Tensions and Metaphors in Higher Education Fundraising Profession

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TENSIONS AND METAPHORS IN HIGHER EDUCATION FUNDRAISING PROFESSION

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In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
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By
Jessica Martin Carver

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TENSIONS AND METAPHORS IN HIGHER EDUCATION FUNDRAISING PROFESSION

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This research examined the language used by higher education development professionals, specifically similar and dissimilar tropes and how they shape the perception of those development professionals. By studying these linguistic devices, insight is provided into this particular occupation and the effects these devices have on perceptions and interpretation. The findings in this study could help to produce more skilled communicators in the field and could be used as a framework to study other professional positions. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather data from twelve participants, and the data was then analyzed through thematic analysis. Findings revealed the types of metaphors used by higher education fundraisers and if and how they shaped their perceptions of the profession. Findings also showed what contradictions, paradoxes, and ironies are found in the field and if and how they shaped perceptions of the profession. This study applies theoretical aspects of organizational communication to the field of higher education development presenting new data. This study also provides practical implications for those currently in the field to consider.

Key words: Tropes; Metaphors; Contradiction; Paradox; Irony; Tensions; Fundraising, Development
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

“Fundraiser” is a newer term used in the English language, first sighted in text in Vance Packard’s *Hidden Persuaders* in 1957. “Fundraising,” also a relatively new term dating back to the late 1930s, is not a new concept (Turner, 1991). Fundraising is the process of raising funds for a particular project, program, cause, or idea (Fund-raising, 2013), and has become an organized activity that nearly all nonprofit organizations must rely on to stay in operation. Fundraising entails identifying individual prospective donors or corporate sponsors, cultivating a relationship with these entities, soliciting funds, stewarding the gifts received, and maintaining donor contact and renewal. Some of the largest fundraising operations exist within higher education (Blackbaud, 2013) and, due to budgetary cuts amongst public institutions, have become a main source of revenue for these schools.

Higher education fundraising, also referred to as development or advancement at many institutions, can be traced back to the mid-1600s, but has been growing dramatically as a profession over the past several years. The occupation of fundraising was also named an up-and-coming career in the 2007 *U.S. News & World Report* (Nemko, 2007). Colleges and universities in the United States raised $31 billion in the fiscal year of 2012 (“U.S. Colleges, Universities,” 2013). Within the nonprofit sector, educational organizations experienced a 1.9% increase in giving in 2012, a growth rate second only to faith-based organizations (Blackbaud, 2013).

Higher education fundraising is particularly important in today’s economic times. Budget cuts are affecting public universities across the nation, and administrators are
facing tough decisions on how to trim the fat. State funding and appropriations for public institutions have decreased nationwide, leaving tuition increases, budget cuts, and private funding to pick up the slack (Chuah, 2013). Private funding through individual donors, corporations, and foundations are an alternate revenue source for public universities, making development efforts high priority. Therefore, the economic challenges facing our higher education institutions make it important to study the field of education fundraising and those individuals who raise funds.

This research project focused on the language higher education development professionals use, specifically the language devices of metaphor, contradiction, paradox, and irony. By examining these concepts, this study offers insight into the perceptions of higher education development professionals, the perceived tensions they face, and how they manage these tensions.

This chapter provides the background and rationale for an examination of higher education development professionals. It begins with a brief history of philanthropy and fundraising and then explores the trends and expectations in higher education fundraising. Lastly, it examines the language used in this field.

**History of Philanthropy and Fundraising**

Today, philanthropy is thought to focus on eliminating social problems by doing good things, which often equates to giving assets (Hildebrandt, n.d.). The word philanthropy comes from two Greek words “philos” and “anthropos.” Philos means *loving*, and anthropos means *humankind*; therefore the word philanthropy can be translated to *loving humankind* (Hildebrant, n.d.). The first roots of philanthropy, as the modern Western world defines it, can be traced back to 347 B.C. This marks the date
when Plato instructed a family member to use his farm estate to help fund students and faculty at an academy he created (Purcell, 2012). In Classical Greece and Rome, civilians raised funds to support amphitheaters, feasts, and Olympic games (Hildebrant, n.d.). Religious fundraising has also been prominent for many years, can be found in all different religions, and continues to be a strong tradition today. In Christianity, philanthropy is cited and encouraged in many verses of the Bible. For example, in Corinthians II, chapter nine, verse seven, the Bible said, “Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, [so let him give]; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver” (Corinthians II, 9:7, King James Version).

The United States was founded on a principal of philanthropy. Most early settlers were volunteers and built the nation from nothing. Benjamin Franklin proposed citizens build public libraries and firehouses. As the nation grew, so did the need for philanthropy and donors to assist in setting up new colonies. The Civil War, although a dark part of U.S. history, brought out philanthropic needs and organized fundraising efforts. People sold bonds and asked for contributions to stop the war. Modern U.S. philanthropy started with Andrew Carnegie, who suggested leaving your estate for the public good in lieu of family members. He made way for other philanthropists like John D. Rockefeller, Sr. Rockefeller hired a staff member to be in charge of philanthropic efforts. In 1921, legislation passed giving individuals tax breaks for their giving, while corporations gained this incentive in 1935 (Brief History, n.d.).

In reference to higher education fundraising in the United States, Harvard University received its first gift in the 1600s. This gift came in the form of a bequest when John Harvard left his library and half of his estate designated to the now renowned
institution (Historical Facts, n.d.). The Council on Foundations reports that soon after that first gift, Harvard started its own fundraising efforts, directing what is considered the first campaign or fundraiser in American history (as cited by Philanthropy Timeline, n.d.). The first fundraisers’ organization was formed in 1960 and named the Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP); although there was already a council for fundraising, there was not one on behalf of the development professionals (History of the Association, n.d.). The founding of this organization can be considered the first recognition of fundraising as a professional career.

In 2010, approximately 2.3 million nonprofit organizations (NPOs) existed in the United States; 1.6 million of those were registered with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), those not required to register include organizations that have annual revenue below $5,000 or some religious congregations (Blackwood et al., 2012). All of these organizations have needs relating to philanthropy. In regards to charitable contributions, education is second only to the religious sector, and higher education has seen a steady increase in number of institutions, revenue, and assets since 2000 (Blackwood et al., 2012). Consequently, the growth in higher education has necessitated more fundraising efforts, particularly in light of recent budget cuts in education and declines in state support for public universities (Farrow & Yuan, 2011).

The term “higher education development professional” encompasses a variety of different titles and job responsibilities. Fundraising positions in the context of higher education are often referred to as development officers, major gift officers, annual fund directors, and annual giving officers. Development directors do a range of fundraising activities from attending fundraising events to soliciting gifts, but primarily focus on
raising major gifts. Major gifts are typically larger than a regular annual gift and take more thought and planning. Some institutions consider gifts of $10,000 or more to be a major gift, while others do not consider a gift major unless it is upwards of $100,000. Other interchangeable titles are major gift officer and director of development. Annual giving officers focus on closing gifts that donors intend to send in on an annual basis. Lead annual gifts can be anywhere from $1,000 to $10,000 based on the institution size and stature. Another title used for this type of position is annual fund officer. An annual fund officer or director might also be in charge of phone and direct mail solicitations. Another area of higher education development is planned giving. This is exactly as it sounds--a gift that requires more planning. Popular planned giving techniques are bequests, charitable gift annuities, charitable trusts, life insurance policies, securities, and gifts of real estate (Chenier, 2008).

Fundraisers also have different membership organizations they are engaged in where they gain resources, participate in conferences, and professional development. A few of the most widely recognized are the National Council for Nonprofits, AFP, and The Council for the Advancement and Support of Education (CASE). CASE, as its name implies, is targeted toward professionals in education roles. These organizations create standards for the profession, and seek to promote ethical methods and rules for raising funds. For example, there are standards of when and when not to count certain gifts in a campaign total (Association of Fundraising, n.d.; Council for the Advancement, n.d.; National Council, n.d.).
Fundraising Trends and Expectations

Fundraising can be done in a multitude of ways including special events, telephone calling programs, direct mail and email campaigns, social media, and face-to-face solicitations (Copley Raff, 2013). It could be argued that the best method for raising lead annual gifts and major gifts is through one-on-one, in-person solicitations. Before these solicitations take place, a relationship or rapport is usually built, which is why the present study will focus on this relational type of fundraising.

When it comes to face-to-face solicitations, which several higher education development professionals conduct, there are methods to approaching a solicitation meeting. Jerry Panas, a well-known development professional and author, stated that the hardest part of fundraising is getting the appointment (Panas, 2009). Once an appointment is confirmed, fundraisers should do some basic research on the individual, his or her interests, and whatever the project is requires funds being raised. Development professionals should know their “case for support” and be ready for objections. A “case for support” is defined by the AFP as “the reasons why an organization both needs and merits philanthropic support, usually by outlining the organization's programs, current needs, and plans” (The AFP Fundraising Dictionary, n.d.). Once the case is made, follow up after the meeting is also crucial, which is why relationships and communication are so important in this field (Fundraising: Face-to-face, n.d.; Panas, 2009). Since this profession requires so much communication with donors and various individuals across higher education institutions, it is worth studying the language and verbal devices used in the profession, as well as the patterns that emerge in this type of communication. This type of research will provide insight into the growing profession of higher education
fundraising and help gain understanding of how these institutional professionals are perceived and what kinds of tensions they face.

**Metaphor and Contradiction in Fundraising**

The language mechanism, metaphor, is used so commonly that some of these concepts are not even acknowledged as such. These devices can shape how individuals view the world and interpret meaning, as “terms create meaning” (Turner, 1991, p. 38) even when we are unaware. Knowing how metaphors are used in higher education fundraising and how they influence perception of the profession can produce more skilled communicators in the field of philanthropy. This will apply not only to fundraising, but also to any occupational role, as metaphors are so commonly used in our language that they influence perception and meaning interpretation.

As with any profession, there is specific jargon and language used to define what fundraising professionals do, experience, and strive to achieve. Sometimes the language of fundraisers presents contradictions and perplexities that could impact how higher education professionals view their career. Conflicting ideologies can be expressed through fundraising language, and different occupational identities can be formed to deal with conflicting goals and themes of the job (Meisenbach, 2008; Meisenbach & Jones, 2003). For instance, fundraisers see themselves as having many roles like educator, relationship builder, and coordinator (Meisenbach, 2008). They strive to manage these different identities even though some of them are conflicting in nature.

The first purpose of this study is to examine the language device metaphor and how it is used in higher education philanthropy. More specifically, this research examined the types of metaphors used in the discourse of higher education development,
as well as how this language mechanism shaped the ways in which higher education fundraisers perceive their profession. When fundraisers in higher education understand how they frame their occupations it can lead to “moments of positive and empowered identities” (Meisenbach, 2008, p. 283). The second purpose of this study is to explore contradictions, ironies, and paradoxes found within the profession, how fundraisers rationalize potential incongruities, and the ways in which those concepts may influence higher education development professionals’ views of their profession.

This study will contribute to work on metaphorical concepts and how they influence perceived meaning. It will also contribute to research on organizational tensions by applying the concepts of contradiction, paradox, and irony to a specific profession. This research will also add to the existing literature for nonprofits by examining higher education development from the fundraisers’ point of view.

This research project is presented in five chapters. This chapter has introduced the history and context of fundraising along with a brief description of the language used in the profession. Chapter 2 offers more insight into the literature available for fundraisers, and also the existing research in the field of higher education fundraising. It also delves into the language devices used by higher education fundraisers and the tensions faced in the field, and poses research questions on the topics mentioned above. Chapter 3 explains the methods of research chosen for this study, a description of participants, and the data collection and analysis procedures. Chapter 4 presents the themes found in the data with participant quotes from interviews conducted. This chapter specifically answers the research questions posed in Chapter 2. Chapter 5 concludes with
a summary of the themes, implications of the study, limitations of the study, and areas for future research.
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Since higher education development is a newly established career, this chapter summarizes literature in the profession, perceived occupational identities and ideologies, and the language used in this line of work. First, to explore the world of higher education development, fundraising research and literature were reviewed to give insight into the field. This section focuses on both literature targeted toward fundraisers and past research on donors and fundraising. Studies regarding occupational identity and corporate vs. friendship ideology in fundraising were reviewed. Both could be used as conceptual frameworks of how fundraising professionals view the occupation and how their views are shaped by language. Next, the language fundraisers used was reviewed, focusing on the different kinds of tropes and how they shape meaning and understanding. Metaphor, paradox, irony, and contradiction are often seen as decorative language but have truly deeper meanings and influence perceptions (Morgan, 1983). To grasp all of the different types of metaphors and their importance to language, Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980) book, *Metaphors We Live By* and Turner’s (1991) paper Metaphors Fundraisers Live By, along with other works, were examined and established a guide for what constituted a metaphor. Metaphors may be the most frequently used trope, but paradox and irony should not be forgotten (Oswick, Keenoy, & Grant, 2002). Therefore, the next section is dedicated to literature on the following tensions: paradox, irony, and contradiction. Although they are similar concepts, each has distinctions that should be taken into consideration for this research in order to see how conflicting messages can influence an individual’s perceived thoughts and feelings on the profession. This area of
research also gives guidance to how different tropes should be grouped during the coding process and how these concepts can shape perceptions within the fundraising profession.

**Fundraising Literature and Research**

This section of the literature review emphasizes two areas of fundraising. The first emphasis is existing literature available to fundraisers for professional development and growth within the field. This area can give light to particular trends and common themes for introduction and advancement in this line of work. The second emphasis highlights past research on fundraising and donors. This piece helps to explain what topics have already been explored regarding this occupation and the contributions made to this area of research.

**Literature for Fundraisers**

With the growth of the development profession, specifically in higher education, many books and articles have been written to share insights into the field, give tips on how to be effective, and share news trends in the occupation. Popular works for fundraising officers usually pinpoint the cycle of fundraising, pyramid of donors, and “making the ask” (Barry, Henze, Lamb, & Swank, 2010; Panas, 2009). The cycle, number of steps, and names of steps varies depending on the author, but there are some main stages that usually remain the same: getting an appointment, cultivating the relationship, making the ask, and stewarding the gift (Fundraising Fundamentals, n.d.; Heim, 2012; Panas, 2009; Seiler, 2003). The fundraising pyramid also differs but usually has the three key components of annual donors, those in the pipeline to become major donors, and major donors (Barry, Henze, Lamb, & Swank, 2010; The Pyramid of Giving,
These references provide best practices of fundraising for those entering the profession, seeking growth and development, or serving in a volunteer capacity.

A chapter of *New Directions for Higher Education* explored the effectiveness of fundraising programs based on traditional methods that can be measured quantitatively, such as dollars raised, number of contacts, and proposals submitted. Qualitative approaches such as looking at measures of quality, for example, proposals submitted vs. closed, observing development professionals on the job, auditing contact reports, and sharing information regarding donor meetings, were also examined to show effectiveness (Hiles, 2010). Seiler (2003) also discussed the success and effectiveness of major gift fundraising, describing it as managing the giving cycle while serving as a “catalyst and coach” (p. 8) for all involved. The books and papers mentioned above are “how to” guides to development, and although written for fundraisers, none of them focused on the language used by fundraisers or how it shapes their feelings about the profession.

**Research on Fundraising and Donors**

There have been a multitude of studies on higher education fundraising and donor relations. Sargeant (2001) furthered Burnett’s (1998) work on relationship fundraising, or what is called donor-centered philanthropy today, by applying it to donor retention. Relational fundraising was the movement of recognizing and dealing with donors as unique individuals (as cited by Sargeant, 2001). This study found that a large number of donors lapsed because they felt another cause was more worthy, which could be prevented by strengthening the donor’s relationship with the organization through stewardship. Social capital should also be a consideration of fundraisers (King, 2004). This concept can be defined as “a set of social resources, which encompasses
relationships, trust, norms, and values” (as cited in King, 2004, p. 471). The relational aspect of social capital is what shapes development, in that when a group of individuals in a network share the same goals and beliefs, people will identify and recognize needs and seek to fulfill them (King, 2004). Scherhag and Boenigk (2013) also studied relational fundraising. They found that preferential treatment of donors through strategic plans based on previous donation amounts helps overall fundraising performance versus equal treatment to all donors (Scherhag & Boenigk, 2013).

Other studies have focused on donors and how their relationship with the institution develops. Mael and Ashforth (1992) found that alumni were more likely to identify with their institutions when there was prestige associated with the school and no intra-organization competition, but it was found that inter-organization competition encouraged identity. They also found that satisfaction with the organization affected the alumni’s identity. Identification, in turn, leads to increased contributions, encouragement of others to attend the school, and increased participation in events and functions (Mael & Ashforth, 1992). Farrow and Yuan (2011) used strength ties and attitudes in their study to show how effective Facebook is when used to communicate and cultivate alumni and, in turn, how it can affect volunteering and charitable giving. Donors were also the focus in Nichols’ (2004) article. The author noted that audiences are more segmented, demographics have shifted considerably, and mass communication has moved to one-on-one communication, which requires more development professionals. Nichols contended that the donors should drive what kinds of communication are used. All of this literature focused on actions fundraisers should take to be successful or the donor’s relationship with an organization, but it does not look into the fundraiser’s perspective or give insight
into the perceptions and tensions that exist within this line of work. In the next sections, the focus will shift to the perspective of the development professional and different types of communication devices that can be used to investigate the language and vocabulary used in higher education development.

**Occupational Identities and Ideology in Fundraising**

Barge & Hackett (2003) conducted research on the differences between nonprofit and for-profit managers and whether they develop professional or cultural identities. Nonprofit managers tend to be shaped by cultural factors and for-profit managers by professional factors. This study found that nonprofit managers’ identities do remain more culturally influenced but are also guided by the traditional forms of for-profit management as well. Therefore a situated model of cultural and professional identity was suggested. The above study accounts for nonprofit managers’ identities but did not focus on others within the nonprofit sector.

Other research has focused on higher education fundraisers, describing the challenges they face with regard to occupational identity, (dis) empowerment with their identity, and how that could lead to micro emancipation. Meisenbach (2008) discovered through 18 qualitative interviews with higher education fundraisers that these professionals used six framing techniques to rationalize their occupational identity. The techniques included financial, relational, educational, mission, coordination, and magical framing modes. The sample showed that fundraisers often negotiate several frames at a time, often layering the frames, and those who used more were usually more experienced and happier in their fundraising roles. The author posited that this constant reframing can “elevate or suppress” (Meisenbach, 2008, p. 281) an individual leading to micro
emancipation. Micro emancipation is where the individual strived to make sense of their position as a fundraiser through everyday challenges. Through this constant reframing, fundraisers deal with the tensions of raising both friends and funds. Therefore, one frame does not offer more power than another frame; instead the ability to move discursively from one to the next gave a sense of empowerment to the individual fundraisers (Meisenbach, 2008).

Meisenbach (2003) addressed fundraisers’ difficulty in negotiating their personal and professional identities due to long hours, consistent travel, and night and weekend engagements and their efforts to keep the two separate or blend them appropriately. Fundraisers try to manage conflicts and tensions that arise in the overlap between their work and personal lives (Meisenbach, 2003). The current study will use a different approach to explain how individual fundraisers frame the occupation based on their use of conceptual metaphors and will also explore the emergence of paradox, contradiction, and irony.

Meisenbach and Jones (2003) took a critical approach exploring how higher education fundraisers use both corporate ideology and friendship language in the profession. The authors questioned the ethical issues surrounding the use of corporate jargon in the workplace and friendship jargon when interacting with donors. The interviews captured several metaphorical references in both aspects of friendship and corporate ideologies. The friendship described in this study is Aristotle’s friendship of utility, which equates to a “tit for tat” relationship. This study supports Barge and Hackett’s (2003) results where they found nonprofit managers use both cultural and professional identities to negotiate tasks and leadership responsibilities. The current
study will expand upon Meisenbach and Jones (2003) by looking into the conceptual metaphors used in both the corporate and friendship sides of higher education fundraising and also determine if some of these ideas are paradoxical, contradictory, or ironic in nature.

Meisenbach (2003), Meisenbach and Jones (2003) and Meisenbach (2008) gave insight into how fundraisers use language to either manage professional and personal identities, express conflicting ideologies, or frame their profession. Metaphorical concepts were not specifically studied to determine how these concepts could shape and transform perceived meaning of philanthropy as an occupation. Conflicting ideas were found in Meisenbach and Jones’ (2003) work and should be examined in the context of paradox, contradiction, and irony to explore the meaning of these conflicting ideologies.

**Concepts Shaped by Fundraising Language**

The language used by fundraisers can be examined to discover a variety of pertinent issues. This study will focus on metaphorical concepts, paradox, contradiction, and irony and how these concepts shape perceptions in higher education fundraising. Metaphors and their common use in the Western World provide a unique tool to explore the depths of language and how meaning is formed, as well as the influence it may have on perceptions about the higher education development profession. These three topics of paradox, contradiction, and irony all stem from research on organizational tensions and have commonalities and themes related to each other (Trethewey, 1999). It is valuable to include all three so that the research is evaluated more specifically in terms of conflicting language and messages fundraisers use every day. Oswick et al. (2002) noted the importance of studying these similar and dissimilar tropes together to gain further insight
into how language is interpreted and perceived. Trethewey and Ashcraft (2004) suggested using each of these concepts to give further insight into the tensions experienced by individuals in an organization, how they shape their perceptions, and how they manage these tensions (Trethewey & Ashcraft, 2004). This study focuses on these topics in relation to higher education development.

**Metaphors We Live By**

Some earlier scholars claimed metaphors did not have a place in organizational settings and should be avoided while "literal language" (Morgan, 1983, p. 601) was encouraged. Literal language describes reality, while metaphor asserts how reality should be seen and evaluated in the future. Literal utterances seek to build identities in their descriptions, while metaphors often favor parts of a whole or partial truth that paint pictures of what is seen as true (Morgan, 1983; Oswick et al., 2002). Other scholars shared the necessity of metaphor extending it as more than a nicety of language and something that cannot be controlled or attained, but instead should be studied for its influence (e.g., Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Morgan, 1983). Tsoukas (1991) found common ground describing the usefulness of metaphors and literal language as complimentary concepts. For this study, metaphor was viewed as an integral role in perception development, along with other tropes that are more conflicting in nature.

So much of how we think and act is “fundamentally metaphorical in nature” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 3). Metaphors in language can affect “how we perceive, how we think, and what we do” (p. 4). *Metaphors We Live By* was written to explore how the metaphors we use are not just comparisons, but deeply rooted parts of our language and affect cognitive processes of our understanding of how the world works. In
their book, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) reviewed three main types of metaphors, structural, orientational, and ontological. An example of structural is “argument is war” (p. 4). Orientational metaphors follow the assumptions of culture, where happy is up and sad is down. Ontological metaphors are described as objectifying inanimate objects. For example, “he broke down” (p. 28) where the “mind is a machine” (p. 28). They also discussed metonymy, which is the reference of one part of something referring to the whole. An example would be if a waitress announced, “the steak is out of water” where she is referring to the individual who ordered the steak. Another more common use of metonymy is the term organization, which describes part of the whole (Morgan, 1983). Metaphors help to explore how subjectivism and objectivism do not completely encompass how individuals experience and find understanding in the world (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

Metaphors can also be categorized as living, dead, or dormant. Live metaphors "lend themselves to further conceptual development” (Tsoukas, 1991, p. 568) and are used as substitutes for actual literal language. An example would be saying the mind works like a machine. Dead metaphors are so commonly used that they can actually take the place of the literal language or gain a new literal meaning altogether. An example would be the word organization in reference to a physical place. Lastly, dormant metaphors are in between and can become alive or dead. They are "quasi-literal terms through which we restrict ourselves to seeing the world in particular ways" (Tsoukas, 1991, p. 569).

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) helped develop a framework for others like McCagg (1998) and Turner (1991) to expand on by applying it to a specific occupation:
fundraising. McCagg studied the strategic use of metaphorical concepts in philanthropic texts while Turner explored how metaphors guide and shape interpretations and meanings of the profession of fundraising. The reality of fundraising can be seen as socially constructed. Some examples of metaphors in fundraising include fluid, organic, and military. “Revenue flowing” (Turner, 1991, p. 48) or streams would be fluid concepts. An organic metaphor used is “to stay alive, much less grow” (p. 43). Nonprofits often “enlist volunteers and target prospects” which is similar to military language. Metaphors show cultural and emotional links to the type of language used and can be related to race, gender, class, etc. Even when individuals do not realize, words and phrases used can transform one’s feelings on a topic, situation, or in this case, a profession. It is valuable to realize the importance of how one describes their profession, specifically fundraisers, as they paint how the rest of the world sees it (Turner, 1991). Commonly used words, jargon, and language in the fundraising process can invoke positive and negative connotations (Heim, 2012). Examples include “low hanging fruit,” “loaded,” and “hit up” (Heim, 2012, pp. 36-37), which create a negative feeling when referring to donors. Not only can metaphors shape how fundraisers view donors, but these concepts can also influence fundraisers’ view of their job responsibilities, goals, and how they came to be in the development profession (Carver, 2014).

Carver (2014) found five themes in higher education fundraising explaining the metaphors used in higher education and how those professionals perceive the profession. The themes addressing metaphors in the profession were as follows: Relationship vs. business, movement along the giving cycle, and dehumanizing terms. The first theme of relationship vs. business explored the terminology differences when fundraisers discussed
donors versus more transactional activities on the job. Movement along the giving cycle showed how development officers view themselves as facilitators in the fundraising process, which supported Meisenbach’s (2009) study where she found a similar theme in the frame of coordinator. Development professionals see a large portion of their job as this role of facilitating contact between the potential donor and the University.

Dehumanizing terms had its own theme because several participants of this study used phrases to describe their donors like “prime for the picking” and “suspects.” These terms are commonly used; therefore, no cognitive dissonance was found between these phrases and how they shaped fundraisers’ views on the occupation. The themes that shaped how higher education fundraisers view their profession were “natural captive audience” and “fundraising, not your typical aspiration.” “Natural captive audience” refers to the perception that higher education institutions have their alumni, and that these alumni must naturally have an affinity toward the institutions. The theme, “fundraising, not your typical inspiration,” discussed how development professionals described their entrance into this line of work. An example a participant used explained how he felt pulled into this occupation, “I’ve just gravitated towards where my personality is best used.”

Two of the themes from Carver (2014) presented conflicting ideas or perceptions about this field of work. They were business and relationship language and dehumanizing terms. Fundraisers spoke in terms of raising both money and friends and used more relational language when referring to donors, but used business nuances when talking about the actual funds (Carver, 2014). Although not intentional, fundraisers also often used jargon that dehumanized their clients or donors. For instance, development professionals often referred to potential donors as prospects, suspects, or never givens.
This metonymy refers to just partial truth about the individual. Terms like “low hanging fruit” or “prime for the picking” were also used and considered dehumanizing (Carver, 2014). It is contradictory that individuals who with fundraisers seek to build a relationship are referred to in this manner, and it highlights the multiple meanings that can be found in contradictions (Trethewey, 1999). These findings provide reasoning to further investigate metaphorical concepts along with other tropes that focus on dissimilarity.

Studies have been conducted regarding alumni and communication (e.g., Farrow & Yuan, 2011; Mael & Ashforth, 1992; Nichols, 2004) and the language fundraisers use (e.g., Meisenbach, 2008; Meisenbach & Jones, 2003; Tuner, 1991). More specifically, Turner (1991) discussed how metaphors could shape fundraisers' definition of the profession, while Meisenbach (2008) explored how language affected occupational identity and ideologies through multiple framing techniques. However, only Carver (2014) has explored how the language device, metaphor, shaped fundraisers’ perception of the profession, including thoughts on donors, how they came to be in the profession and underlying tensions they face, therefore establishing a typology for the current study. Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980) book, Turner’s (1991) essay, as well as Carver’s (2014) study will serve as guides to categorize metaphorical concepts. The following research questions from Carver’s (2014) research will be asked to confirm or add to the original findings:

RQ 1: What kinds of metaphors do higher education development professionals use in their discourse?
RQ 2: How, if at all, do metaphors shape the way higher education development professionals perceive their profession?

The language used in higher education fundraising can be conflicting in nature due to its promotion of both corporate and friendship ideologies (Meisenbach, 2003). As mentioned above, Carver (2014) also found that both relationship and business metaphors are often used in this occupation, supporting Meisenbach’s (2003) corporate and friendship ideology findings. While metaphors focus on similarities, paradox, irony and contradiction describe dissimilarities (Oswick et al., 2002). With the rise of higher education fundraising as a profession, it is important to gain a better understanding of this line of work and explore tensions and conflicting ideas within fundraising, how they shape perceptions, and how they are handled in this field. It also furthers other research on tensions by applying it to yet another profession, particularly one in the nonprofit sector.

**Contradiction, Paradox, and Irony**

Oswick et al. (2002) posited that without tropes, it would be difficult to portray definite meanings within an organization. Although metaphor is probably the most popular trope and gives good insight into meaning, it only delves into similarities and does not recognize the differences and tensions that exist in organizations. The concepts of contradiction, paradox, and irony encourage the examination of dissimilar linguistics to help paint a more accurate picture of the organization (Oswick et al., 2002). It is argued that metaphor is superior because it allows individuals to attribute their own meaning as the best meaning, but it does not always promote gaining knowledge.
According to Oswick et al., the tropes associated with dissimilarity promote a new perspective and can actually provide more insight and "knowledge generation" (p. 298).

Contradictions, paradoxes, and irony are the starting point for tension centered research, and little research has been conducted on how individuals in an organization experience tensions or how they respond (Trethewey & Ashcraft, 2004). Contradictions often stem from power struggles, and “a contradiction centered view of organizations highlights the multiplicity of meanings that circulate within organizations” (Trethewey, 1999, p. 143). Paradox is considered a type of contradiction and is found specifically in “mutually exclusive” processes or “neither/nor situations” (Trethewey, 1999, p. 144). Irony is when language is used in a non-literal manner and has underlying meanings implied by the speaker. It can be used to help manage tensions and exploit contradictions in order to open a door for change (Trethewey, 1999). Oswick et al. (2002) described the cognitive process of irony as "creating a disjunction between the conventional image and the reality it represents...by overturning or reversing meaning of the conventional image" (p. 299). For example, it can be said that anarchy is a good structure for organization (Morgan, 1983). Trethewey and Ashcraft (2004) grouped these three concepts of contradiction, paradox, and irony together under one word, “irrationality” (p. 81). Irrationality is a normal occurrence of organizing and not something to be fixed or changed. Paradoxes and ironic situations are thought to shape social reality at organizations (Trethewey, 1999).

Studies that have investigated contradictions in organizations include tensions related to work versus family identities and roles (e.g.; Buzzanell, Meisenbach, Remke, Liu, Bowers, & Conn, 2005; Meisenbach, 2003), contradictions that stem from male
privilege and force females to walk a fine line of too feminine or too masculine for the workplace (Wendt, 1995), and paradoxes and ambiguities within governmental agencies that seek to raise individuals, but often actually cause dependency (e.g., Trethewey, 1999). Additionally, Buzzanell et al. (2005) discovered an ironic theme regarding conflicting identities with working mothers. One theme was ironic in that females expressed that they found quality childcare for their children. They reframed the situation by stressing the good childcare for their children, since they were not able to do it. The findings from the Carver’s (2014) study suggested that higher education development fundraisers would also have to negotiate contradictions that shape work identities due to the relational and business components of the job (Carver, 2014).

Paradoxes are also thought to shape social reality and are often studied in organizational life. Paradox can be more specifically defined as an ironic situation that occurs in interaction-based context, meaning it is time and context dependent. Paradoxes take place when the pursuit of one goal is sidetracked by another competing goal, sometimes unintentionally, that can undermine the original goal (Stohl & Cheney, 2001). Stohl and Cheney (2001) described four types of paradoxes found in organizations: paradoxes of structure, agency, identity, and power. Structural paradoxes concern “the architecture of participation and democracy;” paradoxes of agency deal with an “individual’s (sense of) efficacy within the system;” identity paradoxes involve “issues of membership, inclusion, and boundaries;” and power paradoxical situations arise in relation to “the locus, nature, and specific exercise of power in the organization.” (p. 360). Similarly, Trethewey (1999) discussed organizational level paradoxes occurring in everyday practices, the mission, and other factors within the organization, as well as
clients’ paradoxes that deal with the client’s experience. Lewis (2000) presented
paradoxes of learning, organizing, and belonging. Paradoxes of learning deal with
change; paradoxes of organizing occur naturally in when people are brought together; and
paradoxes of belonging deals with the multiple identities one faces.

Stohl and Cheney (2001) contended, “The webs we weave will come to constrain
us, often in unforeseen ways” (p. 352). This statement rationalizes the importance of
studying paradoxes within an organization. The pursuit of one goal can lead an
individual down a path that thwarts the original intent, all while shaping the
organizational member’s perception of his/her work. The summary of research above
provides a good framework for identifying tensions (e.g., Lewis, 2000; Stohl & Cheney,
2001; Trethewey, 1999). It also gives insight into power of perception that dissimilarity
tropes have due to multiplicity of meaning and professional examples of various tensions
and how they’re managed. The profession of higher education fundraising presents a
new opportunity for exploration of contradiction, paradox, and irony and how they are
handled in this particular field. This information regarding contradiction, paradox, and
irony leads to the next two research questions of this study:

RQ 3: What types of contradiction, paradox, and irony, if any, are found in
higher education development language?

RQ 4: How, if at all, does contradiction, paradox, and irony shape the way higher
education development professionals perceive their profession?

Beyond what types of tensions exist and how they shape perceptions within the
profession of higher education fundraising, it is also important to explore how they are
managed. Lewis (2000) posited that paradox management is difficult because it often
perpetuates a vicious cycle, but that management is possible by coping with tensions that create them. While some researchers encourage individuals to confront paradoxes, Lewis suggested three ways to manage them: “acceptance, confrontation, and transcendence” (p. 764). By doing this, an individual or manager recognizes the power of paradox and can deal with it in order to stop the cycle (Lewis, 2000). Oswick et al. (2002) and Trethewey and Ashcraft (2004) also suggested looking through an applied lens when it comes to tensions to answer not just how to solve tensions, but also how to manage and live with them, and how to use them as a "fruitful source of knowledge generation" (Oswick et al., 2002, p. 301). Tensions are not necessarily issues that need to be fixed in order to be productive, but if explored, can be managed in order to find balance within the workplace (Lewis, 2000; Trethewey & Ashcraft, 2004). The above research suggests delving deeper into not just fixing tensions but also managing them (Lewis, 2000; Stohl & Cheney, 2001). Previous studies have examined gendered tensions in organizations (Buzzanell & Liu, 2005; Trethewey, 1999), tensions related to balancing work and home life (Buzzanell et al., 2005), and tensions in government occupations such as social work (Trethewey, 1999). However, none of these studies have specifically targeted the profession of higher education development and how individuals within this profession identify and manage their tensions. This leads to the next research question:

RQ 5: How do higher education development professionals manage profession related tensions?

The answers to these questions will provide insight into the metaphors fundraisers use and how they shape their perception of the field of higher education philanthropy, as well as tensions in the profession and how they are managed. In the next chapter, the
methods used to explore these questions are outlined and justified based on the nature of this examination.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

There are two main parts of this study. One focus is to discover what metaphorical concepts are found in the language fundraisers use and how they shape perceptions of the profession. The second focus is to find what contradictory, paradoxical, and ironic tensions are used in fundraisers’ language, how they shape the perceptions of the profession, and how fundraisers manage the tensions associated with their occupation. Considering the research questions and the nature of this study, qualitative methods were used to adequately capture what metaphors development professionals commonly use and their perceptions of their occupation. Qualitative research was also used to identify tensions in the profession of higher education development, and participants were able to express how tensions were either solved or managed. There are often a multitude of interpretations that can be found within an organization on a given topic (Trethewey, 1999), which is why qualitative research best suits the subjective nature of organizational metaphors and tensions. Morgan and Smircich (1980) simply stated that human beings are engaged in the social world and help to create reality. Therefore, they argued that researchers “must move to investigate from within the subject of study and employ research techniques appropriate to that task” (p. 498). With that being said, an interpretivist approach was deemed most appropriate to capture what is happening within the profession of higher education development.

Process

This research works from an established typology conducted on metaphorical concepts used by higher education fundraisers (Carver, 2014). Carver (2014) found that
higher education fundraisers used several metaphors in their profession and to describe their profession. As previously mentioned in the literature review chapter, two themes were found to be contradictory in nature, providing the basis to further this qualitative research. In the current study, metaphors along with profession related tensions will all be studied at the suggestion of Oswick et al. (2002) who discussed the importance of looking at both similar and dissimilar linguistic tools.

First, this project obtained approval from the Western Kentucky University Institutional Review Board. Twelve higher education development professionals were identified through convenience and snowball sampling and contacted to participate. Each participant was briefed on the intent of the study and reasoning for using the interview methodology. Once the potential interviewees agreed to participate, they signed a written consent form, allowing the interviews to be conducted and recorded. The consent form used for this research can be found in Appendix A.

Research Context and Participants

Twelve individuals agreed to participate in the study, including six males and six females. All participants had at least one year experience in higher education fundraising and ranged from 3 to 25 years. Their cumulative total of experience was 149 years, and the mean experience was 12.42 years. Their experience as fundraisers varies. Some have worked only for their current institution; some have worked as a higher education fundraiser at multiple institutions; and others have experience in fundraising at other nonprofit organizations outside of higher education. Levels of administration also varied; some examples of titles are Director of Development, Executive Director of Development, Associate Director of Development, Director of Annual Giving, Director
of Principal Gifts, Assistant Dean for Advancement, Major Gifts Officer, and Vice President for University Advancement. Participants were given the liberty to choose their own pseudonyms. The chart below provides the pseudonym, gender, and specific fundraising experience of each participant in the study.

Table 1 Research Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Fundraising Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crafty</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>10 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governor</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>4 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knotts</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>22 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eric Taylor</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>6 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Starsky</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>25 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>13 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beau</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Derby</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>7 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debbie Turner</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>15 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julianna Florrick</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>11 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kentucky Lion</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>20 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheldon</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>13 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Collection Procedures

Semi-structured interviews were chosen as the main data collection technique for this study because they allow “more flexibility and responsiveness to emerging themes for both the interviewer and respondent” (Jackson, Drummond, & Camara, 2007, p. 25). Interviews allow researchers to gain insights into the social world of their participants and are more personal than other data collection techniques, like surveys. Kvale (1996) described the procedure of interviewing as “an interpersonal situation, a conversation between two partners about a theme of mutual interest” (p. 125). Data collection occurs when “knowledge evolves through dialogue” (p. 125). Interview length ranged from 20 minutes, 59 seconds to 46 minutes, 2 seconds with a mean interview time of 32 minutes 46 seconds. All 12 interviews combined for a total of 6 hours, 33 minutes, 23 seconds. Nine interviews were conducted by phone, and three interviews were conducted in person. Phone interviews were used in the same way as face-to-face since Sturges and Hanrahan (2004) found no significant differences between the two communication channels. Face-to-face interviews took place at the individuals’ offices at their respective institutions.

The interview questions regarding metaphor were the same questions used in Carver’s (2014) study in an attempt to confirm, deny, or add to the original findings of that study. Questions were open ended and started more general asking about the profession and jobs held by participants. As the interview progressed, the questions became more specific asking about interactions with donors, describing the profession in detail, and comparing the profession to another similar line of work. The most definitive questions were posed toward the end of the interview. These questions asked about the
common phrases used, how these phrases shape their view of the profession, what difficulties are faced in this line of work, and how they are handled. The full interview protocol can be found in Appendix B. Lastly, demographic questions including sex, current position, experience, and higher education development experience were asked. All interviews were audio recorded using an application on an iPhone 5c. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and ranged from 12 to 21 pages in length double-spaced. The total transcript length was 194 pages double-spaced.

Data Analysis Procedures

The analysis began with open coding of the interview data so that it could be “broken down into discrete parts, closely examined, and compared for similarities and differences” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 102). Since a portion of this study is based on the actual metaphors used by fundraisers, in vivo coding was used so the words and phrases could be preserved in the codes. Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980) Metaphors We Live By, Turner’s (1991) Metaphors Fundraisers Live By, and the typology established in Carver’s (2014) study informed the coding process, but particularly addressed the first two research questions. Metaphors not discussed in these works were also discovered. Lewis (2000), Stohl and Cheney (2001), and Trethewey (1999) provided the basis for identifying and examining contradictions, paradoxes, and irony within organizations to help answer the remaining three research questions. These works also left room for new tension-related concepts to emerge. Opening coding yielded 2,055 codes.

Next, axial coding was conducted in which the original codes were analyzed and collapsed into 31 larger categories that were determined by parallels and relationships across the codes (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). To maintain focus on the first two research
questions of interest, there was a category created specifically for non-relevant metaphors used during the interview. Several of the categories from Carver’s (2014) study were replicated which included *fundraisers as facilitators* and *where we are* to name a couple. In addition to Carver’s original metaphorical categories, two more categories dealing with metaphor were also discovered, including *fundraisers bouncing around ideas*, *advancement*, and *development*. Some categories related to both metaphors and tensions, including *relationships vs. business metaphors*, *dehumanizing terms, always on*, and *blurred lines*. Categories that related solely to tensions were also found and included *competing NPOs, competing priorities*, and *advancement vs. athletics*. There were also two categories for handling and managing tensions in the profession such as *relying on friends, family, and coworkers, and transparency and openness*.

Categories were reexamined for relationships, and 12 major themes emerged. The themes showed how different tropes of metaphor, contradiction and paradox are used in the world of higher education development and how the concepts shaped both fundraisers’ view of the occupation and their management of the tension-centered tropes. Although irony was an area of study, no ironic situations were found in the data set. Repetition, recurrence, and forcefulness were used while examining data to determine the constitution of a theme (Owen, 1984). Themes emerged when half of the participants noted similar circumstances or ideas. Some themes addressed both metaphor and tension related research questions but were reported to best reflect the intent of the participants. Finally, the data were revisited to find supporting quotes and/or potential outliers in the data.
**Verification Procedures**

Verification procedures are important for any type of research, as they provide credibility and ensure the participants were adequately represented in the findings section (Creswell & Miller, 2000). First, “thick, rich descriptions” are provided to ensure the data were accurately presented. “The purpose of a thick description is that it creates verisimilitude” (Creswell & Miller, 2000, pp. 128-129), thus making the reader feel he or she also could have experienced what is being described in the findings. Quotations by all participants were used to give an authentic representation of all the interviewees.

Second, member checking was also used after the coding process. In qualitative research, it is important that the researcher’s interpretation reflects an accurate picture of what the participants meant. Therefore, two of the participants were asked to confirm the findings, which provided validation to the metaphorical analysis as well as the other themes found amongst the conflicting tropes (Creswell & Miller, 2000). I gained positive feedback from participants in the member check. Both participants agreed with the twelve themes found in this research. (See Appendix D). Third, the credibility of this study was enhanced through peer debriefing. Two individuals who were not participants but knowledgeable on the topic of higher education fundraising were asked to review the findings and give feedback. The chosen peers were encouraged to voice opinions of strong support or challenge the beliefs of the researcher (Creswell & Miller, 2000). The two peer attestations, who also work in higher education fundraising, approved all of the findings in this study, and noted how their experiences were similar to the emerging themes. They also raised additional interest in the donor’s point of view versus the
fundraisers’ and noted that fundraisers tend to have similar personalities, which could account for the large number of themes (See Appendix C).

**Role of the Researcher**

The topic for the first metaphorical concept study as it related to higher education professionals (Carver, 2014) was suggested by my advising professor, Dr. Jennifer Mize Smith. I immediately gained interest since I have worked in the field of higher education development for over 3 years. After conducting an initial study, I found that not only do higher education development professionals use a plethora of metaphors, but they also use conflicting language expressing contradictory ideologies (Carver, 2014; Meisenbach & Jones, 2003). I wanted to research these topics further both to confirm previous findings and to discover other contradictions, paradoxes, and ironic situations that are perceived within the profession.

As the researcher, I took on the role of interviewer. I had to be conscientious during interviews and while analyzing the data so that my own biases did not influence the findings. Instead, I tried to use my own experience to provide valuable insight in the discussion chapter. This took careful consideration since I work in philanthropy for a public university. I carefully phrased questions and made every effort to interpret and report the data from the participants’ perspectives. I jotted down notes of expected outcomes in the research so that when I went through the process of thematic analysis, no underlying assumptions would overcome the actual data found.

In order to accurately code and report the data, I had to study the types of metaphors described in Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980) book, as well as different research conducted in the realm of contradiction, paradox, and irony. I was rigorous in my search
for metaphors; as I mentioned before, some are so commonly used that at first they do not stand out as a metaphorical concept. Also regarding metaphorical concepts, I had to be cognizant of past themes found in my first study, while also allowing new themes from the most recently collected data to emerge. It takes more thought to find concepts highlighting the dissimilar than those which point out similarities, like metaphor (Oswick et al., 2002).

In addition to interviewing, coding, analyzing data, and identifying themes, I also contacted 10 participants through convenience sampling and found 2 participants from referrals. I made sure that all the participants were from a variety of different institutions so this study would reflect a broader population of higher education development professionals.

This chapter summarized the method selection, process, participants, data collection and analysis, verification procedures, and role of the researcher. This explanation provides reasoning for the selected methods of research and describes the rigor of this research project. In the next chapter, the findings of this study are presented in themes addressing the research questions that were posed following the literature review in Chapter 2.
CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

This chapter explores the various themes found in this study. Each theme is described in detail and how it corresponds to the five research questions addressed in the literature review chapter. Twelve themes were discovered through the research with each supported by a minimum of half the participants.

All five themes from Carver’s (2014) study were verified in this current study; however, two theme names were adjusted to better reflect the data but vary only slightly from their original form. New metaphorical themes also emerged. In addition, given the complexities of language and the prevalence of metaphors throughout the data, some themes were both metaphorical in nature and related to tensions, like contradiction and paradox. Consequently, some themes spoke to more than one research question of interest and are reported according to the participants’ views and the research question best reflected by their responses. Table 2 provides a summary of research questions and their corresponding themes.
The next sections reexamine the research questions, explore the themes, and provide participant quotations that support the findings.

### Metaphors in Fundraisers’ Language

The first research question inquired about what metaphors higher education fundraisers used in their work, and findings revealed four themes dedicated solely to metaphor usage: (a) *advancement and development*, (b) *movement along the giving cycle*,...
(c) relationships vs. business (d) dehumanizing terms vs. donor-focused, and (e) fundraisers bouncing ideas.

**Advancement and Development**

This first theme, advancement and development, is based exclusively on the job titles of the participants and the names of the divisions where they work. Participants weren’t specifically asked interview questions about their titles or division names, but as an observation, I noticed how these items are deeply rooted in metaphor. They are ontological because of the use an abstraction is used to define something concrete (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Below I dissect which titles and divisions included the words advancement and development, which are metaphorical terms that represent the work fundraisers do with potential donors and donors to provide advancement and development for their institutions.

Six participants held a position with development in the title, while three had advancement in the title. For example, there were several directors of development, an associate dean for advancement and vice president for advancement. Three other titles did not include either word. As far as division names at the institutions, five used the word development, six used advancement, and one of these incorporated both words into the division name.

Two participants worked directly with a college at the university they were employed by and not in a centralized fundraising division or setting. Some examples of division names are office of university advancement, office of alumni and development, institutional advancement, university development, and development and advancement services. These words have become synonymous with fundraising operations at
universities and other higher education institutions and represent a part of what the entirety of the job and division hold.

**Movement Along the Giving Cycle**

*Movement along the giving cycle* is one of the original themes found in the Carver (2014) study, and it gives insight into different metaphors higher education development professionals use in their discourse. Higher education fundraisers talked about their occupation as a process or cycle with many steps where they are expected to educate, move, facilitate communication, and move donors and prospective donors along. More specifically, the following two categories, *fundraisers as facilitators* and *where we are*, describe how development professionals talk about movement along the giving cycle or throughout the giving process.

**Fundraisers as facilitators.** All twelve participants spoke about themselves as facilitators in some way regarding the fundraising process. For instance, Sheldon discussed, “building a habit of giving” while Beau noted they were “building the next donor base.” Charles also mentioned building a donor’s interest in a particular program. Similarly, Julianna said she assists with “identifying the priorities with donor’s interest,” Kentucky Lion mentioned an important part of the process was “engaging them (donors) with the life of the university,” and Starsky said he helps donors, “match their interests to things that could impact students.” Knotts, too, spoke in terms of connecting donor intent with institutional priorities and how it affects success:

You develop a strategic plan, you develop your priorities, and hope that you can align with your donors’ interest. Try to connect their interest with your priorities.

The *fundraising process* is…you like to establish a realistic goal that stretches
you a little bit. And the more you can connect with strategic priorities of the institution with the donors’ interests, the more money you’ll raise… I think that’s the primary gist of it. I think it’s identifying the priorities with the donor’s interest.

Crafty shared that discussions regarding facilitation amongst donors occurs often at their staff meeting saying they regularly talked about “how we can best tackle it together to move forward and get that person closer to a gift.” Governor also discussed movement in terms of the cycle explaining that you begin with cultivation, “then move towards ‘the ask,’ and then stewardship/cultivation starts all over again.” The next category goes along with the movement of donors and discusses how fundraisers discuss these movements in the profession internally.

**Where we are.** Eleven participants used phrases captured in the category where we are, an in vivo term reflecting the orientational metaphors often used. For example, Beau, Knotts, Julianna, Derby, Debbie, and Governor routinely described their whereabouts with prospects, donors, proposals, processes, goals, and the university in general. For example, Debbie acknowledged that fundraisers talk about “where they are in the process, whether it’s a discovery or cultivation or preparation to deliver a proposal.” Knotts used an orientational metaphor to discuss goal assessment specifically saying, “projecting out what the fiscal year will look like and where we are and where we are in relation to what the goal is supposed to be at the end of the fiscal year.” Kentucky Lion shared how proper planning allows a fundraiser to “get in front of as many people as we can.” Participants also used upward movement phrases like “stepped up” and moving up gift levels or getting donors to higher levels. Participants consistently noted their
coordination role with donors and the institution they where they worked, and were concerned with the metaphorical movement of their donors. They used spatial metaphors to describe these movements, and saw themselves in a part of the work they were doing.

**Fundraisers Bouncing Ideas**

In *fundraisers bouncing ideas*, fundraisers used metaphorical concepts to describe the collaborative environments and relationships that exist among development professionals across all different institutions. Eleven participants shared positive experiences in exchanging information with other higher education fundraisers. For instance, Eric spoke about how people in this profession “*lean on each other* when we have struggles.” Crafty shared how he, too, teams up with other development officers:

You try to *bounce things off your coworkers* to say, “Hey, I’m having trouble getting in to see XYZ corporation. What tactics have you used? Have you worked with them before? If so, what tactics have you used to *get in the door*?”

Governor gave a similar sentiment, saying,

They all understand the *line of work that we’re in*, they all have the same stresses.

With the development officers I talk to, it’s more for *bouncing ideas off each other*, maybe voicing frustrations and seeing how they *overcome* those.

Kentucky Lion expanded on this thought by saying you can rely on other development professionals and “don’t always have to *reinvent the wheel*” to resolve issues. Similarly, Debbie explained how fundraisers “get together and *brainstorm*,” while Charles and Derby shared that they have a *go-to* individual to help with problems they are *facing*. Beau shared an alternate meaning for the CASE acronym and remarked that best practices are shared and development professionals can, “*copy and steal*
Fundraisers shared their positive experiences and the closeness they feel toward other individuals in the same line of work. The metaphors used help convey these feelings based on past experiences.

**Relationships vs. Business**

This theme, *relationship vs. business*, explored all the different types of both relationship and business metaphors used in higher education development. It presents a contradictory issue in the profession, and the conflict lies in the fundraisers’ use of both friendly relational type terms and corporate and businesslike terminology. Since the participants did not acknowledge the contradiction occurring between these two types of terminology, this theme is included in the section regarding research question one. Two categories joined to create this theme centered on contradiction and metaphors. These categories were simply named relationships and business. The final category in this theme describes a similar metaphor and contradiction and is named art vs. science. The art component referring to the relationship side of the profession and the science describes the processes that take place, which are often more businesslike in nature.

**Relationships.** When higher education fundraisers spoke about their interactions with donors, they used relational and friendship type language, and the metaphors shifted to that same focus as well. All of the participants used relationship metaphors in their interviews. For instance, Crafty, Derby, Beau, Julianna, Kentucky Lion, Sheldon and Knotts discussed the donor’s *connection with the institution* or their *connection with the donor*. Crafty, Debbie, Derby, Julianna, Kentucky Lion, Eric, Beau, Knotts, and Charles all mentioned building relationships. Crafty said he could not compare this line of work to any other:
I wouldn’t compare it to anything. I think life’s about building relationships, and that’s really what we do. I think it’s a relationship-based business. You break it down more into those terms rather than you go out and ask people for money. You do that, but if you haven’t built the relationship properly with someone, then the money is not going to come. I think it’s based on relationships. And, yes, you have to ask for money at the end of the day, but it’s really a relationship-based business.

Knotts, Charles, and Governor used more intimate metaphors when describing interactions with donors. For example, Governor shared a story about how his donor was more inclined to give when he approached in a relational manner:

I asked him had he thought about increasing his gifts, if there was something he’d be inclined to make an impact gift towards. He said, “actually, I’ve never been asked that before outside of a piece of paper in the mail. Now, I’m never going to increase my giving through a piece of mail. I may increase it a little bit, but not in terms of an impact type gift. I want the personal touch. I appreciate you coming to see me.”

Knotts also spoke about how fundraisers engaged donors in a personal relationship: “All in all it’s a fun process getting to know the donors and their families…just engaging with them at a personal level not just an institution, a donor relationship.” Charles posited that the topic of conversation raises the intimacy, “And so it’s an engagement process. It becomes very intimate, I think, when you start to talk about larger gifts of a six or seven figure nature.”
**Business.** All the participants also used business terms to describe their positions in higher education advancement. For instance, several interviewees mentioned that they have or manage a portfolio of donors and prospects, which equates to a book of business. Governor even said that a commonly used phrase is “treat your donors as customers.” Development officers wanted their donors to feel like they are investing in the institution. Beau described that it needs to be a mutual experience, “You know, what are we doing to really show them that we’re investing back in them so that they want to invest back in us.” A few also referred to a popular business phrase, return on investment.

Seven participants compared development to business related jobs like sales or a financial planner. Starsky used both outside occupations in his description. “I would look at it more like a cross between a financial planner, [and] you know it has a tendency to have a sales component to it,” he explained, “but you’re selling a feeling, you’re not selling a product, so that’s probably a key difference I would want to point out.” Julianna made the same sales comparison but added that fundraising is a more noble profession. “Higher education fundraising and being on the road doing fundraising as the largest portion of your job is closest to sales for good,” but then clarified, “Sales with a really honorable bottom line.” Four other participants used sales like terminology like building the pipeline or moving prospects through the pipeline.

**Art vs. Science.** Several participants used a similar metaphor that depicted the same idea as business vs. relationship, and it is an art vs. science approach. The donor piece of fundraising was discussed as the art, while the science part tended to be the “behind the scenes” portion that is run more like a business. Charles, for example, described development like a piece of art, “the fundraising process is sort of classic and
timeless.” In contrast, Debbie talked about how common terms in development are the science of the field and thought the focus was often shifted in the wrong direction:

They’re [terms] the science of it, they’re the science part of it, and the human being is the art part of it. So there’s got to be a mixture of the art and the science. So I think what we talk about most often is the science part of it, we don’t really talk about the art that much…which is interesting because we, sometimes think we focus too much on system, and I think the rest of our division is about the system, but we’re more about the art and I think they sometimes forget about the art of it.

Derby also expressed a similar view, trying to strike a balance between the two:

It’s a tricky blend, I think. It certainly requires a lot of analysis and being very strategic. But without the artful piece, the creative piece, the ability to think outside the box about how to cultivate this relationship and how to care for that person, it’s just not going to happen. So, I would describe it as this unique blend of both science and art.

Although these two terms are contradicting in nature like business vs. metaphor, participants alluded to the fact that a mixture or blend of art and science is needed to be successful.

**Dehumanizing vs. Donor-Focused Terms**

The following theme, dehumanizing vs. donor-focused terms, is similar to the last because it could possibly answer the first and third research question. I chose to include it in the section regarding research question one because like relationships vs. business, the interviewees shared that these terms were commonly used language and did not
notice the conflict in terminology. This theme was formed due to the contrast of metaphors that fundraisers use, some of which are donor-centered and some of which are dehumanizing in nature. Dehumanizing and donor-focused language presents a plethora of metaphorical concepts. Below I give examples of each in the corresponding categories named dehumanizing terms and donor-focused terms.

**Dehumanizing terms.** Although it seems unintentional, higher education development officers tend to use terminology internally that dehumanizes donors and potential donors. These terms are metaphors because the language used often refers to the donor or potential donor as a metonymies, or part of the whole. All the participants in this study used or gave an example of at least one term or phrase to describe donors that is dehumanizing in nature. For instance, donors or potential donors were simply called *LYBUNTs* (gave Last Year But Unfortunately Not This year), *SYBUNTs* (gave Some Years But Unfortunately Not This year), *lapsed donor, prospect, an anchor visit, suspect, high potential vs. low potential, low hanging fruit, donors with cobwebs in their wallets,* and sometimes are rated in a system.

Dehumanizing phrases are also used to discuss processes. For example, several participants discussed conducting *wealth screenings* and *prioritizing prospect pools.* Many interviewees also explained how they *qualify prospects.* Governor mentioned *fishing for prospects* and *mining that field.* Eric said “they don’t keep us tied down…they want us out hustling” and stated that his superior had been known to say, “*If the bees are all around the hive, they’re not going out collecting honey.*”

Julianna was not completely comfortable using these terms, while others like Charles and Eric explained that while it could seem impersonal, they must use some kind
of terminology to categorize individuals in this line of work. Overall, the majority of the participants did not feel it shaped their view of the profession.

**Donor-focused terms.** Earlier, it was presented that all participants used relational metaphors, while six participants used *donor-focused* or *donor-centered* to describe their work. This terminology means that their work is largely shaped by the donors’ vision. For example, Debbie said, “*in the end* it’s about the donor,” and also used the phrase *donor driven*. Julianna shared that it is important to treat donors “as individuals who have a *vision that you could align.*” Knotts said, “keep the donor happy at all time.” The *donor-centered approach* contradicts with the dehumanizing phrases mentioned above, but this tension did not seem to impede or shape how fundraisers view the profession as a whole.

**Metaphors Shape Fundraisers’ Perceptions of their Profession**

In response to the second research question exploring how metaphors shape participants’ perceptions of the fundraising profession, two themes emerged and included *fundraising: not your typical aspiration* and *assumption of a naturally captive audience.*

**Fundraising: Not Your Typical Aspiration**

Higher education development professionals described their entrance to the profession with metaphorical concepts that shaped their view of the profession as an occupation that is not typically sought after as an initial career; rather, they felt a calling which is why the theme is named *fundraising: not your typical aspiration*. Eight participants shared how they felt fundraising was not something they knew about previously or studied in a professional school setting. Debbie and Eric shared how they
just jumped in the profession, but did not have previous training or knowledge of what it entailed. Debbie specifically said,

I think in a lot of cases it’s something that people don’t know anything about and they just sort of end up in it somehow. You don’t really train to be a development officer. I just sort of fell into it…I had taught in the English department forever and had thought I was going to teach high school English and realized that I hated it. And this position was created and so I just sort of jumped in.

Knotts described how he “came to through a nontraditional track” and got to “create his own path”, while Starsky also said he was not aware of the profession, but found it was a good career path for him. Julianna explained how she was lead into the profession and was “hooked”, “I was guided here. I had no idea that I was such a fit for fundraising.” Derby and Sheldon explained their entry into the profession as accidental. Sheldon stated, “I just dumb lucked into it,” explaining that the nonprofit she previously worked for experienced budget cuts so she had to “chase the money” try to “keep things afloat.”

Alternatively, there was one outlier. Kentucky Lion described her entrance into the field as the exception, stating,

I’m one of those rare people who went into it right out of college. When I was a student here at T University, I was the Fellow Call Manager. I was the very first one that they had ever had so I was kind of a guinea pig…I had gotten to know people in the development office and they had encouraged me to think about it as a profession.
Although there was one outlier, she still alluded to the fact that her way of getting into the field was “rare” or unusual.

**Assumption of a Naturally Captive Audience**

The underlying assumption of alumni loyalty shapes how higher education fundraisers perceive their profession answering research question two. Six participants expressed the *assumption of a naturally captive audience* by interchangeably using terms like donors and alumni, expressed the assumption that alumni had positive experiences at their institutions, or used ownership pronouns which implied their belonging to the institution. This shows that higher education fundraisers see their occupation as more natural because they have an existing base of potential donors unlike other nonprofits or for-profits. For example, Governor used donor and alumni as synonyms and explained that they had a source for finding donors:

> We have a lot of untapped wealth here at A----, which is a result of us neglecting some of *our donors* outside of our 180 mile radius…We have a lot of very wealthy *alums* who, for whatever reason, *have not been mined*.

Beau did not limit the natural captive audience to alumni but did share that there is already a defined group with interest in the institution:

> I think that one of the advantages that higher education fundraising has is that you already *have a clearly identified prospect pool through alums, through parents of current students or past students through, you know, your board of trustees* which obviously they might not all be alums, but it’s *people that have some connection to your university*. 
Charles also used an interesting metaphor to describe donors to his institution and posited, “Our donor base is an outgrowth of course to a large degree of our alumni base,” meaning that they rely largely on alumni as donors. Sheldon made a valid point saying, “One of the really great parts about being in higher ed development...my alumni are not your alumni” meaning that development professionals can share ideas without the fear of losing their prospective donor base. Derby talked about the importance of alumni giving back to their alma mater, saying, “I think doing something for those who have served you is also a critical piece. A lot of people have received so much because of E University and to give back a little something later on is a really, really special thing.” The reference to alumni as a natural captive audience could be either true or false, but either way it shaped the perception fundraisers have toward the profession.

**Tensions in Fundraisers’ Language**

The third research question examined the tensions found in fundraisers’ language. The tension related themes include categories with contradictions and paradoxes included budget and resource concerns and people do not want to see you.

**Budget and Resource Concerns**

*Budget and resource concerns* are a main source of tension in a lot of work places, but especially at public universities. Private universities also experience a great need for more resources since they do not receive state appropriations. The topic of budget and resource concerns was discussed by eleven of twelve participants, and was often displayed as a contradiction, paradox, or ironic situation. With state funding declining all over the country, a couple participants referred to how they are “state
assisted” not state funded, which was a misconception among some donors. Sheldon shared,

I think one of the big ones [misconceptions] here is that the state contributes a lot of money. At this point, it’s something like 10% of the overall university budget contributed by the state, which is not really very much at all. But to our donors, we’re a state institution and the state’s taking care of us and why do you need my money. There’s not a long history of people contributing here, and so they’re always shocked to find that out.

Knotts described how even though dollars and positions are cut, expectations remain the same:

Some of the institutions would get to do a much better job if they were able to invest in more people…Budget constraints are tough. When you got a cut…the first thing you do, because you don’t want to affect people necessarily, is you look at the vacant positions and you just don’t rehire them. Well, in some cases it might be for the college of business which happens to be one of the areas at N University which is one of the greatest areas to raise money for because it has the most return on investment. Well there was a vacant position so the institution says we’re not going to replace that for a while. Well then who’s going to pick that up? You’re still expected to raise that money but you don’t have anybody assigned to that. So yeah, that does make it problematic.

Starsky stated that institutions need to realize that much like the cost of tuition goes up, so does the cost of fundraising efforts:
You know there’s a growing demand to have private dollars, but if we don’t invest in that, we can’t continue doing more and more for less and less. You know if we keep doing the same thing over and over, we should expect the same results… if you want to raise more money you got to put more money in, put more resources into doing that. And the payoff can be very large, but it’s sometimes a hard nut to swallow for a campus to really invest significant dollars into their fundraising effort.

Charles mentioned an irony that occurs with the stewardship piece when resources are limited and staff cannot be afforded, saying,

We definitely don't spend the same time and energy stewarding gifts…we raise the gifts, kind of hand them over to somebody else, and we go out in search of the next gift. I think that's the reality for most of us. If I'm being totally true, that's what we do. If we could do it better, we would, but we talked about limited resources. So, it's just kind of the reality. So we do the best we can with stewardship.

Budget issues are not an uncommon theme in any type of business, but they are presented in an interesting light from the view of higher education professionals.

**People Do Not Want to See You**

This theme, *people do not want to see you*, also addresses a tension found in higher education fundraising, which answers research question three. Eight participants remarked that sometimes people do not want to see them, it can be a challenge to get visits, or there is a misconception that fundraisers are just out to “twist your arm.” This contradiction stems from the issue of development professionals wanting to build as
many relationships with individuals as possible, yet some people have a fear of the initial visit. Debbie did not feel directly impacted by this tension, but noted that it is a common occurrence, as she explained,

I think [it] could be felt by development officers is the “oh no here she comes again, she’s going to ask for money”. And you know the feeling that people don’t want to see you. I think I’ve been very fortunate that I don’t have folks that feel that way about me potential donor fear of DO [development officer] asking for money, but I think it’s because of the relationship building.

Charles and Julianna also discussed how people misjudge the profession of higher education fundraising and don’t understand the true nature of the position. Julianna said,

We’ve all been in that situation where someone said, oh I don’t want this person to be there people don't want to see DO [development officer], and you feel two feet tall. That’s very old school ideas about development as being pushy and not being in tune with what an essential giver and an institution are trying to accomplish together.

Charles echoed Julianna’s feelings by saying,

I still encounter a lot of people who will joke about our work and say that we twist arms or things like that. And so we, I try to politely correct that or subtly educate them as to the real nature of our business and that we're not sticking anybody up so to speak or you don't have to protect your pocketbook. I hear all of those, you know, the development officer's here.

Eric tried to avoid this misconception of “twisting arms” by using the following introduction, “And, so, really, I go into the conversation and I tell people, ‘you know I’m
not a gift getter. I hope that you will view me more as a philanthropic advisor with a V University bend.” This struggle fundraisers face could be seen as both a contradiction and as a blotted reputation that they must carry.

**Tensions Shape Fundraisers’ Perceptions of their Profession**

The fourth research question inquired as to how linguistic tensions shaped participants’ perceptions of their profession and yielded two themes: *internal and external competitive climate* and *blurred line between work and personal life*. Although they both contained many metaphorical concepts, the participants strongly regarded both themes as tensions; therefore, these findings are included in the section answering the fourth research question.

**Internal and External Competitive Climate**

*Internal and external competitive climate* is the theme with the most categories related to tensions. Development professionals in higher education feel that they face a multitude of competition issues both internally and externally. These categories range from vying for time for both administrative and fundraising tasks, to competing institutional priorities, to competition among development officers and also amongst other nonprofits in the community. This theme addresses the fourth research question because these internal and external tensions impact fundraisers’ views on the profession. They see the profession as highly competitive. First, the internal difficulties faced by higher education fundraisers are discussed, followed by the one external difficulty.

**Administrative tasks vs. fundraising tasks & the race against time.** This category is paradoxical because fundraisers described how administrative tasks often thwart their main goal of raising money for their institutions. Crafty shared that
administrative tasks tend to take a lot of time. “I think at a state school there’s a lot of 
*red tape,*” he claimed. “A lot of times you have to touch a lot of different people to get 
something done.” Charles and Beau explained how they are often more reactive than 
they’d like to be. Beau said, “It’s hard to spend time on the long term and the like big 
picture planning because you’re reacting more to the here and now and what’s, you 
know, what’s screaming the loudest at you at the time.” Charles reiterated Beau’s 
response when he answered what his typical day was like. “It ends up being more 
reactive than I would prefer,” he admitted; “I am dealing with a lot of what I would call 
urgent things that may or may not be really important or the most important things.”

Charles, Starsky, and Derby were all in leadership roles and often found it hard to 
balance administrative tasks and their own fundraising responsibilities. Starsky simply 
stated, “You know it takes away from my time to be out visiting with donors or taking 
care of some other part of the division,” and Derby echoed,

I think that the biggest challenge I face personally is balancing the need for 
administrative time and leadership for the team with my own need to get my job 
[fundraising] done, [it’s the] pressure of [the] balancing act, [getting] my visits 
done, my donors cultivated and stewarded. I don’t know what the magic formula 
is.

Kentucky Lion compared all the responsibilities of a development officer to a 
circus act, saying,

There have been days in this profession where I’ve likened it to the circus 
performers who spin plates on top of those rods, many things going on at once. 
And you get one plate spinning and it’s going really well, but then you have you
know, come back and the other one’s slowing down. You know, get it spinning really well to keep all the plates, otherwise they’re all going to fall down.

Several of the participants stated that there just isn’t enough time to do all the things that need to be done. A couple participants used the specific metaphorical phrase “race against time,” and explained how compelled they felt to be out visiting donors vs. in the office doing other administrative tasks.

**Competing internal and external priorities.** This category is a contradictory tension that has two components, the many needs of institutions (internal) and other nonprofit organizations with the community (external). It explores how these needs can cause conflict since fundraisers found it hard to prioritize these funding needs or compete with priorities outside the institution. Nine participants shared how both internal and external competing priorities often make their position more difficult.

Kentucky Lion, Beau, and Sheldon discussed how annual giving and major giving are often conflicting because while institutions want their participation rates and annual dollars to keep going up, that may not be the highest importance for a donor with major gift potential. Kentucky Lion mentioned that they have very loyal annual donors but, are trying to educate donors with more major gift potential, “We’ve been really trying to sort of create a philosophy of giving a little bit more in major gifts as opposed to focusing on so much on the participation goals.” Sheldon also reflected on this issue, confiding,

It’s always a difficult tug of war between we want high percentage of alumni participating, and we want a lot of money. Those things to me are very different strategies. If you want to reach a lot of people for a little money, or a few people for a lot of money, you’re going to go about this in two different ways. But here,
trying to balance both is quite complicated. I know that I need the phon-a-thon and letters to reach lots of people, we want the participation to be high. At the same time, I don’t want a donor who has the potential to make a very large gift to make a very small gift over the phone and then refuse to see me later when I want to follow up. So, that’s a tug of war there.

Beau shared a similar experience with a specific donor:

We want people’s annual fund money, but we also want people to start the scholarship and that’s a constant debate and conflict around here is we just had some donor that they’re contributing like a million dollars for a capital project, but she gave $20,000 to our Queen’s our annual from last year…how do we approach her and make sure she still does that without seeming like we’re not grateful for the other gift that they gave. So that’s definitely one of the conflicts that I face all the time with higher level donors.

Debbie discussed how competing programs or departments arise and the development officer can get caught between two superiors. “The dean expects me to raise money for his priorities in that college,” she explained, “but suddenly, I’m given another priority from the vice president that has nothing to do with my college.” Knotts, Eric, Kentucky Lion, Beau, Starsky, and Charles all spoke about external nonprofits in the community and the competition for donors’ dollars. Charles shared a great metaphor for the climate of the community where he works and how his development office is trying to shift the culture:

Their mindset is oriented around that sort of peanut butter approach where they spread their philanthropic dollars across lots of different charities. And we're
asking them to make a major investment in us. So changing that mindset and getting people accustomed to that type of philanthropy has been a challenge here.

Knotts also discussed educating donors, saying, “There are so many philanthropic choices now,” he added, “people don’t know why they should support yours so you have to explain why higher education over United Way or the Fine Arts Fund and it might not be one of the other but you want to be on the top of the list.” Beau similarly discussed how their institution fights to be “at the top of people’s list.”

**Competing development professionals and the battle of metrics.** Seven participants acknowledge the competition amongst development officers over prospective donors. A few participants attributed this competitive climate to metric based systems in higher education fundraising designed to measure goals and success. Metric systems are like those found in sales and promote high performance amongst individuals. A couple participants also had strong feelings against the metrics system, stating that it impeded the relational aspect of the profession and focused more on quantity and not quality. This category is also a paradox because instead of working together toward common goals, participants had experienced competition amongst colleagues and felt that metrics could unintentionally pit development professionals against each other. Derby stated, “I think that how you measure success in a development job is a bit of a source of contention conflict in measuring success…The reality is there are some people who say, hey, if it’s all about the number, you’re not focused on the quality.”

Kentucky Lion felt similarly and shared that she thinks development professionals should be encouraged to work together:
Sometimes working with a single donor, they may have an interest in one area, but also an interest in another area and that may involve two development officers, but if you set up a metric system such that only one of them can be given credit for that proposal then you know, you’ve, you’ve \textit{pitted them against one another} rather than encouraged them to work together with the donor toward, you know, a common goal and so sometimes you can set up processes in a way that \textit{gets in the way of philanthropy}.

Crafty thought this inter development competition could cause confusion for the donor. He elaborated saying, “But the donor may get mixed, not a mixed message, but gosh, why are two or three different people calling me from L University about my giving…They don’t understand.” Governor also thought the donor should be the main focus and gave an example: “There’s an engineering alum that I’m working with who wants to give to the business school. And, of course, the engineering development officer wants them to make a gift to the engineering school because they’re an engineering alum. But that’s not necessarily where their interest is.” Eric also spoke to how metrics can impede the donor-centered approach:

I had colleagues who would go into meetings with proposals prefilled out…now they’ve got a proposal out. So, we would \textit{preach about being donor-focused}, but at the end of the day, you know there certainly a camp that was doing that and there were others that weren’t. And, you know, that was part of the—that’s a \textit{byproduct of a metrics based environment}.

The same type of issue arises with other areas of institutions as well, which is described in the next category.
Advancement vs. athletics. This category could have tied into competing development professionals or competing priorities, yet half of the participants specifically voiced their concerns regarding athletic program fundraising and how it often impedes their goals in a centralized development setting. Since six participants shared this paradox of advancement vs. athletics, it was decided that it was strong enough to constitute its own category.

Half of the participants spoke about athletic fundraising as a competitive entity because in their institutions athletic fundraisers work separately from centralized development and often do not collaborate with academic advancement. Knotts said, “Sometimes there’s a turf battle between…athletics and central development. It seems like the other units, at least where I’ve been, have been pretty collaborative, but athletics has been one that they’re going to do what they’re going to do and they don’t care whether you know or not to be honest, in some cases.” Charles also shared his view on the different culture of athletics fundraising:

There's great competitiveness and territorialism between athletic fundraisers and academic fundraisers… I have observed that academic fundraising staffs tend to have different culture and go about their work in a different way than athletic fundraising staffs, which often tend to be long-time folks of that town or that university. The term that I would use is they're more good ol' boys, so to speak. They've been around, and that's how they go about their work is backslapping. I find academic fundraising typically at most universities to be more of a professional enterprise with best practices, so to speak, and more of a professional way of going about their work. And there tends to be a conflict between those two
because on one hand, maybe there's more professional, so to speak, on the
academic side, but a lot of times the athletic folks have longer-standing
relationships with some of the top alumni, and donors, and so on
Julianna voiced why she thought that athletics tends to be able to do what it
wants, when it wants, explaining,
This is my first experience at a Division I athletics institution, and yet it’s so
difficult because our alums identify so closely with athletics. And because they
[athletics] seem to wield so much power, they [athletics] don’t have to play by the
rules. Although I’ve noticed that our development colleagues here seem to be
doing what they can to have a real community with the rest of the development
folks. But I think that their own athletic director and any other powers that are
moving them to do things will be able to change that in a second and ask them to
prioritize any collaboration they might have going on with us. And when I look at
the numbers, what’s being brought in, they [athletics] have the most power
because they’re bringing in the most money.
Eric shared a different perspective, as he previously worked for a large university
with a historically prominent football program:
What’s been really interesting for me to watch...how giving/attitudes of donors,
whatever, how they fluctuate based on how football’s going. Because, I’m telling
you, T University—I would go out...literally would be out every time that
something bad would happen. So, like I was in this—when like Coach F left, I
was...where was I? I was in South Carolina, I think, when Coach F got fired, and
people would go ballistic! And, they’d bring papers to meetings and throw them
at me. I had a buddy who had a $200,000 bequest from a donor—that donor reneged after Coach F was, well retired, or whatever. I mean it was volatile. See you would really hope to God that things wouldn’t happen with football while you’re out because it would blow up your whole trip.

In summary, the competition between advancement offices and athletics was a prevalent tension that occurred in various contexts.

**Blurred Line Between Work and Personal Life**

In the eleventh theme, *blurred line between work and personal life*, research question four was addressed because participants used certain phrases to express how there is often no distinction between their work lives and personal lives. This theme also includes very descriptive metaphors but was described as a tension by participants, therefore it was included in this section. This contradictory situation shows that development professionals often cannot let down their guard even when they are not at work. They must always be ready to encounter donors and “*talk shop.*” Two categories, *always on* and *blurred line*, go hand in hand and were used by the majority of participants to describe the tension fundraisers face when they are not on the job. Blurred line represents the work-life balance, while always on is more specific in describing how fundraisers felt the need to be poised and ready.

**Blurred line.** Two participants, Starsky and Debbie, used the actual metaphor, *blurred line*, to describe that there is not necessarily a distinction between work and home life and both spoke of instances of seeing donors outside of work, while seven other participants used similar utterances. Starsky said,
Sometimes a very *blurred line* between personal life and work life, even by virtue of walking into a restaurant in the evening. You know I’m gonna *run into a donor* everywhere I go…we’re probably gonna talk shop for a little while, so, but it doesn’t, it’s not an adverse effect, it just is there, it’s just a part of life.

Debbie mentioned that donors often become more than acquaintances which can cause conflict. “You know, I have donors who have become good friends,” she explained, “and one of those donors is upset with someone at the University right now who is also a personal friend of hers, and I do not want to *get in the middle* of their conflict so *blurred line*…great analogy.” Charles also negatively mentioned the blurred line, admitting, “Sometimes the stressors, I’ll *take home with me*…you don’t *leave it at work* sometimes.”

Other participants shared similar metaphors to the blurred line. Sheldon said, “It’s very difficult to *separate the two*…And it seems like your life, even you go to the store and you’re *bumping into people*. There’s really *no clear delineation* between work and home.” Kentucky Lion discussed how even though there is sometimes a blurred line, the flexibility offered by supervisors helps with the tension. “Sometimes it does *eat into your personal life*,” he admitted, “but I’ve been fortunate to have supervisors and administrators …they try to compensate then if there’s something we need to do, go pick up the dry cleaning…we’re able to go do that without being concerned about being *held so closely to a clock*.” The participants also described their issues on work-life balance as a pressure they had to deal with on a regular basis, which leads into the next category, always on.
Always on. As previously mentioned, these two categories are very similar, where blurred line describes the unclear delineation between work and personal life, and the category of always on describes how it made the participants feel like they were always on call or had to be ready at all times. Eight participants used similarities to the name of the category. For example, Knotts said,

With fundraising, you’re really always on the clock especially now with technology and everything. People can reach you on your text, they can text you all the time, call you, email you, so you’re always available, always on. But you got to find some balance to where, I don’t think you’re ever completely unplugged. People when they go on vacation, they say they’re unplugged but they really don’t.

Beau shared an experience that echoes Knott’s point that it is often hard for development professionals to unplug completely. “Sometimes it’s hard to turn off, and I think that that’s, too, just because the culture at the place that I’m at is, if you need something you’re kind of on the hook 24 hours a day.” He later confided, “I think going on my honeymoon was the first time that I like completely tuned out and that was kind of scary.” Governor said you have to “be a face for the university,” and Julianna said she had “to be a bit on call” and made her schedule fit the donor’s. Charles explained, “I'm visible and known, whether it's in church, or at the grocery store, or wherever else, you kinda have to be on.” This tension deals with the struggle to keep work and personal lives as separate as possible, even though some participants conceded to the fact that it is almost impossible in this profession.
Managing the Tensions in Higher Education Fundraising through 

Relationships and Transparency

The fifth and final research question explored how higher education fundraisers manage tensions within their profession, and one theme emerged: managing tensions through relationships and transparency. Two categories reflect the main ways that development professionals handle the difficulties they face: transparency, openness, and communication and relying on friends, family, and coworkers.

Transparency, Openness, and Communication

Eight participants shared the commonalities of transparency, openness, and communication to handle the tension related items mentioned in the themes above. Participants discussed the three items in this category with donors, staff, administrators, and others in the profession. Phrases like “communication is key,” “open communication,” and “transparency” were used. Starsky explained how he handles tension in very general terms, saying,

I have great confidence in my staff to talk about some issues with my senior administrative staff and we don’t harbor any secrets when we’re doing that, we just you know make sure that everybody’s in the know …I can talk them off the ledge or they can talk me off the ledge.

When asked about how to deal with competing priorities within the institution, Derby said, “It is always through transparency and open communication, a healthy dialogue, making sure the facts are known by the right individuals, open communication to handle conflict.” Charles elaborated and shared how he specifically handled situations of competing priorities to administrative staff:
One of my biggest challenges day to day can be brokering smooth relationships between deans and development officers. The dean may have some different understanding of what they expect, you know, a different idea on what they expect from the development officer. So working with them to meet their needs but also do what we know is best for the program… My personal preference is [to talk] in person. I have trouble having difficult conversations by email…that can be challenging because everybody likes to do email these days. So if something's really tricky, I try to call the dean or go sit down with them and talk with them in person. The development officers and I talk regularly, as I mentioned earlier.”

Kentucky Lion portrayed that communication is important when development professionals are getting competitive in the profession. “You try to communicate and try to work with the administrators to make them see, you know, those instances so that maybe they can change things” she explained, and then added, “Or you just do the best you can with the parameters you’re given and try to help the donor and then represent the institution as best you can.” These concepts are not in any way new or unique but show the environment in which development professionals work.

**Relying on Friends, Family, and Coworkers**

Seven participants voiced their dependency on others to help them cope with and manage tensions discussed in earlier sections. The interviewees used many outlets to help relieve tensions in the profession including family, friends, and both current and former colleagues. Governor discussed how he overcomes tensions by talking with colleagues and his supervisors and described it this way:
Sometimes to overcome it is to pick up the phone and call a colleague or something like that. My supervisor here is very open, the office is always open. Always answers calls, emails. She’s always very good about talking with you about whatever struggles you have and helping you identify ways that you can overcome them.

Beau handled the stress of the job by talking to supervisors, coworkers, and family, and summarized this by saying,

I do feel like I’m in a spot where I have above me you know, people who I report to, people that they report to that are understanding and they’re open. You know, their door’s always open and they’re willing to, you know, listen to you…if you’re stressed out I feel like we’re very, just because it is a small shop, we’re all very in tuned to one another. I think also having a supportive [spouse], I mean, my husband is like super supportive listening to me talk about it. So I think having outlets both internally and externally is definitely a way that I deal with the stress.

Kentucky Lion told about how she has used the expertise of others in the profession of community friends to help overcome difficulties. “I’ve overcome that [new government and tax laws] by having good relationships with people who are in those professions and whether it be CPA’s or attorneys, volunteers, you know, who can help,” she explained. Charles dealt with his stresses with those outside of his institution, claiming,
I talk with friends a lot. I mentioned those couple of very close friends earlier. I seek their advice a lot on some of the most difficult situations or my wife…It's my main stress relief, spend time with my kids. So basically try to maintain balance. This theme touched on both ways that participants tried to manage and solve the tensions faced in the profession, even though some organizational tensions occur no matter what the professional does to stop it.

**Chapter Summary**

In summary, this chapter described twelve themes giving insight into the five research questions asked in the literature review. These themes and categories illuminated what metaphors are used in the profession of higher education fundraising, what tensions are found in the professions, how those metaphors and tensions shape the perceptions of those that work in the field, and finally how fundraisers deal with or manage those tensions. The next chapter summarizes the findings and ties in existing literature related to tensions and metaphors in the field of higher education fundraising. It also discusses strengths, limitations, and suggested areas for future research.
CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

This study adopts the assumption that tropes, whether they point out similarities or dissimilarities, give deeper meaning to language (Oswick et al., 2002). Metaphors shape meanings due to their tie to emotion and experience (Turner, 1991), and contradiction, paradox, and irony also provide valuable insight and strengthen overall interpretation (Oswick et al., 2002). This thesis examines and gives insight into the language used in the field of higher education development from the point of view of professional fundraisers. This last chapter takes both a theoretical and pragmatic approach in hopes that this research can be furthered and applied to other areas and occupations. I first discuss the themes and the implications that they have on this line of work. Next, strengths and limitations of the study are shared, as well as areas of future research. Lastly, I summarize the main points of this project and give concluding thoughts about the metaphorical concepts used in higher education fundraising, the tensions faced in the profession and how they are managed, then lastly how metaphors and tensions shape perceptions of the field.

Summary of Themes

Previous research on higher education fundraising professionals studied language used in the field, occupational identities, and ideologies (e.g., Meisenbach, 2008; Meisenbach & Jones, 2003) but has not focused on similar tropes (metaphor) and dissimilar tropes (contradiction, paradox, and irony). Studying this gap in extant literature provides insight into how higher education fundraisers communicate through metaphorical concepts and the effects on their perception of the profession, as well as the
multitude of tensions that are faced and how they are managed in this particular organizational setting.

Twelve themes emerged and answered the following five research questions: 1. What kinds of metaphors do higher education development professionals use in their discourse? 2. How, if at all, do metaphors shape the way higher education development professionals perceive their profession? 3. What types of contradiction, paradox, and irony, if any, are found in higher education development language? 4. How, if at all, does contradiction, paradox, and irony shape the way higher education development professionals perceive their profession? 5. How do higher education development professionals manage profession related tensions?

The first theme addressed the first research question and described two metaphors used in the higher education fundraising. *Advancement and Development* is an important theme because it showed how the name of the profession is preferably described in terms of advancing or developing rather than fundraising, which Payton (1987) described as having a negative connotation or stigma attached to it. Advancement and Development are prominently used in higher education fundraising titles and division names because they soften the fact that individuals in these roles are seeking monetary gain for his or her respective institutions.

Just as Morgan (1983) shared that administration and organization are metaphors, advancement and development fall in the same category because they are “elaborated metonymically in terms of their constituent features” (Morgan, 1983, p. 604). Just like an organization metaphor, the terms advancement and development capture “a significant aspect of relations between those people in a particular location of space and time” (p.
These terms describe a part of the whole picture of higher education fundraising (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) and give the occupation a positive undertone. Advancement and development could be classified as “dead metaphors” because they have become so commonly used in the field that the meaning has shifted and is now considered a literal term (Tsoukas, 1991).

As a director of development in higher education fundraising, I prefer that title to “Major Gift Officer,” which we are also referred to internally. If I were to call an individual to set up a visit and introduce myself as the major gift officer for the college they attended, I think it could possibly offend them or put them off. I often even use the name of our division, Development and Alumni Relations, because alumni relations seems to carry a friendlier association with the institution.

*Movement along the giving cycle,* one of Carver’s (2014) original themes, was validated through this study and also gives insight into the metaphors used in the field. Oswick et al. (2002) shared that metaphors can reinforce pre-existing knowledge, which is what the participants did in this theme. The actual relationship a donor has is with the institution or university; therefore, fundraisers described their roles as facilitators or middlemen. Meisenbach (2008) found a similar theme and discovered that fundraisers used a coordination technique that they took on as an occupational frame. This coordinator role emerged when fundraisers were connecting individuals with their respective institutions. One difference in Meisenbach’s finding and this research is that interviewees were not minimizing their positions as they did with the coordination technique. Adversely, participants shared a large portion of their work as facilitating and used metaphors like building relationship, matching interests, and moving donors along
to describe their jobs. Overall, this theoretical implication supported Meisenbach’s work on occupational identities in higher education development. Carver (2014) noted, “The symbolisms in metaphorical concepts used were consistent with her findings that individuals in higher education development used multi-faceted frames to control multiple identities” (p. 18). The frame similar to coordination technique in Meisenbach’s study expressed in these findings was the facilitator metaphor presented in the movement along the giving cycle theme.

Participants also discussed how they help to move potential donor relationships along and often inquired about where they were with particular donors, goals, and processes. The participants were engrossed in their profession, which explains why so many orientational metaphors were found in the data. They often talked in terms of levels and moving donors to different levels. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) posited that these spatially defined or orientational metaphors are so commonly used in some cultures that alternate phrases that could also depict the same meaning are hard to imagine.

Participants unknowingly used so many metaphors that they did not notice when the metaphorical concepts were conflicting. Two themes, relationships vs. business and dehumanizing vs. donor-focused terms, pertaining to metaphors also presented contradictions; however, they were included in the section addressing research question one since participants did not seem aware of the conflict. The theme, relationships vs. business, also validates Carver’s (2014) findings but differs slightly since the current theme also encapsulated the art vs. science category expressed by participants which represents a similar view to relationship vs. business. Fundraisers view their job as both relational and business oriented, raising both friends and money. Interviewees used
business-like jargon internally and more relational language when talking about or with donors. This theme is similar to Meisenbach and Jones’ (2003) finding that there are “problematic juxtapositions between language of corporate ideology and friendship” (p. 1). Meisenbach and Jones used Aristotle’s friendship of utility to describe how these conflicting ideologies can actually work. In a friendship of utility, the friendship is based on what each party can do for the other, meaning what the donor can do for the institution and vice versa. Schervish (1998) posited that a relationship between a donor and an organization is mutually beneficial because the donor also feels satisfaction when they contribute.

The relationship and business metaphors represent the different aspects in the work of a higher education fundraiser. The language differed based on who they were talking to and about. This finding illustrates that while fundraisers seek to build relationship with alumni, they still have to meet goals and raise funds. This supports Scherhag and Boenigk’s (2013) findings that preferential treatment of donors is effective in raising more funds. Fundraisers must think and talk strategically about reaching their goals (business), yet build friendships with donors to accomplish that end (relationships). Similarly, the art vs. science category complements the theme of relationship vs. business. The art portion equates to the relationship part of the profession, while science refers to the internal business and jargon that goes along with it.

*Dehumanizing vs. donor-focused* also presented a contradiction in the field of higher education fundraising through metaphorical concepts, but like the last theme discussed, participants did not seem aware of the incongruence between the two. This new theme confirms the dehumanizing metaphors in Carver’s (2014) study but also
furthered it by adding the additional contradiction component, donor-focused.

Dehumanizing and donor-focused reflect the conflicting types of language used because all the participants referred to donors using negative phrases, yet half of the interviewees also claimed to use a donor-centered approach.

Higher education development professionals’ use of dehumanizing terminology seemed unintentional, yet also nonchalant like this language is commonplace in their work. This aspect of the job must be why only one participant experienced dissonance with using dehumanizing terms. Longtime higher education fundraiser and consultant, Marcie Heim (2012), incorporated a small section in her development best practice book about this phenomenon. She suggested that these dehumanizing terms shape and distort a fundraiser’s view and offered other words to be used in place of common negative phrases. For instance, instead of using “suspect,” she suggested “potential giver.” It was inconclusive in both Carver’s (2014) study and the current research whether these terms shape fundraisers’ perception of the field. Significant cognitive dissonance was reported by only one participant, and the terms were actually defended by some interviewees as a way of categorizing and identifying donors. The common use of dehumanizing terminology may happen in other occupations as well and may not create dissonance after individuals are socialized into these types of roles. Although these terms do not appear to impact fundraisers, they should still be aware of how the phrases would make university supporters feel, and perhaps consider alternatives. This would require a change in the fundraising culture at an institutional and occupational level.

As Carver (2014) mentioned, using dehumanizing terms in fundraising also supports the idea of Aristotle’s friendship of utility, just like Meisenbach and Jones
(2003) described with corporate vs. friendship ideology. Fundraisers showed no dissonance, which shows that often the relationship with the donor is a “tit for tat” type of rapport. Although these terms were used internally, so were terms like “donor-focused” and “donor-centered.” These relationship-based donor terms support Sargeant’s (2001) idea of relational fundraising where the donor is treated as an individual versus sending out mass appeals.

_Fundraisers bouncing ideas_ also addressed metaphors used in the profession. Higher education development professionals used nonliteral language to describe their interactions with others in the same field. These metaphors show how development officers often rely on each other’s expertise and influence decisions made by one another. The profession is one that encourages sharing and “bouncing ideas” or “brainstorming.” In this occupation, development professionals encounter so many individuals with a multitude of personalities, likes, and interests. They expressed the need to reach out and obtain help and ideas from others in the field, because it was logical to not “reinvent the wheel,” but instead to enlist fellow fundraisers for their experience and expertise. These are conventional metaphors and get their meaning from cultural conceptualizations and are rooted in past experiences (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). When participants mentioned that they leaned on someone or bounced an idea, obviously it was not meant in the literal way, but these phrases help to convey the close relationship these professionals have. It is hard to think of an alternative literal description or depiction that paints the same kind of closeness.

_Fundraising: not your typical aspiration_ was strongly supported by the current research and answered the second research question of how metaphors shape perceptions.
of fundraisers. Just like in the framework study (Carver, 2014), participants used metaphors to depict how they came to be in the profession, and also as a justification or reasoning for entering and staying in the field. Saying they fell into it, jumped in, dumb lucked in, were guided here, or found they were a fit for fundraising all framed the work as not typical, but desirable. Some of the metaphors implied they had the right skill set and “framed the work as esteemed although the public’s perception may not be the same” (Carver, 2014, p.19). Payton’s (1987) dissertation posited that the general public has a negative view of fundraising and do not want any part of it. Over the past decade, however, fundraising has assumed a more pivotal role and perhaps is more widely accepted. In general, the majority of society may not mind being asked for funding opportunities but does not necessarily want to do the asking. That being said, this research confirmed Carver’s (2014) findings that “fundraisers in the business described their entrance into the career path as fitting the mold or being pulled in to it, despite the fact that it is not a typical aspiration” (p.19).

*Assumption of a naturally captive audience*, too, answered the second research question of how fundraisers’ perceptions of the field are shaped by metaphors, and was similar to the findings in the original framework study (Carver, 2014). Participants insinuated that their alumni were their best prospective donors and were optimistic about the possibility of earning support with those individuals who had some existing connection with the institution. One participant stated that in this profession there is already a “clearly identified prospect pool” which supports the assumption of a captive audience.
Studies such as Mael and Ashforth (1992) and Farrow and Yuan (2011) found that other factors can also contribute to the engagement of alumni; simply earning a degree is a start but not a determinant factor. Mael and Ashforth found alumni tend to identify with prestige and satisfaction with the institution or inter-organizational competition within the university, which can, in turn, lead to donations. Farrow and Yuan found that engagement through Facebook can encourage positive attitudes and, in turn, increase volunteerism and contributions.

The idea that there is a “clearly identified prospect pool” allowed participants to believe their profession was more noble than sales. They perceived that this occupation makes a difference and assumed that alumni or others in the donor base share their beliefs. This theme also reflects King’s (2003) idea of social capital. That is, when a group of individuals in a network share the same goals and beliefs, the group will identify and recognize needs and seek to fulfill them. Higher education fundraisers held an assumption of social capital, and this finding explained how several interviewees’ perceptions were influenced by the use of metaphors.

Another tension related theme is budget and resource concerns. Budgetary concerns are most likely common in the majority of workplaces, but in the case of higher education fundraising, they present an interesting paradoxical situation. The act of a budget cut to a fundraising division actually impedes or suppresses the ability to raise money for the institution. Many participants echoed this sentiment, arguing that cutting dollars to fundraising operations and expecting the same or greater revenue outcomes is unreasonable. Lewis (2000) shared three types of paradoxes, and this situation would fall under the paradoxes of organizing and learning. It is a learning paradoxical situation
because it encompasses change; it is also an organizational paradox because it involves a group of individuals being brought together. Similarly, Stohl and Cheney (2001) posited that paradoxes are unavoidable in organizations where individuals interact and are a natural part of employee participation. Following Stohl and Cheney’s literature, budget cuts would be considered a “paradox of agency – concerning the individual’s (sense of) efficacy within the system” (p. 360). A budgetary change occurs in times of cuts, and in this case, individual fundraisers question how well they can operate in the current economic climate they are placed. Fundraisers often feel they should be spared from cuts because they believe it takes money to raise money. They often fault the institution for sidetracking their goal.

In the next theme, *people do not want to see you*, a contradiction was also found. Fundraisers seek to see as many people as possible and feel they have a natural captive audience, yet they also claim it is hard to sometimes obtain visits. Development professionals described a perception in society that they are just out to get money and fear that sometimes people are hesitant to talk to them or befriend them because of this stigma. This is an example of how contradiction can shape social reality with the client (Trethewey, 1999). Trethewey (1999) said that many truths are often at work, which is what causes the contradiction or paradox. In this particular theme, there are multiple truths occurring. For instance, a fundraiser wants to ask for donations on behalf of their institution, but does not want to ask every person they encounter or during every interaction with a donor. One participant noted that there is an education process and relationship building that has to ensue to avoid this common conflict.
Along with contradiction, there is also stigma communication present in the last theme. The group, fundraisers, is labeled negatively by a community or individual; the reaction to fundraisers is fear or disgust. Then a stigma attitude is developed and shared with the individuals’ network, causing a shift of perception in social reality (Smith, 2007). This occurrence can cause individuals to discredit members of the stigmatized group, which makes rejecting the group with the stigma easier.

Trethewey (1999) and Trethewey and Ashcraft (2007) shared that tensions often arise from power struggles within an organization. Internal and external competitive climate encompasses the theme that power conflicts form when individuals organize and exist both internally and externally for an institution. Fundraisers also found themselves fighting with different tasks and struggling with prioritizing fundraising efforts. Just like budget cuts, this topic concerns both paradoxes of organizing and agency because the participants were preoccupied with their own efficiency within the positions they held (Stohl & Cheney, 2001). They felt pulled into different tasks that were required of them but thought fundraising was actually the top priority of their job. Lewis (2000) said, “Tensions between control and flexibility underlie paradoxes of organizing, typically manifested as mixed messages and system contradictions” (p. 767). This tension stems from the pressures development professionals face to raise money, yet they still handle other duties and responsibilities that arise in the organization.

Tensions surfaced when development professionals felt pressures from competing priorities within the institution, but also external competition from other nonprofits in the community. With the internal pressures, contradictions arose because participants were being influenced by multiple superiors and goals. Development officers often report to
both a centralized leader and academic leaders, like a college dean, which caused conflicting ideas of what top priorities are. They also felt the pressure of competing goals, where they would try to increase donor participation, while simultaneously raising major gifts. The pressures of trying to balance both goals without impeding progress of one or the other showed a contradiction of objectives. Additionally, participants also felt the stresses of competing with other nonprofits. Sargeant (2001) shared that donors tended to lapse when their interests shifted and they no longer thought the cause was worthy. This is why fundraisers expressed the importance of staying at the “top of the list” with their donors or potential donors, and they felt the pressures of contradicting priorities in the community.

It is interesting that the competitiveness exists primarily internally and not externally. Development officers often rely on colleagues at other schools and do not see outside development professionals as competition at all; yet, they often compete with their internal colleagues because of metric systems in place that measure job performance. This would be considered a paradox of structure because it acknowledges the “architecture of participation and democracy” (Stohl & Cheney, 2001, p. 360).

Development officers are given metrics or goals to hit, and although these metrics promote independent work, it can cause contention among the staff. Furthermore, the internal competition extended into other areas of the university. Participants voiced concerns with athletics staff also impeding their goals when athletics contacted donors they were working with without their knowledge. These examples show what Stohl and Cheney (2001) described as a paradox of power because each staff was fighting to have the most control over fundraising efforts at the institution. One participant conceded
control to athletics because it was noted that they bring in the most funding, implying that the source of power comes from bringing in the most dollars. Overall, fundraisers perceived their job to be of utmost importance under a very competitive climate, whether those competitive entities were internal or external.

The theme *blurred line between work and personal life* was a tension that also shaped how higher education development professionals perceive the profession of fundraising. Participants used many metaphors to describe this work-life balance tension but emphasized it as more of a struggle, which is why it was mentioned in the section concerning tensions shaping fundraisers’ perceptions. Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) defined this tension as “a form of interrole conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect” (p. 77). The participants were not necessarily adversely affected by the “blurred line” or being “always on,” but they still shared that there has to be balance. The tensions lie in the fact that development officers feel like they cannot let their guard down, making this a “strained based conflict” (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, p. 80) because the being “on” all the time is incompatible with “tuning out.” Meisenbach (2003) also found that fundraisers have trouble negotiating personal and professional identities due to consistent travel and after-hour events. She also found that they try to either separate the two or blend when appropriate and necessary to manage the tension.

A few participants also discussed how technology influences this conflict of work-life balance because technology increases the ease of contact. Boswell and Olson-Buchanan (2007) studied this phenomenon and found that use of communication technologies do affect work-life conflict, which was reported by the individuals
themselves and their significant others. That being said, the contradiction between work and personal lives shaped the perceived view fundraisers have of their profession. Specifically, they see it as a job that does not end when the work day is finished, but one that continues and eats into their personal lives.

And lastly, fundraisers described managing tensions through relationships and transparency. Trehewey and Ashcraft (2007) discussed applying tension-related research and the importance of managing and living with these tensions versus previous extant literature seeking to solve tensions. Using this lens, tensions are not seen as a problem but a reality of organizing. When participants relied on their friends and family to voice their concerns, they were not necessarily seeking solutions. They often used those individuals as an outlet to share, vent, and overcome the stress that tensions cause. On the other hand, when participants discussed issues with coworkers, especially supervisors, it was often to overcome adversities in the workplace. Similarly, when the interviewees mentioned open communication and transparency, they were also trying to overcome or solve the issues within their organization. This theme shows that when these development participants discussed issues internally with colleagues, they would try to overcome them. When discussed externally with friends and family, it was more about managing the tensions in order to live with them.

**Strengths, Limitations, and Future Research**

The current study found significant support for the themes in Carver’s (2014) research and also identified other metaphors not discovered in the original framework. In addition, several tensions were found in the profession of higher education fundraising providing valuable insight into the field. All themes were strongly supported by at least
half of the participants, and in the case of several themes, by three fourths of the participants.

This research also had its limitations. For example, convenience and snowball sampling were used to find participants for this study. This study also did not include the perspectives of fundraisers at other nonprofit organizations and only that of higher education development professionals. Participants also currently worked at both public and private institutions, but some had mixed backgrounds. Another interesting limitation was suggested by one of the peer reviewers for this study. The peer was also a higher education development professional and remarked that many of the people she has encountered in this line of work have similar personalities and outlooks. This reviewer described higher education development officers as having a “glass half full” perspective and optimistic. This made me realize that higher education fundraisers tend to be poised and are commonly in situations where they are asking and answering questions with strangers or acquaintances. These observations could shape the results because the participants could be giving answers that are more structured and surface level instead of answers with real depth.

With limitations come opportunities for future research. Since this research focused solely on higher education fundraisers, other studies could delve into different areas of the nonprofit or for-profit sector. Future studies could compare and contrast metaphors and tensions found in other nonprofit areas, or compare and contrast metaphors and/or tensions in nonprofit and for-profits. Since participants made comparisons to sales professionals and financial advisors, those professions in particular could be an area of comparison. A study could also focus primarily on either public or
private institutions and explore the differences and similarities. The two peer reviewers kept mentioning the donor’s point of view, which could be studied alone or in conjunction with fundraisers’ views on the profession. Since all participants had three or more years’ experience, and only one participant showed dissonance using dehumanizing terms, a future study could focus on development professionals in their first year of fundraising to explore any differences with those who have more experience in the field.

**Conclusion**

Higher education development professionals use an abundance of metaphors, even though they may be unaware of their usage. This language device is used to describe the profession of higher education fundraising, job responsibilities, and the donors with whom they interact. The more individuals in this field become aware of their metaphor use and the influence these linguistic tools have, the more skilled and sensitive communicators they will become. Higher education fundraisers also find there are tensions, specifically contradictions and paradoxes, in their line of work that they often have little or no control over. Fundraisers used various management and coping mechanisms to deal with these tensions in the profession. These concepts are important to acknowledge and study in such a growing occupation. The findings of this study are probably true of other professions as well and should be studied in order to gain knowledge on the variety of language devices and tensions in the workforce, their influence on perception, and the manner in which individuals deal with them.
APPENDIX A

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Paradoxes, contradictions, irony and metaphors in higher education fundraising: An examination of how these linguistic devices shape the fundraising profession

Investigator: Jessica Carver, Department of Communication, WKU, 270.779.9409

You are being asked to participate in a project conducted through Western Kentucky University. The University requires that you give your signed agreement to participate in this project. If you are not at least 18 years of age, please stop here.

The investigator will explain to you in detail the purpose of the project, the procedures to be used, and the potential benefits and possible risks of participation. You may ask him/her any questions you have to help you understand the project. A basic explanation of the project is written below. Please read this explanation and discuss with the researcher any questions you may have.

If you then decide to participate in the project, please sign on the last page of this form in the presence of the person who explained the project to you. You should be given a copy of this form to keep.

1. **Nature and Purpose of the Project:** It is my understanding that the purpose of this project is to examine the use of metaphors in higher education development and the tensions that may exist within the profession.

2. **Explanation of Procedures:** It is my understanding that the researcher will conduct individual interviews, approximately 30 minutes in length, during which I will be asked to describe fundraising jargon, how higher education development professionals communicate, particular language used, and the difficulties faced in this field. Basic demographic questions will also be asked of me.

3. **Discomfort and Risks:** It is my understanding that this study places me at little to no risk. The probability of harm anticipated is no greater than I would encounter in everyday life.

4. **Benefits:** While this study offers no direct benefits or compensation, it is my understanding that I will have an opportunity to give my opinions and experiences which will help generate knowledge about the use of metaphors in the higher education fundraising profession and the tensions that exist within the occupation.

5. **Confidentiality:** It is my understanding that my responses will be kept strictly confidential. Records will be viewed, stored, and maintained in private, secure files only accessible by the researcher and faculty sponsor for three years following the study, after which

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End Date - 5/16/2014
Expedited
Original - 1/29/2014
time they will be destroyed. All participants will be assigned pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality, and any other subject identifiers will be altered or reported only in comprehensive form.

6. **Refusal/Withdrawal:** Refusal to participate in this study will have no effect on any future services you may be entitled to from the University. Anyone who agrees to participate in this study is free to withdraw from the study at any time with no penalty.

You understand also that it is not possible to identify all potential risks in an experimental procedure, and you believe that reasonable safeguards have been taken to minimize both the known and potential but unknown risks.

___________________________      ___________________
Signature of Participant                  Date

___________________________      ___________________
Witness                              Date

It is also my understanding that my participation in an interview will be audio recorded.

*Initial here*

THE DATED APPROVAL ON THIS CONSENT FORM INDICATES THAT
THIS PROJECT HAS BEEN REVIEWED AND APPROVED BY
THE WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
Paul Mooney, Human Protections Administrator
TELEPHONE: (270) 745-2129
APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

You have been selected to participate in this study because of your background in higher education fundraising. This research project will explore metaphors in the language fundraisers use along with tensions found in the profession. This study will not evaluate your work experience of techniques, but seeks to learn more about the perceptions of the occupation.

1. Tell me about your job.

2. What is your typical day like?
   
   Probe: What is a day of visits like?

3. How do you describe your current donors?

4. How do you describe potential donors?

5. How do you describe the fundraising process?

6. Tell me a story about an interaction you’ve had with a donor.

7. Tell me a story about interactions you’ve had with other higher education development professionals.

8. What kinds of topics are discussed at higher education development professional staff meetings?

9. Describe your thoughts on higher education fundraising as a profession.

10. If you were describing your profession to someone who knew nothing at all about development, what you compare it to and why?

11. What common phrases are used in your profession?

12. How do those commonly used phrases shape your view of higher education development?

13. What internal difficulties do you face in your profession?
14. How are those internal difficulties talked about by yourself and coworkers?
15. What external difficulties do you face in your profession?
16. How are those external difficulties talked about by yourself and coworkers?
17. How do these difficulties affect your work?
18. How do these difficulties affect your personal life?
19. How do you handle the difficulties or tensions you face in this profession?
20. What kinds of contradictions or conflicts have you seen in the profession?
   Probe: What kinds of tensions come from these conflicts?
21. How do you overcome these tensions?
22. Do you ever face contradictions at work?
   Probe: Contradicting goals? Processes? Resources?
23. How are these contradictions discussed?
24. How do you overcome these contradictions?
25. How long have you been in higher education fundraising?
26. How many higher education institutions have you worked in?
27. What is your job title?
APPENDIX C

Peer Examination Attestation

The role that I played in Jessica Carver’s research was that of the disinterested peer during the peer debriefings as described by Lincoln and Guba (1985). The debriefings occurred at the end of the project where I was provided information about the study. As part of the process, I listened to Jessica’s oral explanation of transcriptions; in addition, I read the master code list and reviewed the open coding and axial coding of the data.

The central purposes of the debriefing sessions were to establish credibility and explore aspects of the research that might otherwise have remained implicit in the researcher’s mind. Through the process of playing devil’s advocate, I attempted to probe potential biases, explore meanings in the data, and clarify basis for interpretation of the data by studying the coding procedures and categories.

Attested by: [Signature]

(Peer Name)

Date: 4/2/14

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Attested by:  

(Peer Name)

Date: 4.2.14

APPENDIX D

Member Check Attestation

The role that I played in Jessica Carver’s research was that of a participant who also provided a member check as described by Lincoln and Guba (1985). I was asked to review the findings and interpretations of the study and offer feedback on the extent to which I believed the summaries represented my own views, feelings, and experiences.

The central purpose of the member checking procedure was to establish authenticity and credibility by allowing someone other than the researcher to confirm the accuracy and completeness of the data and interpretations. Through the process, I had the opportunity to assess the adequacy of data, to correct perceived errors, to confirm and/or challenge interpretations, and to offer additional information as necessary.

Attested by:  

(Participant Name)

Date:  

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Attested by: [Signature]

(Participant Name)

Date: [Date]

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