

Discourse in the Professions

Perspectives from corpus linguistics

Edited by

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Framing matters: Communicating relationships through metaphor in fundraising texts

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Introduction

One of the primary activities of nonprofit organizations is fundraising. While fundraising discourse has a clear persuasive function and bringing in dollars is its obvious goal, fundraising and development are not primarily about raising money. Rather, they are about establishing and maintaining relationships. Even relatively impersonal direct mail letters are more concerned with building relationships than with *raising funds*, as evidenced by the fact that nonprofit organizations typically spend more than they raise on direct mail campaigns. Yet, little is known about the linguistic features of relationship formation through fundraising discourse. This chapter uses computer analysis of a fundraising corpus to identify the ways in which relationships are metaphorically constructed within direct mail letters.

Review of relevant literature and development of research questions

Fundraising as relationship building

As noted in the introduction, fundraising discourse is not always centered on acquiring funds. Fundraising practitioners and theorists alike are quick to agree that, at its core, fundraising is really about relationship building, about establishing a partnership between a community and an organization. Keegan (1990: 13) observes, “Going out into the community, asking people for money,

is in fact inviting them to be our partner in making something of value happen.” Grace (1997: viii) concurs, asserting that development is the series of deliberate activities by which we “involve and retain funders in a donor-investor relationship with our organizations.”

Because of the strong connection between establishing relationships and fundraising, it is, perhaps, not surprising that person-to-person solicitation is considered to be the most effective way to raise funds. Edles (1993: 13) argues, for example, that “people give money to people not to causes... . Writing a letter is the least forcible way to solicit because it’s the most impersonal.” Consequently, it may seem odd to think of the impersonal (or at best, pseudo-personal) letters we all receive in abundance – many of which end up in the trash – as tools for building relationships. And yet, that is what they are. Direct mail letters certainly do not appear to be primarily about raising money. The returns on direct acquisition mailings (mailings designed to attract new donors) are notoriously low, with response rates ranging from .5% to 2.5% considered normal (Warwick 2000). In addition, direct acquisition mailings typically return only 50–75% of their costs (Warwick 2000). In other words, these direct mail campaigns generally cost organizations considerably more than they bring in.

Yet, direct mail letters are an undeniably integral part of a successful fundraising plan, functioning as the frontline in many nonprofits’ fundraising efforts. Fundraising consultants Mal Warwick & Associates, Inc. (2000: 166, emphasis mine) identify direct mail as “the single biggest means used by nonprofits to recruit new donors” and conclude that “research repeatedly confirms that the majority of *first time gifts* to charity are made by mail.” Grace (1997: 121, emphasis mine) suggests that ultimately the purpose of the direct mail letter “is the acquisition of a *new* donor who is then brought into a relationship with the organization.” Clearly, because of the strong link between direct mail letters and the cultivation of donor relationships, understanding the discursive construction of relationships in fundraising letters should be of value to fundraising theorists, practitioners and educators alike.

Relational communication theory and relationships in fundraising

Relational communication theory provides a logical and useful framework for beginning to explore how relationships are built linguistically in fundraising discourse. Relational communication theorists identify dominance and affili-

ation as the two fundamental relational constructs, the “basic substance of all relational judgments” (Dillard, Solomon and Samp, 1996:704). In general terms, *dominance* is the degree of control one participant in a relationship has over the behavior or beliefs of another; while *affiliation* is the degree of affective connectedness one feels for the other. While this relational construct has its roots in the *love/hate* axis of Leary’s (1957) model of interpersonal behavior, Dillard, Solomon, and Samp (1996) suggest that affiliation goes beyond loving or liking and is more accurately represented as *solidarity*. According to relational communication theory, these two constructs, which can be combined to create a two-dimensional model of relationships (see Figure 1) form the foundation of any relationship.

This model provides a useful framework for analyzing the relationships direct mail letters seek to establish. Using the Dominance/Affiliation grid, four possible types of relationships can be plotted: (1) Dominant/Affiliative, in which the emotional bond is high, and power is unequal; (2) Equal/Affiliative, in which the emotional bond is high, and power is equal; (3) Dominant/Nonaffiliative, in which the emotional bond is low, and power is unequal; and (4) Equal/Nonaffiliative, in which the emotional bond is low, and power is equal.

Both Dominance and Affiliation are important constructs in theorizing relationships in fundraising. Grace (1997) suggests that *concern* and *connection* are prerequisites for giving. He maintains that capacity alone – the ability

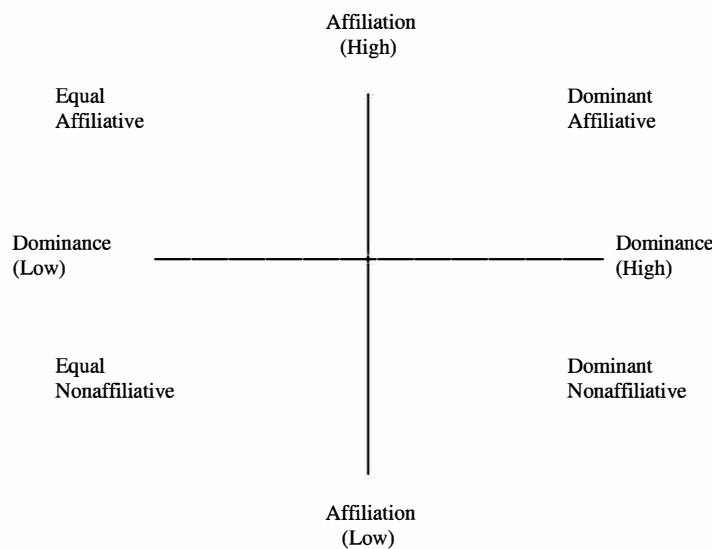


Figure 1. Dominance/affiliation model of relationships (Adapted from Dillard, Solomon and Samp 1996)

to give – will not guarantee that a potential donor will make a contribution, because the donor must also have connection, an emotional linkage with the organization, and concern, an intellectual or thoughtful link to the organization. This would imply that the affiliative relational dimension is particularly important in fundraising. On the other hand, a relationship in which potential donors believe they have the power to *really make a difference* also likely motivates giving. And yet, little is known about the specific discursive manifestations of relationships in direct mail letters. This study seeks to address this gap in scholarship by analyzing the ways in which the four types of relationships are metaphorically created in fundraising discourse.

Metaphors and relationship in fundraising letters

In fundraising letters, the type of relationship a potential donor is being invited to enter is often communicated metaphorically (e.g. *friend, investor, partner*). Metaphors have long been recognized as the primary way in which we come to understand the unknown. Back in the 1960s, Nisbet (1969: 4) observed:

Metaphor is a way of knowing – one of the oldest, most deeply embedded, even indispensable ways of knowing in the history of human consciousness. It is, at its simplest, a way of proceeding from the known to the unknown. It is a way of cognition in which the identifying qualities of one thing are transferred in an instantaneous, almost unconscious flash of insight to some other thing that is, by remoteness or complexity, unknown to us.

This view of the function of metaphor is still common. For example, Lakoff and Turner (1989: 214) suggest that “Metaphor is central to our understanding of our selves, our culture, and the world at large,” and Siegelman (1990: 3) explains:

Metaphor is primary both in language and in thought. It is through metaphor that we come to understand the world As the quintessential ‘bridging operation,’ metaphor links domains by connecting insight and feeling, and what is known with what is only guessed at.

In part, the power of metaphor lies in its ability to redescribe reality. The metaphoric process allows us to develop new ideas because of its ability to link the unknown with the familiar. In fact, Siegelman (1990: 4) concludes, “Indeed it seems that we can only see the new at first in terms of the old.” Within the context of this fundraising research, the *reality* that is being *redescribed* is rela-

tional, with the organization using metaphor to draw potential donors into a new relationship with an unknown organization. By using metaphor to frame the new relationship in familiar terms, the organization creates a bridge that connects the new with the old and makes the letter's receiver feel as if he/she is on familiar territory. Admittedly, the relationship that is created in direct mail letters may be more illusory than real, a *pseudo-relationship* that may exist only in the metaphorically constructed space of fundraising discourse, and yet it is, nonetheless, a relationship that impacts human behavior.

The power of metaphor to redescribe reality is particularly apparent in the association between metaphor and affect, a link that may be especially important in understanding the affiliation dimension of relationships. Siegelman (1990:7) is a strong proponent of the connection between affect and metaphor. She writes that a metaphor "gives flesh and blood to the abstract and theoretical. Metaphor, especially when used deliberately and unconventionally says 'Look at me. Look at the world, not through it.'" The affective impact of metaphor can be clearly seen if one compares saying that a used car salesman is sneaky and untrustworthy with saying that a used car salesman is a snake. Siegelman (1990:7) explains:

The word snake carries an image with surplus meaning and feelings and associations: All the associations that we have collectively and individually to snakes surge in with the image we may be seeing in our mind's eye. . . .A whole tangle of conscious and unconscious associations goes with the image, and metaphor delivers them in an economical and vivid package.

Metaphor, then, by boosting affect and ultimately establishing positive affiliation, is one way in which reality is redescribed and relationships are formed within the impersonal context of direct mail letters.

Examining metaphor in fundraising discourse is not new. Turner (1991), for example, explored the functions of metaphor in shaping reality within fundraising texts. Turner illustrates how pervasive metaphors are in fundraising discourse and highlights the interaction between metaphor and the reality constructed through those metaphors. In addition, McCagg (1998) conducted a Lakovian analysis of conceptual metaphors in the promotional materials from two organizations.¹ Through his analysis of metaphor, McCagg was able to identify the general, underlying conceptualizations of the audience held by each of the organizations included in the study.

Barton's 2001 study of the founding of the United Way examines how both

the potential donor and individuals with disabilities are discursively and metaphorically constructed in promotional texts. He concludes that by representing individuals with disabilities as children/child-like or as *supercrrips*, these fundraising texts “eras[e] the complex experience of individuals, particularly adults, with disabilities” (Barton 2001:172). Furthermore, the United Way’s promotional rhetoric represents the United Way as a *responsible business* and potential donors as *making sensible business decisions*, a practice that erases the experience of people with disabilities completely (Barton, 2001:188). Goering (2001) expanded the analysis of the metaphoric language used to describe the type of relationships potential donors are invited to enter into through direct mail fundraising letters. In a pilot study of a limited number of direct mail letters, Goering identified three metaphor frames that were used to characterize the relationship between potential donors and the nonprofit organization: friend/family, business partner, and assistant.

These studies establish a precedent for analyzing metaphor in fundraising discourse, and they evidence that the assumptions nonprofit organizations make about their relationships with donors can be inferred from the metaphors embedded in fundraising texts. However, each of them is somewhat limited by small sample size. Hence, the current study utilizes computer analysis to examine a relatively large corpus of fundraising texts, as it investigates the metaphoric conceptualizations of relationships in direct mail fundraising letters. Specifically, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

(1) How are the relationships between potential donors and requesting organizations metaphorically described in direct mail letters?

One might expect organizations of different types to define such relationships differently. For example, a social service agency might seek to establish a different kind of relationship with a potential donor than an environmental organization would. In addition, a local organization might be likely to attempt to construct a different kind of relationship than a national organization or a local affiliate of a national organization. Thus, this study proffers two additional research questions:

(2) What differences, if any, exist in the ways in which organizations of different types metaphorically describe the relationship they are seeking with potential donors?

(3) What differences, if any, exist in the ways in which national, local and local affiliates of national organizations metaphorically describe the relationship they are seeking with potential donors?

Method

Fundraising corpus

The corpus used for this research is the Fundraising Corpus collected by and housed in the Indiana Center for Intercultural Communication (ICIC) at Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis. This corpus is a two million word, computerized databank of fundraising texts consisting of the most important fundraising genres – direct mail letters, case statements, grant proposals and annual reports. The fundraising texts in the corpus are drawn from 108 organizations representing a variety of different fields within the nonprofit sector.

This study analyzed 245 of the direct mail letters included in the corpus. The letters were collected from 73 organizations and represent five different *types* of nonprofit organizations: Social Services, Environmental, Community Development, Education, and Cultural/Arts.

Developing theory-based metaphor categories

The first step in this research was to determine if the relational metaphors identified in an earlier study (Goering 2001) could reliably be placed in the four relational quadrants of the Dominance/Affiliation Model presented in the previous section (see Figure 1). A group of ten students enrolled in an upper-level Communication Studies class at a large, urban, Midwestern university were given a questionnaire with twelve representative statements drawn from the direct mail fundraising letters coded in the pilot study (e.g. “Join us in an investment opportunity,” “We are seeking to build partnerships,” “We still need assistance from friends like you”). The students were asked to describe the relationship implied by each statement on two dimensions: *Dominance* (whether the donor is given power and responsibility, or whether power and responsibility are shared equally by donor and organization) and *Affiliation* (whether the donor has a high or low degree of emotional connectedness with the organization). Reliability, which was computed as the percentage of agreement on how the statements were rated among the ten coders, was 83%.

This high percentage of agreement indicates that the metaphoric frames used in fundraising can reliably be situated within the Dominance/Affiliation Model of Relationships. Figure 2 locates the metaphors on the model and offers

examples of each metaphor frame. With 83% agreement, the coders concluded that the *friend* or *family* metaphor connotes a relationship characterized by a high degree of affiliation and relatively equal power. The *savior* metaphor connotes considerable affiliation, but it also implies that the donor – the one doing the *saving* – is dominant in the relationship. The coders concluded that the *investor* metaphor connotes high power but relatively low affiliation, and the *partner* metaphor implies relatively low affiliation and equal power.

Developing metaphor word lists

Once the metaphors used in fundraising discourse had been reliably placed within the theoretical framework provided by the Dominance/Affiliation relational communication model, the researcher sought to establish word lists that could reliably locate the four metaphor clusters in fundraising texts. This was accomplished by returning to the 58 direct mail letters that had been hand-coded in the pilot study and identifying key words associated with each

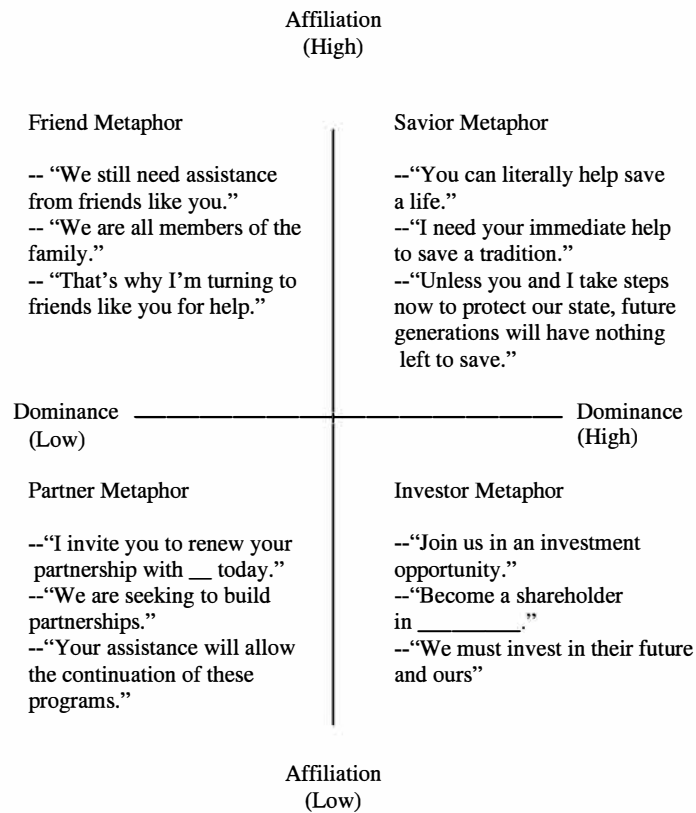


Figure 2. Relationship metaphors situated in dominance/affiliation relational model with examples

metaphor category. For example, words associated with the Investor metaphor included *investment*, *shareholder*, and *investor*, while words such as *friend*, *family*, *brother*, and *sister* were associated with the Friend/Family metaphor.

Using the word lists that had been constructed for each metaphor cluster, the word-search function of QSR Nud*ist,² a software package for qualitative analysis of text, was utilized to search for the metaphors in a sample of documents that had been hand-coded for the pilot study. The results of the computer search were then compared with the results of the hand coding, and the word lists were modified until the list facilitated finding the metaphors in the fundraising documents reliably and parsimoniously. Reliability was operationalized as constructing a word list for each metaphor cluster that successfully located at least 90% of the occurrences of that metaphor that had been located by hand in the sample of letters. Parsimony was operationalized as constructing a word list for each metaphor cluster that did not include any words that did not increase the reliability of the search. The words *brother* and *sister*, for example, were removed from the Friend/Family metaphor list because they did not increase the reliability of finding relevant metaphors in the fundraising letters. The final word lists for each metaphor cluster included the following words: Friend Metaphor = friend, family; Investor Metaphor = investor, shareholder; Partner Metaphor = supporter, help us, partner, join us; Savior Metaphor = save, free, magic, dream. With these two stages – establishing theory-based metaphor clusters and identifying word lists for each metaphor cluster – completed, the actual analysis of the texts in the fundraising corpus could begin.

Analyzing metaphor use in fundraising corpus

The analysis of metaphor use in the fundraising corpus involved a two-step process: First, once reliable and parsimonious word lists had been compiled, the word lists were used to search 245 direct mail letters in the fundraising corpus. The word searches were completed using the *Pattern Search* function of QSR Nud*ist. For each word, the root of the word was entered as the search term, so that any form of the word would be located. For example, *investor* was entered as *invest*, so that any word with *invest* in it (e.g., investor, invest, investment) would be found. The QSR Nud*ist text-search program provides the researcher with the opportunity to *query* each instantiation to allow elimination of false finds before finds are analyzed and saved. This function was used

to determine whether or not the usage of the word was, indeed, metaphorically describing the relationship the donor was being invited to enter. Only those instances that met this requirement were included in the final calculations. After the word-search was completed, the second step in the data analysis process was to use the software program SPSS to statistically analyze metaphor use in the fundraising letters.

Results

Metaphor use in fundraising corpus

Table 1 summarizes the frequency with which each relationship metaphor occurs in the fundraising corpus. A total of 385 phrases in the corpus letters metaphorically described the relationship between organization and donor. The majority (n=148, 38%) of these occurrences metaphorically framed that relationship as a Partnership, in which the donor *helps* or *joins with* the organization in meeting its goals. The Friend relationship metaphor was utilized second most frequently, with 141 (37%) of the occurrences defining the donor as *part of the family* or a *friend* of the organization. In 66 instances (17%), the donor was metaphorically described as an Investor; while 8% (n=30) described the donor as Savior, the last chance or last hope for the nonprofit and the cause it is promoting. In all, 75% of the metaphoric descriptions of the relationship between donor and organization describe the relationship as one in which both parties have relatively equal power (the dominance dimension of relationship is low). Whether the letter uses a metaphor that elicits strong affiliation or not is fairly evenly divided, with 45% falling in the *high affiliation* categories.

The frequencies presented to this point represent composite counts of all the words on the word list for a particular metaphor cluster. By examining the frequencies of each word on the word list separately, it is possible to identify the most commonly used metaphors *within* each metaphor type (see Table 1). *Friend* (n=127) is a much more commonly used metaphor in fundraising letters than *family* (n=14). *Partner* (n=61) is the word most often used within the Partner metaphor category, while words with the root *invest* (n=64) account for nearly all of the occurrences of the Investor metaphor. The most common words used to describe the Savior metaphor are words that stem from the root, *sav* (n=15).

Table 1. Frequency of metaphor use in fundraising corpus direct mail letters

Metaphor cluster metaphor search term	Number of occurrences	Number of letters with metaphor
Friend/Family	141	98*
Friend	127	92
Family	14	12
Savior	30	22*
Save	15	8
Free (as in "to liberate")	2	2
Magic	3	3
Dream	10	10
Investor	66	38
Invest	64	36
Shareholder	2	2
Partner	148	81*
Partner	61	32
Join us	21	18
Help us	50	41
Support	16	13

* This value does not equal the sum of letters with each individual search term for this metaphor cluster because some letters used multiple search terms.

So far this analysis has looked only at total occurrences of each metaphor; it has not looked at how many different metaphors occur in each letter or how many of the 245 letters metaphorically describe the relationship the organization is seeking with the donor. Relationship metaphors were located in over two-thirds of the letters ($n=169$, 69%). The majority of letters ($n=108$) use words from a single metaphor category; however, words from two of the categories are found in 53 letters and words from three categories are found in eight letters. None of the letters use words from all four metaphor categories. All in all, these results confirm that organizations do define donor relationships metaphorically. Furthermore, they provide evidence that the answer to the first research question is that, to varying degrees, nonprofits use metaphors that represent each of the four types of relationships presented in the Dominance/Affiliation model.

Metaphor use by type of organization

The second research question this study seeks to answer relates to whether or not metaphor use varies by type of organization. In other words, do social service nonprofits frame donor-organization relationships differently than environmental organizations or educational nonprofits? Table 2 presents means and standard deviations for each of the four metaphor categories by organization type.

Comparing the average metaphor usage by different types of organizations yields some interesting findings. Social service organizations employ all four metaphors, with Partner and Investor being first and second in average frequency of use. In fact, social service nonprofits use the Investor metaphor more than any of the other types of organizations. Environmental organizations use the Savior metaphor most often and considerably more often than any other type of organization. Interestingly, environmental associations do not employ the Investor metaphor at all. Community development organiza-

Table 2. Means and standard deviations for metaphor use by type of organization

Type of organization	Relationship Metaphor Cluster			
	Friend	Savior	Partner	Investor
Social Services (n=78)				
Mean	.41	.12	.68	.51
Standard Deviation	.69	.32	1.06	1.71
Environmental (n=10)				
Mean	.50	1.00	.80	.00
Standard Deviation	.53	1.89	1.48	.00
Community Development (n=10)				
Mean	.10	.00	1.30	.00
Standard Deviation	.32	.00	1.49	.00
Education (n=108)				
Mean	.81	.06	.42	.20
Standard Deviation	1.32	.29	1.02	.54
Cultural/Arts (n=37)				
Mean	.43	.14	.78	.11
Standard Deviation	.60	.38	1.16	.32

tions overwhelmingly rely on the Partner metaphor, with the Savior and Investor metaphor not in evidence at all. Community development nonprofits use the Partner metaphor more than any other type of organization. Educational nonprofits, like social service, use all four metaphors, with Friend occurring most frequently. In fact, educational organizations use the Friend metaphor more than any other type of nonprofit. Finally, cultural/arts associations also employ all four metaphors, with Partner being used most frequently.

An analysis of variance was used to determine whether these mean differences in metaphor use are statistically significant. The results of this analysis indicate that there are no statistically significant differences in the use of the Partner or Investor metaphors. In other words, no type of organization is more likely than any other to refer to potential donors as partners or investors. There are statistically significant differences, however, in the use of the Friend ($F=2.3$, $df=5$, $p=.045$) and Savior ($F=7.7$, $df=5$, $p=.000$) metaphors. While the analysis of variance indicates that there are significant effects in the use of these two metaphors by organization type, it does not show where those significant effects lie. Tukey's posthoc comparison of means indicates that educational nonprofits are more likely than any other type of organization to use Friend language, and environmental organizations are more likely than any other to use the Savior metaphor.

Metaphor use by locus of organization

The third research question this investigation attempts to answer is concerned with metaphor use by national versus local organizations. Table 3 presents means and standard deviations for each of the four metaphor categories by organizational locus. Comparing the mean metaphor usage by national versus local versus local or regional affiliates of national organizations reveals some noteworthy, if puzzling, findings. Interestingly, local or regional affiliates of national organizations, which use the Investor metaphor more than any other metaphor, use all of the metaphor clusters more frequently on average than either their local or national counterparts. Local nonprofits rely most heavily on the Friend metaphor; while national organizations most often describe donors metaphorically as Partners.

Once again an analysis of variance was used to determine whether these differences are statistically significant. The results of this analysis indicate that national, local, and regional/local affiliates of national organizations do not use

Table 3. Means and standard deviations for metaphor use by organizational locus

Organizational locus	Relationship Metaphor Cluster			
	Friend	Savior	Partner	Investor
Local Nonprofit (n=181)				
Mean	.64	.08	.61	.14
Standard Deviation	1.10	.30	1.12	.45
Local/Regional Affiliate of National Nonprofit (n=17)				
Mean	.65	.35	1.00	1.47
Standard Deviation	.86	1.22	1.50	3.31
National Nonprofit (n=47)				
Mean	.58	.12	.60	.27
Standard Deviation	1.02	.50	1.11	1.05

the Friend or Partner metaphors in significantly different ways. There are statistically significant differences, however, in the use of the Investor ($F=13.83$, $df=2$, $p=.000$) and Savior ($F=5.01$, $df=2$, $p=.05$) metaphors. While the analysis of variance indicates that there are significant effects in these two areas, it does not show where those significant effects lie. Tukey's posthoc comparison of means indicates that local or regional affiliates of national organizations are more likely than national or local organizations to describe the donor both as Savior and Investor.

Discussion

While the results section identifies numerous interesting, and even some puzzling, findings, this discussion section will focus on three main issues, namely: (1) the relationship metaphors used in fundraising, (2) patterns in the use of relationship metaphors in direct mail letters, and (3) practical, pedagogical, and methodological implications of this research.

Relationship metaphors in direct mail letters

The results of this research confirm the usefulness of the Dominance/Affiliation model for understanding the ways in which relationships are metaphorically described in direct mail fundraising letters. As noted in an earlier section of this paper, the power of metaphor, according to Siegelman (1990), is to *re-describe reality*. Indeed, each of the four metaphor categories – friend, investor, partner, savior – creates a decidedly different reality for the desired relationship between the organization and the would-be donor. Each elicits quite different understandings of what the nature of the relationship between the donor and the requesting nonprofit will be, the expectations, the responsibilities.

The findings of this study clearly reveal that the majority of fundraising letters attempt to establish a *partnership* or *friendship* relation with potential donors. Interestingly, both of these metaphor clusters are situated in the low-dominance half of the Dominance/Affiliation relational model, suggesting that dominance may not be as important as affiliation in cultivating desired donor relationships. The preferencing of affiliation makes intuitive, practical and theoretical sense, which can be seen through closer exploration of the implied connotative meanings of Partner and Friend. Partner, for example, invokes images of someone in a supportive role, encouraging the donor to participate in community improvements without necessarily placing them in a leadership position and endowing them with the responsibilities that would be associated with the leadership role. The Friend metaphor elicits greater affiliation (and possibly more baggage) than a partnership, but maintains the relational equality of the Partner metaphor. In doing so, the Friend metaphor invites the potential donor into a relationship that is as comfortable, non-threatening, and valuable as a friendship. Not only does this finding that dominance is less important than affiliation in fundraising relationships make intuitive sense, it is also consistent with Grace's (1997) claim that "connection" and "concern," emotional and thoughtful linkages between donor and organization, are key components of building relationships in fundraising.

Although affiliation seems to be the salient dimension in creating donor relationships, the high-dominance metaphor clusters, Investor and Savior, were used in some of the fundraising letters. Perhaps the appeal and metaphoric impact of investor and savior is that they cast the donor in a position of power, in which the donor is given the ability and responsibility to make a difference in his/her community. One might expect that this metaphor would

have to be used more cautiously, because there is more potential for a donor to reject the position of responsibility implied by the label. Yet, for certain organizations in certain circumstances, imbuing the donor with that kind of power is very motivating, suggesting that metaphor use may follow distinct patterns.

Patterns in the use of relationship metaphors in direct mail letters

The results of this corpus analysis also give rise to the conclusion that there are *patterned* differences in the ways in which relationships are metaphorically described in direct mail letters. The data suggest that nonprofits tend to use differing metaphoric relational frames in their fundraising efforts, depending on what type of organization they are. Most notable, perhaps, in this patterned usage of metaphor is the widespread use of the Savior metaphor by environmental organizations. Given the relative infrequency with which the Savior metaphor is used overall, it might seem surprising that this one type of organization would rely so heavily on Savior language in describing donor relationships. And yet, if one considers the connotative meaning of the Savior metaphor, one of urgency and the need for desperate measures in extreme situations, this pattern of metaphor use seems particularly appropriate to solicit support for environmental causes. After all, the prevailing discourse about environment in the culture at large casts the environment as an entity facing enormous threats and warns of dire, long-term consequences for lack of action. Furthermore, the environment is typically portrayed as an entity that cannot help or speak for itself, necessitating a savior with the ability and power to protect it.

A second noteworthy pattern in metaphor use revealed in this study is the frequent invoking of the Friend metaphor by educational nonprofits. In their direct mail letters, as Table 2 illustrates, educational organizations use the Friend metaphor more than any other metaphor cluster, and they use it more often than any other type of organization. Why would organizations that tend to focus predominantly on logic and the intellect utilize the metaphor linked most closely with emotion and affect? One answer to this question might be that educational organizations typically target fundraising campaigns to alumni, to individuals who really do have an affiliative connection with their institution. Another possible explanation is that many educational institutions, especially smaller colleges, enact a college-as-extended-family model, where students can expect the kind of care and consideration usually experienced in

families. A final possible explanation is the tendency of American culture to de-emphasize intellectualism and privilege family values. Within this cultural context, the use of the Friend/Family metaphor by educational organizations becomes a logical and persuasive choice.

In addition to patterns of metaphor use related to type of organization, this study's results also illustrate that national, affiliate and local organizations use metaphors in patterned ways. Local nonprofits, according to these findings, tend to rely most heavily on the Friend metaphor, which seems logical, given the familiarity and close-to-home *reality* that language connotes. Also, that national organizations would employ the Partner metaphor most frequently seems reasonable, because it maintains the equality of friendship but acknowledges the geographical distance, and, hence, the lessened affiliative connection, between donor and organization.

The results for local and regional affiliates of national organizations, however, which suggest that these organizations rely most heavily on the Investor metaphor, are a bit more puzzling and seemingly counter-intuitive. Perhaps the results are skewed because the sample size for this organizational locus is relatively small. Before definitive conclusions can be drawn, additional research would be needed.

A final pattern of metaphor use by organizational locus that is worth mentioning is the relative similarity in how local and national organizations use relationship metaphors in fundraising. As evidenced in Table 2, the mean usage of each metaphor cluster is nearly identical for national and local nonprofits. It seems likely that smaller, local organizations would model their fundraising efforts after the successful strategies of larger, national organizations. These results are particularly interesting within the context of institutional theory, which argues that in order to survive, organizations must establish legitimacy by adhering to institutional standards for how things are to be done. Institutional theorists observe that one way in which newly forming, localized organizations establish legitimacy is by fashioning themselves after visible, well-established organizations (e.g., Huber and Daft 1987). This research offers intriguing linguistic corroboration of this process.

Practical, pedagogical, and methodological implications of this research

Both the findings related to the use of relationship metaphors in direct mail letters and the discernable patterns of their use have implications for fundrais-

ing practitioners as well as teachers of fundraising and English for Specific Purposes. The results of this research suggest that metaphoric framing does, indeed, matter and could be used strategically and intentionally to foster particular relational *realities*. By theorizing the types of relationships that are evoked in direct mail letters and by identifying the metaphoric frames through which those relationships are communicated, this research enables fundraising practitioners to tailor their fundraising messages even more systematically and deliberately to cultivate the desired donor-organization relationship.

Fundraising practitioners and teachers of fundraising might make particular note of the fact that all four metaphor clusters extend a form of power to the potential donor. The high dominance metaphors (Investor and Savior) offer power by implying that the donor has the ability and, indeed, the responsibility to bring about change. On the other hand, the affiliative metaphors bestow upon the reader the power that comes from emotional connectedness and belonging.

The power implicit in the metaphor clusters can, of course, be both positive and negative. For example, while some donors may respond favorably to the Savior metaphor because it gives them power, others may feel disenfranchised by the label of Savior because they may perceive the role as a burden. Hence, fundraising practitioners and teachers might be well advised to make the transference of power through metaphor a conscious and carefully deliberate choice. In some ways, through careful metaphor choice, the fundraiser linguistically can harness their power to bestow power within the organization-donor relationship.

A second useful consideration for teachers of English for Specific Purposes and fundraising practitioners is to recognize the cultural situatedness of relational metaphors. Even though metaphors such as Friend or Investor may seem universal and transcultural, the connotative meanings of metaphors always are mediated by cultural context. For example, *friend* has a substantially different meaning in American culture as compared to other cultures, such as Germany. In America, the word *friend* tends to be used more loosely to describe relationships with people with whom one is friendly. However, within the German cultural context, the word *friend* is only one word available for describing the many gradations of intimacy and implies a much closer, personal bond than it does in American culture. Consequently, to use the word *friend* within a German cultural context in an impersonal, direct mail letter, when the relationship has not progressed through the typical stages of inter-

personal connection could be a donor turn-off indeed. In light of culturally specific meanings invoked by metaphors, it stands to reason that any fundraising effort should choose linguistic strategies that are in keeping with careful consideration of the donor's culture.

Finally, this research has implications for future study of fundraising discourse, especially for using corpus research methods in that endeavor. The study evidences that computer software can be reliably used to search for metaphors in fundraising texts, making it possible to examine much larger samples than would be possible with hand coding. In addition, this research illustrates the value of synthesizing linguistic corpus research methods with theories drawn from outside of the linguistics discipline, in this case from communication theories. Such research provides multiple new opportunities for fruitful interdisciplinary collaboration.

Note

1. According to Lakoff, metaphors are more than simply superficial or decorative devices; rather, metaphors play an important cognitive role in human conception. Metaphors facilitate thought by providing an experiential framework that can be used to make sense of new and abstract thoughts.
2. QSR Nud*ist, which stands for "Non-numerical Unstructured Data Indexing, Searching and Theorizing," is a software package designed to aid users in the qualitative analysis of non-numerical data. The software package can be used to analyze textual data, such as transcripts, letters, or literary documents, as well as non-textual data, such as musical scores, photographs, or maps. QSR Nud*ist can be used to search and index texts; however, it also can assist a researcher in theorizing about indexed data.

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