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Factors Influencing Internalization of Organizational Mission Among Frontline Staff of the YMCA of San Francisco

Robert Sindelar

University of San Francisco

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Factors Influencing Internalization of Organizational Mission
Among Frontline Staff of the YMCA of San Francisco

A THESIS SUBMITTED

by

Robert Sindelar

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

Master of

Nonprofit Administration

The University of San Francisco

May 7, 2001

Factors Influencing Internalization of Organizational Mission
Among Frontline Staff of the YMCA of San Francisco

This Thesis written by

Robert Sindelar

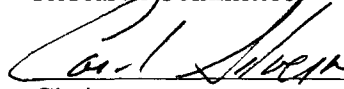
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 5/19/01

Chairperson

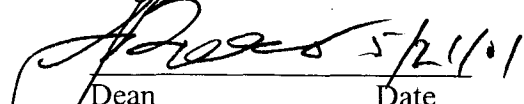
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Second Reader

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Program Director

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ABSTRACT

This research measured which workplace experiences are associated with the internalization of organizational mission by employees of the YMCA of San Francisco. Further, it also measured the association between employee internalization of organizational mission in the line staff of the YMCA of San Francisco and both job satisfaction and employee retention.

This study demonstrated that several workplace experiences are positively associated with employee internalization of mission among the line staff of the YMCA of San Francisco. These factors include attending a new-hire orientation, attending YMCA trainings, contact with YMCA members, donating money to the YMCA, volunteering in the YMCA, and prominence of mission in the workplace. The study also demonstrated a positive association between employee internalization of mission and job satisfaction and retention.

VITA AUCTORIS

Name	Robert Sindelar
Date of Birth:	March 16, 1964
High School:	Baltimore City College High School Baltimore, Maryland
Graduated:	1982
Bachelor of Arts Degree:	Oberlin College Oberlin, Ohio
Graduated:	1986

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Background of the Problem

A mission statement has to be operational, otherwise it's just good intentions. A mission statement has to focus on what the institution really tries to do and then do it so that everybody in the organization can say, "This is my contribution to the goal." (Drucker, 1990, p. 4)

The importance and centrality of a nonprofit organization's mission statement cannot be overstated. Aside from being a legal requirement set forth by the IRS, the mission of a nonprofit is the very heart and soul of the organization, its "raison d'être." According to Drucker, nonprofits "exist for the sake of their mission. . . . If you lose sight of your mission, you begin to stumble and it shows very, very fast" (Drucker, 1990, p. 45). In their noted book, Profiles in Excellence, Knauff, Berger, and Gray (1991) again and again emphasize the importance of organizational mission. They stress the mission statement should be "on the tongue of board members and staff — and most importantly, is reflected in their actions" (p. 3). Frances Hesselbein, a respected leader in the nonprofit community, declares that nonprofits "must be anchored in a clear mission . . . that constituents can understand and leaders and managers can use to guide their actions" (Young, Hollister, & Hodgkinson, 1993, p. 67). Almost every book or article about strategic planning for non-profits begins with having the board and staffs assess and agree on the organizational mission.

Even the for-profit sector has adapted the idea of using a mission statement as a rallying point for re-energizing their downsized companies. Recent best-selling business/management titles include: The Mission Statement Book: 301 Corporate Mission Statements from America's Top Companies, A Sense of Mission, Say It and Live It: The 50 Corporate Mission Statements that Hit the Mark, and Mission Statements: A Guide to the Corporate and Nonprofit Sectors. Well-crafted mission statements are being credited for turning around ailing companies like Northwest, Quaker State, and UPS and helping new companies like Mutare succeed (Cox, 1996; Stone, 1996).

Commenting on the increased popularity of mission statements as a management and motivational tool, Fairhurst, Jordan, and Smith (1997) have noted that “a consistent theme running through the organizational development literature on corporate mission statements is an acknowledged widespread failure in their implementation” (p. 243). These authors identify two main causes of this failure: lack of communication and lack of context for understanding the mission. Given the importance and centrality of the mission statement necessary for the success of an organization, a logical question is: How can the mission statement affect and positively influence the organization?

Mission statements can serve many purposes. Sharon Oster (1995) defines the three functions of the mission statement:

1. Sets boundaries of the organization
2. Motivates staff, volunteers, and donors
3. Allows for evaluation

The motivational function that Oster identifies is of particular relevance to this study. While many authors have written about how organizational mission can be used to motivate donors (Stubbs, 1998) and volunteers (Ross, 1992; Geber, 1991; Goodale, 1995), the present study focuses on employees. In their 1994 book, Rekindling Commitment, Jaffe, Scott, and Tobe state that “The match between individual and organizational missions often makes the difference between a high-performance organization and one that is just getting by” (p. 131). In order for a mission statement to motivate staff, staff would have to both be aware of the mission and believe in it, at least enough to make the mission a motivator. Small, fledgling nonprofits are often comprised solely of volunteers who are intimately involved with the mission. As a nonprofit grows, it may begin to employ larger numbers of people who may or may not be aware of and/or see the effects of the organization’s mission. In addition, beginning in the 1980s and continuing today, many nonprofits are becoming more businesslike in their structure and organization. Some nonprofit jobs may be virtually indistinguishable from positions in the private sector in terms of actual job content. This phenomenon would seem to be even truer in nonprofit organizations that are large and that derive most of their revenue from earned income, e.g. hospitals, universities, or the YMCA. Some nonprofits may face the dilemma of hiring someone who has needed technical skills but who hasn’t a clue about the organization’s mission. How is a hotel clerk position at the YMCA different from a front desk position at Best Western? While nonprofits such as the YMCA may not be able to pay the wages offered by the private sector, perhaps they can

use the mission of the organization as a recruiting and motivational tool. This study attempts to identify some of the ways to do this effectively.

There are numerous ways that an employee may become aware of and internalize an organization's mission statement. Many theorists and researchers have emphasized the influence and importance of upper management in using organizational mission as a motivating tool (Barnard, 1938; Drucker, 1990; Herman & Heimovics, 1991). Others have suggested that employees enter an organization predisposed towards identification with the organizational mission (Pierce & Dunham, 1987). To date, this researcher is unaware of any study that has attempted to identify specific factors that are correlated with the degree to which an employee internalizes organizational mission. This is one of the goals of this research. Having achieved this goal, the research will attempt to determine whether internalizing an organization's mission leads to increased job satisfaction and employee retention.

Employee retention is a critical field of study with a great deal of research and theory. Estimates of the cost of employee turnover run between 33 and 200 percent of an employee's annual salary (Sherman, Bohlander, & Snell, 1996). Hiring and screening employees is an additional area of great concern to human resource managers. This study will attempt not only to identify the factors that influence the degree to which an employee internalizes organizational mission, but to also identify any possible correlations between internalization of the mission and (1) commitment to the organization, as measured by employee retention, and (2) job satisfaction.

Nonprofits typically have fewer resources than businesses or public agencies (Powell, 1987). Studies have demonstrated that nonprofit workers often earn anywhere from 10 to 32 percent less than their counterparts in business or government, when other factors are controlled for (Preston, 1990; Mirvis & Hackett, 1983). Many nonprofit jobs include a great deal of stress, arising from factors such as salaries being funded by one-time grants and increased competition from the private sector. Despite these drawbacks, some studies have shown that nonprofit workers are more satisfied with and committed to their jobs than their counterparts in the private and governmental sectors (Mirvis, 1992). Some researchers such as Preston, Mervis and Hackett (1990) have theorized that nonprofit workers are willing to “supply labor at lower than market wages to organizations that generate social benefits . . . and the donation is likely to increase with the worker’s connection to the provision of social benefits” (p. 18). The above-stated lies at the heart of this research. Given the constraints of resources in nonprofits and the large cost of hiring and employee turnover, nonprofits may have to look to their missions and mission statements as ways to attract and retain employees. This research seeks to find out how to do just that.

The Young Men’s Christian Association (referred to from here on as the YMCA) was founded by volunteer George Williams in London in 1844. The first American chapter was established in Boston in 1851, and the YMCA of San Francisco was established in 1853. The National YMCA’s mission statement was crafted in 1891 and stated that the organization is dedicated to “improving the body, mind and spirit” of its members. This has been updated over the years, culminating in today’s mission

statement of the YMCA of the USA, which is “to put Christian principles into practice through programs that develop spirit, mind and body for all people.”

The YMCA of the USA is a federation comprised of YMCA Associations around the country, each having its own independent mission statement in keeping with the general spirit of the national organization. The mission statement of the YMCA of San Francisco is “The YMCA of San Francisco builds strong kids, strong families and strong communities by enriching the lives of all people in spirit, mind and body.” It should be noted that the key words that are represented in both statements include: spirit, mind, and body. The verbs “develop” and “build” are similar in definition and intent. Some within the organization have criticized these statements for being too vague, cumbersome, and difficult to memorize, especially for people outside the organization or who are unfamiliar with what the YMCA does. As a result, the YMCA of the USA has developed a “tag line,” or mini-mission statement: “*We build strong kids, strong families, strong communities.*” This tag line has been adopted by the YMCA of San Francisco and appears on most printed materials.

Statement of the Issue

This research will attempt to identify YMCA employee experiences and/or perceptions that are correlated with internalization of the mission of the YMCA. Further, this study will attempt to show that employees who demonstrate a high degree of internalization of the mission of the YMCA will also demonstrate (1) high job satisfaction and (2) high commitment to the organization. Experiences expected to

influence internalization of the mission are grouped into five main categories: (1) contact with the YMCA prior to employment; (2) daily contact with YMCA clients/members; (3) YMCA trainings attended as a staff person; (4) prominence of the mission statement in the workplace; and (5) current involvement in YMCA programming. The first factor, previous contact with the YMCA, was chosen under the assumption that persons who had contact with the organization prior to employment would be more familiar with the mission. Both the second and the fifth factors were chosen because they represent experiences that would place the employee in contact with the persons benefiting from the YMCA mission. Training attendance was picked because the mission of the YMCA is emphasized in most trainings. Finally, prominence of the mission in the work place could affect employee internalization of mission by sheer reinforcement.

While the major focus of this research is on employee experiences, this study does examine some employee perceptions, e.g. whether or not the employee perceives upper management as promoting the mission. This research is focusing on line staff because other research (Preston, 1990) has demonstrated that higher-level employees tend to understand, believe in, and promote organizational mission.

A scale has been developed to measure the degree to which employees have internalized the mission statement. Scoring of this scale is based on the following factors: (1) employee familiarity with the various mission statements of the YMCA; (2) importance of the mission for the employee; (3) employee understanding of how his or her work fits into the YMCA mission; (4) employee understanding of how the YMCA is

different from other organizations that do similar work; and (5) how frequently the employee thinks and talks about the YMCA mission.

The researcher expects to be able to correlate certain work experiences and perceptions with a higher degree of internalization of the mission. Finally, this study will attempt to determine whether a high degree of mission internalization is positively correlated with job satisfaction and/or commitment to the organization.

Research Questions

This study attempts to identify factors correlated with increased employee internalization of organizational mission. It also attempts to identify whether or not internalization of the mission positively affects employee job satisfaction and intent to remain with the organization. Specific hypotheses include:

1. Employee contact with YMCA members, youth, and others who benefit from the organizational mission is positively correlated with employee internalization of the mission.
2. The prominence of the mission in the workplace as perceived by the employee is positively correlated with employee internalization of mission.
3. The number of YMCA trainings an employee attends is positively correlated with employee internalization of mission.
4. Previous participation in the YMCA is positively correlated with employee internalization of mission.

5. Current participation in YMCA programs is positively correlated with employee internalization of mission.
6. Attendance at a new-hire orientation is positively correlated with employee internalization of mission.
7. Volunteering with the YMCA is positively correlated with employee internalization of mission.
8. Donating money to the YMCA is positively correlated with employee internalization of mission.
9. Internalization of mission is positively correlated with job satisfaction.
10. Internalization of mission is positively correlated with intent to stay with the YMCA.

Definitions of Major Concepts

Frontline Staff – Any nonexempt, nonsupervisory YMCA of San Francisco employee who works at least 20 hours per week.

Contact with members – Interaction and communication with any of the beneficiaries of the YMCA mission. This includes, but is not limited to, health and fitness facility members, children and parents of childcare programs, children and parents of youth programs, aquatics participants, senior members, financial assistance beneficiaries, et al.

Employee internalization of organizational mission – The degree to which an employee identifies with the mission and the organization and understands and applies the principles of the YMCA mission in his or her daily work.

Previous YMCA contact – Any participation in YMCA programs or membership in the YMCA prior to becoming a YMCA employee.

Importance of the Study

This study is of potential importance for a number of reasons. First, while a great deal of literature has emphasized the centrality of the mission statement in the nonprofit organization, including its use as a motivational tool to recruit and retain staff, no study has been done to determine exactly how employees internalize and strengthen their belief in organizational mission. This study will attempt to do this for the frontline employees of the YMCA of San Francisco. Second, as discussed earlier, hiring and retention are expensive aspects of doing business, potentially even more so for nonprofits. Depending on the size of the nonprofit, salary and benefits consume 60 to 90 percent of the operating budget (Powell, 1987). The YMCA of San Francisco employs approximately 1,000 workers who can be considered “frontline” employees as defined in this paper. The cost of hiring these workers and any consequent turnover is enormous, consuming a significant portion of budgeted expenses (personal interview with A. Vamis, vice president of human resources for the YMCA of San Francisco, October 21, 1998). By identifying candidates who strongly identify with its organizational mission, the YMCA of San Francisco could possibly make better hiring decisions, increase its staff retention, and have employees who are more satisfied with their jobs. In addition, it is hoped that information will be garnered that will help the YMCA and other nonprofit organizations increase the degree to which current employees internalize the organization’s mission.

The results of this study will be available to any YMCA of San Francisco staff and should be of particular interest to anyone responsible for hiring and/or supervision of staff.

The job market in the Bay Area continues to be a tight one. Some Bay Area cities, including San Francisco, have already passed “living wage” ordinances that establish minimum wage requirements for any businesses or organizations that conduct business with the city government. These ordinances could drastically increase the personnel costs for all nonprofits, many of whom receive funding or other sorts of aid from city governments. In addition, if nonprofits are forced to offer wages competitive with entry-level positions in the private sector, the motivation and profile of job candidates for nonprofits could change significantly. Although the statistics and methods used in this study can only be related to the specific sample used in this research, other nonprofit organizations may nevertheless find the results helpful.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Little available academic research or theory exists directly related to the topic of how employees internalize organizational mission and whether or not a high degree of internalization results in greater job satisfaction and/or employee retention. A few anecdotal references appear in the popular literature, namely an article in Computerworld that focuses on Kaiser Permanente's low 15 percent turnover in IT staff compared to an industry average of 30 percent (Hayes, 1998). The author attributed Kaiser's success to the fact that the company connects its IT workers to the organization's mission by taking them on "field trips" to see the good work that Kaiser is doing.

Due to the lack of direct research and theory published on this topic, this literature review will include related studies and theories that together provide a good background for this research. First, I will briefly introduce some of the basic theories of motivation that could be relevant to using the mission statement to motivate employees. Second, I will examine some literature on mission statements and organizational mission, relating them to employee motivation. Third, I will review literature regarding employees and organizational culture that identify mission statements as one of the major influences on culture. Fourth, I will review literature on employees' values and organizational values, mission again being a core element of organizational values. Finally, I will look at two studies (O'Reilly III & Chatman, 1986; Pierce & Dunham, 1987) that attempt to identify factors leading to organizational commitment.

Employee Motivation

Perhaps one of the most well-known and respected theorists on human motivation is Abraham Maslow. Maslow outlines a hierarchy of needs on a continuum from most basic to higher level, with one level of need having to be satisfied before the next level becomes a motivator. The needs he identifies are, in order: physiological, safety, belongingness, esteem, and self-actualization (Maslow, 1970). According to Maslow, the need for self-actualization (the highest level in the hierarchy of needs) is “the desire for self-fulfillment, namely, to the tendency of him to become actualized in what he is potentially” (Maslow, 1970). Employees who strongly believe in the mission of the nonprofit organization for which they work may be motivated to work for this organization to attain self-actualization, or the alignment of their personal beliefs with the beliefs of the organization for which they work.

Other major theorists of motivation include Herzberg and McClelland. Herzberg divides motivational factors into two categories: demotivators (or hygiene factors) and motivators (Herzberg, 1966). Herzberg’s motivating factors are the most relevant to this study. These are: achievement, recognition, advancement, and actual job content. The mission of the organization may motivate employees if their actual job content is closely aligned with the work the organization does to fulfill its mission.

McClelland identifies three motivating forces: need for power, need for achievement, and need for affiliation (McClelland, 1975). Individuals who closely identify with the mission of an organization may be motivated to work for the organization by their need to affiliate with its mission.

Chester Barnard, one of the most respected management theorists and practitioners of this century, also has a number of theories regarding employee motivation. In his book Functions of the Executive, the chapter entitled “The Economy of Incentives” discusses incentives that can be used to motivate employees, namely: material inducements, personal nonmaterial opportunities, desirable physical conditions, ideal benefactions, associational attractiveness, adaptation of conditions to habitual methods and attitudes, opportunity for enlarged participation, and what he termed “the condition of communion” (Barnard, 1938). Although Barnard was writing for the private sector, his idea of “ideal benefactions” as a motivating force is particularly applicable to the nonprofit sector and relevant to this study. Barnard writes: “By ideal benefaction I mean the capacity of organizations to satisfy personal ideals usually relating to nonmaterial, future, or altruistic relations. They include pride of workmanship, sense of adequacy, altruistic service for family or others, loyalty to organization . . .” (Barnard, 1938, p. 146).

Peter Drucker, considered one of the top management theorists of the 1990s, talks about organizational mission as a motivational factor in his book Managing the Non-profit Organization:

One of the greatest strengths of a non-profit organization is that people don’t work for a living, they work for a cause (not everybody, but a good many). That also creates a tremendous responsibility for the institution, to keep the flame alive, not to allow work to become just a “job.” . . . The leadership challenge . . . is to bring people . . . together again and again and ask: What

can we be proud of? Have we really made a difference? (Drucker, 1990)

As demonstrated by this passage, Drucker is so certain that organizational mission is a motivating factor for (many) nonprofit employees, that he just considers it a given.

Mission and Mission Statement

In their landmark book, Profiles of Excellence, Knauf, Berger, and Gray (1991) interviewed leaders of top nonprofits and compiled the results of their research. According to their research, the number-one hallmark of excellence in nonprofit organizations is “a clearly articulated sense of mission that serves as the focal point of commitment for board and staff and is the guidepost by which the organization judges its successes and makes adjustment in course over time” (p. 167). The authors go on to emphasize the importance of the mission in motivating staff, especially as used by executive directors and boards of directors.

One example of a nonprofit organization using its mission to motivate employees is World Vision International, an organization devoted to serving the needy throughout the world. Their “spiritual-formation manager” Paul remarks that “We recognized that the most effective and fulfilled employee is one whose personal goals are aligned with the goals of the community in which he or she is employed” (Laabs, 1995, p.64). After having implemented a program to align personal and company goals, the company has had fewer disability, stress, and workers’ compensation claims (Laabs, 1995).

World Vision International's work is just one example of a growing trend in human resource management in the late 90s: spirituality in the workplace. Although I was unable to locate any empirical studies on the topic, it is of growing interest, and I would suspect that studies should be emerging at any time. The idea of aligning one's personal mission with the mission of the organization one works for is at the very heart of this study.

Employee Values and Organizational Values

Employee values and how these values may or may not match organizational values is a topic relevant to this study that has a substantial body of empirical research. Studies have focused on job choice decisions (Judge & Bretz, 1992), value congruence between co-workers and its relationship to work (Adkins, Ravlin, & Meglino, 1996), values congruence and hiring (Adkins, Russell, & Werbel, 1994; Chatman, 1991), value congruence between organizations and workers (Posner & Schmidt, 1993; Posner, Kouzes, & Schmidt, 1985), organizational commitment (Pierce & Dunham, 1987; O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986) and value congruence between workers and their supervisors (Meglino, Ravlin, & Adkins, 1989). Since most nonprofit organizational mission statements presumably are indicative of the values the organizations espouse, some of the findings in these studies may be relevant to the central issue of this research.

In their 1985 study, Posner, Kouzes, and Schmidt found that "clearly articulated organizational values do make a significant difference in the lives of employees, as well as in their organization's performance" (p. 293). They surveyed approximately 1500

managers across the country with a questionnaire to ascertain the degree of values congruence between managers and their organizations, as perceived by the managers completing the survey. Managers were classified as having a low, moderate, or high degree of values congruence with the organizations for which they worked. The authors of the study found that shared values

were related to feelings of personal success, organizational commitment (i.e., managers were significantly more confident they would stay with the company longer and were more willing to work longer hours), self-confidence in understanding personal and organizational values, ethical behavior, feelings of job and personal stress, organizational goals (i.e., were more likely to take company goals 'to heart'), and organizational stakeholders (i.e., were more likely to value customers, co-workers, etc.)." (p. 303)

The authors of the study continue by addressing the question of how the organization decides which of its many values are being discussed and promoted by the organization and go on to say "...the most significant values deal with the organization's hoped-for impact on society" (p. 304). In the case of nonprofits, these values would clearly be embodied in their mission statements.

In 1989, Meglino, Ravlin, and Adkins studied the notion of values congruence from another angle and discovered that "workers were more satisfied and committed when their values were congruent with the values of their supervisor" (Meglino et al., 1989, p. 424). The study surveyed approximately 180 workers and their supervisors and

measured them on four scales: job satisfaction, satisfaction with coworkers, organizational commitment, and satisfaction with supervisors. The researchers wrote:

The most conclusive finding of this study was the presence of significant value congruence relationships at the lowest level of the organization, between workers and their supervisors. These relationships included significantly greater overall and facet job satisfaction, greater organizational commitment, and a marginally significant reduction in lateness (p. 430).

Again, assuming that a mission statement would include and reflect values, the implications of hiring and retaining a staff with strong belief in the mission statement are clear. The values espoused in the mission statement can be used as a tool to unify employees, supervisors, and the organization.

A related study by Adkins, Ravlin, and Meglino in 1996 focused more on values congruence between coworkers. The study examines 98 mutually-named dyads, coworkers who each named the other as someone they work with closely. Work values were measured through surveys. Results showed that values congruence between coworkers affected desirable outcomes for low-tenured employees. This finding might indicate that the mission as a motivational tool is a more potent force in the early stages of a job.

Several studies have focused on the role of values in the recruiting and selection process, often referred to in the literature as “person-organization fit.” In 1992, Judge and Bretz hypothesized that “the extent to which concern for others is emphasized in an organization is positively related to individuals’ decision to accept a given job offer”

along with a further hypothesis that “individuals whose primary values orientation is concern for others are more likely than others to accept a job in an organization in which concern for others is emphasized” (Judge & Bretz, 1992, p. 263). This latter hypothesis is of particular interest because most nonprofits, as defined by their mission statements, are organizations with a strong emphasis on caring for others. Judge and Brentz performed between-subject and within-subject analyses in this study. Within-subject analysis showed that concern for others exerted more influence in the subject’s decision to take a job than did pay and promotional opportunities.

Chatman’s 1991 study attempted to prove, among other things, that “high person-organization fit at entry will be positively associated with job satisfaction” and that “high person-organization fit will be negatively associated with intent to leave the organization and positively associated with length of membership” (p. 464) Chatman used regression and hierarchical regression to demonstrate support for both of the hypotheses, both of which were significant at the .01 level. In a related part of the study, she also demonstrated that socialization experiences such as social interactions with coworkers in the first year of employment can increase the strength of the person-organization fit. Relating this to the study at hand, trainings, interactions with YMCA members, and other socialization experiences would be expected to be factors in increasing the degree to which an employee internalizes the YMCA mission.

Organizational Commitment and Attachment

One of the hypotheses of this study is that internalization of the mission statement will be positively correlated with intent to remain with the organization. One possible way to measure internalization of the mission statement would be through “organizational commitment,” the subject of the following two studies.

In their 1986 study, O'Reilly III and Chatman attempted to study the effects of compliance, identification, and internalization of prosocial behavior. As described by Kelman (1958), compliance, identification, and internalization are three ways that individuals accept influence. Internalization is the concept most relevant to this study. “Internalization occurs when influence is accepted because the induced attitudes and behaviors are congruent with one’s own values; that is, the values of the individual and the group or organization are the same” (O'Reilly III & Chatman, 1986, p. 497). The authors define prosocial behavior as behavior that surpasses what is not directly required by the job but benefits the organization while not offering any direct benefit to the employee. Their hypothesis is that individuals who demonstrate internalization are more likely to engage in prosocial behaviors. They also predicted that these employees would have a lower turnover rate.

Eighty two nonfaculty university employees participated in the study by O'Reilly and Chatman. The independent variables compliance, identification, and internalization were all measured on scales contained in a self-administered survey. The dependent

variables were prosocial behavior as measured by a scale, intention to remain with the organization, and actual turnover. The results of the study are summed up as follows:

First, commitment based on internalization, or similarity of individual and organizational values, is significantly related to intrarole and extrarole behavior, very strongly related to intent to remain with the organization, and negatively related to actual turnover 16 months later. Attachment based on identification, or pride in affiliation with the university, is also related to extrarole behavior, tenure intentions, and turnover. Compliance-based commitment is not significantly related to intrarole or extrarole behavior or turnover but is negatively related to an intent to remain with the university. (O'Reilly III & Chatman, 1986, p. 495)

Their research suggests that the more employees share the values of an organization, the more likely they are to perform "above and beyond the call of duty," the longer they intend to stay with the organization, and the less likely they are to leave. Again, assuming that the mission of a non profit is values-driven, the present study hopes to replicate the results of their study.

Pierce & Dunham (1987) suggest in their study that certain individuals who join organizations have a propensity for organizational commitment. This finding would suggest that certain individuals enter an organization with a greater inclination to become committed to it. Applying their finding to this study would mean that certain individuals enter the organization more ready and open to becoming committed to it. One of the independent variables being tested for in this research is prior experience with the

YMCA, something that is hypothesized to be correlated with stronger internalization of the mission of the YMCA.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Subjects/Respondents

The subjects of this study were line staff employed by the YMCA of San Francisco. The YMCA of San Francisco comprises 14 branches spread over five Bay Area counties. The branches vary from large, modern facilities with 7,000 or more members to a small office with only three full-time staff running community-based programs. Respondents to this study work at the following four branches: Embarcadero, Mission, North Bay, and Chinatown. These branches were selected because they represent a diversity of size, budget, and programs offered. Line staff, for the purposes of this study, refers to entry-level, nonexempt workers who work at least 20 hours per week. This would include persons working primarily in the following areas: membership sales and service, administration, youth, physical fitness, aquatics, and childcare. The YMCA of San Francisco was chosen because of the researcher's connection to the organization, facilitating easy access to the subjects. It should also be noted that the YMCA is the largest nonprofit agency in the Bay Area, according to the United Way. The number of questionnaires distributed was approximately 300 and 94 were returned. This represents a response rate of approximately 30 percent.

Research Design

This is an exploratory, cross-sectional study with individual employees as the unit of analysis. The research instrument is a self-administered survey. The independent

variables in this study are work-related experiences and perceptions, and the dependent variable is the degree to which employees have internalized the mission of the YMCA. A second part of the study identifies mission internalization as the independent variable and job satisfaction and employee retention as the dependent variables.

Subjects were asked a series of questions to determine how much they have internalized the mission of the YMCA of San Francisco and their work-related experiences and perceptions. Subjects were also asked a series of questions to develop a job satisfaction scale. Pretesting was done on a number of line staff at the Central YMCA to refine the instrumentation. These pretest responses were not included in the data analysis. An attempt was made to associate certain employee experiences and perceptions with the degree to which employees have internalized organizational mission. A significant correlation was also sought between the degree to which an employee has internalized the mission and their degree of job satisfaction and commitment to the organization, as measured by intent to remain with the organization.

Instrumentation

The instrument consists of a self-administered questionnaire. All statements and questions are geared toward correlating the independent variables (employee experiences and perceptions) with the dependent variable (degree of internalization of the organizational mission). Employee job satisfaction and organizational commitment are also dependent variables reflecting the degree of mission internalization. Measuring subjects' experiences and perceptions was relatively straightforward. They were simply

asked a number of direct questions. Questions related to degree of member contact and questions related to degree of prominence the mission has in the employee's workplace, respectively, were combined to form two scales: degree of member contact and degree of mission prominence in the workplace.

Determining the degree to which employees have internalized the mission was more challenging. Questions regarding the internalization of mission were clustered around (1) behaviors which would indicate this (e.g., talking about the mission) and (2) the degree to which the mission influences the employee's work (e.g., "The spirit of the mission statement does not really guide my work.") A job satisfaction scale which measured the degree of internalization was constructed from a scale used by Fairhurst, Jordan, and Neuwirth (1997).

The first part of the questionnaire contained 34 statements which respondents rated on a Likert scale. Participants had the choice of saying that they strongly agreed, agreed, neither agreed or disagreed, disagreed, or strongly disagreed with the statements. This section was followed by nine questions about employee experiences, perceptions, behaviors, and job satisfaction. Finally, there were two open-ended questions which allowed the subjects to state what the mission statement of their organization means to them, and how it has most influenced them. The purpose of these questions was to gather qualitative information that might be used to enhance understanding of the results.

Procedures

As stated earlier, four of the 14 branches of the YMCA of San Francisco were chosen to participate in the study. These four branches represent a diverse sample: one large branch with a big facility, one medium-sized branch with a workout facility, one smaller neighborhood branch with a workout facility, and one neighborhood branch with no workout facility. Pretesting was completed at the Central YMCA with a group of 12 employees representing the youth, membership sales, membership service, and physical fitness departments. Feedback was used to adjust the questionnaires. The major change resulting from pretesting was changing a question about intent to remain employed with the YMCA from an open-ended question to a scaled question. The researcher attached a cover letter explaining the project and guaranteeing anonymity. In addition a letter of support from the senior vice president of operations and vice president of human resources were attached.

There are approximately 300 frontline employees as earlier defined working at least 20 hours at these four branches. Cover letters and questionnaires were distributed to the associate executive directors at each of the branches. Each associate executive director chose the most appropriate way to have the survey completed, with most of them indicating they had department heads present the questionnaire at department meetings where the surveys were completed. One branch attached the questionnaire to employee paychecks. In either case, returned surveys were immediately placed in a container which was sealed and was not opened by anyone except myself. Each branch was given a two week window of time to distribute and collect the surveys. Once this time had passed,

the associate executive director returned the completed questionnaires to the researcher. A total of 300 questionnaires were distributed and a total of 94 were returned.

Operational Definition of Relevant Variables

New Staff Orientation – Four-hour employee orientation to the YMCA of San Francisco required of all employees within the first 90 days of employment. The mission of the organization is stressed throughout the presentation.

YMCA training – Any training offered by a YMCA branch, a YMCA Association, or the YMCA of the USA. These range from two-hour mini-modules to seven-day residential retreats.

YMCA program or activity – Any program or activity offered by or at a YMCA branch. This includes, but is not limited to, physical fitness, aquatics, childcare, camping, and leadership programs.

YMCA member – Anyone who is a paying member of any YMCA branch.

YMCA participant – Anyone who is a paying participant in a YMCA program.

Campaign – The annual YMCA community support fund-raising campaign.

Mission statement of the YMCA of San Francisco – “The YMCA of San Francisco builds strong kids, strong families, and strong communities by enriching the lives of all people in spirit, mind and body.”

Mission statement of the YMCA of the USA = “To put Christian principles into practice through programs that develop body, mind, and spirit.”

Branch mission statement – A mission statement developed by a branch that further refines the mission statement of the YMCA of San Francisco.

Internalization of organizational mission statement – The degree to which an employee understands and uses the YMCA mission statement(s) as a motivational tool in their work as evidenced by their responses to questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 11, 13, 15, 18, 21, 22, 23, 24, 26, 27, and 28, which form a scale on which all participants were rated.

Treatment of Data

This research is based on a primary hypothesis that frontline employees who have internalized the organizational mission have significantly different work experiences and perceptions than employees who have not. The independent variables are the perceptions and experiences of employees including, but not limited to, the following factors: orientation, trainings, previous volunteer experience with the YMCA, and length of employment. The dependent variable is the degree to which the employee has internalized the organizational mission.

A secondary hypothesis is that employees who have demonstrated a strong internalization of the mission (independent variable) will be more likely to have higher job satisfaction and organizational commitment (dependent variables) than employees who show little internalization of the mission.

To determine which statistical formulas were most appropriate, four factors were considered: number of variables, level of measurement, whether or not results are to be generalized, and whether or not the study is looking at changes over the course of time.

For the first hypothesis, there are multiple independent variables (employee perceptions and experiences) but only one dependent variable (the degree to which the employee believes in the mission). For the second hypothesis, there is only one independent variable (degree of internalization of mission) and two dependent variables (job satisfaction and organizational commitment). The intent of the study is descriptive, not inferential; i.e., the study will only describe the sample used in the research. While the formal requirements for inferential statistics are not met, inferential statistics, including chi-square and gamma, will be conducted for illustrative purposes. Since the dependent variable in both hypotheses is one of degree, ordinal measurement is appropriate. Finally, this study does not address changes in the same group over time.

Given the discussion above, the most appropriate choices for statistical analysis were cross tabs, chi-square, and gamma. T tests and ANOVA were also used to determine potential relationships between the independent and dependent variables. The SPSS software package was used to perform statistical analysis.

Variables that consisted of a scale were collapsed into quartiles with the exception of employee retention, which was collapsed into thirds.

Limitations of the Study

Attempting to measure the degree to which an employee has internalized the mission of the organization for which he or she works is ambitious at best. While the researcher has identified a number of statements, beliefs, and actions that together should represent a good indication of this variable, there are always other factors that could have

been used to measure internalization of the mission statement. Other or different experiences and perceptions could also have been used as possible independent variables.

This study includes measurements of perception; for example, agreeing or disagreeing with the statement “The executive director talks about the mission frequently.” A more precise approach would have been to actually measure the number of times the executive director spoke about the mission, something also clearly beyond the scope of this study. This study also simply measures a nonrandomly selected sample for a specific organization at one point in time. Therefore, the results cannot be generalized to other employees and the affects that would show up in a longitudinal study are not available for analysis.

Finally, this study does not address the content of the mission statements themselves. Perhaps the mission statement of the YMCA is ill-conceived or not well-articulated. This could result in low internalization of the mission despite a great number of experiences that would encourage the internalization of a better-stated mission.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

This chapter will present the results of the administered survey and the statistical analyses conducted. After a brief review of the sample and response, the reliability of the scales used in the survey instrument will be presented. Finally, descriptive statistics that examine the association between variables will be presented.

Sample and Response

This research attempted to identify the factors that influence the degree to which line staff of the YMCA of San Francisco internalize the organization's mission. Furthermore, a second set of hypotheses were tested to discover whether or not any relationship exists between internalization of the organization's mission, and (1) job satisfaction and (2) employee retention. Four branches of the YMCA of San Francisco participated in this study: Embarcadero, Chinatown, North Bay, and Mission. These branches are four of the 15 branches that make up the YMCA of San Francisco. They were chosen because they represent a diversity of size, staff, location, and program. These branches contain approximately 300 line staff who fit the parameters of this study. Ninety five surveys were returned, and only one was unusable.

Reliability of Scales

As stated in the previous section, four scales were used to measure four different variables that were part of the hypotheses put forth. These are: (1) the degree to which an employee has internalized the YMCA mission; (2) the degree of contact the employee

has with YMCA members; (3) the degree to which the YMCA mission is prominent in the workplace; and (4) job satisfaction. The mission internalization scale consisted of 16 items. A reliability analysis produced an alpha of .8836. This suggests that this scale is indeed reliable.

The second scale used in this research consisted of three items that measured the degree of contact staff had with YMCA members. A reliability analysis conducted produced an alpha of .7611, a result sufficiently strong to suggest that this scale, too, is reliable. The third scale used in the study attempted to measure the degree to which the mission was prominent in the workplace. It contained five items. Reliability analysis showed this scale to have an alpha of .7881, making this scale reliable.

The final scale contained in the survey instrument was a job satisfaction scale. This scale consisted of four items. A reliability analysis of the scale produced an alpha of .8092. This score suggests that this final scale is also reliable enough to be used in the data. Four simple additive scales were constructed.

All respondents were rated on a mission internalization scale, ranging from “most internalized” to “least internalized.” For ease of analyzing and presenting data, this scale was collapsed into quartiles. Crosstabs analysis was performed comparing each quartile with the corresponding variable(s). A similar procedure was used for three other scales in the study: degree of contact employee has with YMCA members; degree of the mission statements’ prominence in the workplace; and job satisfaction. The specific items included in each of these scales are outlined in Chapter Three.

Results Related to First Hypothesis

The first question of this research is, “What perceptions and experiences influence the degree to which an employee internalizes organizational mission?” Among the experiences and perceptions measured were: attending a new staff orientation; the number of YMCA trainings attended; prominence of the mission in the workplace; degree of contact with YMCA members; length of employment with the YMCA; previous contact with the YMCA; current participation in YMCA programs; volunteering with the YMCA; and donating to the YMCA. Each of the above variables was cross-tabbed with the degree to which an employee had internalized the organizational mission, to determine if a significant association existed. Gamma was used to determine significance in data with more than two variables, and chi square was used to determine significance in data with only two variables. In cases where no significant association was detected, ANOVA was run for data with more than two variables (such as length of service) and t-tests were run for data with only two variables (such as whether or not the employee donates money) This analysis strategy was used for all associations considered in this study. The results of these statistical analyses will be addressed one by one.

Attending a New-Staff Orientation is Associated with Mission Internalization

This hypothesis states that attending a new-staff orientation would be associated with internalization of mission. The chi-square of this cross tab analysis is 7.899 and is significant at the .05 level (see Table 1). It is worth noting that both for those employees who did attend and for those who did not attend, there is a major difference between the

staff that have least internalized the mission and the other collapsed groups, with a notable difference between the third and fourth quartiles. Several staff indicated that the new-hire orientation they attended was the most significant experience shaping how they think and feel about the YMCA mission. One respondent representative of this group stated “Participating in the staff orientation really opened doors to finding out about myself and the YMCA mission.” Presumably, these are newer staff whose experience at the orientation is still fresh in their minds.

Table 1

Mission Internalization Crosstabulated with New-Hire Orientation Attendance

New hire orientation attendance	Degree of internalization				Respondents
	1 (Most)	2	3	4 (Least)	
Yes %	25	29.7	27.7	15.6	64
No %	27.3	7.1	22.7	40.9	22
Total %	25.6	24.4	27.9	22.1	100
Respondents	22	21	24	19	86

Note: The degree of internalization is a continuum on a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 representing greatest degree of internalization, and 4 representing least. Chi square = 7.899, sig < .05.

Employee Trainings Attended is Associated with Mission Internalization

This hypothesis states that the number of YMCA trainings a staff person has attended is associated with the degree to which the mission is internalized. The gamma for this analysis is $-.370$ and is significant at the .01 level (see Table 2). There are two aspects of this table worth noting. First, for employees who have most internalized the mission and those who have least internalized the mission, there is a major difference between those who attended one to two trainings versus those who attended three to five trainings. Second, no one who had six or more trainings fell into the least internalized tier of employees. One respondent said that “the opportunities we are given to learn and grow through trainings and workshops” were the most significant experiences in shaping how he or she felt about the YMCA mission. Responding to the same question, others suggested that just meeting and being with other people (a situation inherent in most trainings) was the most critical factor in shaping their feelings about the YMCA mission.

Table 2

Mission Internalization Crosstabulated with Trainings Attended

		Degree of internalization				Respondents
		1 (Most)	2	3	4 (Least)	
Trainings attended in the past year						
	None	20	10	40	30	10
	1-2	16.2	21.6	29.7	32.4	37
	3-5	34.6	34.6	15.4	15.4	26
	6 or more	41.7	25	33.3		12
Totals	Response %	25.9	24.7	27.1	22.4	100
	Respondents	22	21	24	19	85

Note: The degree of internalization is a continuum on a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 representing greatest degree of internalization, and 4 representing least. Data in the crosstab matrix cells (the internalization scale) express responses as percentages of the total study sample. Data in the Respondents cells are subject counts. The total attendance percentages do not equal exactly 100% due to rounding. Gamma = -.370, sig < .01.

Length of YMCA employment is associated with Mission Internalization

This hypothesis states that there is an association between the amount of time an employee has worked with the YMCA and the degree to which he or she internalizes the organization's mission. The gamma value is $-.175$, and there is no significant association detected. A secondary analysis ANOVA analysis was conducted and also yielded no significant correlation between the two factors. No correlation between length of employment at the YMCA and degree of internalization of YMCA mission was evident.

Employee Familiarity with the YMCA prior to employment is associated with Mission Internalization

This hypothesis states that there is an association between the degree to which an employee was familiar with the YMCA prior to working there, and the degree to which he or she internalized the mission. The gamma for this analysis is $-.052$, and there is no significant association. As with the previous example, ANOVA was conducted and no significant correlation surfaced.

Employee participation in YMCA activities prior to employment is associated with mission internalization

This hypothesis states that YMCA participation or membership prior to employment in the YMCA is associated with mission internalization. Since the calculated chi square is $.823$, the association is not significant. In fact, of all the variables, this appears to be one of the least associated and most evenly spread (see Table 3). A t-test was run but no significant correlation was detected.

Table 3

Mission Internalization Crosstabulated with Previous YMCA Experience

Previous YMCA membership or participation	Degree of internalization				Respondents
	1 (Most)	2	3	4 (Least)	
Yes	28.1	28.1	28.1	15.6	32
No	25	23.1	28.8	23.1	52
Total	26.2	25	28.6	20.2	100
Respondents	22	21	24	17	84

Note: The degree of internalization is a continuum on a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 representing greatest degree of internalization, and 4 representing least. Values in the crosstab matrix cells are response percentages. Respondents values are actual counts. Chi square = .823, no sig.

Employee participation in YMCA programs is associated with mission internalization

This hypothesis states that there is an association between whether or not an employee participates in YMCA programs and the degree to which he or she internalizes the YMCA mission. The chi square value for this analysis is 4.367, and there is no significant relationship. As with the previous example, a t-test was conducted, and no significant relationship between whether an employee participates in YMCA programs and the degree to which he or she internalizes the YMCA mission was evident.

Current volunteering with the YMCA is associated with mission internalization

This hypothesis states that there is an association between whether or not an employee volunteers with the YMCA and the degree to which he or she has internalized the mission. The chi-square for this is 9.335, and it is significant at the .05 level (see Table 4). Employees in the fourth quartile differ sharply from those in the third quartile in degree of mission internalization, relative to their YMCA volunteerism. From the third quartile to the fourth quartile is a marked increase in the number of staff who do not volunteer. There is also a dramatic increase in those who do not volunteer between the most internalized quartile and the second most internalized quartile. Three respondents noted that their first volunteer experience was the most important experience in shaping their feelings about the YMCA mission.

Table 4

Mission Internalization Crosstabulated with Volunteering in the YMCA

Employee volunteering	Degree of internalization				Respondents
	1 (Most)	2	3	4 (Least)	
Yes %	31.1	24.6	29.5	14.8	61
No %	8.3	25	25	41.7	24
Total %	24.7	24.7	28.2	22.4	100
Respondents	21	21	24	19	85

Note: The degree of internalization is a continuum on a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 representing greatest degree of internalization, and 4 representing least. Chi square = 9.335, sig < .05.

Employee donating to the YMCA is associated with mission internalization

This hypothesis states that there is an association between an employee who donates to the YMCA and the degree to which he or she has internalized the YMCA mission. While the chi square for this is 6.068, indicating no significance, an independent samples *t*-test shows significance at the .05 level (see Table 5). For those who do donate, the degree to which they have internalized the mission is distributed across the quartiles from highest to lowest, supporting the hypothesis. For those who do not donate, the first two quartiles average 14.3% while the last two quartiles are 33.3% and 38.1%, respectively. This sharp difference is in contrast to the more even spread among those who do donate.

Table 5

Mission Internalization Crosstabulated with YMCA Donation

Donation by employee	Degree of internalization				Respondents
	1 (Most)	2	3	4 (Least)	
Yes %	29.2	27.7	26.2	16.9	65
No %	14.3	14.3	33.3	38.1	21
Total %	25.6	24.4	27.9	22.1	100
Respondents	22	21	24	19	86

Note: The degree of internalization is a continuum on a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 representing greatest degree of internalization, and 4 representing least. Chi square = 6.068, no sig, *t*-test sig < .05.

Prominence of mission in the workplace is associated with mission internalization

This hypothesis states that there is an association between the degree to which the mission is prominent in the workplace and the degree to which an employee internalizes the mission. The gamma for this hypothesis is .599 with a significance of .000 (see Table 7). (As with many of the other findings, employees who internalized the mission the most and the least exhibited the strongest correlations.) Although the degree of mission prominence in the workplace is composed of several factors, respondent comments seem to indicate that mission promotion by other staff members, particularly supervisors, is important. Asked which experiences most shaped their feelings about the YMCA mission, respondents commented “my interview when I got the job,” “my supervisor told me about the mission,” “working with my previous supervisor,” “hearing our development director talk about YMCA stories,” and “some of the people who work in the main office and display the mission statement in their everyday life.”

Table 6

Mission Internalization Crosstabulated with Mission Prominence in the Workplace

		Degree of internalization				Respondents
		1 (Most)	2	3	4 (Least)	
Degree of prominence						
	1	47.6	33.3	19		21
	2	32.3	29	29	9.7	31
	3		13.3	33.3	53.3	15
	4	11.8	11.8	29.4	47.1	17
Totals	Response %	26.2	23.8	27.4	22.6	100
	Respondents	22	20	23	19	84

Note: The degree of internalization is a continuum on a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 representing greatest degree of internalization, and 4 representing least. The degree of mission prominence is a continuum on a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 representing greatest degree of mission prominence, and 4 representing least. Data in the crosstab matrix cells (the internalization scale) express responses as percentages of the total study sample. Data in the Respondents cells are subject counts. Gamma = .599, sig < .000.

Degree of member contact is associated with mission internalization

This hypothesis states that the degree to which an employee has contact with YMCA members is correlated with mission internalization. The gamma for this hypothesis is .351 and its significance is at the .002 level (see Table 8). One respondent typified many responses to this hypothesis by stating “Working with financial assistance members on a daily basis has had a tremendous affect on me. This work exemplifies what we stand for.” Other answers to the question “What experience most affected the way you think and feel about the YMCA mission?” included “the caring members” and

“the everyday interaction with members.” The number of comments that reflect the impact of member contact, particularly with youth members, is striking.

Table 7

Mission Internalization Crosstabulated with Degree of Member Contact

		Degree of internalization				Respondents
		1(Most)	2	3	4 (Least)	
Degree of member contact						
1		42.9	20	25.7	11.4	35
2		30.8	23.1	15.4	30.8	13
3		4.8	28.6	42.9	23.8	21
4		11.8	29.4	23.5	35.3	17
Totals	Response %	25.6	24.4	27.9	22.1	100
	Respondents	22	21	24	19	86

Note: The degree of internalization is a continuum on a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 representing greatest degree of internalization, and 4 representing least. The degree of member contact is a continuum on a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 representing greatest degree of member contact, and 4 representing least. Data in the crosstab matrix cells (the internalization scale) express responses as percentages of the total study sample. Data in the Respondents cells are subject counts. Gamma = .351, sig < .002.

Thus, in summary, this data suggests that the following factors are not significantly associated with YMCA employee internalization of organizational mission: length of employment at the YMCA, degree of familiarity with the YMCA before working there, whether or not the employee was a YMCA member or participant before working there, or current participation in YMCA programs.

The following factors were found to be statistically significant in their association with employee internalization of mission: whether or not an employee attended a new staff orientation; number of YMCA trainings the employee attended; whether or not the employee volunteers with the YMCA; whether or not the employee donates to the YMCA; the degree of contact an employee has with YMCA members; and the degree to which the mission is prominent in the workplace.

Results Related to Second Set of Hypotheses

The second set of hypotheses stated that employee internalization of mission would be associated with job satisfaction and employee retention. Although test results for the first set of hypotheses resulted in varied significance, both results for the second set of hypotheses were significant. Crosstabs were used to determine the correlation between mission internalization and job satisfaction and retention. Because the data for job satisfaction and employee retention were ordinal, gamma was used. The results follow in the next two sections.

Employee internalization of mission is associated with job satisfaction

This hypothesis states that there is an association between the degree to which employees internalize the YMCA mission and employee job satisfaction. The gamma for this hypothesis is .638 with a .000 significance level (see Table 8).

Table 8

Mission Internalization Crosstabulated with Job Satisfaction

		Degree of internalization				Respondents
		1 (Most)	2	3	4 (Least)	
Degree of Job Satisfaction						
1		47.1	35.3	11.8	5.9	17
2		38.7	32.3	22.6	6.5	31
3		4.2	12.5	54.2	29.2	14
4		7.1	14.3	14.3	64.3	14
Totals	Resonse %	25.6	24.4	27.9	22.1	100
	Respondents	22	21	24	19	86

Note: The degree of internalization is a continuum on a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 representing greatest degree of internalization, and 4 representing least. The degree of job satisfaction is a continuum on a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 representing greatest degree of job satisfaction, and 4 representing least. Data in the crosstab matrix cells (the internalization scale) express responses as percentages of the total study sample. Data in the Respondents cells are subject counts. Gamma = .638, sig < .000.

Employee internalization of mission is associated with employee retention

This hypothesis states that the degree to which an employee has internalized the YMCA mission is associated with how likely he or she is to remain working for the organization (see Table 10). The gamma value is .513 and the significance is .000. This suggests a relatively strong association between these two factors.

Table 9

Mission Internalization Crosstabulated with Employee Retention

	Degree of internalization				Respondents
	1(Most)	2	3	4(Least)	
Likely to remain					
Strongly agree %	36.2	34	21.3	8.5	47
Agree %	5.6	16.7	38.9	38.9	87
Non agree %	20	10	30	40	20
Total %	25.9	24.7	27.1	22.4	100
Respondents	22	21	23	19	85

Note: The degree of internalization is a continuum on a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 representing greatest degree of internalization, and 4 representing least. The total response percentages do not equal exactly 100 percent due to rounding. Gamma = .513, sig < .000.

In summary, the data suggest that there is a statistically significant association between employee internalization of the YMCA mission and job satisfaction and job retention.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Review of the Problem

The mission of a nonprofit organization is the very reason for its existence. It is the purpose toward which all work is geared, money is raised and spent, and volunteers are recruited. As described in Chapter One, much has been written about the centrality and importance of the mission both for nonprofits and businesses alike. While many writers talk about how the mission of an organization can be used to motivate employees, little if any research examines exactly how this is done. This research attempted to identify experiences that would be associated with employee internalization of mission. Frontline employees of the YMCA of San Francisco, one of the largest nonprofits in the Bay Area, were chosen for this study. Some of the factors which were hypothesized to lead to internalization of mission included degree of contact with YMCA members, degree of mission prominence in the workplace, number of YMCA trainings attended, whether or not employees attend new-staff orientations, their degree of familiarity with the YMCA prior to working there, whether or not employees donate time or money to the organization, and their degree of current involvement in the organization.

Staffing is often the most significant portion of a nonprofit's budget. Yet, nonprofits often have fewer resources than businesses for recruiting and retaining quality employees. Job satisfaction and employee retention are thus critical issues facing many nonprofits. This research hypothesized that if an organization could successfully influence its employees to internalize organizational mission, these staff would be more satisfied with their jobs and more likely to continue working for the organization.

Discussion of the Findings

This study had two sets of related hypotheses. The first set tested a number of workplace factors and experiences as independent variables, with employee internalization of mission as the dependent variable. We will look at each of the factors included in this hypothesis one by one.

The first hypothesis states that whether or not an employee attends a new staff orientation is associated with the degree to which he or she internalizes the organizational mission. This association did prove to be significant. Employees who did attend a YMCA new-hire orientation demonstrated greater internalization of mission than those who did not attend. This is a relevant and useful finding because the mission of the YMCA is the largest and most significant part of the new-hire orientation, and a great deal of time is spent discussing how the organization originated, what it has done in its 150 year history, and how the organization currently works toward achieving its mission. Employees usually attend this orientation within the first 90 days of employment when they are still absorbing a great deal of information and forming their opinions about the organization. Therefore, a good orientation with an emphasis on the organization's mission will likely produce strong employee internalization of mission and better results for the organization.

A second hypothesis stated that the number of YMCA trainings an employee attends is associated with the degree to which he or she internalizes the mission. The mission is usually emphasized a great deal at YMCA trainings regardless of the topic of the training. This research did show that the more trainings an employee attended, the

greater the internalization of mission. The number of trainings was divided into quartiles: zero trainings, one to two trainings, three to five trainings, and six or more trainings. The largest interquartile difference was between respondents who attended one to two trainings and those who attended three to five trainings, suggesting that although one to two trainings is more significant than no trainings in shaping employee internalization of mission, a more significant difference is made when an employee attends at least three trainings. Like new-hire orientations, trainings are an opportunity to convey the importance of the mission to a large number of people at once. Orientations and training sessions usually take place outside the context of day-to-day operations. It should also be noted that employee attendance at most YMCA trainings for frontline staff is initiated by the supervisor. This would seem to reduce the likelihood that frontline employees who have internalized the mission more than average would self-select for greater participation in trainings. It should also be noted that there is no consistency across the YMCA in deciding which staff should go to which trainings. This decision-making varies widely from site to site and from supervisor to supervisor.

A third hypothesis states that there is an association between whether or not an employee volunteers with the YMCA and the degree to which he or she internalizes the organizational mission. This association also proved to be statistically significant. The association is particularly strong for employees on each extreme of the mission internalization scale. Thirty-one percent of employees who rank in the highest quartile of mission internalization volunteer with the YMCA, while almost 42 percent of employees in the lowest quartile of mission internalization do not volunteer. This may be one of the more significant aspects of the study because volunteering is by and large limited to the

nonprofit sector. This could be a unique opportunity for nonprofits to simultaneously increase employee internalization of mission and increase the number of volunteers they have.

A fourth hypothesis states that whether or not an employee donates money to the YMCA is associated with the degree to which he or she internalizes the mission. The t-test indicated a significant association at the .05 level. For those who do donate money, there is a large shift between the least internalized quartile and the third quartile. On the other hand, for those who do not donate money, the big difference is between the second and third quartiles. This suggests that whether or not an employee gives money may not be as indicative of how much they have internalized the mission as the fact that employees who do not donate money are much less likely to have internalized the mission.

A fifth hypothesis states that the degree of prominence of the mission in the workplace is associated with the degree to which an employee internalizes organizational mission. This association also proved statistically significant. As outlined in previous chapters, the prominence of the mission in the workplace was measured by a scale composed of four factors: the employee's perception of how much the executive director talks about the mission, how much the employee perceives the management team to share the mission with employees, how much the mission statement appears in printed materials, and how prominently it is displayed throughout the branch. It would be interesting to further explore which, if any, of these four factors is most significant.

A sixth hypothesis states that the degree of contact an employee has with YMCA members is associated with the degree to which he or she internalizes the mission. This

also proved to be statistically significant. Like the factor of mission prominence discussed above, the degree of member contact was also measured by a scale. This scale consisted of three questions asking employees how much and how often they interact with YMCA members and youth. This association proved to be one of the strongest associations in the study. Since the mission focuses on benefiting the people the YMCA serves, this association makes sense. In fact, it supports some of the literature cited in Chapter Two reporting that employees who interact with the people who benefit from the work they do are more likely to stay with their organization longterm.

While all the preceding hypotheses discussed proved to have significant associations, there were a number of factors that did not prove to be statistically significant in their association with employee internalization of mission. These factors include: length of employment with the YMCA; degree of familiarity with the YMCA prior to working there; participation in YMCA programs before working there; and current participation in YMCA programs. In attempting to understand why these factors proved to be insignificant, the qualitative comments and the survey instrument may provide some clues.

The lack of significant association between whether or not an employee was a previous YMCA member or participant and internalization of mission seemed surprising at first. However, the comments respondents made were helpful in pointing toward a possible explanation. Of the 33 employees who indicated they had been a YMCA member or participant prior to working at the YMCA, 12 of them participated when they were young or very young, and 15 participated only in adult fitness activities. Responses indicating prior involvement with the YMCA which typify these respondents include “I

was a member of the Andover YMCA 23 to 25 years ago — when I was 2 to 6,” and “member of Presidio site, worked out in different classes,” and “summer residence camp once way back in my youth.” It could be argued that participation a long time ago would not shape the adult perception of the YMCA today. Additionally, many YMCA members who participate only in fitness activities often do not realize all the other mission-related work the YMCA does. Many only know it as a fitness center or a place to work out and do not consider that their health and fitness participation is part of the YMCA mission. Six respondents did indicate that their prior participation was in areas more obviously directly related to mission work, such as “volunteer for youth programs” and “preschool for my son.”

There is a similar response pattern concerning current participation in YMCA activities. Of the 49 respondents who indicated that they currently participate in YMCA activities or programs, 6 did not indicate what kind of programs, 35 indicated some sort of fitness program (strength training, aquatics, group exercise, etc.) and 8 indicated a nonfitness activity such as educational programs or volunteering at camp. Again, many YMCA participants, including employees, may tend to see the fitness activities of the YMCA as being separate from the mission or community work the YMCA does.

These results are provocative in that some of the independent variables which demonstrated a significant association with mission internalization are measurable, objective factors, such as attendance at a new-hire orientation. The degree of member contact is also an example of an external work condition which is determined by the job itself, not the employee.

The second set of hypotheses in this research had internalization of mission as the independent variable with job satisfaction and employee retention as the dependent variables. Both of these dependent variables proved to be statistically significant.

The association between job satisfaction and internalization of mission proved to be quite strong, especially among the “most internalized” and the “least internalized” groups. Job satisfaction was determined by a scale of four items adapted from a scale used by Fairhurst, Jordan, and Newirth (1997). Almost 86 percent of the respondents reporting the highest degree of mission internalization were either satisfied or very satisfied with their jobs. On the other end of the spectrum, more than 93% of the respondents who rated as “least internalized” were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their jobs.

Employee retention in this study was measured by simply asking the employees how strongly they agreed or disagreed with the statement “All things being equal, I plan to be working at the YMCA in 12 months.” As with the previous hypothesis this association proved statistically significant. Employees who have internalized the YMCA mission are more likely to remain with the organization. Given the lack of research on this subject, this finding is important for any mission-driven organization.

Conclusions

This study attempted to identify what factors contribute to internalization of the YMCA mission among frontline employees of the YMCA of San Francisco. Several factors were demonstrated to be significantly associated with this employee internalization, including: whether or not an employee attends a new-hire orientation; the

number of YMCA trainings an employee attends; whether or not an employee volunteers for the YMCA; whether or not an employee donates to the YMCA; how prominent the mission is in the employee's workplace; and the degree of contact the employee has with YMCA members. Further, this study demonstrated a significant correlation between job satisfaction and retention and the degree to which a YMCA employee internalizes the organizational mission.

Recommendations for Action and Further Research

Based on the results of this study, several recommendations for action emerge. First, the importance of sending all new staff to new-hire orientations must be emphasized. This is a relatively simple and inexpensive way to promote the mission of the YMCA while achieving several other benefits simultaneously (i.e., explaining company policies, going over workplace safety, etc.).

Second, supervisors should strive to get their employees, especially their new ones, to attend at least three trainings. Not only does this foster internalization of mission, it also helps the employee socialize with other employees, do something different from the norm, and (hopefully) learn a new skill or upgrade a current one.

Third, employees should be encouraged to volunteer at and donate to the YMCA. Both of these are potentially tricky because they could be seen as unfairly pressuring employees to perform duties above and beyond those associated with their jobs. Instead of directly asking employees to volunteer, volunteer opportunities that would appeal to employees could be promoted in a variety of ways such as posting notices in common areas and employee newsletters, giving line staff enough information about volunteer

opportunities to promote them amongst themselves, etc. Similarly, employees could be encouraged to donate money during the annual fund drive by other frontline employees so there is no pressure from supervisors.

Fourth, both the executive director and the management team of YMCA branches should make it a priority to prominently display the mission. This would include talking about the organizational mission and referring to it in the context of people's jobs and when proposing new initiatives. It also means including the mission statement on stationery, printed brochures, and web sites, as well as making it visible throughout the facility with banners, signs, and other visual displays.

Fifth, all YMCA supervisors should make sure that their employees have some significant contact with members and participants. Obviously, this is more difficult for some positions (bookkeepers, janitors) and easier for others (fitness instructors, youth workers). Yet given how strong the association between degree of member contact and degree of mission internalization proved to be, it seems that creative ways of making this happen could be developed.

Finally, supervisors need to be educated about the two benefits of helping employees internalize the organizational mission: increased job satisfaction and increased employee retention, two results near and dear to the heart of most managers. Here is a cost effective way, unique to nonprofits, to affect these two important variables.

There is a great deal of research that could flow from this study. First, this research could be replicated by other nonprofit organizations both in the human service field and outside of it to see if the results can be generalized. Secondly, while this research attempted to identify the factors which lead to employee internalization of

mission, it really only succeeded in identifying associations and correlations. Perhaps, for example, employees internalize the YMCA mission because they volunteer for the YMCA instead of volunteering because they have internalized the mission. A more sophisticated study could attempt to identify causal relationships between the variables. Third, some of the factors which comprised scales such as degree of member contact and mission prominence in the workplace could be further broken down into specific variables, e.g., which aspects of member contact, if any, are more important in affecting mission internalization: frequency, quality, type of interaction, etc. Finally, there is the issue of the mission internalization scale itself. Although the scale developed for this research proved quite reliable (see Chapter Four), further research could certainly be conducted to identify how organizational mission influences employees, and to evaluate the importance of employees' pre-employment attitudes regarding organizational mission as a factor influencing subsequent job performance, satisfaction, and retention.

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APPENDIX A
Instructions to Respondents



We build strong kids,
strong families, strong communities.

April 28, 2000

Dear Fellow Employee,

I am the Associate Executive Director at Central branch in the Tenderloin and am writing you because I would like your assistance. I am completing my Master's thesis at the University of San Francisco in Nonprofit Administration. My hope is that the research I am doing will provide information to the YMCA of San Francisco which will help us understand better what the mission of our organization means to employees. Only a few branches were chosen to participate in this study, so your assistance is critical. Please note that participation in this study is completely voluntary.

Please take a few minutes to complete the enclosed survey. Your responses are kept completely confidential and will be seen only by me. Please do not mark your name on the questionnaire. If you would like to see a copy of the results of this research, please contact me, and I will gladly provide you with one.

If you have any questions about this research project, you may contact Robert Sindelar at 415-447-2502. If further questions arise about this study, you may contact the IRBPHS at the University of San Francisco, which is concerned with the protection of volunteers in research projects. You may reach the IRBPHS office by calling 415-422-6091 and leaving a voice message, by e-mailing IRBPHS@usfca.edu, or by writing to the IRBPHS, Department of Psychology, University of San Francisco, 2130 Fulton Street, San Francisco, CA, 94117-1080.

Again, this is the first research to look at how organizational mission affects employees in the YMCA. Your participation is very important. If you have any questions, or would like additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me at 447-2502. Thank you in advance for your support.

Sincerely,

Robert Sindelar
Associate Executive Director
Central Branch

APPENDIX B
Survey Questionnaire

Robert Sindelar
University of San Francisco

QUESTIONNAIRE

Thank you for agreeing to take this survey. It should only take 5 –10 minutes to complete.

Please mark your response to the following statements.

1 = strongly agree

2 = agree

3 = neither agree nor disagree

4 = disagree

5= strongly disagree

1. I am familiar with the mission statement of the YMCA of San Francisco. ____
2. I am familiar with the mission statement of the YMCA of the USA. ____
3. I work here primarily because I believe in the mission of the YMCA. ____
4. I am familiar with the mission statement of my branch. ____
5. I interact with members almost every day. ____
6. The mission of the YMCA is very important to me. ____
7. My Executive Director talks about the YMCA mission. ____
8. I work here primarily because I like the type of work I do. ____
9. My supervisor talks about the YMCA mission. ____
10. I have frequent contact with youth members in our facility. ____
11. My job is essential to fulfilling the mission of the YMCA. ____
12. I work here primarily because it is convenient. ____
13. I am familiar with financial assistance for those who can't afford our services. ____
14. I have frequent contact with members. ____
15. I understand how my job contributes to the achievement of the YMCA mission. ____
16. I work here primarily because of opportunities for growth and learning. ____
17. Branch management shares the YMCA mission with employees. ____
18. I know and understand the mission statement of the YMCA of San Francisco. ____
19. A YMCA mission statement is printed on most of our materials. ____
20. A YMCA mission statement is prominently displayed in our branch. ____
21. The mission of the YMCA is very important to me. ____
22. My work is an important part of fulfilling the YMCA mission. ____
23. The YMCA is more than just a health club. ____
24. The YMCA is different from other workout facilities. ____
25. I work here primarily because I like the work environment. ____
26. I refer to the YMCA mission when speaking to my colleagues and/or members. ____
27. I sometimes think about the mission of the YMCA during my work day. ____
28. I believe in the mission of the YMCA. ____

- 1 = strongly agree
2 = agree
3 = neither agree or disagree
4 = disagree
5 = strongly disagree

29. I work here primarily because of the money and benefits. ____
30. I am proud to tell others I am part of the YMCA. ____
31. The YMCA really inspires the very best in me in terms of work performance. ____
32. I find that my values and the YMCA's values are very similar. ____
33. I talk up the YMCA to my friends as a great place to work for. ____
34. All things being equal, I plan to be working at the YMCA in 12 months. ____

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS (Circle your answer)

1. **Did you attend a New Staff Orientation?** Yes or No
2. **How many YMCA trainings have you attended in the past year?**
0 1-2 3-5 6 or more
3. **How long in total have you worked for the YMCA?**
Less than 1 month
1-3 months
4-6 months
6-12 months
1-2 years
3-5 years
more than 5 years
4. **How familiar were you with YMCA programs and activities before you started working here?**
Totally unfamiliar
Somewhat unfamiliar
Familiar
Somewhat familiar
Totally familiar
5. **Were you ever a member or program participant in a YMCA before you began working here?** Yes or No. **If yes, what programs/activities did you participate in?:**
-

6. **Do you currently participate in YMCA programs or activities?** Yes or No. **If yes, which ones?** _____

How often? (Circle one): 2-3 times per week

Once a week

Several times a month

Once a month

A few time a year

7. **Do you volunteer at YMCA events?** Yes or No

8. **Have you volunteered at YMCA events in the past?** Yes or No

9. **Do you donate money to campaign?** Yes or No

10. **Have you donated money in the past to campaign?** Yes or No

11. **What experience has most shaped the way you think and feel about the YMCA mission?** _____

12. **What does the YMCA mission mean to you in your own words:**

Thank you for your participation. Please return the survey as directed.

APPENDIX C
Letters of Support



We build strong kids,
strong families, strong communities.

September 15, 1999

Dear Employees,

I am writing to express my support for the attached research project being conducted by Robert Sindelar and to encourage you to take a few minutes to complete the attached survey. As Robert states in his cover letter, all replies are completely confidential, and the results of this research will hopefully help the YMCA of San Francisco understand better what the mission of the organization means to you. Please understand that this project has the support of the YMCA of San Francisco. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact my office.

Sincerely,

Krystal Canady

Senior vice president of operations, YMCA of San Francisco