

Discourse and the projection of corporate culture: the Mission Statement

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ABSTRACT. This article explores how corporations project their corporate philosophy through 'Mission Statements'. Linguistic and textual analysis of such statements drawn from a sizeable corpus allows us to typify the texts as constituting a non-routine, organizational genre, and one that has recently become of some significance. This discussion serves as a foundation for a contextual and intertextual analysis (cf. Fairclough, 1992) of Mission Statements from two well-known US companies. By detailing the history, rationale and role of these Mission Statements we indicate how the texts are rhetorically designed in order to ensure maximum employee 'buy-in'. Despite linguistic and rhetorical similarities among the texts, an exploration of context reveals startling differences in communicative purpose. In one case the Mission Statement emerges as an empowering historical vision to be protected and nurtured through all vicissitudes; in the other case, the rewriting of the Mission Statement emerges as a collaborative response to crisis. The article ends by discussing the implications of such findings for contemporary approaches to discourse and genre analysis within institutional linguistics.

KEY WORDS: business communication, corporate culture, discourse analysis, genre studies, ideology, Mission Statements

Communication is almost always an attempt to control change, either by causing it or preventing it. (Hanna and Wilson, 1984: 21)

INTRODUCTION

Management experts, whether writing in scholarly journals or in more popular formats, have consistently recognized the importance of language in business affairs. In a 1991 interview for the *Harvard Business Review*, Raymond Smith, Bell Atlantic's Chief Executive Officer (CEO), was asked, 'What are some tangible signs of change in an organization?' Smith responded simply, 'The language is changing' (Kanter, 1991: 123). On the

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academic side, Weick (1985: 129) observes that 'Agreement on a label that sticks is as constant a connection as is likely to be found in organizations', thereby illustrating the epigraph's second alternative. This inherent relationship between managing and communicating is further recognized in Eccles and Nohria's statement: 'The basic tool of management . . . is to mobilize action by using language creatively to appeal to the self- and collective identities of individuals' (1992: 37). Likewise, Fairhurst comments, 'chiefly through discourse, a new point of reference is created, meaning is created, and action becomes possible' (1993: 344).

More broadly, discussions of the relationships among vision, leadership and communication abound in the management literature. A brief sampling might include Goia and Chittipeddi's (1991) exposition on the importance of 'sensemaking' and 'sensegiving', Dutton and Duncan's (1987a, 1987b) 'strategic issue diagnosis' model of the change process, and more 'practical' interventions such as Judson's (1991) book on minimizing resistance to change. These and other discussions acknowledge the central role of communication in change management in a variety of ways: Judson (1991) does so explicitly, by advocating the need for face-to-face interactions and effective written communications; Dutton and Duncan do so implicitly by suggesting that their model requires giving 'meaning and definition to an issue' (1987: 291). Czarniawska-Joerges and Joerges (1988) note the importance of searching for the labels, metaphors and platitudes by which organizational changes may be identified, understood and implemented. And Kissler is among those who suggest that effective change efforts require not only a formal communication strategy, but also a 'captivating vision' in order to facilitate the necessary consensus-building (1991: 272).

Such intrinsic connections between management and communication have been documented in ethnographic and case studies by scholars in rhetoric and technical business communication (e.g. Paradis et al., 1985; Brown and Herndl, 1986; Doheny-Farina, 1986; and Cross, 1994). Following pioneering work in the sociology of science by Latour and Woolgar (1979) and Knorr-Cetina (1981), these social constructionist accounts place texts, and the processes of their construction and reception, as central to the working of corporate and institutional life. More recently, with the (belated) discovery of Bakhtin (1986) and Giddens (1979), US studies of organizational discourse have gained strength from more fluid and dynamic conceptions of genre (Devitt, 1993; Swales, 1993) and from identifying genre as one of the key modalities in structuration theory (e.g. Bazerman, 1992). For a more extended illustration, Yates and Orlikowski conclude their argument for the importance of organizational genres with the following:

... our genre approach to organizational communication takes into account the inherently situated and dynamic nature of organizational processes. Adopting a concept from rhetoric and using the premises of structuration, we have interpreted organizational communication, not as the result of isolated, rational actions, but as part of an embedded social process that over time produces, reproduces, and modifies particular

genres of communication. We expect that this concept of genre will provide new and productive ways of understanding communicative action in organizations. (1992: 323)

We too are interested in genre development (or its ossification) as an 'embedded social process', and one which concomitantly both shapes and reflects organizational attitudes and behaviors. In this endeavor, we have followed a corpus survey with close textual analysis of three exemplars of the selected genre plus contextual explorations of their histories, authorships and institutional roles. We find sufficient anomalies between text and context to suggest that any interpretation of discourse that relies principally on only the former is likely to be incomplete, and perhaps suspect. (See Chin, 1994, for a broadly comparable view.) We conclude that discourse analysts need cultural and social strategies for discourse comprehension (van Dijk and Kintsch, 1983) just as much as successful discourse consumers do.

MISSION STATEMENTS

Of the myriad types of documents that constitute the matrix of modern corporate or institutional life, we have deliberately selected a class of genres that primarily act as carriers of ideologies and institutional cultures. Some of the genre-exemplars in this class are short, pithy and mnemonic, such as Ford's 'Quality is Job 1', or one of America's largest insurance company's 'Like a good neighbor, State Farm is there'. These catchphrases, slogans and mottos (whether stand-alone or part of larger messages) are typically institutional, although, in the hands of powerful luminaries, they can occasionally also be individual—none more famously perhaps than President Truman's 'The buck stops here'. They tend to occur and recur in visual form on desks and walls and doors, and may act as spoken 'signature tunes' in radio or television advertising. They perhaps have their origins in domestic samplers and genre-pictures of the 'Patience is a Virtue' type. They give rise, as nearly all well-established genres do, to humor and anti-generic parody, such as in graffiti and in posted variants of Murphy's Law and the like. They also occur in more extended form, especially when used to project the 'captivating vision' (Kissler, 1991) of a corporation. Johnson & Johnson's self-described 'Our Credo' is a well-known example. Here is the first of their five 'responsibilities':

WE BELIEVE THAT OUR FIRST RESPONSIBILITY

is to the doctors, nurses, hospitals, mothers and all others who use our products. Our products must always be of the highest quality. We must constantly strive to reduce the costs of these products. Our orders must be promptly and accurately filled. Our dealers must make a fair profit.

Most such Mission Statements are designed as displayable single-page documents or take the form of a folded flyer or small booklet. Doubtless, there are parallels here with religious synopses like 'The Four Spiritual

Laws' or 'The Ten Commandments' and with political ones such as Mao's 'Little Red Book'.

These types of genre act as carriers of culture, ethos and ideology. As a result, they stand a little apart from the normal recursive processes that produce and reproduce everyday social and institutional customs (Giddens, 1979). In other words, they seem less directly integrated into the systems of genres that 'get things done' (Martin, 1985), such as the placing of orders, the negotiating of contracts and the handling of complaints, and thus fall into the category of communications that Lengel and Daft (1988) earmark as 'nonroutine'. Rather, genre-exemplars of this type have a ghostly immanence over and above the plethora of regulations, instructions and procedures. This immanence may be invoked for annual events such as Dana Corporation's yearly pilgrimage of managers to headquarters for 'Hell Week', or in times of crisis, as with the now legendary case of Johnson & Johnson immediately withdrawing all Tylenol in the US (after a few instances of tampering with their product), apparently in response to their 'Our Credo'. Indeed, the Tylenol case can be contrasted with Exxon's procrastinated and legalistic response to the *Exxon Valdez* oil-spill, the tardiness of which has been ascribed to the absence of any such guiding principles. As Tyler concludes, 'Public statements that were prudent for legal and financial reasons nonetheless gave the impression that Exxon was cold, calculating, and ruthlessly capitalistic' (1992: 162).

This particular genre, which we will use to illustrate the creation and projection of corporate culture, encompasses texts that appear under a variety of labels, such as 'Our Mission' (SIEL Corporation), 'Our Commitment' (*New York Times*), 'Fundamental Intercor Values' (Intercor Corporation), 'A View to the Future' (Cargill Corporation), or often some form of 'Vision' (Caltex) and most often 'Mission Statement' (e.g. John Hancock Insurance Company, Fluor Daniel Corporation, Coopers & Lybrand, George Hyman Construction Company). Although terminology may not yet be fully stabilized, these texts possess similarities sufficient to characterize them as a single genre, and we use Mission Statement as it is the label we have seen used most often.

Our general observations are based on over a hundred individual texts, largely collected from organizations associated with the University of Michigan School of Business Administration. From this corpus, we analyzed more closely a sample of 30 texts submitted by participants in the Fall 1994 Michigan Executive Program. Since these executives were selected to form a diverse group in terms of industry, organizational type and country of operation, there is reason to believe that the 30 Mission Statements comprise a diverse but representative subset.

The Mission Statements in the sample are pithy and up-beat, and tend to deal with abstractions possessing 'a strategic level of generality and ambiguity' (Fairhurst, 1993: 336), somewhat like inspirational speeches. There is an almost total absence of what Walter (1966) originally called 'support' (i.e. examples, comparisons, quotations, statistics, visuals and the like). Rather, the content of these texts largely consists of general statements,

claims and conclusions. It is not surprising then that the verb forms are predominantly the present, the imperative ('Return to underwriting profit'—Chubb & Son) and the purposive infinitive ('To provide a caring environment for staff'—Bank of Ireland; 'To be the safest carrier'—Conrail). If modals occur they are typically of the un-hedged variety such as Kodak's 'We *will* be a globally competitive high growth company . . .' or EID-Perry Farm Products' 'All the business activities *must* maximize satisfaction to customers . ..'. Frequently used nouns are *goals*, *principles* and *values*, and the texts draw their color mostly from a variety of adjectives used to characterize activities in a positive light, such as *competent*, *creative*, *enthusiastic*, *leading* and *profitable*.

If the Mission Statement is one kind of generic constituent of corporate culture, then the Ethical Code or Standard Practice Guide constitutes quite another (even though 'hybrids' may be possible and the distinction not always well maintained, e.g. in Berenbeim, 1987). Ethical Codes and Standard Practice Guides became widespread in the United States about a decade ago as a means of *regulating* behavior or of *disassociating* an organization from employees who engage in unethical practices (Cressey and Moore, 1983), even if there is considerable doubt as to their effectiveness on either the behavioral or legal level (Pitt and Groskaufmanis, 1990). Ethical Codes tend to be bureaucratic, legalistic, non-visionary and instructional; in particular, they stress what employees should *not* do. Further, new employees may be required to sign that they have read and understood their corporation's Ethical Code as part of their contractual obligations. Ethical Codes are often quite long and read as if written by corporate lawyers. The sentence below well illustrates the coercive, legalistic character of this genre:

Loans to employees from customers, suppliers or any other persons with whom contact is made in the course of business are prohibited unless extended by those who engage in lending in the usual course of their business, and then only in accordance with applicable laws and regulations and only on terms offered to others under similar circumstances without special concessions as to interest rates, terms, security, repayment terms and other conditions. (PNC Financial Corp.: Ethics Statement, p. 4)

As the fragment from Johnson & Johnson (above) and the extracts from Dana and Honeywell (Figure 1 below) illustrate, Mission Statements are very different. They tend to stress values, *positive* behavior and guiding principles within the framework of the corporation's *announced* belief system and ideology. It also appears that these Mission Statements are in most cases engendered by senior management, indeed they may be written by the CEO with his or her most senior colleagues, but not likely by the legal staff. Although, as we shall see, the precise sets of motives and purposes underlying a particular Mission Statement can vary quite widely, perhaps all share the aim of facilitating employee 'buy-in' and of fostering identification with the company. Their proliferation can thus be seen as evidence for Galbraith's argument in *The New Industrial State* (1985) that identification has succeeded financial reward, which in turn replaced compulsion and

fear, as the primary motivational force in the modern corporation. If Galbraith is right about this trend in the United States, then the Mission Statement has developed as yet another management tool both for promoting corporate culture and ethos and for tying the workforce to that culture and ethos.

Even so, the value of the Mission Statement as a management tool has not gone entirely unchallenged. In his *Harvard Business Review* article entitled 'The Vision Trap', Gerard Langelar recounts his personal knack for implementing ambitious visions that became powerful enough to *weaken* his company. 'I have come to believe that the sense of vision that initially drove Mentor Graphics forward', he wrote, 'came finally to lead us down a primrose path of self-infatuation that carried us away from our best business interests' (1992: 239). Along similar lines, IBM's Louis Gerstner stated 'the last thing we need right now is a vision', and Robert Eaton, who assumed the chairmanship of Chrysler after the company's much publicized comeback under Lee Iacocca, declared, 'we don't use the word vision . . . I believe in quantifiable short-term results' (*Wall Street Journal*, 4 October 1993). However, a little reflection shows that the trenchant, pithy character of these two last remarks actually makes them sound very much like 'Mission Statements' themselves.

Despite the occasional iconclasts, the Mission Statement seems to be patently a growing, rather than a dying, genre. It has come to represent for the 1990s what the Ethical Code represented in the decade before—a management tool for projecting corporate integrity and instilling loyalty and normed behavior in the corporate workforce. The difference is that prohibition has been replaced by exhortation.

DANA AND HONEYWELL AND THEIR MISSION STATEMENTS

In this section of the paper we examine three Mission Statement documents from two companies:

1. *The Philosophy and Policies of Dana*,
2. *Honeywell Principles*, and
3. *Honeywell Strategic Priorities*.

As we shall attempt to show, the fact that there is but one document from the Dana Corporation, while there are two from Honeywell, will turn out to be a crucial variable in the two case histories. Extracts from these three documents are displayed in a 'collage' in Figure 1 in order to communicate something of their typographic and rhetorical character.

Dana is a world-wide automotive parts supplier with its headquarters in Toledo, Ohio. Its total workforce is around 35,000. It has been widely recognized as an excellently managed company (Peters and Waterman, 1984; Levering et al., 1985). *The Philosophy and Policies of Dana* (henceforth PPD) was first produced and distributed in 1969 and, until recently, remained virtually unchanged, apart from a small addition to cover 'global-

HONEYWELL PRINCIPLES

Honeywell is an international corporation whose goal is to work together with customers to develop and apply advanced technologies through products, systems and services, which in turn serve primarily to improve productivity, conserve resources and meet aerospace and defense needs. Honeywell adheres to the following principles.

Profits – Profitable operations are necessary to assure the continued health and growth of the company. Honeywell expects profits which equal – or exceed those of leading international companies.

Quality – Quality of product, application and service is essential to continue Honeywell's success. Quality improvement should pervade every job within the company. Honeywell believes quality results from an environment in which people work together to sustain excellence.

THE PHILOSOPHY AND POLICIES OF DANA

EARNINGS

The purpose of the Dana Corporation is to earn money for its shareholders and to increase the value of their investment. We believe the best way to do this is to earn an acceptable return by properly utilizing our assets and controlling our cash.

GROWTH

We believe in steady growth to protect our assets against inflation. We will grow in our selected markets by implementing our market strategies.

PEOPLE

We are dedicated to the belief that our people are our most important asset. Wherever possible, we encourage all Dana people within the entire world organization to become shareholders, or by some other means, own a part of their company.

We believe people respond to recognition, freedom to participate, and the opportunity to develop.

We believe that people should be involved in setting their own goals and judging their own performance. The people who know best how the job should be done are the ones doing it.

We believe Dana people should accept only total quality in all tasks they perform.

We endorse productivity plans which allow people to share in the rewards of productivity gains.

We believe that all Dana people should identify with the company. This identity should carry on after they have left active employment.

We believe facilities with people who have demonstrated a commitment to Dana will be competitive and thus warrant our support.

We believe that wages and benefits are the concern and responsibility of managers. The Management Resource Program is a world-wide matter – it is a tool that should be used in the development of qualified Dana people. We encourage income protection, health programs, and education.

We believe that on-the-job training is an effective method of learning. A Dana manager must prove proficiency in at least one line of our company's work – marketing, engineering, manufacturing, financial services, etc. Additionally, these people must prove their ability as supervisors and be able to get work done through other people. We recognize the importance of gaining experience both internationally and domestically.

We believe our people should move across product, discipline, and organizational lines. These moves should not conflict with operating efficiency.

We believe in promoting from within. Dana people interested in other positions are encouraged to discuss job opportunities with their supervisor.

HONEYWELL STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Our Mission

Honeywell. We are a publicly owned, global enterprise in business to provide control components, products systems and services. These are for homes and buildings, aviation and space, industrial processes and for application in manufactured goods.

For the future:

We are committed to sustaining our focus on the controls business as we grow and change, and to being the global leader in the markets we serve.

Our Guiding Values

As a business, we have responsibilities to all of our stakeholders: customers, shareholders, employees, suppliers and communities. Balancing these responsibilities requires a value system, and ours comprises the following:

Integrity To practice the highest ethical standards.

Quality To strive for total quality to set the pace for our industry and satisfy our customers' current and future needs.

Performance To achieve and reward outstanding results through continuous improvement, personal and organizational commitment, and accountability.

FIGURE 1. Extracts from Mission Statements

ization' in 1987. The PPD is in the form of a flyer which opens to a full-page, small-print, single-space document consisting of eight sections and 66 sentences. On the overleaf is a brief introduction concluding with the statement that 'The Policy Committee is responsible for our philosophy and our policies'.

Honeywell is also a world-wide company with a total workforce of around 60,000 at the time of our site-visit. It is perhaps best known for its temperature control systems. The corporation has its world headquarters in Minneapolis, Minnesota, in a building that has come to be known as 'The Fortress'. *Honeywell Principles* (HP) first appeared in 1974, and its seven short paragraphs offer a somewhat unstructured mix of elements:

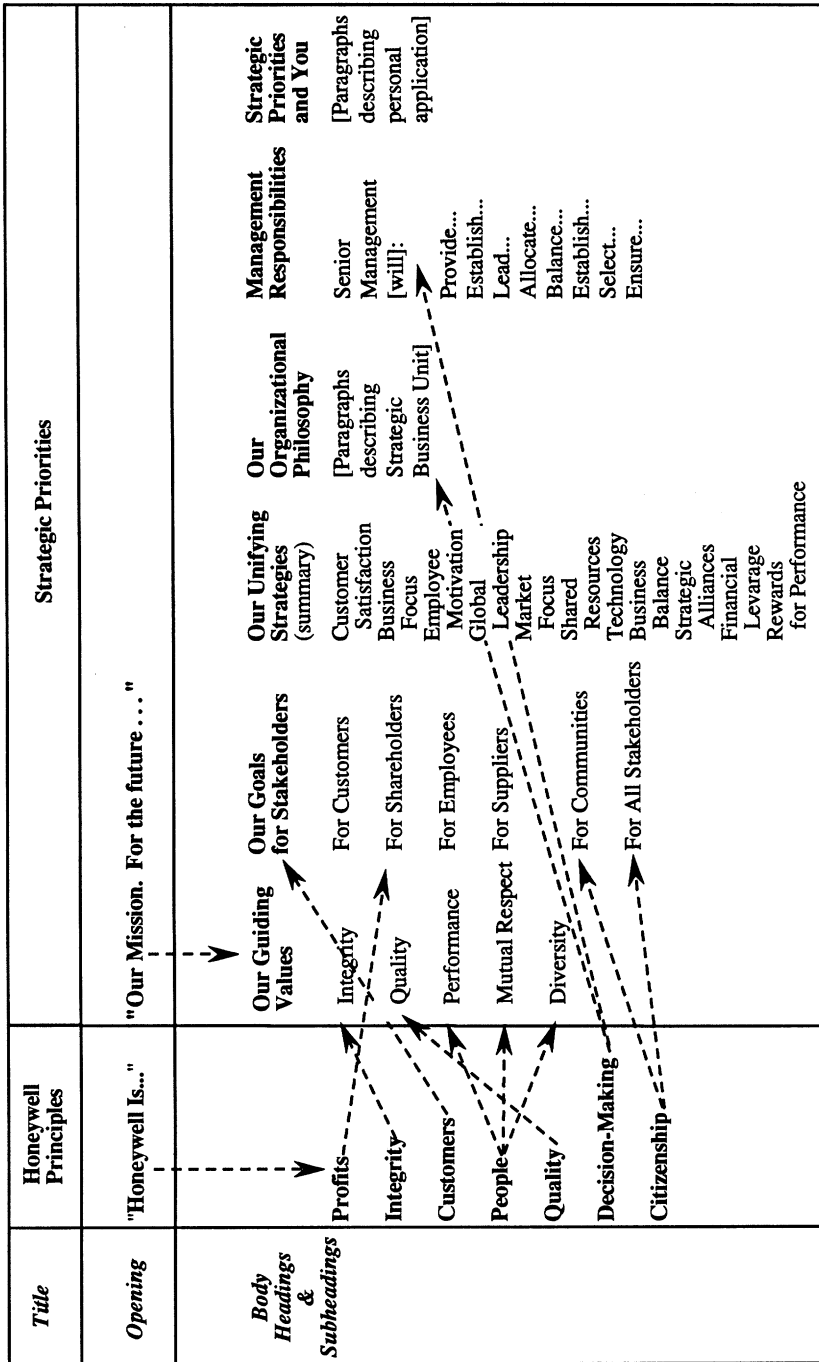


FIGURE 2. Honeywell Principles become 'Strategic Priorities'

goals (profits, quality), virtues (integrity, citizenship), groups (customers, people) and processes (decision-making). In the middle 1980s Honeywell experienced a financial crisis as a result of extensive diversification, from which it has apparently recovered by refocusing on what it does best—the designing and making of control systems. One important casualty of the crisis was Ed Spencer, who had been CEO since 1974 and had written HP soon after assuming office; he was replaced by Jim Renier. As part of the crisis recovery process, in 1986 Honeywell replaced the HP with another Mission Statement entitled *Honeywell Strategic Priorities* (HSP). This replacement is about four times longer and has a much more developed structure than the earlier HP.

Figure 2 displays the main changes that have occurred as HP was transformed into HSP. We can note, in particular, how four of the original paragraph headings in HP have now become subheads in a new section entitled 'Our Guiding Values', while the notion of 'Customers' has been expanded into another new section entitled 'Our Goals for Stakeholders'. The ordering of elements has also changed. Most noticeably, 'Profits', which appeared in first position in HP, is now tucked under 'For Shareholders' in the second section and, in fact, reappears in more euphemistic guise as 'to consistently generate above-average returns'. Whereas the original HP (as well as Dana's PPD) frontloads the profit motive—perhaps as a way of getting certain uncomfortable realities over early—HSP places 'Integrity' first. The value 'Quality', which appeared fifth in HP, also finds promotion to the second spot in the HSP, perhaps reflecting the US response at that time to Japanese use of 'quality' management techniques. Finally, by beginning the entire document with a section entitled 'Our Guiding Values' and by frontloading those elements most associated with virtues (such as 'Integrity'), the HSP Mission Statement can be seen as placing greater emphasis on ethical concerns.

On a micro-level, the three Mission Statements reveal a number of linguistic features also of rhetorical significance. The most interesting of these revolves around attempts to foster affiliation and identification. A classic rhetorical device for doing this is to adopt the first-person-plural pronoun (Rounds, 1987), a decision adopted by many of the Mission Statements in our corpus. Cheney, in a study of 10 in-house company magazines, comments as follows:

The assumed 'we' is both a subtle and powerful identification strategy because it often goes unnoticed. Uses of this strategy allow a corporation to present similarity and commonality among organizational members as a taken-for-granted assumption. To the extent that employees accept this assumption and its corollaries unquestioningly, they identify with their corporate employer. (1983: 154)

Table 1 presents the data for sentence-subjects of finite declarative sentences in the three texts. Category B sums the total number of sentence-subjects that refer in some way to employees (as opposed to customers, the environment, the economy and so on), while part C offers a breakdown of the category into its lexical realizations.

TABLE 1. Sentence-subjects in three Mission Statements

	PPD	HP	HSP
A. No. of finite sentences	66	19	29
B. No. of employee-denoting subjects	44 (66%)	15 (79%)	14 (48%)
C. Realizations of B:			
(a) 'We'	33	0	8
(b) 'Our' + NP	0	0	4
(c) Company people (e.g. 'Dana People' or 'Honeywellers')	3	1	1
(d) Company name or 'The company'	2	14	1
(e) Subgroups, e.g. 'Senior management'	6	0	1

If we ignore sentence fragments and imperatives, we can see that in all three cases there is a remarkable percentage of sentences containing subjects that refer to the employees of the corporation (from 48 percent to 79 percent). Fairly consistently then, employees are, in terms of functional linguistics, the *unmarked* themes and thus serve, in the traditional formulation, as the points of departure for the statements (Halliday, 1985). Syntactically at least, the Mission Statements are 'about' the employees. If we now turn to part C, we can see that, in any particular instance, these employees can be referred to in one of a small number of ways. We have displayed them along a cline of congregation–segregation; in other words 'we' is the most affiliative and incorporating of the reader, while some subset of the employees such as 'senior management' is the least (except for uncommon cases when the reader happens to be a member of the subset). Similarly type (c), 'Dana People' or 'Honeywellers', seems a little more identifying and congregating than the type (d) equivalents—'The Dana Corporation' or 'Honeywell'. As can be seen, the PPD and the HSP score strongly on we-identification while the HP does not. On the other hand, the HP has the highest proportion of sentences beginning with employee-denoting subjects. We shall return to these points later.

Elsewhere (Rogers and Swales, 1990) we have discussed in some detail the 11 instances in the Dana text where the authors have chosen something other than 'we' for an employee-denoting subject. In some cases the Policy Committee authoring group decided that the potential advantages of using 'we' were outweighed by an increased possibility that employee-readers would not accept, in Cheney's words, the identity assumption 'unquestioningly'. Compare the original with a possible 'we' alternative (1a):

- (1) The Purpose of the Dana Corporation is to earn money for its shareholders and to increase the value of their investment.
- (1a) Our purpose is to earn money for our shareholders and to increase the value of their investment.

The profit motive can be rhetorically problematic for Mission Statements since it can appear to conflict with the high 'ethical' tone and regard for 'human' values that tend to dominate the genre. Like some other Mission Statements (including the HP), Dana's PPD gets this 'bad moment' over with right at the beginning, as a kind of no-nonsense reminder as to what

the corporation is ultimately about. However, by associating the company rather than 'we' with profits, the authors wisely refrain from enjoining their workforce to believe that they should *personally* identify with seeing their labor as designed to line the pockets of the shareholders.

In a second illustrative case of 'we' avoidance, the PPD offers the following:

- (2) It is highly desirable to outsource a portion of our production needs.

In fact, this is the only occasion in the whole document where the authors have used an agentless, adjectival structure, and it thus stands out from the surrounding sentences which typically begin with either 'we' or 'Dana people'. Again, the reason becomes apparent if we reformulate (2) in the 'standard' PPD format:

- (2a) We believe in outsourcing a portion of our production needs.

Since outsourcing has been a contentious issue between management and (organized) labor, particularly in the automotive industry, not all employees are likely to 'believe' in the virtues of outsourcing. On the other hand, a managerial *pronunciamento* like:

- (2b) It is Dana policy to outsource a portion of . . .

would run counter to the affiliative and cooperative tone adopted in the Mission Statement as a whole.

At this juncture we seem to be well embarked on a linguistic and textual analysis of the chosen examples of the Mission Statement genre. We have charted the macrostructure of at least two of the texts; we have presented some quantitative data on salient linguistic features; and we have begun to use the standard linguistic technique of substitution to demonstrate the consequences of discursive choices. There is in fact quite a lot more that could be said: about the order and arrangement of the topics; about contrasts between declaratives and imperatives, and between full sentences and fragments; about the choice of lexis; and about the relative absence of modals (in marked contrast to their heavy use in Ethical Codes). However, as Fairclough (1992) reminds us, such accounting would in the end do little more than underscore the limits and limitations of a purely textual approach to genre analysis. It is time for a contextual turn.

VISION, MISSION STATEMENT AND CONTROLLING CHANGE

Here first is some further information. In 1969, PPD was initiated by Ren McPherson, the legendary CEO of Dana. McPherson's Dana is an unusual automotive parts supply company in which, as retired President Gerald B. Mitchell tells it, 'We worked to develop communication as an art. There is little, if anything, written down; it's all done orally' (*Industry Week*, 13 October 1986). Indeed, when visiting Dana headquarters, we were struck by the fact that there were almost no papers visible anywhere (except in the

Accounts Department). Rather, the emphasis was on talking to people, their *own* people, the Dana people, as most strikingly illustrated by their strongly avowed policy of 'promote from within'—a policy which sets them on a collision course with the whole apparatus of management experts, head-hunters and Business School MBA production lines.

As we talked to three of the four executives on the ruling Policy Committee, we began to see what their Mission Statement really was. As Executive Vice President, Borge Reimer remarked, 'What we have here is a belief system . . . It's a bit like when you pledge a commitment, as in church.' It became clear that the four-man Policy Committee, overseeing an extensive international set of business activities, saw themselves as keepers of the McPherson and Mitchell vision. As Reimer observed, 'At Dana, style may change, but vision and belief can only come from the top.' The Mission Statement, signed as written by this Policy Committee, is the instrument for maintaining this vision, and it is therefore not surprising that as many as 22 out of the 66 sentences in the document begin with the credo-like incantation 'We believe . . .'. Further, this vision has been inherited almost intact from the McPherson era, which is today more than 20 years old. The Policy Committee speaks of the PPD, as we have seen, in quasi-religious terms and, at least as far as the Mission Statement is concerned, they see themselves as but disciples of the company's great leaders. The PPD is thus an immanent and inherited guiding philosophy largely impervious to trend, fashion and change.

However, we learnt in 1994 that the Dana Policy Committee was, indeed, for the first time in many years reconsidering the PPD, 'the rock on which Dana has stood'. Moreover, it is quite significant, we think, that the company would not reveal to us the nature of any revisions. As Reimer confided, 'Changes in the PPD are our competitive advantage so we don't want to go public with them just yet.'

The first of the two Honeywell documents, HP, was written by the then CEO, Ed Spencer, in 1974. The one-page document was accompanied by a cover letter which explains Spencer's motives clearly enough:

These principles have developed naturally as we have grown, and have become the core of the culture of our company. I learned about them from Harold Sweatt, who, along with his father, founded and built Honeywell . . . I felt strongly about the principles and, in 1974, when I became your Chief Executive Officer, I put them into words so that we could all understand them and share them.

In contrast to Dana's McPherson, Spencer saw himself as an annalist and historian orchestrating into a convenient single page the previously unconsolidated cultural traditions of Honeywell. As heir apparent, he stressed his intention to maintain the old ways. Spencer then did not see himself as a charismatic innovator like Dana's McPherson, who, in a widely remembered incident, introduced the PPD by ceremoniously dumping all the old policy manuals into a trash-can. Indeed, Spencer's cover letter introducing the HP is full of positive references to the past and consistently uses the

present perfect tense to carry the continuation of tradition. The HP themselves are, of course, in the present tense and the principal subject-entity is Honeywell, as in:

Honeywell manages its business in ways that are sensitive to the environment and that conserve natural resources.

Thus, the corporate name as theme emphasizes an enduring entity over the variable collectivity of employees constituting its workforce; the HP stands in direct contrast to the personal affirmations of Dana's PPD.

Spencer was replaced by Jim Renier as Honeywell's CEO in 1986 in response to the deep financial crisis the corporation was experiencing at that time. Commenting on leadership during his first year in charge, Renier observed, 'A leader is the person who knows how to deal with the value system of the organization and paint a picture of what we are doing' (quoted in Tichy and Devanna, 1986: 30). Renier painted this picture in part by initiating a revision of the HP, which resulted in the writing of the corporate document we now know as HSP. This Mission Statement rewriting process took on particular significance at Honeywell, not only because of when it took place, but also because of who was involved.

According to Karen Bachman, Honeywell Vice President for Communications, writing the HSP was essentially a 'bottom-up' process extending over several months, involving hundreds of people and several layers of management. Revisiting the old HP in the process of crafting a new statement forced Honeywell employees to examine the current state and future direction of the corporation in a very personal and intense way (cf. Doheny-Farina, 1986, for a comparable case), which would not have been possible if the Mission Statement had been simply 'dropped from on high' by Jim Renier and his most senior officers. In essence, we see here the process of creating a document as a calculated device for driving institutional change (which has now become the bread-and-butter for high-paid consultants with facilitation skills). In this new document, the impregnable 'Honeywell Fortress' of previous years is infiltrated by the much humbler, indeed marginally punning, theme of 'Customers Control Our World'. The change in Mission Statement title itself from 'Principles' to 'Strategic Priorities' reflects a shift from a stable independent value-system to one admitting the possibility of future modification.

Of further note is the fact that, whereas the lead paragraph in the old HP opened with a definitional structure: 'Honeywell is an international corporation whose goal is to . . .', the HSP begins with a topic-comment structure: 'Honeywell. We are a publicly owned, global enterprise in business to provide . . .'. These definitional changes are significant. First, the clever use of the 'Honeywell. We are . . .' rhetorical device in the HSP allows for a *double* identification of the corporate entity and of the people comprising it. Second, 'international' has been replaced by 'global', thus avoiding the 'Uncle Sam-ism' traditionally associated with American multinationals. Third, we can note that 'corporation' as a hierarchical legally embodied

entity has been replaced by the racier and more entrepreneurial 'enterprise'. Furthermore, unlike the HP, the style of the new document is punchy and action-oriented. Compare these typical HP and HSP formats:

HP: Honeywell believes in the highest level of integrity and ethical behavior.

HSP: To practice the highest ethical standards.

Indeed, at times the punctuation in the HSP is decidedly idiosyncratic since it is used to break sentences into fragments, thus achieving a kind of one-two staccato rhythm which accentuates causes and effects. Below is one HSP example of many:

To ensure continuous improvements in our productivity and quality. By seeking mutually beneficial partnerships with suppliers.

In effect, these textual changes both signal and promote the 'real-world' changes that were required to make Honeywell profitable again, including reframing long-established values and demonstrating a change in leadership that regularly accompanies them (Bass, 1981).

DISCUSSION

After an introductory survey, this article has centered on the case histories of the three examples of the Mission Statement genre. In doing so, we have gone beyond the surface of the text to explore the framing context. With this aim, we have studied company history, collected a wide range of documents, searched the business press, made site-visits and talked to key players, all in an effort to establish how Mission Statements both get written and are perceived by their creators and users. If all this activity leads to more systematic analysis and a somewhat 'thicker' description of the texts (Cross, 1994), there is one further step that we have been unable to take. Our research plan was to follow the site-visits with interviews of a stratified group of employees, so that we could gain a sense of their attitudes toward and uses of the Mission Statements (if any). In both corporations, we were politely but firmly discouraged from any such ambition. From hints received, we concluded that this was because we ourselves were perceived as being *outsiders* to the particular corporate culture; in effect, we were neither 'Dana People' nor 'Honeywellers'. We mention this 'reverse' because it seems to us to be a significant part of the narrative of the case histories that we have offered.

The overall picture that emerges from the study offers the profiles of the three Mission Statements, illustrated in Table 2. Beyond these differences in purpose, theme and self-definition, the contextual aspect of the study also reveals that the first two Mission Statements operate to prevent change, while the third, viewed as both product and process, is designed to encourage it. Indeed, the HSP breaks out of the internal, 'fortress' mentality of both the PPD and HP, admitting the assault of external forces,

TABLE 2. Foci in the three Mission Statements

	PPD	HP	HSP
<i>Purpose</i>	Credo	Historical record	Call to action
<i>Theme</i>	Identity	Entity	'Customers'
<i>Self-definition</i>	People	Technology	Business controls
<i>Subjects</i>	We	Honeywell	We/Our customers

including international rivals vying for marketshare. It is only by learning of these attitudes to change that we can come to fully understand the structural, discursive and stylistic characteristics of the three texts.

Witte, in a major article entitled 'Context, Text and Intertext', argues for a more embracing theory than we have at present which will 'permit a synthesis of the textual, cognitive, and social perspectives that Halliday suggests would be necessary for a comprehensive theory of language' (1992: 241). One of his principal examples of such a synthesis is his study of the minimalist genre of shopping lists, wherein he is able to show that an understanding of their embryonic structure is only possible after gaining access to the thoughts of their originators. Although there may be value in purely textual studies for cross-cultural or stylistic purposes, we join Witte and Fairclough in arguing that a useful understanding of the role of genres in institutional and community affairs requires more sociocognitive input than the texts themselves provide. Certainly, the rationales for the three Mission Statements did not exactly leap off their pages, but were enmeshed within the context of corporate history, culture and legend.

As we have seen, Mission Statements are largely detached from day-to-day social, economic and administrative events and decisions (and their associated media 'coverage'). Even so, their permanence, provenance and role place them within what van Dijk has recently called 'elitist discourse' (1994a: 6). Like many other kinds of elitist discourse, Mission Statements have the strategic objective of creating allegiance and inspiring commitment within and to a constructed discourse community—and in this genre, communities that may number many thousands of individuals distributed in subcommunities across a good portion of the globe. Further, in these cases, the discursive means employed by the corporations to encourage this employee commitment can be quite subtle.

As a situated response to an emerging rhetorical need, the Mission Statement is a newly evolved genre of somewhat uncertain origins and with a somewhat uncertain future. Indeed, as we have seen, one or two cautionary tales are emerging about the *dangerous* propensity for visionary Mission Statements to produce 'more poetry than product'. As a CEO from a company outside our case study observed, 'our company vision had become a laboratory creation, built to satisfy us, not our customers' (Langelaar, 1992: 52). The further evolution of Mission Statements (or their atrophy), just as much in Europe and elsewhere as in the United States, thus emerges as a viable research topic in the interface between critical linguistics and discourse-based business communication.

AFTERWORD

Purposefully, our illustrative analyses of the Mission Statements have been framed in largely non-technical language; moreover, the analyses have also been presented independently of a general theory of discourse, and without much overt attention to our own ideological stance. At the close of the paper, we would like to explain the thinking behind these decisions.

On the first point, we have tried to make our analyses as accessible as possible in a spirit which supports and encourages multidisciplinary collaboration. More importantly, however, we suggest that this type of study can contribute specifically to our understanding of what Eccles and Nohria identify as 'the rhetorical nature of managerial action' (1992: 50) and, more generally, can serve as an element in educational and social action (Kress, 1985; Martin, 1993). After all, Mission Statements themselves are easily accessible even on a secondary school level. They also represent a type of corporate document that entry-level employees of corporations regularly encounter. We would like to claim that the 'rhetorical consciousness-raising' which the analysis of such texts might engender can help both younger and older people gain a better understanding of the strategies behind the corporate messages and images that are so prevalent in contemporary society. We ourselves have used the case studies in a variety of educational settings to good effect and, in the spirit of critical linguistics and educational genre analysis, we would be happy to supply any interested readers will full-size copies of the complete Dana and Honeywell Mission Statements. As de Beaugrande observes:

The imperative today is clear enough, however arduous and remote its realization: an integrated, discourse-centered approach to the entire educational experience, placing the language program in the pivotal (and rather daunting) position of training the discourse skills for navigating both in everyday life and in the several domains of schooling itself. (1993: 444)

Our second decision stems from our experience that initial studies of genres are best conducted *sui generis*, and are not helped by trying to fit those genre exemplars into complex frameworks arising from the study of other text-types (Swales, 1990). This experience is part of our own personal histories. As we began this study, we recognized that we have a greater and more variegated understanding of our own corporate world (the academic) than we did of the 'other' corporate world of business, even if one of us comes into frequent contact with businesspeople on a professional basis. And recall that we were rebuffed from site studies of employee reactions to the texts despite our meticulous preparation for the executive meetings, not excluding discussion of what we should wear!

On the other hand, like presumably most readers of this journal, we have subsisted fairly successfully within our own complex framework of academic culture and its preferred and privileged academic texts (even if those texts may appear uselessly arcane and obtuse to their critics, e.g. Limerick, 1993). However, we suspect we differ from most of the journal's readers in

consequence of our own separate roles as individuals in charge of programs in English for Academic Purposes and Management Communication. These responsibilities have involved us extensively in the difficulties of non-native speakers and those who come from various kinds of minority or otherwise less privileged backgrounds. Indeed, much of our *routine* daily activity is devoted to propping up van Dijk's statement that 'Exclusion, marginalization and inferiorization have no place in a universal multicultural academia' (1994b: 276). The irony is, of course, that such efforts at preventing marginalization in others always tend to foster our own marginalization and those of the units within which we work, since the majoritarian culture will view them as more remedial than scholarly. They have also led to the charge (Benesch, 1993) that such efforts should best be construed as 'accommodationist' and the counter-charge that Benesch and others are 'ideologist' (Allison, 1994). We make this brief mention of our own complex engagement with academic institutional discourse (complex at least in the sense of conflicting levels of power and authority) simply to underline the fact that, in more cases than not, our own institutional discursive efforts are compromised and problematized by what they attempt and do not attempt to do. Why then, we asked ourselves, should we assume that another arena of institutional discourse (that of the corporation) should somehow be free of comparable dynamic tensions or competing values and be dismissed as 'Yet More Bad Corporate Statements' or whatever?

It is this question which leads us to the last of our concluding comments—those that deal with discourse and ideology. In our view, much has become clearer about this debate following Pennycook (1994). Pennycook's own preference is obvious enough from this short extract:

To think in terms of discourse in a Foucauldian sense is useful, I believe, because it allows us to understand how meaning is produced not at the will of a unitary humanist subject, not as a quality of a linguistic system, and not as determined by socio-economic relations, but rather through a range of power/knowledge systems that organize texts, create the conditions of possibility for different language acts, and are embedded in social institutions. (1994: 128)

Indeed, we have deliberately tried to convey, in the previous paragraph, something of our own felt sense of that 'range of power/knowledge systems'. Pennycook contrasts this Foucauldian approach with 'the decontextualized contexts and political quietism of applied linguists and the often reductionist and deterministic frameworks of CDA' (p. 133) and concludes that 'even if these three views cannot be reconciled or merged, they can at least be mutually understood' (p. 134). We would, however, like to suggest that recent studies of genre, as outlined by Yates and Orlikowski at the beginning of this paper and as recently put forward by Devitt (1993), Schryer (1993), Bazerman (1994) and Berkenkotter and Huckin (1995), offer a dialogic middle way of thinking about social control and human agency, reproduction and innovation, coercion and resistance, model and instance, and linguistic form and institutional setting that promises more than a hint of that reconciliation Pennycook finds so elusive. Such studies

carefully delineate those forces that, in the words of the opening epigraph, 'attempt to control change, either by causing it or preventing it'. But, of course, transforming this emerging consensus into a Mission Statement may still be some way off . . .

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