for their visit because it provided something for them to do while

they waited. Fridays are the Admission Office's busiest days for visitors. Upon arrival

and check-in with the administrative assistant students filled out necessary

paperwork and were asked to sit in the waiting room. If students arrived 15 or more

minutes early the administrative assistant notified me that there was a prospective

student and his or her family that I could approach.

I would then approach the family and ask them if they were interested in

participating in the study and explained the study the same way I did at the five large

visitation events. If the prospective student agreed I brought them to a room with a

large viewing screen to view one of the three videos and then completed the same 45-

itemed survey used at the five large visitation events. If more than one prospective

student was in the waiting room at once I asked all if they were willing to participate

and all visitors watched the video and took the survey at the same time.

All visitors who participated in the study saw the videos and completed the

surveys before they visited with an admission counselor and went on a campus tour.

I showed a different video each week on the same rotation. The Friday visitors were

also given folders with the same information as the large visit days upon checking-in

at the Office of Admission. After participants were finished with their surveys they

were escorted back to the waiting room to await the start of their appointment or

campus tour. I was the only researcher involved in collecting data during the Friday

data collection dates.

All participants were asked to watch the video and choose the response closest to their opinion or feeling toward the questions on the survey. The participants were told that the study had been approved by the university's IRB, and their participation would have no influence on their admission process to NDSU. No incentives were offered to the students for participating in the study. The NDSU admission staff had no access to the data; they only helped collect the anonymous surveys when participants were finished completing the questionnaire. Responses from each phase of data collection were color coded and stored separately to ensure the proper responses were paired with the corresponding video. Data was manually entered into spreadsheets to prepare and save for data analysis.

A minor delimitation for this stage of the dissertation was that I did not get to show more than one video to separate groups at each large visitation event. The visitation events took place at different points in the college application and decision making process and date of visit could have possibly influenced how participants responded to videos. This delimitation could not be avoided while working under the restraints of the NDSU Office of Admission. I attempted to combat this delimitation by showing the fact and tour videos at both the early and late data collection dates.

Measures

The 45-item questionnaire was made up of six scales: narrative probability, narrative fidelity, attitude toward the behavior, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and behavioral intentions (see Appendix D and E). Three of the 45 items were demographic questions. The six scales are representative of the narrative paradigm and theory of planned behavior's theoretical constructs. To assess the

validity of the scales, a CFA examining the six constructs was run using LIREL because of the potential for conceptual overlap between narrative probability and narrative fidelity and the four dimensions of TPB (attitudes towards a behavior, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and behavioral intention). These six measures made up of 42 items were submitted to three CFAs for a six-factor solution. The primary purpose of conducting the CFAs was to remove any cross loading items from the measurements. Once all cross-loaded items were removed items with factor loadings lower than .60 were also removed from the measurements.

The first CFA with all 42 items specifying a six-factor solution (χ^2 [861, N = 237= 21123.70, p<.05, NFI = .90, CFI = .94, IFI = .94, GFI = .68, AGFI = .64, RMSEA = .09) resulted in poor fit. The modification indices specified by LISREL suggested that multiple items were crossloading to both latent constructs. Fourteen total items were removed due to crossloading, including: four attitude toward the behavior items, five subjective norms items, two perceived behavioral control items, one behavioral intention item, and two narrative fidelity items.

The remaining 28 items representing the six factors were submitted to a second CFA (χ^2 [351, N = 237= 10217.80, p<.05, NFI = .93, CFI = .96, IFI = .96, GFI =.79, AGFI = .75, RMSEA = .08). This model also resulted in a poor fit because the modification indices specified by LISREL suggested that multiple items' factor loadings were below .60. Seven total items were removed due to low factor loadings including: six attitude towards the behavior items and one perceived behavioral control item.

The remaining 21 items representing the six factors were submitted to a final

CFA (χ^2 [190, N = 237= 7449.20, p<.05, NFI = .96, CFI = .98, IFI = .98, GFI =.88, AGFI

=.84, RMSEA = .07). The model resulted in adequate fit with all items' factor loadings

at .60 or above. Six scales (attitude toward the behavior, subjective norms, perceived

behavioral control, behavioral intention, narrative probability, and narrative fidelity)

made up of 21 items with no cross loading were the result of the final CFA (see

Appendix F and G).

Narrative probability. Narrative probability was operationalized using the

Narrative Probability Scale developed in stage two of this dissertation. The Narrative

Probability Scale used in the main study was made up of six semantic differential type

items (e.g., "The stories in the video left out important information"). Two narrative

probability items were removed from the original 12-item scale upon the request of

the Office of Admission and the other four were removed for cross loading in the CFAs

mentioned above. See Appendix F for the narrative probability items used for the

data analysis. Responses to these items are on a 7-point scale with bi-polar anchors

of completely disagree and completely agree. To better account for the measurement

of the actual stories rather than the video itself and to provide a more realistic option

for the control group participants, I added a response item to the scale that stated,

"There were no stories in this video." All participants no matter the group had this

option on their survey. Stage two and three reported a high reliabilities for the

Narrative Probability Scale (α=.91 and α=.89) and main study also reported a high

reliability for narrative probability (α =.92) .

Narrative fidelity. Narrative fidelity was operationalized using the Narrative

Fidelity Scale developed in stage two of this dissertation. The Narrative Fidelity Scale

used in the main study was made up of two semantic differential type items (e.g., "The

information from the stories in the video if applied to my life would result in self

benefit"). Though the original Narrative Fidelity Scale is made up of four items, two

narrative fidelity items were removed because of cross loading in the CFAs mentioned

above. See Appendix G for the narrative probability items used for the data analysis.

Responses to these items are on a 7-point scale with bi-polar anchors of completely

disagree and completely agree. To better account for the measurement of the actual

stories rather than the video itself and to provide a more realistic option for the

control group participants, I added a response item to the scale that stated, "There

were no stories in this video." All participants no matter the group had this option on

their survey. Stage two and three reported a high reliabilities for the Narrative

Fidelity Scale (α =.81 and α=.86) and the main study reported good reliability (α .89).

Theory of planned behavior. The variables of theory of planned behavior

(Ajzen, 1991) were operationalized using Fishbein and Ajzen's (2010) instructions for

constructing a questionnaire to test the TPB. Fishbein and Ajzen advise developing a

specific scale for the specific behavior and situation being studied. To effectively

measure the variables of TPB they recommend that there be at least three items

measuring each variable (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). The four scales created to

measure the TPB variables for this dissertation main study was originally made up of

32 semantic differential items (see Appendix E). However, after submitting the

measures to the previously mentioned CFAs for validity testing, the 13 items that did

not cross load to other factors were used in the analysis of this dissertation (Appendix G). Three of the four TPB's constructs (attitude toward a behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control) contain two dimensions representing the cognitive aspect and behavioral outcome of each construct. After conducting CFAs I decided to combine the two dimensions for each construct into one factor because a four-factor TPB scale rather than a seven-factor scale had less crossloading items. The four scales used to operationalized TPB demonstrated acceptable validity. Each item of all four scales was on a 7-point scale with two bipolar opposite terms depending on the question.

The four scales used to measure the TPB constructs are: attitudes toward a behavior (six items: e.g., "NDSU is a school that will provide me with a good education"), subjective norms (one item: e.g., "My parents expect me to attend a university like NDSU"), perceived behavioral control (three items: e.g., "If my grades are not good I will still attend college"), and behavioral intention (three items: e.g., "I intend to go to NDSU"). The subjective norm scale was reduced to only one item after the CFA, but the item did not cross load and reported a strong factor loading. Each scale reported high or acceptable reliability: attitudes toward a behavior (α =.94), subjective norms (only one item), perceived behavioral control (α =.72), and behavioral intention (α =.94). Previous research has reported reliabilities for all four scales ranging from .51 to .95 (Brann & Sutton, 2009; Jang & Yoo, 2009; Wang, 2009; Wellbourne & Booth-Butterfield, 2005).

Data Analysis

I ran a series of ANOVAs to test for differences between experimental

conditions, demographics, and video sessions. These preliminary ANOVAs

determined how to analyze the data and the statistical analyses used to test the

hypotheses and research questions. A series of split file correlations and a

correlation combining all the video conditions also were run for preliminary analysis.

I tested the hypotheses and research questions using LISREL. Path modeling

determined if the model with additional exogenous variables (narrative probability

and fidelity) was supported by these data and to examine the relationships of the

variables within the models. The theory of planned behavior was tested using a

multi-linear regression rather than path modeling because the TPB model was just-

identified. The results of these analyses are discussed in detail in the next chapter.

Conclusion

This chapter explained the progression of preliminary stages leading to the

main study of this dissertation. I described the participants, procedures, analysis,

measures, and results for each of the preliminary and experimental stages of this

dissertation. This chapter explained how I theoretically and methodologically

followed experimental procedures to create effective scales and recruitment

messages that met the needs of the main study and the NDSU Office of Admission.

The next chapter describes the results of the data analysis used to test the hypotheses

and research questions of my dissertation.

CHAPTER 4. RESULTS

In this chapter I present the preliminary analyses, results, and additional analyses of this dissertation. The purpose of this study was to test the influence recruitment materials using personal stories with high and low levels of narrative probability and narrative fidelity have on prospective students' attitudes toward choosing NDSU, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control of choosing a university, and their behavioral intention of attending NDSU. This chapter begins with an explanation of the results for the preliminary analyses that assisted in the testing of the hypotheses and research questions. The chapter continues with the model testing of the hypotheses and research questions and concludes with additional analyses and a summary of the results.

Preliminary Analyses

The main study used three different videos varying in levels of narrative probability and narrative fidelity to test whether personal stories positively influence prospective students' choice of college. Three experimental groups were formed based on which video the visiting students saw: video with high levels of narrative probability and narrative fidelity (Welcome Home), video with low levels of narrative probability and narrative fidelity (Tour), and the control video that contained no stories (Facts). The first step was to perform a manipulation check to determine if there were significant differences between the experimental conditions.

I ran an ANOVA test of differences in narrative probability and narrative fidelity among the three videos. My analysis revealed no significant main effect in narrative probability (NP) or narrative fidelity (NF) between any of the videos: high

narrative probability and narrative fidelity video (NP*M*= 5.66, *SE*= .13; NF*M*= 5.25, *SE*= .15) X control video (NP*M*= 5.30, *SE*= .16; NF*M*= 4.73, *SE*= .18), narrative probability *F* (2, 231) = 1.30, *p* =.66, η^2 = .01 and narrative fidelity *F* (2, 231) = 1.30, *p* =.07, η^2 = .02; high narrative probability and narrative fidelity video X low narrative probability and narrative fidelity video (NP*M*= 5.66, *SE*= .77; NF*M*= 5.23; *SE*= .17), narrative probability *F* (2, 231) = 1.30, *p* =1.00, η^2 = .01 and narrative fidelity *F* (2, 231) = 1.30, *p* =1.00, η^2 = .02; control video X low narrative probability and narrative fidelity video, narrative probability *F* (2, 231) = 1.30, *p* =.38, η^2 = .01 and narrative fidelity *F* (2, 231) = 1.30, *p* =.17, η^2 = .02. Though the means for the high narrative probability and narrative fidelity video and the low narrative probability and narrative fidelity video appear to be higher than the control video, these means were not significantly higher.

I decided than to examine differences between data collection dates to see if there was any evidence of problems with the data collections or to see if differences between certain dates were prevalent since five of the six data collection dates only showed one of the videos. I ran ANOVA tests of differences in narrative probability and narrative fidelity among the six data collection dates. My analyses revealed there were significant differences in narrative fidelity among the November 19 data collection (viewed high probability and narrative fidelity video, *M*= 5.25, *SE*= .14) and the January 28 data collection (viewed control video, *M*= 4.31, *SE*= .26), *F* (5, 228) = 3.34, *p* =.02 η^2 = .07. To verify this difference I ran an independent samples t-test and the analysis confirmed that the prospective students who viewed the high narrative probability and narrative fidelity video on November 19 did consider the video to

have higher narrative fidelity than the students who viewed the control video on January 28, $t(137)= -3.22$, $p< .001$, $SE= .29$.

Since the five of the six data collection dates were tied to a specific video I decided to analyze the relationships between the videos further by performing a split file correlation of the all of the model variables (narrative probability, narrative fidelity, and TPB variables) based on video and data collection dates where only one video was shown. I also performed a correlation on all the video conditions combined (Table 2). The split file correlations revealed that the videos' levels of narrative probability and narrative fidelity were significantly and positively correlated with the theory of planned behavior variables (attitude toward choosing NDSU, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control of choosing a college, and behavioral intention to choose NDSU) as expected depending on the videos' varying levels of narrative probability and fidelity. The high and low narrative probability and fidelity videos had significant positive correlations between narrative probability and fidelity with the TPB variables and the control video did not. The correlation combining all the video conditions revealed that narrative probability and narrative fidelity had significant positive correlations with the majority of TPB variables. See tables 2-10 below:

Table 2. *Pearson Correlation Matrix All Video Conditions Combined*

	P	F	A	SN	BC	BI
Probability	--					
Fidelity	.74***	--				
Attitude	.31***	.36***	--			
Subjective Norms	.03	.14*	.29***	--		
Behavioral Control	.16*	.09	.33***	.26*	--	
Behavioral Intention	.13*	.24***	.58***	.31**	.31**	--

*p<.05. **p<.01. ***p<.001

Table 3. *Pearson Correlation Matrix High Narrative Probability & Fidelity Video: Model Variables*

	P	F	A	SN	BC	BI
Probability	--					
Fidelity	.52***	--				
Attitude	.53***	.46***	--			
Subjective Norms	.18	.31**	.24*	--		
Behavioral Control	.28**	.11	.26**	.26*	--	
Behavioral Intention	.26**	.42***	.59***	.20*	.28**	--

*p<.05. **p<.01. ***p<.001

Table 4. *Pearson Correlation Matrix Control Video: Model Variables*

	P	F	A	SN	BC	BI
Probability	--					
Fidelity	.87***	--				
Attitude	.14	.16	--			
Subjective Norms	-.11	.02	.25*	--		
Behavioral Control	.02	-.04	.39**	.19	--	
Behavioral Intention	.02	.07	.58***	.28*	.38**	--

*p<.05. **p<.01. ***p<.001

Table 5. *Pearson Correlation Matrix Low Narrative Probability & Narrative Fidelity Video: Model Variables*

	P	F	A	SN	BC	BI
Probability	--					
Fidelity	.56***	--				
Attitude	.65***	.67***	--			
Subjective Norms	.14	.16**	.38**	--		
Behavioral Control	.41**	.42**	.36**	.16	--	
Behavioral Intention	.27**	.40**	.54***	.54***	.28**	--

*p<.05. **p<.01. ***p<.001

Table 6. *Pearson Correlation Matrix Nov. 19 (High Narrative Probability & Narrative Fidelity Video): Model Variables*

	P	F	A	SN	BC	BI
Probability	--					
Fidelity	.52***	--				
Attitude	.53***	.46***	--			
Subjective Norms	.18	.31**	.24*	--		
Behavioral Control	.28**	.11	.26**	.26*	--	
Behavioral Intention	.26**	.42***	.59***	.20*	.28**	--

*p<.05. **p<.01. ***p<.001

Table 7. *Pearson Correlation Matrix Jan. 28 (Control Video): Model Variables*

	P	F	A	SN	BC	BI
Probability	--					
Fidelity	.93***	--				
Attitude	.11	.14	--			
Subjective Norms	-.06	.04	.31	--		
Behavioral Control	.03	-.002	.54**	.24	--	
Behavioral Intention	-.08	.01	.67***	.29	.50**	--

*p<.05. **p<.01. ***p<.001

Table 8. *Pearson Correlation Matrix Feb. 11 (Low Narrative Probability & Narrative Fidelity Video): Model Variables*

	P	F	A	SN	BC	BI
Probability	--					
Fidelity	.71*	--				
Attitude	.66*	.41	--			
Subjective Norms	-.25	.20	.14	--		
Behavioral Control	.53	.48	-.08	-.35	--	
Behavioral Intention	.14	.64*	.43	.51	.13	--

*p<.05. **p<.01. ***p<.001

Table 9. *Pearson Correlation Matrix Feb. 25 (Control Video): Model Variables*

	P	F	A	SN	BC	BI
Probability	--					
Fidelity	.87**	--				
Attitude	-.53	-.71	--			
Subjective Norms	-.33	-.04	-.37	--		
Behavioral Control	.07	-.22	.47	-.39	--	
Behavioral Intention	.13	.26	-.02	.14	.30	--

*p<.05. **p<.01. ***p<.001

Table 10. *Pearson Correlation Matrix March 3 (Control Video): Model Variables*

	P	F	A	SN	BC	BI
Probability	--					
Fidelity	.99***	--				
Attitude	.23	.29	--			
Subjective Norms	-.50	-.48	.09	--		
Behavioral Control	-.15	-.21	.28	.43	--	
Behavioral Intention	-.02	.03	.60	.41	.44	--

*p<.05. **p<.01. ***p<.001

The correlation analyses suggested testing the proposed models in the hypotheses was still worthwhile. The correlation matrices showed significant positive correlations for the high and low narrative probability and narrative fidelity videos and with the dates that showed both the high and low narrative probability and narrative fidelity videos. No significant correlations between narrative probability and narrative fidelity with the TPB variables were found for the control video or dates associated with the control video. Though the videos did not appear to have different levels of narrative probability and narrative fidelity after the manipulation check, they did result in different patterns of associations between variables.

Testing the Hypotheses and Research Questions

The three hypotheses and research question were examined by testing the fit of the path model proposed in hypothesis four using LISREL 8.80 (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 2006). The complete model with the exogenous variables combined all experimental video conditions and was made up of six variables: narrative probability, narrative fidelity, attitude toward choosing NDSU, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control of choosing a college, and behavioral intention to choose NDSU. The complete model directly represented hypothesis 4 of this dissertation and provided a simultaneous test of all the hypotheses and research question. The complete model was tested first and overall the model did not appear to fit the data well (χ^2 [15, N = 237= 406.81, p<.05, NFI = .87, CFI = .88, IFI = .88, GFI =.93, AGFI =.69, RMSEA = .21). The majority of fit indices failed to meet the standard rule of thumb of .90 (Hoyle & Panter, 1995). The RMSEA also failed to meet the rule of thumb of .08 or less and the

χ^2 is significant, which also did not meet the rule of thumb (Chen, Curran, Bollen, Kirby, & Paxton, 2008). The model predicted in hypothesis four was not consistent with the data. The complete model t-values also revealed that the majority of paths between narrative probability and narrative fidelity with the TPB variables were not significant. See Figure 3 for the complete model results.

Hypothesis 1a predicted narrative probability would positively influence attitude toward choosing NDSU. The data was not consistent with this hypothesis because there was no significant path found in the complete model between narrative probability and attitudes towards choosing NDSU. However, the results of the correlation combing all the video conditions run in the preliminary analysis were consistent with this hypothesis because there was a positive correlation between narrative probability and attitudes toward choosing NDSU.

Research question 1a examined how narrative probability would influence subjective norms beliefs of prospective students. The complete model did not produce a significant path between narrative probability and subjective norms beliefs. The correlation run in the preliminary analyses also produced similar results with no significant relationship between narrative probability and subjective norms beliefs.

Hypothesis 2a predicted that narrative probability would positively influence perceived behavioral control of choosing a university. The data was not consistent with this hypothesis because there was no significant path between narrative probability and perceived behavioral control of choosing a university in the complete model. However, the results of the correlation combining all the video conditions

Figure 3. *Hypothesis 4 Complete Model Results*
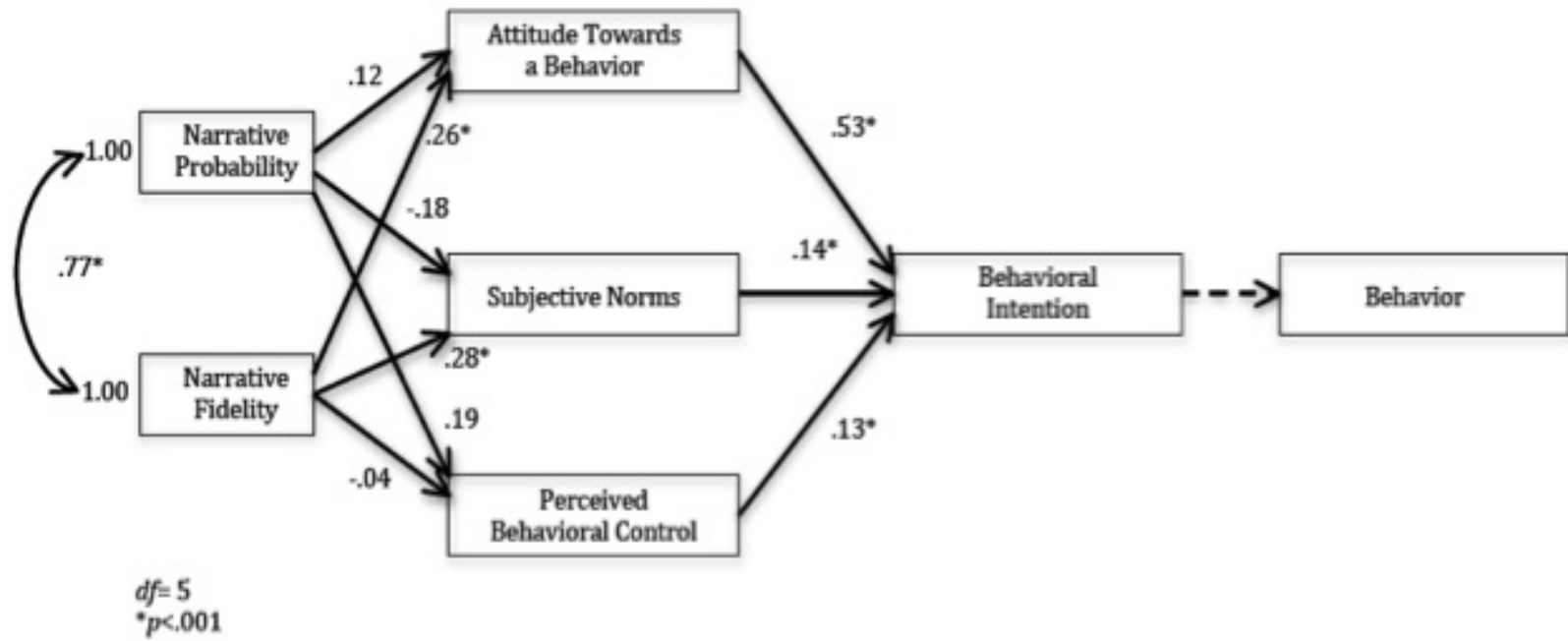
run in the preliminary analysis were consistent with this hypothesis because there was a positive correlation between narrative probability and perceived behavioral control of choosing a university.

Hypothesis 1b predicted narrative fidelity would positively influence attitude toward choosing NDSU. This hypothesis was consistent with the data because a significant path was produced between narrative fidelity and attitude towards choosing NDSU in the complete model. This hypothesis was also consistent with the results of the correlation run on all of the video conditions combined because there was a significant positive correlation between narrative fidelity and attitude toward choosing NDSU.

Research question 1b examined the influence narrative fidelity would have on the subjective norms beliefs of prospective students. The complete model produced a significant path between narrative fidelity and subjective norms beliefs indicating that narrative fidelity positively influences subjective norms. The correlation run on all the video conditions combined from the preliminary analyses also produced a significant positive correlation between narrative fidelity and subjective norms beliefs.

Hypothesis 2b predicted that narrative fidelity would positively influence perceived behavioral control of choosing a university. This hypothesis was not consistent with the data because the complete model did not produce a significant path between narrative fidelity and perceived behavioral control of choosing a university. The results of correlation combining all the video conditions run in the preliminary analysis were also not consistent with this hypothesis because no

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significant correlation was found between narrative fidelity and perceived behavioral control of choosing a university.

Hypothesis 3 predicted the theory of planned behavior model would be supported by this data. Because the model was only just-identified, LISREL 8.80 could not test the model as a path model. I combined all condition data for this hypothesis because no exogenous variables were included in the TPB model proposed by Hypothesis 3. I used a multiple linear regression analysis instead of a path model to test this hypothesis. A significant regression equation was found, (F (3,227) = 43.82, p < .001), with an adjusted R^2 of .36. Attitude towards choosing NDSU, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control all significantly predicted behavioral intention to choose NDSU as the TPB suggested. These results are presented in Table 11. The complete model also produced significant positive paths between all three TPB variables and behavioral intention. The results from both multi-linear regression and the complete model were consistent with Hypothesis 3.

Table 11. *Predictors of Behavioral Intention*

Variables	β	95% CI
Attitude Toward Choosing NDSU	.49***	[.64, 1.02]
Subjective Norms Beliefs	.15**	[.03, .21]
Perceived Behavioral Control of Choosing a University	.12*	[.01, .27]

F (3,227) = 43.82, p < .001, adjusted R^2 of .36
***p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05

Additional Analyses

I ran additional analyses to investigate the hypotheses and research questions further since there were inconsistent results between the complete model and the split file correlations run in the preliminary analyses. Three additional models representing the same variable paths as the complete models (narrative probability

as exogenous variables added to the TPB model) were tested based on each video

condition (high narrative probability and fidelity, low narrative probability and

fidelity, and control videos) to see if the conditions exposed to videos with higher

levels of narrative probability and narrative fidelity fit the data better than the

conditions with lower levels and the control group video. A path model was run

representing each video: high narrative probability and fidelity, control, and low

narrative probability and narrative fidelity (see Figures 4-6).

Both the high narrative probability and narrative fidelity model (χ^2 [15, N =

104= 204.27, p<.05, NFI = .91, CFI = .93, IFI = .93, GFI =.94, AGFI =.76, RMSEA = .16)

and the low narrative probability and narrative fidelity model (χ^2 [15, N = 62= 188.26,

p<.05, NFI = .92, CFI = .94, IFI = .95, GFI =.93, AGFI =.72, RMSEA = .21) appeared to fit

the data better than the control group video model (χ^2 [15, N = 71= 114.93, p<.05, NFI

= .83, CFI = .85, IFI = .86, GFI =.91, AGFI =.62, RMSEA = .22) and the complete model.

The two narrative video models more adequately fit the data than the complete model

and control group video model because more of the fit indices in both story models

reached the .90 rule of thumb than the control video (Hoyle & Panter, 1995). All but

one of the control group video's fit indices (GFI) and one of the complete model fit

indices (GFI) failed to meet the rule of thumb of .90 (Hoyle & Panter, 1995). All three

experimental group models and the complete model failed to reach the rule of thumb

for RMSEA (<.08) and χ^2 (non-significant) (Chen et al., 2008). The preliminary

correlations also support the interpretation of these models because narrative

probability and narrative fidelity in both the high and low videos had significant

positive correlations with most of the TPB variables and the control video had no

significant correlations. However, not all of the paths in the high and low probability and narrative fidelity video models were significant after reviewing the t-values; but the majority of paths were significant and represent the testing of the remaining hypotheses and research questions. See all three video models in Figures 4-6.

Though the low narrative probability and narrative fidelity video model had slightly higher fit indices than the high narrative probability and narrative fidelity video model, upon deeper examination of the standardized parameters and t-values the high narrative probability and narrative fidelity video does have more significant paths between narrative probability and narrative fidelity and the TPB variables. Examining the individual paths of each video model provides more insight to the results. The individual paths of the additional video condition models are explained more in the next chapter. The results of the split file correlations also provided support for the results of each of the video models run in the additional analyses. The split file correlation results produced significant positive correlations between narrative probability and narrative fidelity with most of the TPB variables in both the high and low narrative probability and narrative fidelity video conditions (see Tables 3-10). Subjective norms in both the high and low narrative probability and narrative fidelity videos did not correlate with narrative probability. No correlations were found between narrative probability and narrative fidelity with the TPB variables in the control video condition. Therefore, both story models represent videos with some level of narrative probability and narrative fidelity and influence prospective students' behavioral intention more than the control video.

Figure 4. *High Narrative Probability & Narrative Fidelity Video Model Results*
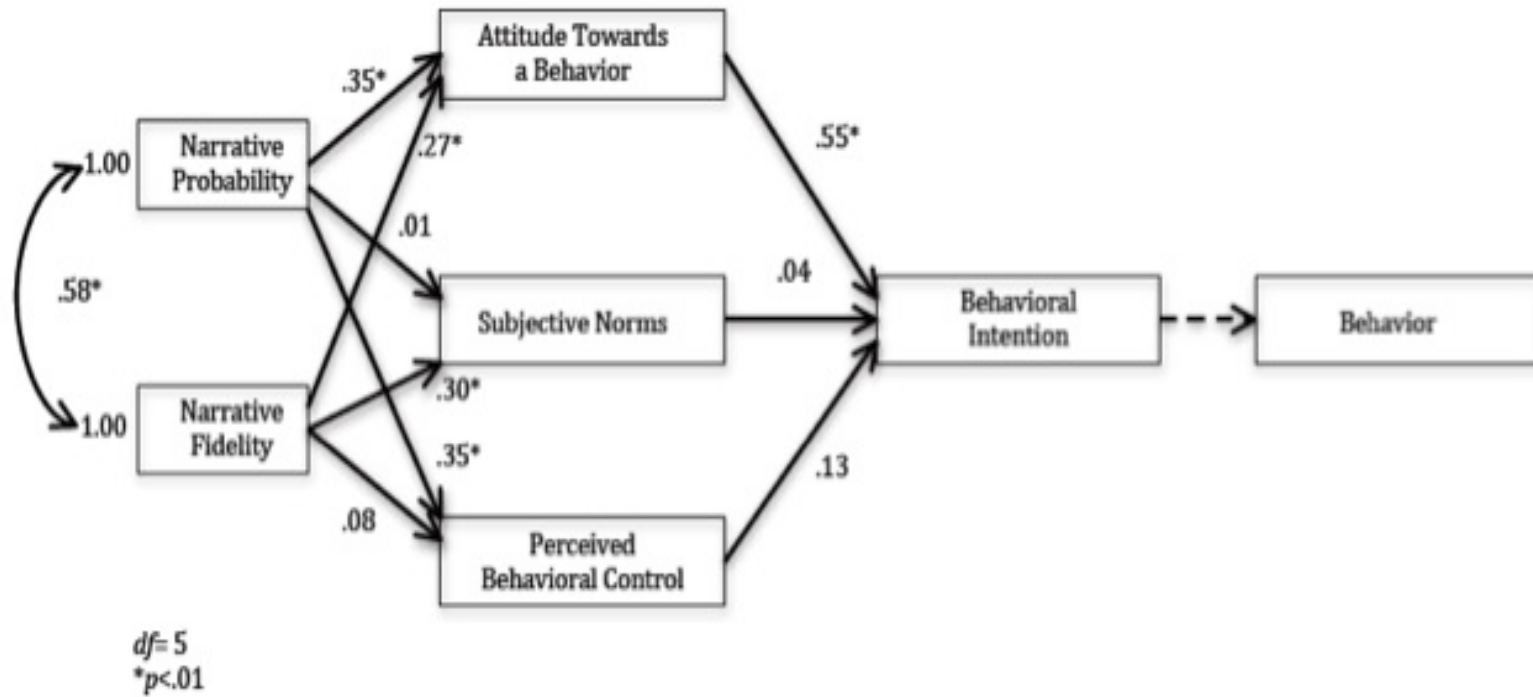
Figure 5. *Low Narrative Probability & Narrative Fidelity Video Model Results*
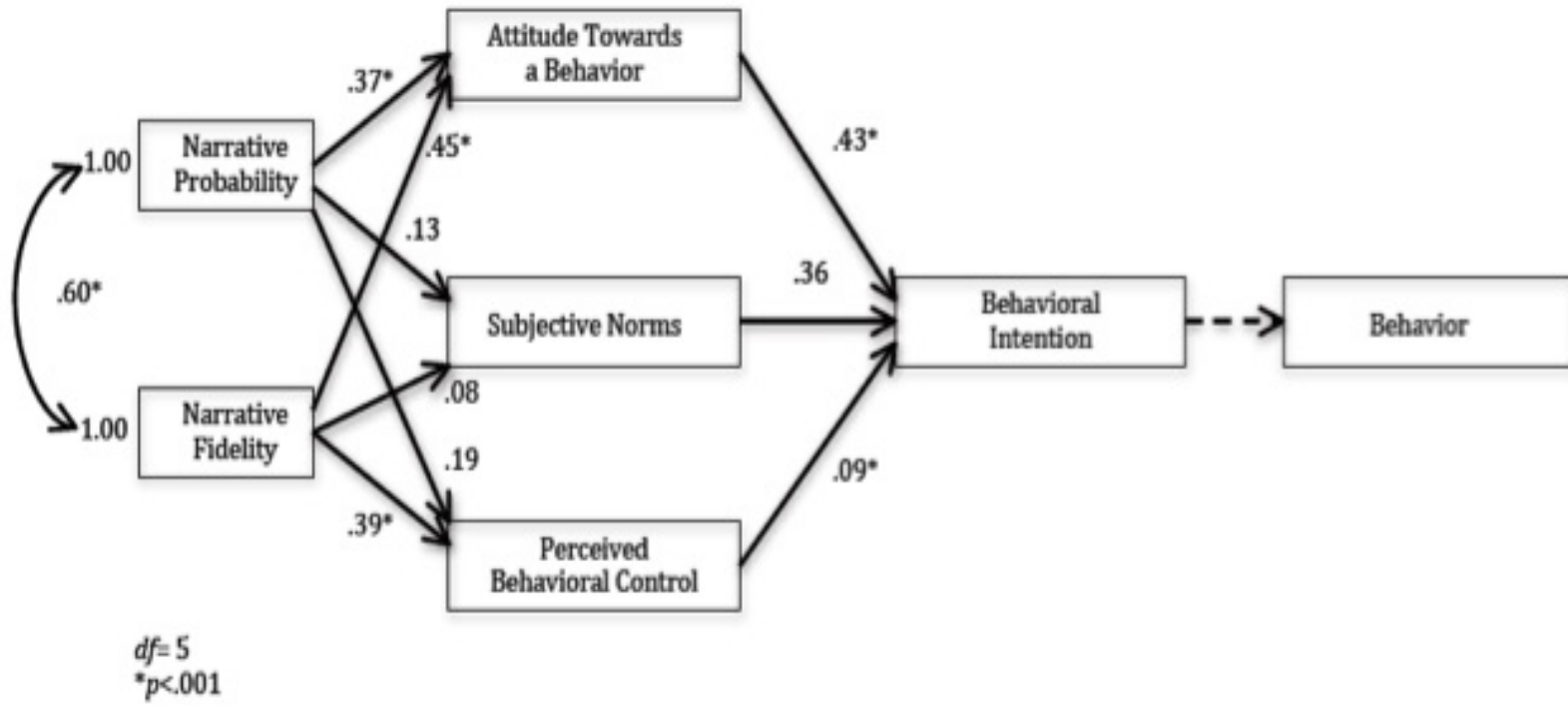
Figure 6. *Control Video Model Results*

df= 5
*p<.01

d
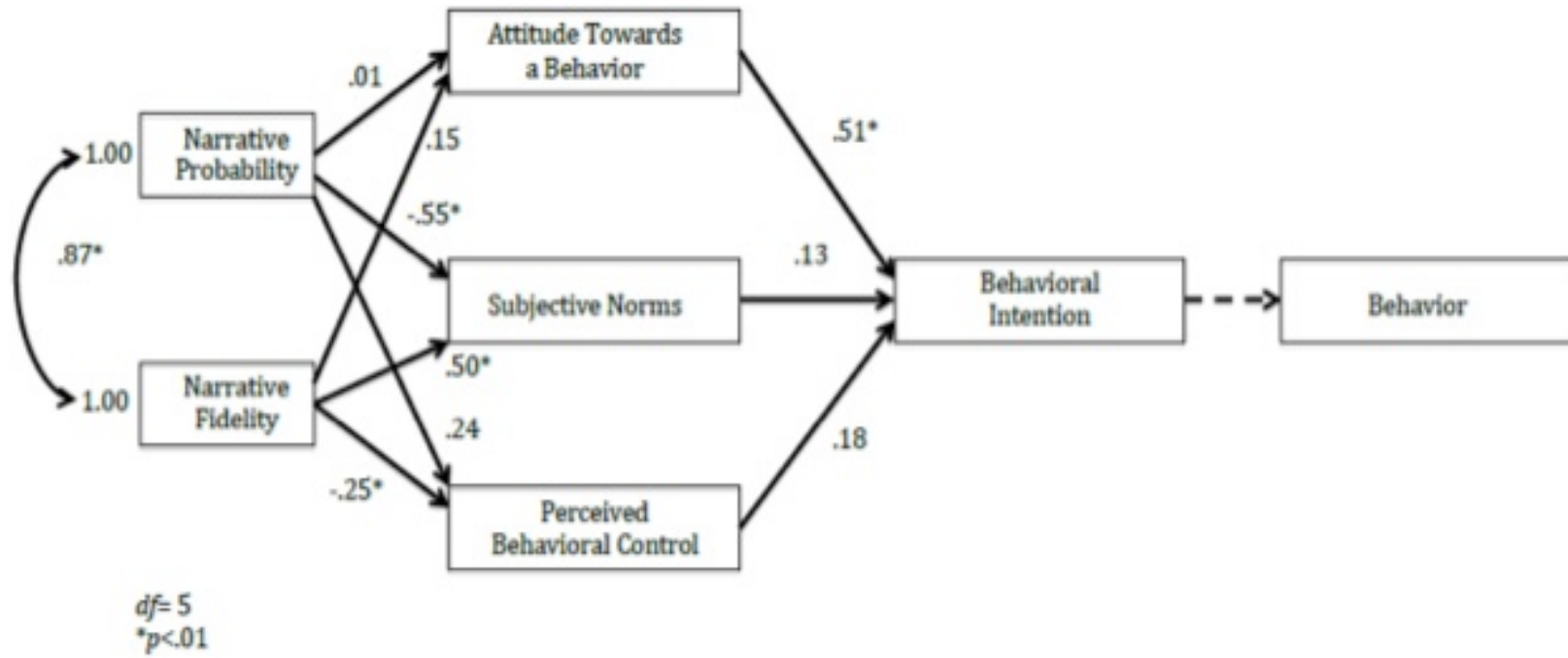
Summary of Results

A path model, correlation combining the all the video conditions, and a

multiple linear regression were used to test Hypothesis 1a, Research Question 1a,

Hypothesis 2a, Hypothesis 1b, Research Question 1b, Hypothesis 2b, Hypothesis 3,

and Hypothesis 4. The overall proposed complete model adding narrative probability

and narrative fidelity as exogenous variables to the theory of planned behavior did

not fit the data. The results of the individual paths between narrative probability and

narrative fidelity and the endogenous variables in the complete model produced

inconsistent results with the correlation.

The results indicated that narrative probability positively influenced attitude

toward choosing NDSU (Hypothesis 1a) according to the correlation combining all the

video conditions, but the hypothesis was not consistent with the data based on the

complete path model. Subjective norms beliefs were not positively influenced by

narrative probability based on both the complete path model and correlation results

(Research Question 1a). Perceived behavioral control was positively influenced by

narrative probability according to the correlation results, but the hypothesis was not

consistent with the complete path model results (Hypothesis 2a). The results of the

both the complete path model and correlation indicated that narrative fidelity does

positively influence attitude toward choosing NDSU (Hypothesis 1b). Narrative

fidelity positively influenced subjective norms beliefs according to the complete

model results and correlation (Research Question 1b). Perceived behavioral control

of choosing a university (Hypothesis 2b) was not positively influenced by narrative

fidelity in the complete model or in the correlation of the all the video conditions combined.

Though the overall proposed complete model adding narrative probability and narrative fidelity as exogenous variables to the theory of planned behavior did not fit the data; additional testing of the proposed model on each video condition separately and the split file correlations run in the preliminary analyses revealed that narrative probability and narrative fidelity do have an influence on the TPB variables. The results also indicated that the theory of planned behavior model was consistent with this data and attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control positively predicted behavioral intention to choose NDSU in the complete model and according to the multi-linear regression results (Hypothesis 3).

Conclusion

In this chapter I explained the preliminary analysis of data, results of my dissertation, and additional analyses examining the relationship between narrative probability and narrative fidelity and the TPB variables. Though the proposed complete model with the exogenous variables did not fit these data, the additional analyses revealed narrative probability and narrative fidelity appear to play a complex role in the creation of attitudes toward choosing NDSU, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, which influence a person's behavioral intention to choose a university. These results provide both theoretical and practical implications for the study of communication, persuasion, and university recruitment. The next chapter will discuss the results, the impact the additional analyses have on the

hypotheses and research questions, theoretical contributions, practical applications, limitations, and directions for future research.

CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION

This dissertation had three primary goals. The first goal was to examine the

effects personal stories have on prospective students' choice of college by comparing

the effects of three different recruitment videos with varying levels of narrative

probability and fidelity. This first goal also answers the call for future research to

examine the influence narrative probability and narrative fidelity have in generating

attitude change (Massi Lindsey & Ah Yun, 2005). The second goal of this dissertation

was to create a theoretical link between the narrative paradigm (Fisher, 1984) and

theory of planned behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991) while framing the connection in

Jablin's (1982) anticipatory socialization phase of organizational assimilation. The

third and final goal was to provide theory-based practical advice for admission offices

and other organizations to consider when developing recruitment strategies. The

results of this study provided insight for each of these goals and bridged the

interpretive with the social scientific through my applied prospective.

Jablin's (1982) anticipatory socialization phase provided the context of this

study, prospective students forming expectations about life at a particular university.

Fisher's (1984) narrative paradigm provided practical communicative advice for

creating messages that encouraged identification and understanding by

communicating stories that have high levels of narrative probability and fidelity. TPB

provided a framework to analyze the behavioral process of choosing a university.

Together these three theories, despite being from different research paradigms,

created theory-based practical results that combat the current challenges university

admission offices are facing: budget cuts, a changing generation of students, promoting an intangible experience, and competition from online universities.

This dissertation has taken steps toward examining one possible solution to help alleviate these challenges. To examine these challenges I chose to quantify and study the effects narrative probability and narrative fidelity have on attitudes toward choosing a university, students' subjective norms beliefs, and perceived behavioral control of choosing a university. I also tested how the TPB variables influenced the behavioral intention of choosing a university. Narrative probability and narrative fidelity served as exogenous variables to the model of TPB. The results of this study provided a close examination of how using stories to communicate and create understanding about an anticipated experience (college) can impact the decision-making process. Humans are essentially storytellers who make sense through stories (Fisher, 1984), and based on this study's results, prospective students seem to be influenced by story-based messages.

This chapter begins with a summary of the results, which provides literature and theory-based explanations for this study's findings. The chapter continues with overarching theoretical contributions and practical implications for practitioners on using narratives in university and organizational recruitment. This chapter and dissertation conclude with limitations of the current study, future research opportunities, and a conclusion summarizing the dissertation.

Explanation of Results

The current study did not provide support for the complete model proposed in Hypothesis 4 (narrative probability and narrative fidelity as exogenous variables in

the TPB model), which included all three video conditions (high and low narrative probability and narrative fidelity videos and control video). Based only on the complete model narrative probability and narrative fidelity appeared not to influence the TPB variables. However, when the proposed model using narrative probability and narrative fidelity as exogenous variables was tested with each video condition separately in the additional analyses, the influence of narrative probability and narrative fidelity on attitude toward choosing NDSU, subjective norms beliefs, and perceived behavioral control of choosing a university is significant and positively related. Each hypothesis and research question will be discussed separately to best explain both the model results and individual paths between model variables.

Hypothesis 1a predicted that narrative probability would positively influence attitude toward choosing NDSU; both the high and low narrative probability and fidelity videos were consistent with this hypothesis and the control video did not have a significant influence nor did the complete model. Hypotheses 1b predicted that narrative fidelity would positively influence attitude toward choosing NDSU and both the high and low video models and the individual path in the complete model were consistent with this hypothesis and the control video had no significant influence. Previous research on narratives supported these findings. For example, Green (2006) found when using narratives to communicate cancer-related information to patients, patients attitudes changed through connections with characters and perceptions of realism of the stories. Though Green's study took place in a health context, it provides support for prospective students' attitudes changing toward a university when given narrative-based recruitment material because students may have connected with

students (characters) in the video and could have seen themselves fitting in at that campus because the stories were realistic. Connections with characters and perceiving the stories realistically represented narrative probability (consistent/realistic) and narrative fidelity (ringing true), which explained the positive relationships between the narrative variables and attitude toward NDSU.

The strongest predictor of behavioral intention is dependent on the situation, behavior, and experiences (Bracchita, 2006; Doukas, Localio, & Li, 2004; Fingerson, 2005; Ham, 2006; Johnston & White, 2003; Tabak & Ozon, 2004). Attitude toward choosing NDSU was the strongest predictor of behavioral intention to choose NDSU on both the high and low narrative probability and narrative fidelity video models and the complete model's individual path between attitudes toward the behavior and behavioral intention. The research did not detect a significant path on the control video model between attitude toward choosing NDSU and behavioral intention of choosing NDSU. As hypotheses 1a and 1b demonstrated, narrative probability and narrative fidelity had a strong and positive influence on attitudes toward choosing NDSU, which then positively influenced behavioral intention as the TPB model predicted (Hypothesis 3). Narrative probability and fidelity's influence on the TPB model made sense in this context because attitude toward a behavior was based on behavioral beliefs about the likely outcomes of the behavior (Ajzen, 1991). The stories provided a channel for these beliefs to form. The outcome of choosing NDSU was having a positive student experience, which was demonstrated very clearly by the students in both the high and low narrative probability videos because they shared their stories about their positive outcomes at NDSU. Admission offices are

faced with reducing the stressful feeling involved with choosing a university by providing clarity and positive outcomes of the process (Kuo, Hagie, & Miller, 2004; Roderick & Carusetta, 2006), all of which can be demonstrated through a good story with narrative probability and fidelity.

Hypotheses 1a and 1b also provided support for using stories to recruit students during the anticipatory socialization phase of organizational assimilation. These results suggested that attitude toward the behavior is impacted by narrative probability and narrative fidelity and in the context of anticipatory socialization attitude toward the behavior is the strongest predictor of behavioral intention. Jablin (1982; 1984) explains that communication during the anticipatory socialization phase guides newcomers' vision of what life in that organization is like. Stories with high levels of narrative probability and narrative fidelity can act as the communication that builds the expectations and visions that best represent a particular college campus.

Research Questions 1a and 1b examined the influence narrative probability and narrative fidelity had on subjective norms beliefs of prospective students. The study found no significant paths between narrative probability and subjective norms with either the high or low narrative probability and narrative fidelity video models or the complete model; however, the control video model did have a significant negative relationship between narrative probability and subjective norms. Narrative fidelity, on the other hand did have a significant positive relationship with subjective norms beliefs in the high narrative probability and narrative fidelity video model, the complete model, and the control video model. No significant path was found in the low narrative probability and narrative fidelity video model. These results provided

interesting insight to the interpretive aspects of personal narratives and whether they can influence subjective norms in the context of choosing a university.

Subjective norms are the social pressure the individual feels to perform or not perform a behavior (Perloff, 2003). Subjective norms are created from normative beliefs or expectations of others and our motivation to comply with others' expectations (Ajzen, 1991; Ajzen, 2002). The stories in the videos were primarily directed at the students and their experiences they would have. The videos did not focus on making their parents proud or friends happy. Two stories in the high and low narrative probability video mentioned their parents being alumni of the university, which might explain the positive relationship between narrative fidelity and subjective norms because those particular stories may have rung true for some participants. The control video also produced a positive significant path between narrative fidelity and subjective norms. According to Fisher (1984), all communication is a series of stories, so arguably some participants related more with the fact (control) video and found it to have fidelity, which may have reinforced what their parents or peers think of NDSU and the expectations they have for whether they choose NDSU or not.

The consistency and narrative structure (narrative probability) of the stories may not have positively influenced subjective norms because whether a story can be followed or not would more than likely not influence your beliefs about the expectations of a family member or friend. However, the study found a negative relationship between narrative probability and subjective norms in the control video model. This relationship may have occurred because the control video did not use

student stories but still showed low levels of narrative probability; therefore, if students had a harder time following the video they may have thought their parents' or friends' advice may be more valuable than the information received from the video. Only the complete model produced a significant path between subjective norms and behavioral intention of choosing NDSU as did the regression run to test Hypothesis 3. Previous research suggested that in some contexts other TPB variables are stronger and sometimes the only predictor of behavioral intention (Bracchita, 2006; Doukas, Localio, & Li, 2004; Fingerson, 2005; Ham, 2006; Johnston & White, 2003; Tabak & Ozon, 2004) and in this case attitude toward choosing NDSU was the stronger predictor.

Jablin's (1982) organizational assimilation theory focuses very much on the individual's interpretation of the messages and identification process while deciding to enter and organization or not. This individual focus may explain why subjective norms beliefs were not as powerful of a predictor as attitudes toward choosing NDSU. The anticipatory socialization phase is a time when newcomers try to envision themselves and their lives within that organization (Jablin, 1982; 1984), this idea is directly related to narrative fidelity because of its link to personal relevance (Fisher, 1984). Students are searching for relevant material during the anticipatory socialization phase, which might explain why the complete model did produce a significant path between narrative fidelity and subjective norms. More than likely, people other than admission counselors (parents and friends) are providing relevant information about a particular university during the anticipatory socialization phase.

Hypotheses 2a and 2b predicted narrative probability and narrative fidelity would positively influence perceived behavioral control of choosing a university. Narrative probability had a positive influence on perceived behavioral control within the high probability and narrative fidelity video model, but no significant paths were found in the low narrative probability and narrative fidelity video model, the control video model, or the complete model. Narrative fidelity only had a significant path within the low narrative probability and narrative fidelity video model. These hypotheses did not show consistent support between the story video models, but some level of narrative probability and narrative fidelity did positively influence perceived behavioral control. The findings also supported the previously mentioned finding that attitude toward choosing NDSU was the strongest predictor of behavioral intention because though the low narrative probability and fidelity video model and the complete model produced a significant positive path between perceived behavioral control and behavioral intention of choosing NDSU, the paths were not as powerful as attitude toward choosing NDSU. The results from the regression used to test Hypothesis 3 also showed perceived behavioral control as significant and positive predictor of behavioral intention, but the relationship was not as strong as attitude toward the behavior.

Control beliefs were the beliefs about the presence of factors that may facilitate or impede the performance of the behavior (choosing a college). The weak relationship may be explained by the fact that NDSU and most colleges do have specific standards for admission related to GPA or SAT and ACT scores. Most students who are visiting NDSU or any college more than likely meet at least the minimum

requirements for admittance and perceived behavioral control was operationalized based on factors such as admission standards like test scores and GPA. These participants did not see these factors as major indicators of whether they would choose NDSU. Attitude toward the university was the strongest predictor in regard to choosing a university, and these perceived behavioral control results also suggested that focusing on attitude change is more valuable than factors like exam scores or GPA. The students who were on the borderline of admission requirements may still see these factors as major influences on their admission to college, which may also explain the inconsistent results.

Much of the anticipatory socialization phase of choosing a university begins with whether students meet the requirements for acceptance. Narrative probability and narrative fidelity cannot change the fact of whether a student meets these requirements or not, therefore, the inconsistent results are not surprising based on Fisher's (1984) concepts. However, some students may have met the admission requirements but lack the confidence of going away from home and starting over in a new environment. Emotional factors may be the area of perceived behavioral control that stories influence, but the questions used in this study measuring perceived behavioral control of choosing a university only focused on the admission requirement barriers. Providing a story that is easy to follow and creates an understanding of what life is like on that campus may build a prospective students' confidence in making a decision on a college.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that the theory of planned behavior model would be supported by this data. This model was consistent with Hypothesis 3 after running a

multiple linear regression and examining the individual paths in the complete model. A regression was used rather than a path model because the model was only just-identified. All experimental conditions were combined to test this hypothesis. Attitude toward choosing NDSU, subjective norms beliefs, and perceived behavioral control of choosing a university all significantly predicted behavioral intention of choosing NDSU. These results not only supported the model of TPB, but also supported the previous path model results indicating attitude toward choosing NDSU was the most powerful predictor of behavioral intention.

TPB research does not provide specific instructions on what type of communication most influences TPB variables or how to create messages that do. Narrative probability and narrative fidelity provide insight on how to create messages that positively influence the TPB independent variables. The narrative paradigm provided the channel and message content for this dissertation. Logically, if a story makes sense and is easy to follow people will more than likely understand it. If narrative fidelity is present and a connection between the story and the person is created the story can influence a person's behaviors (Fisher, 1987).

Attitude toward choosing NDSU predicted 49% of the unique variance. These results are not surprising because TPB is one of the most widely researched theoretical models used to predict behaviors (Hale et al., 2002). Though attitude toward choosing NDSU was the primary predictor of behavioral intention, admission offices should still focus on some messages that address subjective norms and perceived behavioral control because they are still predicting a significant level of unique variance.

The fourth and final hypothesis predicted the complete model of with

narrative probability and narrative fidelity acting as exogenous variables in the TPB

model would be consistent with this data. As mentioned above, the complete model

was not consistent with this data, but when the model was tested with each

experimental condition separately narrative probability and narrative fidelity often

influenced the TPB variables. Many possible reasons exist for why the complete

model did not fit this data; however, the lack of significant differences between the

videos in the manipulation check may have been the primary reason. The video

conditions with more extreme differences in narrative probability and fidelity may

have improved the fit of the complete model.

The results of this study an the additional analyses provided evidence that

using stories with higher levels of narrative probability and fidelity indeed influence

prospective students' choices of college because of the effects narratives can have on a

student's attitude toward a university. These results have begun to build a bridge

between Fisher's (1984) concept of narrative rationality and Ajzen's (1991) theory of

planned behavior. The TPB provided a cognitive and behavioral outcome of narrative

rationality, while the tenets of the narrative paradigm explained how the

communicative nature of stories can enact the change that TPB predicts. To recognize

this relationship exists in the particular context of university recruitment, which

represents the anticipatory socialization phase of Jablin's (1982) organizational

assimilation theory, is vital.

Theoretical Contributions

Applied communication research provides opportunity for not only practical application, but also theoretical advancement because oftentimes the problem or circumstance being studied is best informed by theories that are not often studied in conjunction with one another. This dissertation is an example of how theories from different research paradigms can provide a new perspective and can advance theory by filling the gaps one perspective left empty. Though several theoretical contributions and explanations about each individual path were described in the previous section, I would like to outline the overarching theoretical contributions the results produced. Persuasion research has studied the effects of stories in forms of messages such as testimonials or personal statements but never truly recognized the connection between social science research and narrative paradigm by asking the question "what makes those stories effective or ineffective?" Narrative probability and narrative fidelity fill this gap, but what makes a story have higher levels of narrative rationality is also dependent on the context, and organizational assimilation theory provided insight to why the narrative paradigm does influence the TPB. The connections between these theories provided several specific theoretical contributions.

The first major theoretical contribution the results of this dissertation provided is the creation of scales to measure narrative probability and fidelity. Although Fisher's (1984) main interest behind the narrative paradigm was to develop a theory to understand how narratives are used on a societal level and as basic human communication, the results of this study have taken his practical notions of narrative

rationality and empirically tested their effects by applying them to the TPB. The results indicated that creating messages that contain high levels of narrative probability and narrative fidelity do impact a person's attitude toward a behavior, and in some cases subjective norms beliefs and perceived behavioral control are also impacted. Having a way to empirically measure narrative probability and narrative fidelity provides concrete direction on how to create messages that influence cognitive and behavioral changes for practitioners or researchers using TPB. These results advanced the application of the narrative paradigm by opening opportunities for the theory to be used empirically as well as rhetorically.

Fisher (1984) argued that humans make sense through stories and that narrative rationality (narrative probability and fidelity) provides humans with the means to rationalize and act a basis for decision-making. This explanation of human communicative behavior compliments Jablin's (1982) anticipatory socialization phase of organizational assimilation because stories provide a natural channel for people to build an image of what life is like within the organization. Jablin argued that messages being communicated during the anticipatory socialization phase build the potential members' impressions of the organization. The results of this study indicated that attitudes toward choosing NDSU during the anticipatory socialization phase were positively impacted by narrative recruitment material, and the prospective students' attitudes were the most powerful predictor of whether the students chose NDSU or not. The results advanced Jablin's theory because using stories with high levels of narrative probability and narrative fidelity did impact students' expectations of what life is like at that particular campus and did build a

vision of organizational reality. These findings provided specific direction on creating

messages used in the anticipatory socialization phase.

This dissertation's findings also advanced the TPB because it provided a new

context this established theory could be applied and also provided insight into ways

to create messages that initiate change in behavioral, normative, and control beliefs.

To my knowledge this time is the first that TPB has been studied not only in the

context of university recruitment, but also in the theoretical context of anticipatory

socialization. Highhouse et al. (2002) studied the use of narratives in organizational

recruitment, but they did not refer to the organizational assimilation or TPB when

measuring attitudes and behavioral intention. Though Highhouse et al.'s study did

not use Fisher (1984), Ajzen (1991), or Jablin's (1982) ideas, they were present and

would have informed the study. Persuading people to apply for jobs is representative

of the anticipatory socialization phase, and attitudes about the organization and how

likely the recruits are to apply represent the tenants of TPB. Highhouse et al.'s study

is an example of research being conducted that looks at similar ideas but does not

does not look outside the standard research context or paradigm. The results of this

study provided new outlets for TPB to be studied in and advance the breadth and

depth of the theory.

This dissertation advanced communication theory because it bridged three

previously unrelated theories together. This study could not have been

conceptualized, operationalized, or conducted if one of these theories was removed.

Each of these theories played a vital role in creating the argument, experimental

conditions, measurements, and most importantly the practical applications of this

dissertation. The narrative paradigm provided direction for creating messages that would ease the turbulence of the college admission process and create positive impressions during the anticipatory socialization phase. These first impressions positively influenced students' attitudes toward a university, which impacted the likelihood of students choosing that particular college. Stories are a natural form of human communication through which humans create reason from and view the world (Fisher, 1984).

Practical Implications

Undergraduate admission offices are challenged with promoting an anticipated social experience to a changing and technologically-driven generation (Anctil, 2008a). With tough economic times for many families becoming the norm, universities are now competing more than ever with online degree programs that provide less strain financially because students are able to stay at home and even hold jobs while taking classes (Hoover, 2011). Admission offices are experiencing a marketing problem that involves convincing prospective students and their families that the sense of community, culture, and social experience on a campus is worth the extra expense.

The added financial stress makes the transition from high school to college even more turbulent. Admission offices are the first step in the transition process because they build the expectations of what students' new environment, lifestyle, and responsibilities will be like once they begin their college career. Universities, however, are unique organizations because their members pay to be a part of the organization, and they only exit the organization physically but remain connected as alumni. This unique quality requires a different type of marketing because admission

counselors are not selling a tangible product and cannot guarantee that just because you paid you will earn a degree. Anctil (2008a; 2008b) calls for university marketing plans to become more strategic by using relationship marketing techniques that build relationships with prospective students that will socially build identification with the university and will make the intangible idea of higher education and the social experience seem more tangible.

The results of this dissertation provided practical advice for admission offices to help make the intangible idea of higher education and the anticipated social experience more tangible by helping prospective students to visualize what organizational life is like on that campus through stories. This study's findings also provided insight on how to create recruitment material for the Millennial generation. This dissertation advanced Anctil's (2008b) ideas on relationship marketing by providing theoretically based and tested suggestions for creating recruitment material that not only allows students to see themselves fitting in at a particular campus but also material that positively influences a student's attitude toward choosing a university. Positive changes in attitude also increase the likelihood of that student choosing to attend that university. I describe ten practical implications based on the findings of the four stages of this dissertation below. These implications will assist admission offices and other organizations recruiting new members in the creation and delivery of narrative-based recruitment messages.

1. Share Stories with Narrative Probability & Fidelity

The primary findings of this dissertation supported the use of personal stories in recruitment material as long as they contain narrative probability and fidelity. The

results of the additional analyses models provide ample evidence of narrative

probability and narrative fidelity's positive influence on the college decision-making

process through each models' individual paths. Narrative probability refers to as

story's consideration of fact, consistency of plot, characterization, organization, and

absence of contradiction (Fisher, 1987). A story that has narrative probability is easy

to follow; organizations should use stories in recruitment material that are not

complicated. Narrative probability can often be achieved by mode of delivery. For

example, organizations can use a current student who delivers his or her story in a

clear manner or print a story that is easy to read and follow.

Narrative fidelity is the idea of a story ringing true and having relevance to the

receiver by striking a responsive chord (Fisher, 1987). Achieving narrative fidelity is

more difficult because gauging the relevancy for every visiting student is difficult;

however, being aware of the what the majority of prospective students visiting a

university are interested in can help decide what stories have higher levels of

narrative fidelity. Using stories with narrative fidelity help students with

visualization of what their lives will be like on that campus and creates the feeling of

rightness or what Aaker and Lee (2006) refer to as "regulatory fit." The remainder of

the practical implications provide guidance on finding and sharing stories with

narrative fidelity.

2. Involve Students in the Process

Using current students in any part of the recruitment process seems to be

beneficial. While conducting the focus groups in stage one of this study and creating

the videos in stage three, I found it much easier to build narrative probability and

fidelity when we were not searching for a specific story but asking current students to tell us any story about their time at NDSU. Using organic stories rather than system-generated allowed for prospective students to see a more accurate description of campus life. During the focus groups, participants liked the video and blogs that did not seem to have too much of an adult's hand involved. This is also the reason I chose to have current students help produce the videos. Seeing current students benefitting from their experiences supports Anctil's (2008a: 2008b) idea of building identification with the university from the first visit. Finding as many ways as possible to involve current students will aid in the development of recruitment material that successfully uses stories with narrative probability and narrative fidelity that positively impact prospective students' attitudes toward the university. The additional analyses models and the TPB model all provide evidence of why using "real" stories produces positive attitudes and influence behavioral intention.

3. Create Messages Directed Toward Prospective Students' Attitudes

The results of this study found that attitudes are the most powerful predictor of behavioral intention in the context of choosing a university. Attitude toward choosing NDSU was the strongest predictor of behavioral intention in every video condition model and the complete model and was also supported by the multi-linear regression used to test Hypothesis 3. The stories shared with prospective students should be directed toward building a positive attitude about the school. Attitude toward the behavior, in this case choosing a university, is a person's individual judgment that performing that particular behavior is good or bad (Perloff, 2003). Showcasing stories of students who are benefitting from their time and opportunities

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available at that university will encourage the behavioral belief that positive outcomes will come from choosing that college. For recruitment material to be attitude-directed, prospective students must be exposed to positive outcomes, and an easy way to do this is sharing the stories of current students. Subjective norms beliefs and perceived behavioral control also predicted some of the variance in behavioral intention. Having messages directed to parents and messages covering some of the admission factors students do not have as much control over is still beneficial in persuading students and can easily be integrated into the stories that are shared.

4. Showcase Several Students' Stories

Narrative fidelity is often difficult to produce with only one story when working with several hundred and sometimes thousands of students. Using several students and types of stories in recruitment material will provide a greater chance for a prospective student to relate to at least one of the stories or characters, which would increase the narrative fidelity for that particular story. The results indicated that narrative fidelity had the most significant paths and the strongest correlations with the TPB variables, which means that admission offices should find as many ways as possible to create narrative fidelity with prospective students and showcasing several stories is one way to do this. The focus groups also revealed that students want to be able to see themselves at that particular campus and students like stories that they can relate to because of similar past experiences. Showcasing more than one story and student allows for prospective students to better visualize themselves in that setting and provides more moments to identify with characters and the setting (Slater & Rouner, 2002). Having several stories available also allows for more direct

relationship marketing when working one-on-one with students because messages can be better tailored to visiting students' interests.

5. Share Stories that Showcase Daily Experiences

The transition from high school to college is particularly stressful because of the unknown factors of the new environment, lifestyle, and expectations (e.g., Ashmore et al., 2007; Demick, 1996; Kim, et al., 2001; O'Donnell & Tobbell, 2007; Ramsay, et al., 2006). One way for students to manage this transitional stress is to learn what their lives will be like on a daily basis. The focus groups from stage one of this dissertation provided strong evidence that stories used in recruitment messages should showcase what the average day and the life of a college student looks like on that campus. Providing a message that creates a visualization for prospective students will increase narrative fidelity because they are going to be able to relate to the student they are watching and this type of mundane information is highly relevant when transitioning into a new environment. Increasing narrative fidelity will increase the likelihood of choosing a college because the path models showed the positive influence narrative fidelity had on attitudes toward the behavior and attitude, in turn, was the strongest predictor of behavioral intention.

The routine daily activities of an organization paint a picture of organizational life creating a lasting impression for students in this anticipatory socialization phase. Matching the individual's expectations built in the anticipatory socialization phase with the reality of the organization is the single most important factor in determining if a newcomer indentifies with an organization (DiSanza, 1995; Jablin, 1984; Jablin &

Krone, 1987; Myers, 2005). Showcasing a normal day on campus is the most accurate image of organizational life and can be brought to life through narratives.

6. Share Academic and Entertaining Stories

Choosing a university is no longer a decision solely based on majors and future career goals (Boyer, 1990). College involves living in a new environment and culture and interacting with new people with different expectations. The results of the focus groups from stage one of this dissertation suggested that admission offices create a balance of both academic and entertaining stories. Academics are the most important part of going to college, but the social experience is often seen as just as important or another primary reason for choosing a university. Prospective students understand that college requires studying and offers academic opportunities; what they do not understand or have yet to experience is the "fun" part of college or the social aspect. Sharing entertaining stories can increase narrative fidelity because students can relate to the social aspect of college based on their past experiences and social opportunities are a relevant part of their college decision. The entertaining stories can also influence prospective students' attitudes about the university if they see the story as having narrative fidelity and relate to the plot and characters. The results of this study produced evidence that narrative fidelity indeed influences attitude toward choosing a particular university and that attitude is the strongest predictor of behavioral intention in the context of university recruitment.

7. Share Unique Stories

Nazione et al. (2011) found that communication in the form of memorable messages motivate students to change behavior and attitudes. The results of the

focus groups from stage one of this study provided support for the use of memorable messages through unique or quirky stories that are university specific or student specific. For example, students remembered the story told about the black squirrels on Kent State University's campus and the story a student from Kent told about meeting his fiancé in the dining hall. These unique stories were memorable and caused considerable discussion among the students. These unique stories make a university stand out from the others on the prospective students' short lists. These unique stories help build what the anticipated social experience looks and feels like. Nazione et al.'s research provides evidence that memorable messages motivate change in attitude, and the results of this study showed that attitude was the strongest predictor of the behavioral intention of choosing NDSU.

8. Use Technology as Much as Possible

The Millennial generation is the most technologically savvy and connected generation of all time (Kohut et al., 2010). Campus visits have already began to move to more online channels through interactive websites, online application processes, and instant messaging (Rhodes et al., 2006; Zinch & Cappex, 2007). Meeting Millennials online and sharing stories through blogs and videos will help maintain that relationship with the student and build his or her identification with the university. The results of the focus groups from stage one of this study revealed that the more visual a message can be the better. Videos offered the most visually stimulating option for prospective students and can easily be posted on websites. Blogs with pictures were more popular than blogs with a lot of text. Most of the

respondents from the focus groups preferred watching the stories to reading the stories.

Staying up-to-date on the current technology trends is also vital for staying within reach of Millennials. Using social networking websites like Facebook and Twitter is becoming an expectation because 75% of Millennials use these websites regularly (Kohut et al., 2010). Using some technology is inexpensive and can cut costs on mailing and printing; however, producing well-made videos can be expensive, and they cannot be used forever. Fortunately, videos that showcase students' stories rather than facts and figures can be used longer because those stories are memories and do not change with the university's size or cost. If admission offices are strategic about the types of stories they use in their recruitment material, they can increase the longevity of use.

Finding ways to involve students in producing the video or material for a class or project is also another option for staying in touch with technology and cutting costs of production, which relates back to the second practical implication of involving students as much as you can in the process. Using real student stories that show positive outcomes from choosing a university will build narrative fidelity and will allow universities to produce more attitude-directed messages. The results of this study suggested creating story-based messages that are directed toward attitudes toward choosing a particular college would have a stronger influence on behavioral intention than the other TPB variables; especially when these messages are shared through technological channels such as social networking websites.

9. Consider Length of Stories

Research shows that Millennials have shorter attention spans than earlier generations and have difficulty focusing on tasks (Horne, 2010). Horne's (2010) findings were also supported in the focus groups from stage one of this dissertation when participants described the blogs taking too long to read and opined that videos over four minutes long are not worth watching. Using stories that have narrative probability will assist with using limited time wisely because probable stories have the most consistency and clarity. The additional analyses of this study showed the positive influence narrative probability had in each video condition and telling stories in a concise reliable manner will only positively influence a prospective student's identification with a university. Stories do not have to be long to have narrative fidelity either; the clustering of shorter stories that tell one larger story, like the "Welcome Home" video (high narrative probability and fidelity) used in this study provided efficient use of the three-minute time span and kept participants' attention. Adapting to your audience is important when trying to make sure they watch memorable messages that influence their attitudes about the university.

10. Test Your Stories

Conducting market research of your own can be very beneficial for knowing if the stories being shared are considered to have narrative probability and fidelity. The results of the this dissertation provided measurement tools that would allow for preliminary research on whether you chose the stories with the most narrative probability and fidelity. The results of this study provided evidence that creating stories with high levels of narrative probability and fidelity is difficult, but if

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successfully done, the models provided strong evidence for the positive influence

using stories with high levels of narrative probability and fidelity can have on the

decision-making process. Receiving constant feedback on the recruitment material

provides insight on what to change or adapt and also provides insight on what stories

may be resonating with prospective students the most. Using several stories and

students allows for more options of narratives to provide prospective students.

Depending on how the messages are created, some stories may be more appropriate

for different events or times of the year. The stories shared in recruitment material

influence prospective students' attitudes toward choosing that particular university,

and conducting research on your messages will allow you to best adapt to the needs

of your visitors.

This dissertation's results provided theoretically researched-based

applications that could assist admission offices on creating and sharing narrative-

based recruitment messages to the Millennial generation. These practical

implications could also be applied to other groups within college campuses such as

Resident Life offices recruiting resident assistants or student organizations trying to

build their memberships. These results are not bound to university settings. Many

organizations' new members are also part of the Millennial generation, which makes

these findings more valuable to employers. However, storytelling is a natural

communication process, and if all humans can see and understand the world through

stories as Fisher (1984) suggests, the findings of this study suggest narratives may

benefit any type of organizational recruitment. These ten practical implications

provide both practitioners and researchers guidance on studying and using narratives

as persuasive tools to build positive attitudes, influence behavioral intention, and recruit new members.

Limitations

Though this dissertation provides theoretical and practical insight for narrative, persuasion, and organizational recruitment research, all studies have limitations that must be considered. As described in chapter one this study had delimitations because I worked with an organization to conduct this research, and many of these limitations are related to restraints created from the delimitations. Six major limitations are discussed in this section. These six limitations are primarily related to sample and measurement concerns.

The first limitation is related to the sample of the focus groups from stage one of the dissertation. Focus groups used current college students; they did not use prospective students. Current students were used because one goal of the focus groups was to gather ideas for the types of stories that could be told about NDSU to help guide the creation of the experimental videos. Including prospective students would have been beneficial because they would have provided better insight to how to use stories since they would currently be going through the college admission process. The current students had to think retrospectively. Prospective students may have provided different opinions on the types of stories that should be shared than what the current students provided. This limitation could be a reason why the study found no significant difference between the video conditions in the message testing stage of this dissertation and also with the manipulation check during stage four.

The second limitation is also related to using prospective students for the message testing stage of this study.   The original research plan was to use prospective students to test the experimental video conditions, but the Office of Admission changed its plans a week prior to the event and decided they had insufficient time to show all four videos to visiting students. This last-minute change forced me to use new first-year students for message testing. The message testing results were not significant and provided surprising results because the control group video had the highest means for narrative probability and fidelity. These findings may be a result of testing the videos on current students rather than prospective students. The stories in the videos may not resonate with current students because they are already on campus and have created their own stories and memories of NDSU. The facts in the control video about the college may have actually been more interesting or beneficial to current students who already committed to the university. Using current students may have also been the reason why there were no significant differences among the experimental conditions in the manipulation check because I based the conditions off of the message testing results.

The times and days I could collect data was also determined by the Office of Admission. Some of these collection dates were before the application deadline and some were after. Prospective students who participated before the application deadline were still determining if they were interested in NDSU, and the students visiting after the application deadline have more than likely already narrowed their choices of college and NDSU was on their short list. This time difference may have played a role in how participants responded to the videos and also their attitudes,

subjective norms beliefs, and perceived behavioral control of choosing NDSU.

Students who have NDSU on their short list more than likely have a more positive perception of the university than those who decided not to apply. Many students participated after the application deadline and had not only been accepted, but also already committed to the university, which would imply they have a positive attitude toward the university.

The measurement instrument used in the main study stage of this study also created limitations. Due to time restraints on data collection during admission events, no more than 50 items including demographic information could be included on the questionnaire given to prospective students. This restraint limited the items used to measure each variable, which created problems while running confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) to determine what items to remove because of cross loading. This limitation was especially noticeable when measuring subjective norms beliefs because after the series of CFAs only one subjective norms beliefs item remained. Although I measured subjective norms with a single item factor, the item was strong and did not cross load with other variables. Having the option for more survey items could have allowed for a more complete measurement of each variable.

Another limitation is related to the use of people in the videos. I did not control for the possibility that the participants may have been relating more to the people they were seeing in the videos rather than the stories they were hearing. For example, a prospective student may have seen some of the people in the video as attractive and paid more attention to the person telling the story rather than the person's story. Taking steps to control for this confounding variable may have

explained the lack of differences in the video conditions because many of the same people where used in all the videos and participants may have been relating to the characters and not the stories.

The final limitation relates to the type of information that I was allowed to collect from each participant. Though I did measure behavioral intention, I was not permitted to collect names from participants and track whether or not they chose to attend NDSU. Working with an admission office does provide opportunity to possibly measure actual behavior and track what students chose the university and which did not. However, to avoid prospective students feeling that participating may influence their acceptance, the admission office asked for all surveys to remain anonymous. The results of this study can only claim behavioral intention, but behavioral intention is one of the strongest predictors of actual behavior (Ajzen, 1991).

Though this study experienced limitations (many of which were related to the delimitations described in chapter one), the results still provide new and exciting insight for both practitioners and researchers. Many of these limitations create calls for future research and also provide advice for researchers taking the next steps to examine organizational recruitment or the college transition process. Conducting narrative-based social scientific research creates obstacles for researchers to overcome, but yield worthwhile theoretical and practical results.

Future Research

This dissertation took an applied approach to studying and testing the effects using stories in university recruitment material had on prospective students' attitudes toward the university, subjective norms beliefs, perceived behavioral

control of choosing a university, and behavioral intention of attending that university. Though this dissertation looked specifically at university recruitment, these findings yielded several future research opportunities to examine other organizations and other phases during the organizational assimilation process. I believe that my dissertation results were only the first step toward understanding the power of persuasive narrative-based messages.

To conduct this study I needed to create scales to quantify and measure narrative probability and fidelity. The preliminary confirmatory factor analyses produced strong results for the narrative probability and narrative fidelity scales, as did the experimental stage of this dissertation. Future research should continue the development of these scales by doing further validity testing. The convergent validity of the narrative probability and narrative fidelity scales could be tested by measuring narrative transportation (Green & Brock 2000) and narrative engagement (Busselle & Bilandzic, 2009), and need for cognition (Cacioppo & Petty, 1982) could be measured to test the discriminant validity of the scales. Validating the narrative probability and fidelity scales would provide numerous research opportunities for not only persuasion and organizational recruitment research, but also research in other communication contexts that would benefit from measuring the effects of stories.

This dissertation was exploratory research on narratives' influence on the theory of planned behavior (TPB) variables, and the results indicated that attitude toward choosing a university was the strongest predictor of behavioral intention. Conducting experimental research with narrative-based messages that were specifically tailored to each of the TPB independent variables may provide more

specific insight on how stories impact the variables that influence our behaviors and decisions. For example, the types of stories used in this study may have been better suited for attitudes, and other stories may have provided for stronger influences on subjective norms beliefs and perceived behavioral control. Having a better understanding of the types of stories that influenced each TPB variable would allow admission offices to better tailor messages toward specific events and audiences.

This study did not have the opportunity to study the parents or legal guardians of prospective students due to constraints from the NDSU Office of Admission. The focus groups from stage one of the dissertation provided evidence that parents and legal guardians do play a major role in the decision making process and would qualify as subjective norms according to the TPB (Ajzen, 1991). Measuring the parents' and guardians' perceptions of narrative probability and narrative fidelity along with their attitudes about the university would provide interesting insight to the decision process of choosing a university. Studying the parents and legal guardians may also provide practical advice on what type of stories would help ease parents' stress with their child's transition to college.

The transition from high school to college is stressful and often times turbulent for students because of the many decisions that they have to make their senior year of high school (Kuo et al., 2004; Rodericak & Carusetta, 2006). This study examined the effects stories have on recruiting students during the anticipatory socialization phase but did not measure how the stories impacted prospective students' levels of stress, uncertainty, or preparedness to come to college. Stories may provide for clearer understanding of what is expected at college and what to expect the first year; this

understanding may reduce the level of uncertainty and cause for a less turbulent transition. Narrative research could also extend to the other phases of organizational assimilation. Stories could provide better assistance for communication during the encounter and metamorphosis phases of organizational assimilation to ensure that students strongly identify with the university. Stories may also work to increase alumni donations after the exit phase if stories with high levels of narrative probability and narrative fidelity are provided to alumni. Finding stories that ring true with alumni is more likely if strong identification was built over the previous organizational assimilation phases.

Future research should also be conducted in other organizational contexts besides undergraduate admission offices. Other departments at a university recruiting student employees or volunteers may benefit from the use of personal stories to promote the positive outcomes of being involved. Other organizations outside the university setting could also benefit from this type of research. Highhouse et al. (2002) already found benefits from using stories to communicate organization's value statements during recruitment; therefore, stories may also benefit new employees during the encounter phases of organizational assimilation. Developing stories that resonate or possess high levels of narrative fidelity for marketing and public relations purposes could also benefit organizations and the scales created in this dissertation could act as a tool to assist research departments. Fisher (1984) argues storytelling is a natural human communication process, and the results of this dissertation provide future research opportunities to test the validity of Fisher's ideas in organizational settings of all types.

Conclusion

This study explored the persuasive effects using personal stories in university recruitment material has on the attitudes, subjective norms beliefs, perceived behavioral control, and behavioral intention of choosing a university. This dissertation consisted of four stages of research beginning with a qualitative analysis of the use of narratives in university recruitment, moved the findings down the research continuum by creating scales to empirically measure Fisher's (1984) ideas of narrative probability and fidelity, and then tested the persuasive effects of Fisher's theory in conjunction with Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behavior. This study took an applied approach that required the use of three theories from different research paradigms to properly examine and provide theoretically based advice for admission offices and organizations that actively recruit new members.

Each stage of this dissertation provided valuable results that built a foundation for the final experimental stage of the study. The final results provided not only theoretical and practical implications, but also opportunities for future research. The final results of this study revealed that stories with narrative probability and narrative fidelity do positively influence the TPB variables of attitude toward behavior, subjective norms beliefs, and perceived behavioral control and attitude toward the behavior was the strongest predictor of behavioral intention in the context of university recruitment. Though the complete model combining all the experimental conditions was not supported by the data, the model was supported by the experimental conditions that were exposed to the story-based videos (high and low narrative probability and narrative fidelity videos). These results support

Fisher's (1984) tenets of the narrative paradigm and also support the TPB model (Ajzen, 1991).

This dissertation provided researchers with several future research opportunities to test the communicative and persuasive power of stories. This dissertation advanced communication theory by finding new ways to apply Fisher's (1984) narrative paradigm, exploring exogenous variables that can be applied to Ajzen's (1991) TPB model, and provided concrete suggestions for effective communication during the anticipatory socialization phase from Jablin's (1982) theory or organizational assimilation. Stories are a natural part of the human communication process and using them to make the college admission and transition process easier is not only worth exploring, but also worth trying. This dissertation is only the first chapter in this research story; more research should and will be done to find out how this story ends.

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APPENDIX A. 56-ITEM NARRATIVE PROBABILITY & FIDELITY SCALE: STAGE 2

Directions: For each of the following statements please indicate how much you agree or disagree to the statement about the story you just read by choosing a number between one and seven. Choose the number closest to the term that describes your feelings. Number 1 means completely disagree, number 4 means do not agree or disagree, and number 7 means completely agree. The numbers in between may also be chosen if you feel that 1, 4, or 7 are not exactly how you feel. Choose only one response for each question.

Narrative Probability Items

1. The story's setting matched the storyline.
2. I question the accuracy of the information given in the story.
3. The story left out important information.
4. The story was confusing.
5. The story is missing a clearly developed beginning, and/or middle, and/or ending.
6. There are important parts of the story left out.
7. The story misrepresented facts.
8. The storyline was easy to follow.
9. The information in the story was presented in a logical manner.
10. Information seemed to be missing from the story.
11. The story made sense.
12. The story was difficult to follow.
13. The story was organized.
14. The parts of the story logically fit together.
15. I trust the information that was presented in the story.
16. The story was believable.
17. The people in the story acted in a manner that I expected.
18. The people's actions in the story were believable.
19. The people in the story were believable.
20. The people in the story behaved consistently throughout the story.
21. The people in the story are not to be trusted.

Narrative Fidelity Items

22. It was clear what I was supposed to learn from the story.

23. I understand the story's overall lesson.

24. The story painted a clear picture of what life is like for the characters in the story.

25. The story did not have a clear moral or lesson.

26. The story's moral was implicit (between the lines).

27. This story is relevant to my life.

28. I could not relate to anyone in the story.

29. The events in the story matched the overall lesson.

30. The people in this story learned a lesson.

31. The people in this story did not learn a lesson.

32. The events of the story supported the general point of the story.

33. The people in the story learned from the similar experiences I learned from.

34. The story matches similar experiences that I have had or people I know have had.

35. The relationships in the story remind me of my own relationships.

36. The people in the story remind me of people I know.

37. The events in this story are not similar to anything I or any of my friends have ever experienced.

38. The story made me remember events from my past.

39. The story allowed me to identify with one or more of the characters.

40. The story rings true to me.

41. The story's lesson/moral is consistent with what I've learned from others.

42. The story is not like the real world.

43. The information from the story applies to my life.

44. The story represents everyday life.

45. I do not act similar to the people in the story.

46. This story made me feel connected to the characters.

47. The story's lesson/moral if applied to my life would result in self-benefit.

48. The story's lesson/moral if applied to my life would result in better relationships.

49. The story's lesson/moral if applied to my life would have negative effects in my everyday life.

50. This story should be told/shown to other people.

51. The events in this story are something I would like to experience.

52. This story invokes positive emotions.

53. The lesson learned from this story should be followed by everyone.

54. The story's lesson/moral is good.

55. The story's lesson/moral is harmful.

56. The story's lesson/moral should be taught to young people

APPENDIX B. FINAL 12-ITEMED NARRATIVE PROBABILITY & FIDELITY SCALE

Narrative Probability Items

1. The story left out important information.
2. The story was confusing.
3. The information in the story was presented in a logical manner.
4. The story made sense.
5. The story was difficult to follow.
6. The story was organized.
7. The parts of the story logically fit together.
8. I trust the information that was presented in the story.

Narrative Fidelity Items

9. The story's lesson/moral if applied to my life would result in self-benefit.
10. The story's lesson/moral if applied to my life would result in better relationships.
11. The lesson learned from this story should be followed by everyone.
12. The story's lesson/moral should be taught to young people.

APPENDIX C. 27-ITEM NARRATIVE PROBABILITY & FIDELITY SCALE: STAGE 3

<u>Directions</u>: For each of the following statements please indicate how much you agree or disagree to the statement about the video you just watched by choosing a number between one and seven. Choose the number closest to the term that describes your feelings. Number 1 means completely disagree, number 4 means do not agree or disagree, and number 7 means completely agree. The numbers in between may also be chosen if you feel that 1, 4, or 7 are not exactly how you feel. Choose only one response for each question.

Narrative Probability Items

1. The story left out important information.

2. The story was confusing.

3. The information in the story was presented in a logical manner.

4. The story made sense.

5. The story was difficult to follow.

6. The story was organized.

7. The parts of the story logically fit together.

8. I trust the information that was presented in the story.

9. I question the accuracy of the information given in the story.

10. The story is missing a clearly developed beginning, and/or middle, and/or ending.

11. The people in the story behaved consistently throughout the story.

Narrative Fidelity Items

12. The story's lesson/moral if applied to my life would result in self-benefit.

13. The story's lesson/moral if applied to my life would result in better relationships.

14. The lesson learned from this story should be followed by everyone.

15. The story's lesson/moral should be taught to young people.

16. The story's moral was implicit (between the lines).

17. I could not relate to anyone in the story.

18. The people in this story did not learn a lesson.

19. The story lesson/moral is consistent with what I've learned from others.

20. The events in this story do not match anything I or any of my friends have ever experienced.

21. The story represents everyday life.

22. The story's lesson/moral if applied to my life would have negative effects in my everyday life.

23. The story's lesson/moral is good.

24. The story's lesson/moral is harmful.

25. The events in this story are something I would like to experience.

26. The story painted a clear picture of what life is like for the characters in the story.

27. The story matches similar experiences that I have had or people I know have had.

APPENDIX D. NARRATIVE PROBABILIYT & FIDELITY SCALE: STAGE 4

<u>Directions:</u> Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the statement about the video you just watched by circling a number between one and seven or indicating there was no stories in the video. Choose the number or check the box closest to the term that describes your feelings. Choose only one response for each question.

Narrative Probability Items

1. The stories in the video left out important information

Completely Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Completely Agree

☐   There were no stories in this video

2. The stories in the video were confusing

Completely Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Completely Agree

☐   There were no stories in this video

3. The stories in the video presented information in a logical manner

Completely Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Completely Agree

☐   There were no stories in this video

4. The stories in the video made sense

Completely Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Completely Agree

☐   There were no stories in this video

5. The stories in the video were difficult to follow

Completely Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Completely Agree

☐   There were no stories in this video

6. The stories in the video were organized

Completely Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Completely Agree

☐   There were no stories in this video

Narrative Fidelity Items

7. The information in the stories if applied to my life would result in self-benefit

Completely Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Completely Agree

☐   There were no stories in this video

8. The information in the stories if applied to my life would result in better relationships

Completely Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Completely Agree

    ☐   There were no stories in this video

9. The stories in the video should be shared with everyone

Completely Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Completely Agree

    ☐   There were no stories in this video

10. The stories in the video should be shared with students

Completely Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Completely Agree

    ☐   There were no stories in this video

APPENDIX E. THEORY OF PLANNED BEHAVIOR SCALE: STAGE 4

For each of the following statements please indicate how much you agree or disagree to the statement about NDSU by circling a number between one and seven. Choose the number closest to the term that describes your feelings. Choose only one response for each question (the numbers next to each item represent the order they were in on the survey).

Attitude Toward a Behavior Items

Behavioral Belief Strengths

1. NDSU is a school that will provide me with a good education.

Completely Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Completely Agree

11. NDSU is a school that will provide me with student-focused experience.

Completely Unlikely   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Completely Likely

6. NDSU will provide me with opportunities to meet new friends.

Completely Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Completely Agree

23. NDSU is a school that will provide me with plenty of extracurricular activities.

Completely Unlikely   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Completely Likely

7. NDSU is a school I can see myself at.

Completely Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Completely Agree

9. I think going to NDSU would be

Not Fun   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Very Fun

25. I think going NDSU would

Not Cool   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Very Cool

30. I think going to NDSU would be

Not Exciting   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Very Exciting

Outcome Evaluations

12. Receiving a good education at NDSU is

Not Important   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Important

26. Finding new friends at NDSU is

Bad   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Good

13. Receiving a student-focused experience at NDSU is:

Not Important   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Important

28. Participating in extracurricular activities at NDSU is:

Bad   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Good

15. Going to the school I see myself at is:

Not Important   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Important

16. Going to NDSU would be

Not Cool   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Very Cool

21. Going to NDSU would be

Not Fun   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Very Fun

18. Going to NDSU would be

Not Exciting   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Very Exciting

Subjective Norms

Normative Beliefs

19. Most people who are important to me approve of me going to NDSU.

Completely Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Completely Agree

31. My parents expect me to attend a university like NDSU.

Completely Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Completely Agree

5. Other people in my high school think it would be good for me to attend NDSU.

Completely Unlikely   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Completely Likely

Motivation to Comply

8. When it comes to choosing a college I want to do what my friends think I should.

Completely Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Completely Agree

20. When it comes to choosing a college I want to do what my parents think I should.

Completely Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Completely Agree

22. I will attend the college that other people think I should.

Completely Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Completely Agree

Perceived Behavioral Control

Control Belief Strength

4. Choosing what college to attend in the fall is dependent on where I receive a scholarship or financial aid.

Completely Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Completely Agree

10. Choosing what college to attend in the fall is dependent on my grades I receive this year.

Completely Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Completely Agree

24. Choosing what college to attend in the fall is dependent on how I do on the SATs or ACTs.

Completely Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Completely Agree

Power of Control Factor

29. If I do not receive scholarship or financial aid I will still attend college in the fall.

Completely Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Completely Agree

14. If my grades are not good this year I will still attend college in the fall.

Completely Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Completely Agree

3. If I do not do well on the SATs or ACTs I will still attend college in the fall.

Completely Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Completely Agree

Behavioral Intention

2. How likely is it that you will attend NDSU in the fall?

Completely Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Completely Agree

17. I plan on choosing NDSU for college.

Completely Unlikely   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Completely Likely

27. NDSU is at the top of my list of colleges to attend.

Completely Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Completely Agree

32. I intend to go to NDSU in the fall.

Completely Unlikely   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Completely Likely

APPENDIX F. NARRATIVE PROBAILITY AND FIDELITY ITEMS USED TO TEST

HYPOTHESES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS AFTER CFA: STAGE 4

Narrative Probability Items

1. The story left out important information
2. The story was confusing
3. The information in the story was presented in a logical manner
4. The story made sense
5. The story was difficult to follow
6. The story was organized

Narrative Fidelity Items

1. The information in the stories if applied to my life would result in self-benefit
2. The information in the stories if applied to my life would result in better relationships

APPENDIX G. THEORY OF PLANNED BEHAVIOR ITEMS USED TO TEST HYPOTHESES

AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS AFTER CFA: STAGE 4

Attitude Toward a Behavior Items

1. NDSU is a school that will provide me with a good education.

Completely Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Completely Agree

2. I think going to NDSU would be

    Not Fun   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Very Fun

3. I think going NDSU would

    Not Cool   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Very Cool

4. I think going to NDSU would be

    Not Exciting   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Very Exciting

 5. Going to NDSU would be

    Not Fun   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Very Fun

6. Going to NDSU would be

    Not Exciting   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Very Exciting

Subjective Norms Item

7. My parents expect me to attend a university like NDSU.

Completely Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Completely Agree

Perceived Behavioral Control Items

8. If I do not receive scholarship or financial aid I will still attend college in the fall.

Completely Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Completely Agree

9. If my grades are not good this year I will still attend college in the fall.

Completely Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Completely Agree

10. If I do not do well on the SATs or ACTs I will still attend college in the fall.

Completely Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Completely Agree

Behavioral Intention Items

11. I intend to go to NDSU in the fall.

Completely Unlikely   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Completely Likely
12. I plan on choosing NDSU for college.

Completely Unlikely   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Completely Likely

13. How likely is it that you will attend NDSU in the fall?

Completely Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Completely Agree