

“PLEASE MAKE YOUR TAX-DEDUCTIBLE DONATION TODAY”: DISCOURSE
ANALYSIS OF EMAIL AND DIRECT MAIL FUNDRAISING LETTERS

by

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I dedicate this dissertation to my husband, Dirk. You are my hero. I love you more.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the linguistic and rhetorical properties within organizational solicitation letters. While significant research has been performed on the linguistic analysis of specialized genre that share a specific set of goals and purposes, particularly academic genre, there is a dearth of research that combines both linguistic and rhetorical analysis within popular genres such as fundraising letters. To address this gap, this study investigates positioning in fundraising discourse through the linguistic lens of stance and engagement combined with the analysis of rhetorical appeals and moves. A corpus-based discourse analysis was performed on a representative sampling of fundraising discourse comprised of 340 direct mail and email solicitation letters spanning the years 2015-2017. Hyland (2005) provides the theoretical framework for the analysis of the linguistic features of stance and engagement while rhetorical analysis is informed by the work of multiple researchers (e.g. Connor and Gladkov, 2004; Connor and Lauer, 2010; Bhatia, 1998; and Upton, 2002). Results indicate that linguistic features of stance (e.g. hedges, boosters, attitude markers, and self-mentions) are more commonly used than the features of engagement (e.g. reader pronouns, personal asides, appeals to shared knowledge, directives, and questions), but the distribution of engagement features is fairly balanced within the fundraising corpus regardless of the discourse type (e.g. educational, environmental, and humanitarian) or political leaning of the organization. This can be attributed to the overriding need to forge a relationship with a potential donor. The findings also suggest that establishing personal connections is necessary to bridge the gap between the writer and the reader within this genre where there may not be shared

discourse community. This connection is often achieved through the use of emotionally charged language and personal narratives as well as the strategic employment of rhetorical moves that include establishing credentials, expressing gratitude, and offering incentives. The research sheds light on the language of direct mail and email fundraising, furthers our understanding of the use of the elements of stance and engagement within organizational communication, and contributes to the growing body of research on genre analysis and variation.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Fundraising is big business. According to the 2016 *Giving USA: The Annual Report on Philanthropy*,¹ Americans gave \$373.25 billion to charitable organizations in 2015 with \$268.28 billion (71%) from individual donors. Religious and educational organizations are the most substantial receivers at 32% and 15%, respectively. Political donations are not considered in the Giving USA report; however, the Federal Election Commission reported that the 2016 election² saw \$1.08 billion of donations (excluding donations from political parties or the candidates themselves) with 99.7% of those donations coming from individual donors. Because of its important role, there is research into fundraising methods, effectiveness, and rhetorical appeals with crossover in many of these areas (see Bazerman, 1998; Edles, 2006; Goering, 2004; Goering et al, 2011; Herrnson, 1992; Myers, 2007; Petty, 2008; Ritzenhein, 1998; Rose-Ackerman, 1982; Upton, 2002; Waters, 2013). However, the majority of this research focuses on analysis of specific fundraising subgenre such as academia or political campaigns rather than an analysis and consideration of multiple fundraising subgenre. This interdisciplinary study, however, examines the fundraising corpus holistically and individually to analyze similarities and differences across four defined subgenre types. The focus is on discursive positioning and analyzes major linguistic elements of stance and engagement and rhetorical elements of appeals and moves.

¹ *Giving USA* is based on research performed by Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy and The Giving Institute. The respected publication was first published in 1956.

² Data includes primaries and is not limited to the Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump campaigns.

This research is informed by Hyland's findings regarding stance and engagement and how writers position themselves with their audience and project an identity. Hyland (2015) states that identity is created "from the texts we engage in and the linguistic choices we make" (p. 36) and is, therefore, a social construct within the discourse. He further states that writers and speakers identify within a particular discourse community in order to gain credibility and that those "membership identities" influence our linguistic choices regardless of whether we are communicating within that discourse community. However, Hyland's work with positioning centers on academic discourse and how speakers establish membership within a particular discourse community (2010). Writers and readers use inside knowledge within a community to effectively communicate with one another and ensure that they are not misunderstood (Hyland, 2010; 2015). Blyler (1992) adopts the same position but adds that recognizing a community's discourse proves that someone shares values with the community. As such, it brings acceptance and access to that community's knowledge.

The hurdle with fundraising, however, is that writers are trying to reach people who do not necessarily share the same discourse community, so writers do not have the benefit of using inside knowledge or jargon. Because fundraising reaches an audience that is not part of the same discourse community, the tools available to those in similar professions, academic disciplines, or other like-minded communities are not available to a writer with a demographically, educationally, and economically diverse audience. This becomes particularly problematic when the writer has to create a natural and seemingly unconstructed identity that appeals to the diverse audience.

Hyland (2010) states, "Regular patterns of language choices help individuals to realize coherent and relatively consistent identities" (pp. 160-161) given that our language choices, oral or written, reflect our individualities and the relationship we seek with our audience. In this sense, corpus methodology is an ideal means of investigating these language choices. If identity, as Hyland again maintains, is really "a performance and not simply an interpretive recounting then we need to find ways of capturing what people routinely do with language that is similar or different from what others do with it. Corpus studies help provide us with this" (Hyland, 2010, p.162). Therefore, the purpose of this corpus study is to look at the linguistic elements, rhetorical appeals, and rhetorical moves used in direct mail and email fundraising letters and to determine commonalities and differences between causes and subgenre of fundraising with regard to construction of identity.

Other linguistic elements related to semantics and pragmatics are investigated to determine how writers construct their argument and position themselves with the reader. The analysis of pragmatics focuses on positioning and manipulation through politeness strategy and conceptual metaphor based on work by Van Dijk (2006), Brown and Levinson (1987), and Lakoff and Johnson (1980). Benwell and Stokoe (2006) and Hyland (2010) inform the analysis of semantic and the pragmatic choices of regarding positioning and, in a small part, manipulation.

The research into rhetorical strategies of positioning draws on the work of Biber (2007), Connor and Gladkov (2004), and Connor and Lauer (2010) and focuses on techniques used in the Aristotelian appeals of *logos*, *pathos*, and *ethos* and how writers

connect with their audience through varieties of these appeals and combinations of those varieties. The specific techniques within the appeals derive from work by the aforementioned researchers but are tailored to the corpus for this study. This study considers how rhetorical appeals and techniques work independently and autonomously within each text to position the requestor and the potential donor in regard to each other.

Another rhetorical aspect tailored for this study is the notion of moves, which is based on Bhatia (1998) and Upton (2002). The study of rhetorical moves observes the rhetorical structure as well as the physical structure of the letters and provides insight into key elements of the fundraising letter within specific subgenre types.

Fundraising as a Genre

In order to study fundraising discourse, it must first be established as a genre. Hyland (2015) states that genre "is the interface between individual and community" and that writers rely on "inside knowledge to create a mutual frame of reference" so that the audience will recognize the intent of the communication and be receptive to the purpose (p. 33). Hyland's reference here is to academia and how academics construct themselves as part of their discourse community. While this same idea of genre applies to fundraising discourse, it is important to note that, as mentioned, fundraisers do not have the benefit of guaranteed inside knowledge. For instance, potential donors for any soliciting organization may range from experts to those with a working knowledge of the cause to those who have an emotional connection but no real exposure to the cause. However, Hyland (2010) also states that language allows us to influence how our audience sees us;

therefore, writers in the fundraising genre must be able to navigate between the novice and the expert and all levels in between.

Allen states that genre is a "staged, goal-oriented social process" (2016, p. 236) and draws on the four registers defined by Biber et al (1999) of conversation, fiction writing, news writing, and academic prose. Fundraising discourse falls into the conversation register, albeit simulated conversation, and narrative—specifically the anecdote—is an important element of the fundraising conversation. The anecdote allows storytellers—who may or may not be the sender of the request—to socially construct themselves and define social roles for themselves. The brevity of the anecdote encourages readers to invest in the narrative and in the storyteller and, ideally, to affiliate themselves with the storyteller (Eggins & Slade, 1997).

Bhatia (1996) discusses the characteristics of genre as (1) "a recognizable communicative event characterized by a set of communicative purpose(s) identified and mutually understood by members of the professional or academic community in which it regularly occurs," (2) "a highly structured and conventionalized communicative event," and (3) communications that "display constraints on allowable contributions in terms of their intent, positioning, form and functional value" (pp. 13-14). Fundraising, by nature, meets these characteristics. In the case of identification, Bhatia's definition of community must be expanded from professional or academic to the audience demographic because fundraising communication may or may not be unique to a discourse community. For example, a donation request from a particular college or university to alumni would fall into a discourse community (those who attended and/or graduated from the institution)

while a request to the general population (for example, a request from local non-profits or political organizations) are not necessarily relying on one particular commonality other than an interest in the organization or its cause.

However, it is vital that the audience recognize communication within a fundraising request as an appeal for donation or it will not be effective. Likewise, fundraising requests must be structured and conventionalized in both language and visual rhetoric. This convention is realized through the use of moves (Bhatia 1998, Upton 2002). Finally, donation requests have specific constraints on the genre. Upton and Bhatia (2002, 1993) argue that fundraising discourse has a wide variety of linguistic options for a comparatively limited communication function. While this is certainly true, the genre is still bound by Bhatia's constraints (1993) with specific intent and function, positioning of the requestor, and—though somewhat flexible—form in the way of accepted moves.

Swales (1990) defines genre using five concepts. He first states that genre is a class of communicative events, which is a commonly held definition (see Bhatia, 1996; Connor & Gladkov, 2004; Upton, 2002). He then states that a principle feature of genre is shared purpose. This is an important definitional addition with regard to fundraising because it minimizes the role of the discourse community by specifying a shared purpose as more important than specific language. Thirdly, Swales argues that “exemplars or instances of genres vary in their prototypicality (p. 49) and furthers that genres may not share defining features but instead share relationships. Again, this is important for fundraising because it allows a variety of movements and fluidity of the use of moves in

order to appeal to specific or general groups. Despite the accepted variety within genre, Swales points out that there are constraints on content, positioning, and form, which harkens back to shared purpose. With regard to fundraising discourse, specific rhetorical moves allow writers to adhere to the constraints while still distinguishing their organizations from other similar ones. Swales finally points out that discourse communities use specific nomenclature and that this nomenclature provides a glimpse into the purpose. While this applies to fundraising as a whole (charity event, fundraising letter, grant application, telethon), this particular study focuses solely on the fundraising letter.

As for discourse types in the fundraising genre, Bhatia (1998) argues that there are five types: direct mail, fundraising packages for different audiences, fundraising advertisements for events, annual reports, and grant proposals. He also furthers the idea of fundraising as a genre by discussing it in tandem with commercial advertising and argues that both genres have a similar goal in procuring money, albeit with different missions. The differing missions provide motivation for the potential donor. Donations to philanthropic organizations are presumably selfless and motivated by "social responsibility and an urge to take moral action" (p. 101), which is not the case for commercial advertising. While Bhatia does not consider digital media (likely due to the date of the study), this study considers email a type of discourse similar to direct mail in its use of rhetorical moves. The same principles and language rules that apply to direct mail also apply to email; though there may be differences of approach based on media (for example, providing brochures in direct mail and links in email).

Direct mail affords the opportunity for the requester to give small gifts in an attempt to motivate the recipient to make a financial contribution. St. Jude Children's Hospital and the Boys and Girls Clubs of America, for example, send return address labels with their donation requests. The Wounded Warrior Project sends notepads as holiday gifts. Smile Train includes a poster-sized world map with their request. The Christian Appalachian Project simply sends a check for \$2 with a request not to cash it and the words "Quite honestly, I sent the check to get your attention."

This "gift with donation" tactic is an attempt to endear the organization to the donor and possibly establish a personal connection. Sometimes that connection is simply guilt from using gifts such as notepads or address labels and feeling compelled to make a donation. Another popular tactic is the promise of a gift such as a coffee mug or calendar with a donation. Email requests also offer gifts; though, the approach is different by necessity. *Consumer Reports*—which is a paid subscription service—requests additional donations from subscribers and offers a digital edition of a research guide for any donation of \$50 or more. A popular fundraising website, Prizeo, takes the gift technique one step further by providing celebrities the opportunity to offer drawings for large prizes with entries dependent on donation amount. The "above the fold" headline on Prizeo's website is "Support a great cause and win the experience of your dreams. For as little as \$10 donation, the next winner could be you!" The prizes are substantial: trips to New York City with tickets to Broadway shows such as *Hamilton*, bass lessons with Flea from The Red Hot Chili Peppers, or a Christmas celebration with the band One Direction.

Function of Fundraising Discourse

Fundraising and donation requests come through a variety of media—direct mail, email, telephone calls, radio broadcasts, social media, and television—and often target a particular demographic. However, direct mail, email, and telephone calls are easily customizable and are frequently tailored to appeal to particular donors. If a contributor makes a monetary donation, that contributor will likely receive requests for additional donations from that particular organization, often addressing the donor by name. The intent is to create a connection between the individual and the organization in order to establish an ongoing financial relationship. Personal connections increase successful fundraising because people feel more comfortable donating to someone they have a relationship with rather than an organization (Bazerman, 1998). According to Bazerman, one fundraising basic is the reality that people do not donate to organizations but instead prefer to donate to other people (1998). Goering (2004) agrees with this assessment and notes that this preference establishes a difference between function and goal. The function of fundraising is to bring in donations, but the goal is to establish lasting relationships. Goering and Edles (1993, 2006) echo Bazerman's statement, and Edles further states that philanthropy at its root is gift giving and is not legislated or governmentally mandated. A donor can choose when and if to give, to whom to give, and how much to give. Organizations, therefore, must remember that not everyone can afford

to give and not everyone is inclined to do so even if they³ can (Edles, 2006). Therefore, even organizations that have nothing in common are still competing for donations from individuals with limited personal budgets.

Establishing this connection can be problematic for the writer of the fundraising letter, though, due to the social and physical distance between the fundraiser and the potential donor and the lack of a known common discourse community. It is important to note that Swales (1990) differentiates between discourse community and speech community and argues that a member of a speech community is either born or adopted into it or falls into it by chance. A discourse community, on the other hand, recruits and initiates members and uses language specific to the group to set members apart from other discourse communities, which separates that community from the general population who belong to other discourse communities. Therefore, writers must be able to position themselves through their use of language and rhetoric so that they can close the gap and simulate closeness in order to induce the reader to action.

Ultimately, the role of the fundraising letter is to effectively use linguistic and rhetorical strategies to convince readers that an organization is worthy of receiving their donation. The writers must project integrity and an ethical character in order to persuade potential donors. Baker (2008) discusses virtue ethics with regard to communication and states that the actions that most people find virtuous include gratitude, humility, and

³ Technically, “they” or “their” is a grammatical mistake, but upon my advisor’s recommending, I choose to use it throughout this dissertation in place of the gender-neutral “his” or the awkward “his and her”

social responsibility. Baker also states that virtue ethics relies on caring about the common good, and she argues that we base our decisions on how we think someone of good character would react in the same situation (2008). Writers who can position themselves as what Baker calls “principled advocates” increase the chance that other principled advocates will contribute to their causes.

CHAPTER II: METHODOLOGY

Fundraising letters and emails are designed to be persuasive. The primary objectives of the fundraising letter are to generate monetary donations and relationships with potential donors in order to persuade the audience to donate funds to a particular organization. Devices such as rhetorical and linguistic strategies allow writers to position themselves favorably and identify themselves as a person instead of an organization.

As briefly discussed in the introduction, part of the analytical methodology adopted in this work is based on Hyland's conceptualization of stance and engagement (2005, 2010, 2015); however, I also consider rhetorical appeals and rhetorical moves as means of relational positioning. The combination of Hyland's linguistic elements with rhetorical moves and appeals allows for a better understanding of how writers use explicit and implicit methods to position themselves and their audience. The quantitative characteristics (explicit) of Hyland's elements coupled with the qualitative characteristics (implicit) of rhetoric complement each other and augment our understanding of persuasion in the genre of fundraising discourse. This study also looks at fundraising through the lens of technical communication and, therefore, studies not only the communication but its relationship and effectiveness with other communications within the same subgenres.

Research Questions

The main objective of this dissertation is to explore the elements of successful fundraising letters within the umbrella of positioning.

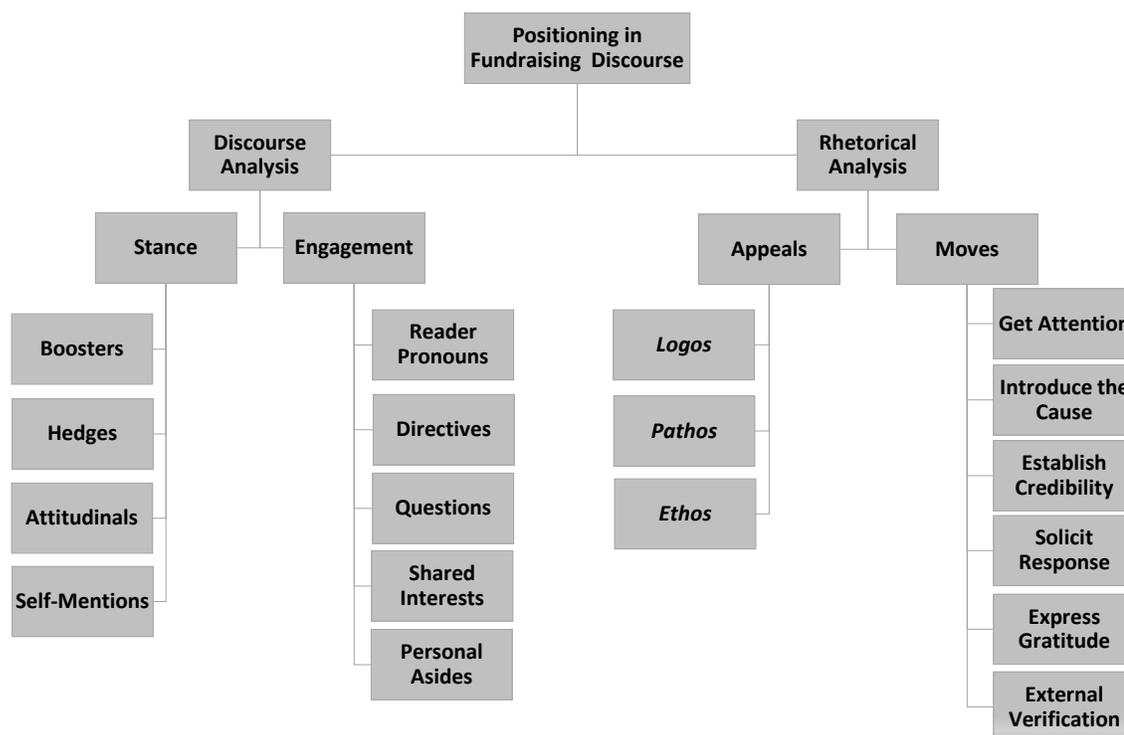


Figure 1. Linguistic and Rhetorical Elements of Fundraising Discourse

The study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. How do requestors use specific linguistic elements to create their identity and present their ideas and judgments with regard to their potential donors (stance)?
2. How do requestors use specific linguistic elements to relate to their audience, allow their audience to participate in the discussion, and guide the audience to the requestor's intended goal (engagement)?
3. How do requestors use other linguistic elements to position themselves and their audience?
4. How do the rhetorical appeals of *logos*, *pathos*, and *ethos* function within donation requests?
5. How do rhetorical moves (see the end of chapter 2), based on work from Bhatia (1998) and Upton (2002), function within donation requests?

Corpus and Data Collection

The corpus was gathered from 340 fundraising letters delivered through direct mail and email. Letters were collected through personal correspondence with fundraising organizations located in different parts of the United States. Fundraising examples

available or archived on the Internet were also considered—especially those for political campaigns in various areas of the U.S. This allows a broader sampling instead of a limitation to one geographical region. Data was gathered from 329 distinct organizations. The corpus consists of 340 letters with a total of 100,052 words.

The corpus was divided into four categories: educational and cultural; environmental and scientific; humanitarian; and political. Each category was subdivided further as detailed in *Table 1*. While this seems straightforward, some of the divisions become problematic, particularly in terms of overlap. For example, Planned Parenthood could fall into either the political or medical categories. For the purposes of this paper, it is included as political. According to the Planned Parenthood mission statement, political advocacy is a key element, and their examples of fundraising collected for this paper primarily reflect political content and call to action. The National Rifle Association (NRA) Back Our Blue initiative also presented as a challenging categorization. On one hand, the project supports first responders and, like the Gary Sinise Foundation, could, therefore, be included in the humanitarian category. However, the solicitation request is overtly political and uses charged language against those who disagree, so it was included in the Political category. On the other hand, groups such as Greenpeace and Sierra Club are listed as special interest groups (OpenSecrets); however, their primary fundraising goal is for conservation, so they were included in Environment, Research, and Science.

Table 1. *Categories and Subcategories Included in Study*

Education and Culture	
Subcategory	Total Texts
College and Academic	34
Cultural (library, museum, theatre, etc.)	28
Public Media (NPR, PBS)	10
Youth Activities	13
Environment, Research, and Science	
Conservation	31
Medical Research	24
Scientific Research	20
Wildlife Care	10
Humanitarian	
Children-specific	11
Military-specific	10
Religious-sponsored	17
Health and Welfare	49
Political	
Activism	26
Campaign	49
Special Interest	10

Education and Culture

The Educational and Cultural category allows analysis of institutions of higher learning as well as community-based organizations such as children's museums, historical preservation societies, and public television/radio. This category includes solicitations from various college and university as well as from individual colleges within larger universities. It also includes solicitations from National Public Radio and local Public

Broadcasting System television stations, libraries, children's activities, and local cultural outreach.

Environment, Research, and Science

Originally, environmental and science were separated into two categories. However, analysis revealed that, in many cases, the two intertwine. While there are certainly instances of fundraising that are specifically environmental or conservation issues that delve very little into the scientific (National Park Service or zoos) and scientific organizations that are not related to the environment (Planetary Society), enough organizations deal with the relationship between science and the environment to support studying them in tandem.

Medical research is also included in this category. While medical research could reasonably be paired with medical health, this study recognizes a difference in the organizations' missions. For example, St. Jude Children's Research Hospital provides care for child patients with life-threatening illnesses; however, their mission statement reads as follows: "The mission of St. Jude Children's Research Hospital is to advance cures, and means of prevention, for pediatric catastrophic diseases through research and treatment. Consistent with the vision of our founder Danny Thomas, no child is denied treatment based on race, religion or a family's ability to pay." The primary goal of St. Jude is to research childhood diseases and develop cures and preventative measures. Other medical research organizations such as American Heart Association and National Multiple Sclerosis Society are included in this category.

Humanitarian

The Humanitarian category primarily consists of requests for people whose needs are represented on the lower tier of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs—food, clean water, shelter. The requests vary from ongoing needs such as in poverty-stricken communities to immediate but short-lived needs such as in the case of natural disaster. However, the commonality is that the requests are made on behalf of people who do not have access to basic needs for survival. This category also includes medical groups who provide care and do not actively participate in medical research as stated by their mission statements. Doctors without Borders, for example, provides medical care as outlined by their mission statement: “We are Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF). We help people worldwide where the need is greatest, delivering emergency medical aid to people affected by conflict, epidemics, disasters, or exclusion from health care.”

Groups that help military and veterans are also included in this category. For example, the National Military Family Association helps active duty soldiers and their families; National Coalition for Homeless Veterans addresses homelessness for veterans; and Wounded Warrior Project provides medical and mental health care, career counseling, and support for veterans and their families. Organizations that extend their services to first responders such as the Gary Sinise Foundation are also included.

Finally, animal protection and care involving domesticated pets—for example, ASPCA, rescue organizations, and awareness advocacy groups—is another part of the Humanitarian category because of the close relationship between humans and pets.

Political

The political category is the most diverse category considered. It is clear that it should include campaign fundraising letters from Republican and Democratic candidates as well as independent or third party candidates. These political campaigns range from local level offices to U.S. President. However, the category also includes organizations that have a political interest and participate in advocacy. This includes Planned Parenthood and the NRA, as discussed above, the American Civil Liberties Union, and the Human Rights Campaign.

Procedure

Analysis was performed on each of the texts looking specifically at Hyland's definitions of stance and engagement as well as semantics, Aristotelian rhetorical appeals of *logos*, *pathos*, and *ethos* as discussed by Connor and Gladkov (2004), Biber (2007) and Connor and Lauer (2010), and rhetorical moves developed from work by Bhatia (1998) and Upton (2002). Due to the nature of the study, the methodology relies on corpus-based analysis and close reading to investigate some of the linguistic resources of positioning employed in the corpus including the features of stance and engagement as well as rhetorical resources such as appeals and moves.

Stance and Engagement

Stance refers to how the writers construct their identities within the conversation with respect to authority, ideals, and values while engagement refers to how writers position readers with regard to their respective roles—in the case of fundraising, the role of potential donor—and compel them to act in a particular way (Bhatia, 1996; Connor &

Gladkov, 2004; Hyland, 2005; 2010; 2015; Upton, 2001). Elements of stance allow solicitors to connect with donors despite not having the benefit of discourse community while elements of engagement allow solicitors to appeal to donors on a personal level (Hyland, 2005).

Biber and Finegan's markers of certainty, doubt, positive affect, and negative affect (1989) were used when considering stance. Hyland's features for stance are reasonably objective (hedges, boosters, attitude markers, and self-mentions) and often involve single words lending themselves well to corpus software counting. Each text was loaded into NVivo 11 for Windows, and then queries were created using specific terms for the linguistic features mentioned. NVivo generated a count of the features, and the data was exported to MS Excel. WordSmith 7 was used to count the collocation of words as well as keywords of each of the texts individually and as a corpus. The concordance tool was used to determine whether specific words were used as the linguistic features queried. For example, "may" was used primarily as a modal verb in the texts, but two instances referred to the month May and were, therefore, not statistically relevant to the study.

Hedges, boosters, and attitude markers demonstrate the solicitor's confidence or hesitancy regarding a particular assertion. Hedges serve two key purposes. They give solicitors deniability if a particular statement proves to be untrue, but they also allow solicitors to maintain a sense of humility while exhibiting qualifications and strengths. This humility and authenticity allows the writer to project herself as the principled advocate previously discussed (Baker, 2008). Boosters work much the same way as hedges

but produce the opposite effect. The solicitors may use a booster to emphasize a particular statement or bring attention to an achievement or strength that could influence the reader to donate. The research into hedges includes lexical verbs such as “think” and “believe,” modal adjectives such as “possible” and “probable,” and modal adverbs such as “likely” and “maybe.” Boosters include such terms as “highly” and “very.” Though modal verbs of possibility are included in the count for hedges, they are also included as the separate feature of modal verbs categorized as necessity, possibility, predictive, and semi-modal based on Albakry (2015).

In addition to the role of stance in positioning the speaker, Hyland specifies five features regarding engagement and how the writer positions the reader: (1) reader pronouns, (2) personal asides, (3) appeals to shared knowledge, (4) directives, and (5) questions. However, appeals to shared knowledge cannot be guaranteed between the writer and the audience within the fundraising genre. Nonetheless, Hyland (2005) expresses the importance of writers connecting their own propositions with the audience’s values. Writers are careful to avoid jargon, complex ideas, or unexplained acronyms because they recognize that their audience is varied in demographics, expertise, and interest, but there are many instances of shared ideology that cannot be overlooked and serve the same purpose as shared knowledge in other genres—to highlight commonalities between the writer and the reader with the intent of establishing a relationship.

Though engagement markers are more subjective than stance markers, they are still reasonably objective. Nonetheless, they are less easily counted because they often

involve phrases that are unique to the writer, so manual coding and close reading were used to gather this data. However, NVivo generated a count of the most frequently used words in the texts, which was used to guide a manual coding of engagement features.

Because of the subjective nature of directives, shared interests, and personal asides, the texts had to be manually coded to find these linguistic features. To ensure a thorough count, questions were also included in the manual coding so that cases with incorrect punctuation were not inadvertently excluded. Close reading was also used to ensure accurate results from the other methods.

Other Linguistic Elements

As mentioned, this study looks at the features of stance and engagement within each letter to determine commonalities or differences in fundraising attempts across and within fundraising subgenre. In addition to the numerous markers of stance and engagement, the study also considers other linguistic (semantic and pragmatic) features.

An analysis of lexical choices and the semantics of those choices was performed through close reading guided by the concordance function in WordSmith for frequently occurring words. Word usage was viewed within the contexts of specific letters and was compared to other usages of the word or phrase within the letter and the corpus.

Each of the letters in this study is considered a communication act—albeit one that has an unknown perlocutionary act; therefore, each has its own context regarding pragmatics. For the purposes of this research, pragmatics is discussed in relation to the interpretation of conceptual metaphor and the role of politeness within the context of the text. Pragmatics relating to these two strategies is analyzed by close reading. Using

Brown and Levinson's variable of positive and negative face, Upton looks at: “the social distance between the speaker and the addressee, the ‘power’ relative to each other, and the ‘absolute ranking of impositions in the particular culture’” (Upton, 2001, pp. 318-319; Brown & Levinson, 1987, pp. 319-320). Upton argues that speakers with less power than their audience use negative face such as apologizing or being indirect to minimize the face threat to the audience and show respect to the readers and their independence. However, speakers who desire to identify with their audience and be on equal footing will highlight their commonalities and position themselves as equals.

Rhetorical Elements

Finally, this study examines the elements of rhetorical appeals and rhetorical moves to determine how requestors use structure and rhetoric when positioning themselves and their readers.

Rhetorical Appeals

Building on Connor and Upton’s argument that direct mail letters are planned letters that rely on rhetorical appeals for persuasion, Connor and Gladkov (2004) state that planned letters use the three Aristotelian elements of rhetoric: *ethos* (credibility), *pathos* (emotional), and *logos* (rational). Effectively persuasive letters integrate the three appeals in order to identify with the audience and compel cooperation. This argument is widely accepted albeit with some disagreement on which appeal is the most effective. The three primary Aristotelian appeals of *pathos*, *ethos*, and *logos* through a close reading on each letter in order to code the various techniques used for the appeals (Connor & Gladkov, 2004, Biber, 2007, and Connor and Lauer, 2010).

Rhetorical Moves

As Swales (1990) argues, moves are the basic elements that define a genre, and Bhatia furthers this by positing that moves are the variable that distinguishes one genre from another (see also Bhatia 1993, Upton 2002). Bhatia (1998) defines six moves for the fundraising genre: (1) establish credentials, (2) introducing the cause, (3) soliciting support, (4) expressing gratitude, (5) offering incentives, and (6) enclosing brochures. Bhatia clarifies that (5) and (6) are used inconsistently compared to (1) through (4) and may not be seen in all fundraising letters. Upton (2002) follows Bhatia's analysis of moves but adds two moves to Bhatia's six: getting attention (such as with a startling statement) and concluding with pleasantries. Upton proposes the following seven moves: (1) get attention, (2) introduce the cause and/or establish credentials, (3) solicit response, (4) offer incentive, (5) reference insert, (6) express gratitude, and (7) conclude with pleasantries. Note that Upton combines Bhatia's "establishing credentials" and "introducing the cause." His argument is that the two become intertwined. The cause is introduced while establishing the credentials. The organization cannot separate the two because one is dependent on the other.

This study looks at a six major moves. Five are a combination of Bhatia's (1998) and Upton's (2002) moves: (1) Get Attention, (2) Introduce the Cause, (3) Establish Credentials, (4) Solicit Response, and (5) Express Gratitude. Another move that is added to this study but has not been included in research to date is (6) "External Verification." Moves within the texts are examined through close reading, and the six moves are marked to enable an accurate count of the moves used in each category. Arguably,

External Verification could be considered part of Establish Credibility; however, it is included at the end of the letters after the signature and after any post scripts. It is not included as part of the letter, but it is part of the communication. Therefore, it is included as a separate move in this study.

Ultimately, this study uses an integrative approach to analysis. While each element is counted and reported separately, the texts must be looked at holistically with consideration to how the elements work with each other as opposed to individually. For example, linguistic elements are counted individually but may also be part of a particular rhetorical appeal. Likewise, rhetorical moves also frequently serve in the function of rhetorical appeals. This overlap produces a study that considers individual elements and their interactions.

CHAPTER III: POSITIONING THROUGH STANCE

Hyland discusses positioning with regard to genre, identity, stance, and engagement (2005, 2015). While Hyland's discussion centers on academic writing, the principles of positioning are the same in fundraising discourse. Both adopt a point of view in relation to the issues and the opinions that the audience has about those issues. The writer must form a relationship with the reader in order to establish competence in the field and position themselves as an insider. This relationship involves a dialogue between people or between people and ideas. Hyland argues that this is done in academic discourse through a shared professional context and having similar professional goals that enable the reader to question or agree with assertions or and assess validity (Hyland, 2005). The writer-reader relationship in fundraising, however, does not manifest itself in the same way because it lacks a common discourse community. All readers of a fundraising request letter may not have the same goal as the writer. However, some readers—potential donors—do share goals and interests with the writers; therefore, writers must position themselves in such a way that their readers recognize commonalities and enter into a “dialogue” with the writer. Writers accomplish their own positioning and their readers' positioning through stance and engagement (Biber and Finegan, 1989; Hyland, 1994; Hyland, 2005). Without the writer's voice, the reader will not engage; therefore, stance and engagement must work together (Hyland, 2005). The following examples will serve as illustration.

- (a) If we want to help change history, we need to hear the cry of the poor and commit ourselves to ending their marginalization. We cannot remain passive. Blessed are

the hands that reach beyond every barrier of culture, religion, and nationality, and pour the balm of consolation over the wounds of humanity. Blessed are the open hands that ask nothing in exchange, with no “ifs” or “buts” or “maybes”: they are hands that call down God’s blessing upon their brothers and sisters.

- (b) This new World Day should become a powerful appeal to our consciences as believers, allowing us to grow in the conviction that sharing with the poor enables us to understand the deepest truth of the Gospel. The poor are not a problem: they are a resource from which to draw as we strive to accept and practice in our lives the essence of the Gospel.
- (c) When Michael was a baby, he developed a rare condition which resulted in a permanent disability and pain. The father, overwhelmed by poverty, abandoned the family. You can stop his suffering now. (CMMB)

The three examples above are from the same Catholic Medical Mission Board (CMMB) fundraising letter, and (a) and (c) are from people positioned as insiders to the problem—example (a) is a direct quote from Pope Francis while example (c) is an anecdote regarding one of the children directly affected by poverty and hunger.

Positioning takes two extremes in this particular letter—the leader of the Catholic Church and a suffering child stricken by poverty and illness. Hyland’s (2015) work with positioning within genre discusses how speakers make themselves relevant within the text. He states that there are options beyond “pre-packaged” identities and that those options help with interpersonal alignments. The examples from CMMB show that identities from extreme ends of the spectrum can be effective and likely reach more

people—the devoutly religious Catholic who trusts Pope Francis to guide them and someone who may or may not be devout and even may or may not be Catholic but feels compelled to help a small, suffering child regardless of religious affiliation. The mission and reputation of CMMB allows them to position themselves in proximity to more than one community. Hyland (2005) states that members of a community respond to rhetorical appeals differently, which makes one appeal less effective than a combination. In this case, the CMMB makes the appeal to the religious and/or the altruistic obvious; however, the letter also provides links to Charity Navigator and the Better Business Bureau, which is a credibility appeal that speaks to the donor who wants to ensure that the funds are being used properly and effectively.

Stance Markers

Writers use stance to assume a voice that expresses attitude, opinion, and even loyalty and allows them to present themselves as authorities on the subject. Stance markers afford writers the opportunity to focus attention on their point while subverting an opposing point or avoiding inaccuracies while engagement markers connect the readers with the writers and reinforce the relationship. Hyland proposes four elements of stance—hedges, boosters, attitude markers, and self-mentions (Hyland, 2005). Each of these elements is considered in this study. As shown on Figure 2, each element of stance is present in the individual texts of fundraising corpus with relatively high percentages. Percentage represents presence of elements within the individual texts and does not represent word count. Each text containing the applicable marker is counted once regardless of how many times that marker is represented. For example, a letter with one

instance of an attitudinal will be counted the same as a letter with multiple instances of an attitudinal.

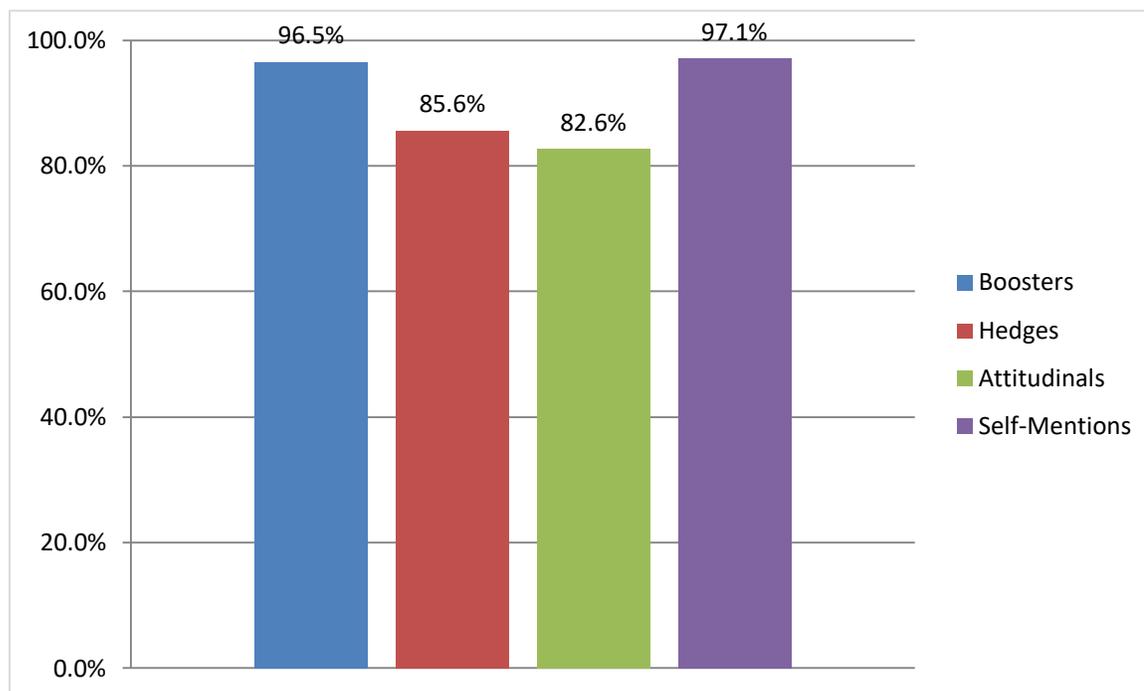


Figure 2. Elements of Stance in Fundraising Corpus

Boosters

Boosters are elements of communication that enable the speaker to convey reliability and a commitment to the topic (Hyland, 2005). Hyland (2015) argues that writers use boosters to remove question from the reader, to “restrict alternative voices,” and to underscore the importance of the topic—in this case, the organization requesting donations. Boosters are used in donation requests to reassure the potential donor that the cause is worthwhile. Every category represented in this study used boosters in 81-96% of their samples. The only anomaly appeared in military texts within the Humanitarian category, which used boosters in 63% of the samples. Boosters appeared in 1.2% of the

texts raising funds for military groups. The following samples highlight some of the features of stance.

- (d) In his 33 years of ministry at First Christian Church, Kent, WA, Marvin Eckfeldt became **quite** familiar with Disciples Church Extension Fund ... **In fact**, Marvin became **so** familiar to DCEF staff that he was asked to serve on its Board of Directors in 1994. (Email letter from DCEF, emphasis mine)
- (e) Celebration will go **far beyond** celebrating milestones and honoring community members. Sponsorship proceeds will go **directly** to providing a safety net for our community. With the proposed elimination of essential safety net programs by the State of California, your support of Family Service is **even more** crucial to our community's future. Please complete the attached sponsorship form and send it in by July 16, 2010. (Email letter from Family Service Agency, emphasis mine)
- (f) Please, make a contribution of **just** \$1 to help us **crush** our goal this month. (Email letter from Donald Trump, emphasis mine)

Example (d) is from a religious organization that is highlighting one of its board members. The letter touts Mr. Eckfeldt's achievements and qualifications and uses subtle boosters—such as “quite” and “so”—to convey a sense of humility but also uses “in fact” to quash any notion that what is said about Mr. Eckfeldt is false.

The agency in letter (e) is more forthright in their use of boosters. “Far beyond” implies that the agency is prolific within the community but reiterates its financial need when saying that support is “even more crucial.” This language guides the reader into feeling like an imperative part of the agency. The agency also uses the word “directly” to

assure the giver that the money will go to the cause itself and will not be wasted or put into holding.

Example (f) is from a political fundraising letter and represents an interesting juxtaposition of boosters. On the one hand, “just \$1” is an appeal to those who may not be able to afford to donate but still want to be involved. The word “just” is unassuming and presents the donation as a modest amount. However, the next phrase uses the word “crush,” which implies superiority and violence, and appeals to potential donors who want to be part of success.

Hedges

Like boosters, writers use hedges to influence how readers receive communication. However, instead of instilling a sense of commitment and reliability, hedges offer a way for writers to limit their commitment and protect themselves from claims that could be disputed (Hyland, 2008). Also like boosters, hedges are represented in every category, however, to a significantly lower degree. The highest percentage of hedge use is in the religion category at 80% and lowest percentage is military at 25%. All other categories are between 50% and 68%. However, hedges represent an average of only 0.7% of the text of the letters.

- (g) Then, the latest FEC reports **show** Nancy Pelosi outraising House Republicans by nearly 3X. And now, the latest poll numbers **show** Hillary Clinton leading in 54 districts held by Republicans. I’m concerned that **if** we don’t change course right now, we **may** look back at August as the month where we lost the election.

(Email letter from Paul Ryan, emphasis mine)

- (h) This literally **could** be the best time to give, when any amount will be worth three times as much. (Habitat for Humanity, emphasis mine)
- (i) **If** you have owned a security for more than one year, you **may** qualify for a charitable deduction based on the appreciated value of the security rather than having to pay tax on the gain when you sell it. As always, you **should** check with your tax advisor about the deductibility of any such donation. (Alabama Public Television, emphasis mine)

Example (g) is a political fundraiser from Senator Paul Ryan. Ryan's goal is to convince the people he addresses as "Fellow Conservatives," and to accomplish this, he reports Election Commission and polling reports. However, he must also mitigate any potential feelings of resignation or dispiritedness that may accompany large numbers for the other side. Ryan uses hedges to lessen the impact of the numbers and motivate his audience to donate.

Again there is an interesting juxtaposition in (h). The hedge "could" is adjacent to "literally," which gives a hedge and a booster (at least when "literally" is used figuratively). This particular letter references an anonymous donor who promised to match all gifts up to \$25,000; therefore, a gift of \$100 would bring in \$200 for the organization. The hedge is necessary because of the possibility that this is not actually the "best time to give." Another donor could later offer to triple each donation, which would make \$100 worth \$300. Alternatively, the hedge allows for the possibility that the anonymous donor will not come through on their matching promise.

Finally, we see hedging in (i) related to tax law. The organization wants to capitalize on the attraction of a tax break but wants to exercise caution when distributing information that does not apply to all donors. The use of the hedge allows the organization to mention charitable donations without giving out false or inconsistent information.

Attitude Markers

An attitude (or attitudinal) marker refers to the emotion behind the actual words used. Like boosters and hedges, attitude markers also highlight or understate a particular idea; however, Hyland (2005) differentiates these features by stating that boosters and hedges are epistemic while attitude markers are affective. For example, adjectives terms such as “promising” and “interesting” show how the solicitors feel about a point and how the reader should feel about the point, rather than what either participant actually knows about it.

Attitudinals allow writers to position themselves emotionally with the readers and influence the readers' feelings toward a particular issue; therefore, attitudinals are stance markers, but they play a significant role in engagement of the reader as well. Attitudinals are used frequently and naturally in oral communication and may come across as sarcasm or empathy or may indicate the speaker's feelings. The same is true for written communication; though, subtle markers may be missed or misinterpreted. The following excerpts show how attitude markers can be used to influence a potential donor by showcasing the writer's attitude toward the issue.

- (j) With Thanksgiving just two weeks away, you're likely **anticipating** the **abundance** of good food, **warmth**, and laughter that will be shared with close friends and family. But for many hardworking families in Silicon Valley, skyrocketing rents and the high cost of living turn this holiday into another **struggle** to put a **modest** meal on the table. (Second Harvest Food Bank, emphasis mine)
- (k) Now that we know much of what was behind the **phony witch hunt** against President Trump was based on nothing more than a **hit job** by **Crooked** Hillary and the DNC – we must take action to expose their **cover-up**. (Trump Headquarters, emphasis mine)
- (l) Little Mohammed is walking through the **cold mud** right now, with **ripped socks** and **broken flip flops** ... No gloves, no coat. The one mattress his family shares in their tent has gotten wet from the **frigid** rain. Influenza is spreading rapidly (sic) through the community—he's only one cough away from a **severe** illness. From Albania to Afghanistan, Bosnia to India, Iraq to Pakistan, Palestine, Syria, Tunisia, Yemen, when the **brutal** winter weather hits **vulnerable** children like Mohammed, it **slaps them with biting cold**. Even their tears are frozen in place. (Islamic Relief USA, emphasis mine)

The example in (j) shows clear but subtle attitude markers (in bold). The appeal is scheduled to go out during the Thanksgiving holiday when the writers can capitalize on the good chance that their audience is thinking about upcoming family gatherings or time with friends or a general feeling of thankfulness. The writer uses moving but comforting

words to get the audience's attention: "anticipating," "abundance," and "warmth." The attitude of the writer is of gratefulness and reminds the reader to be grateful as well. After the writer has the attention of the reader, the letter moves into introducing the cause. The word choice and, with it, the attitude change. There is still an overall tone of gratefulness set up at the beginning of the letter with the nostalgic list of a traditional Thanksgiving, but writer uses language that moves the reader to an attitude of giving. The writer feels that the families that need help are not able to control their situation. "Skyrocketing rents" and "high cost of living" prevent this "hardworking" family to be able to provide Thanksgiving dinner. The organization is not asking for extravagance—simply a "modest meal" for the families.

Example (k) also uses attitude markers, but in this case, the attitude conveyed is that of injustice and righting a perceived wrong. The email uses first person plural pronouns to indicate comradery with the reader, but "phony witch hunt," "hit job," "crooked," and "cover-up" indicate that the writer is angry. The charged language coupled with second person plural pronoun "we" encourages the reader to also feel angry about the injustice perceived by the writer.

Example (l) takes a similar approach as (j) but focuses on an attitude of heartbreak for Little Mohammed's suffering without overtly appealing to the financial situation of the potential donor. However, the reader can identify with the little boy because the writer gives us his name and provides a picture of the child. Furthermore, the writer uses language that drives the point of the message home to the potential donor. "Cold mud." "Ripped socks." "Broken flip-flops." (Flip-flops in winter are already insufficient, but this

little boy's are broken). He is "vulnerable" and sleeps on a shared mattress wet from "frigid" rain. And the *pièce de résistance*: "Even their tears are frozen in place." The writer's position is up close and personal, and the words paint a vivid picture of pain, suffering, and misery. The reader appreciates the writer's candor and honesty, which effectively draws the reader through the writer's emotions.

Self-Referentials

The fourth element of Hyland's framework of stance features is self-mention, which includes self-referential pronouns. Hyland argues that "writers cannot avoid projecting an impression of themselves and how they stand in relation to their arguments, their discipline, and their readers" (Hyland, 2005, p. 181); therefore, the self-mention allows solicitors to be part of the narrative, maintain linguistic ownership, and remind the donor that he or she is an individual. This technique underscores Bazerman's (1998) assertion that donors want to give to individual people and not to large corporations or organizations.

Writers couple self-referential pronouns with non-threatening verbs such as "think," "believe," and "hope" in order to create and maintain an identifiable but humble voice and convey commitment and personal investment (Hyland, 2015). Teodorescu (2015) states that writers want to create a close relationship with their audience, so they use first person plural pronouns to express intimacy. She discusses advertising methods; however, the same principles apply to fundraising discourse. Cruz, Leonhardt, and Pezzuti argue that first person plural pronouns encourage intimacy because people tend to use "we," "our," and "us" when referring to their personal relationships (Cruz et al.,

2017). The first person plural pronoun, though, is often vague and can refer to the writer and reader or to the writer and the writer's associates (Biber, 1999). However, the relationship exists regardless of the level of intimacy. The donation requests in this study use first person singular and plural pronouns to underscore the requestor/donor relationship and the varying levels of intimacy the writers are trying to establish or maintain, and thus support Goering's (2004) argument regarding relationship types (friendly/family, savior, investor, partner).

CHAPTER IV: POSITIONING THROUGH ENGAGEMENT

Writers use engagement to connect with and involve readers by acknowledging their presence, addressing their concerns, and helping them to make the decisions that meet the writer's goals (Hyland, 2005). Stance positions the writer within the relationship, but engagement positions the reader. This creates a reciprocal relationship even though the audience is unidentified. The anonymous audience also brings challenges when the writer attempts to find common ground.

Engagement Markers

Hyland proposes five elements of engagement—reader pronouns, directives, questions, shared knowledge, and personal asides. Each of these elements is considered in this study. As shown on Figure 3, each of the elements of engagement is included; however, only two—reader pronouns and directives—are included in the majority of samples, and personal asides are not significantly represented. Percentage represents the individual texts within the corpus and does not represent word count. Each text containing the applicable marker is counted once regardless of how many times that marker is represented. For example, a letter with one instance of a shared interest will be counted the same as a letter with multiple instances.

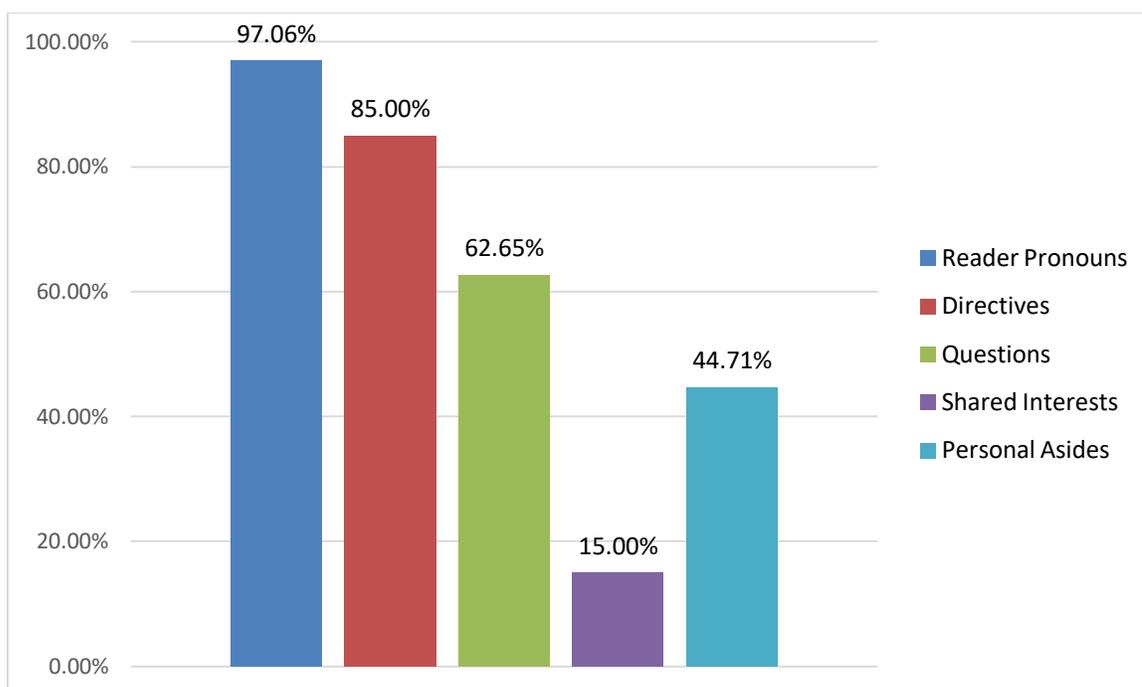


Figure 3. Elements of Engagement in Fundraising Corpus

Reader Pronouns

Hyland argues that reader pronouns are the most effective method for acknowledging readers. However, the role of second person pronouns goes beyond recognition and extends to engagement by allowing the writer to anticipate and address the reader's potential point of view before it becomes an issue. The writer can then guide the reader to the organization's viewpoint (Hyland 2005). Cruz et al. discuss the role of reader pronouns in their article regarding consumer brands. Though their observations are from a commercial standpoint, many of the same principles apply. For instance, they argue that personalization influences consumer response positively. They specifically mention personalization by way of using the customer's first name in the subject line of an email, which significantly raises the likelihood that the customer will open the email and make a purchase (Cruz 2017). They argue that the reason for increased engagement

is because the second person pronoun encourages the reader to self-reference themselves. However, of the 120 organizations studied, only 17 used the recipient's first name in the subject line of the email.

Consider Wikipedia's email donation request in (y). As discussed, the email uses first person plural pronouns to highlight the savior metaphor. However, the email uses a smattering of second person pronouns when asking directly for funds: "We need asking directly for funds: "A year ago, **you** donated," "We need **your** help again this year;" "Please renew **your** donation today;" and "If Wikipedia is useful to **you**..." The first three uses of reader pronouns places the responsibility of keeping the website online on reader donations. The final use of reader pronoun reminds the donor that Wikipedia is useful to him or her and encourages a donation.

Directives

Directives, such as imperatives and obligation modals, serve as instruction to the audience to see the information the way the speaker chooses, which allows the speaker to get to the point of the communication more quickly (Hyland, 2005; 2015). Hyland speaks specifically of academic texts in his discussions and states that science writings tend to use directives to guide the audience through an argument and focus on what the writer wants the reader to take from that argument. Interestingly, the same is true in fundraising discourse regardless of discipline. While the majority of directives instruct readers to "see the enclosed brochure" or to "click on the link for more information," the requestor often uses directives to guide their reader to a conclusion. Hyland (2005) differentiates between the types of directives calling the former a textual act and the latter a cognitive act.

Hyland has a third category—physical act—that expressly tells the reader what to do to carry out the directive.

(m) **Imagine** getting a few months of free service from the phone, electric, or cable company. Unfortunately, we live in a world where you pay as you go. Overlook your bills for too long and watch those services disappear. Now **imagine** a valuable service that keeps coming to your home even if you ignore the bills for years. Sounds impossible, right? Well, **think** again. WOSU Public Media lets YOU decide whether or not to pay your “bill.” You can watch and listen for free ... or you can voluntarily help pay for the programs you enjoy. It’s your choice. Are you a member of WOSU yet? If not, **consider** as your “free sample” all that you’ve watched on WOSU TV and listened to on 89.7 NPR News or Classical 101. (WOSU, emphasis mine)

(n) Giving your gift is easy! We’ve provided three simple ways.

ONLINE: **Click** to wosu.org/youdecide

MAIL: **Complete** the reply form and **return** it in the enclosed envelope

PHONE: **Call** us toll free, 24 hours a day, at 855-868-9678 and **use** your credit card (WOSU, emphasis mine)

The samples use cognitive act and physical act directives to guide their readers to make a decision to donate and then to make the donation. The requestor in (m) directs the reader to imagine, think, and consider specific arguments—how WOSU is always available and does not send a monthly bill or expect payment. The email strategically uses the word “bill” (enclosed in parentheses) to plant the idea of an obligation even

while admitting that payment is not required for service to continue. The same organization, in (n), uses physical act directives to tell the reader exactly how to make a donation. These directives come at the end of the communication after the cognitive act directives have guided the donor to make a decision.

Questions

The technique of using questions positions the writer and the reader in a conversation and, therefore, places them on equal ground. The writer and the reader can explore problems together. Even rhetorical questions promote exploration because the reader's importance and judgment is recognized and appreciated (Hyland, 2005). The Wikipedia letter, (y), asks "Has it crossed my mind how much money we could have made if we were a traditional website?" and immediately answers "Sure." This question engages the reader by anticipating a possible question. Even if the reader has not asked, the question itself prompts the reader to recognize a potentially different direction the staff of Wikipedia could have gone. This engages the reader but also positions the writers in a position of integrity. They know they could have made money—and considered it—but ultimately chose to provide the service for free.

Not all questions have an answer provided. NMFA asks, "Recovering from the hustle and bustle of Black Friday, Small Business Saturday, and Cyber Monday?" The answer can only be provided by the reader, but the question is conversational and even friendly. It is the same question many people would ask their friends and coworkers. It is placed at the beginning of the email, so the request starts off with a congenial reminder that the holidays are here. The letter then asks the reader, "Why not get a jump start on

the giving?” before asking for a donation to military families. The writer uses the questions to create a natural and friendly relationship and to compel the reader to answer the questions when they read them and, thus, become engaged in the correspondence.

Shared Interests

Shared interests focus the audience on commonalities between themselves and the writers and, therefore, position both participants in a willing relationship. Shared knowledge in a discourse community proves to the audience that the speaker is a member of the group. Likewise, shared interests prove to the audience that the speaker and the audience have the same goal whether it is funding a research project, campaigning for a candidate, or helping in a humanitarian effort. This bonds the writer and reader and encourages the reader to engage in the solicitation and, ideally, donate to the cause.

- (o) We should all take pride in the fact that our university is now recognized as one of the nation’s premier urban research universities and a national leader in guiding students from all walks of life to success. (Georgia State)
- (p) We are honored by your shared belief in ARNOVA's vision to create a community of leaders who will advance our field through research, education, practice, and policy. (ARNOVA)
- (q) We know that you want to end homelessness for children and adults in Marin County. We do too. (Homeward Bound)

The samples above each appeal to shared interests between the speaker and the audience but take different approaches. Georgia State uses the second person plural pronoun to indicate the two members participating in that particular speech act and

underscore a camaraderie. ARNOVA, on the other hand, uses “we” to indicate the writer and members outside that particular speech act; however, the writer brings the audience back in by specifying “your shared belief” indicating a commonality. Homeward Bound combines the implication of friendship with the common bond by stating, “We know that you want to end homelessness ...” This phraseology implies that the Homeward Bound organization already has a personal relationship with the reader. The second sentence proves the common goal—to end homelessness—that unites them.

Personal Asides

Personal asides allow writers to interrupt themselves in order to offer a comment to the reader and imply a conversational and friendly relationship (Hyland, 2005). Hyland further states that the personal aside “builds a relationship between participants which ... is an intervention simply to connect: to show that both writer and readers are engaged in the same game and are in a position to draw on shared understandings” (2005). The personal aside is often casual but can also be emotional. WCBE uses the personal aside to give information about potentially not needing an upcoming fundraiser. “In fact, if you help us raise the full amount of our Spring funds now, we’ll outright eliminate the regular fundraiser (it’s scheduled to begin one week from today).” The parenthetical information is not needed; however, it serves to inform the reader that the fundraiser is scheduled and will only be cancelled if enough funds are raised now. Save Our Bay uses the personal aside to remind the reader that their gift will be matched. “That’s why I hope I can count on your support again now—when your gift will go twice as far—so we can make even more progress in the year ahead.” The sentence would be effective without “when your

gift will go twice as far,” but the aside serves to motivate the donor to give now instead of later.

MoveOn uses multiple personal asides in their email regarding policy decisions. Their letter relies on shared ideology and uses charged language along with personal asides to capitalize on any agreement between the reader and the writer.

- (r) If just three Republicans vote no, Trumpcare is dead. And if the bill doesn't pass before Congress leaves town for its August recess, then even Senate Leader Mitch McConnell himself admits that Trumpcare is probably dead for good. When that happens, he'll have to **(gasp!)** work with Democrats to shore up the health markets under the Affordable Care Act ... He's trying to bring the holdouts on board with policies that are micro-targeted at their state—effectively bribes **(even though these offerings are virtually meaningless compared to the pain and suffering that will be caused by the massive loss of health care and vicious cuts to Medicaid)** ... It won't be easy to stop Trumpcare for good, but I believe in MoveOn's ability to do it. They are organizing events to pressure on-the-fence senators **(including, recently, huge rallies with Bernie Sanders that were all over the news)**, flooding those same senators with calls, making compelling videos with heart-wrenching stories, helping lead daily rallies in Washington, D.C., to focus national media on the grassroots opposition to this bill, and more. (MoveOn, emphasis mine)

The tone of the (r) is aggressive but explanatory. The letter does not intend to incite anger. Instead, it wants the audience to be hopeful that they can stop to a potential

policy change. However, the writer needs the audience to feel an undercurrent of fear or anger—even if it is not overt—toward specific policy makers and uses the personal aside to accomplish this objective.

Semantic Elements of Engagement

Though Hyland's elements for engagement provide a thorough and quantitative framework for persuasion, writers must use lexical choices to communicate the idea clearly so that the reader can follow and make assumptions about the writer's purpose (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006; Hyland, 2010). The writer must produce a recognizable voice for the reader. Many times, this voice lies in the semantic choices. This section looks at how meaning is conveyed with regard to affect within the elements discussed and specifically how word choice is designed to influence the emotions of potential donors.

In some cases, a single word or phrase may be in common for multiple letters, but the surrounding words and phrases connote an entirely different tone and, therefore, meaning. For example, The Green Party of the United States sent two emails regarding marginalization of people within two days of each other. The first stated, "As Greens, we are actively marginalized, demonized, and scapegoated by people that see our existence as a threat. You all already know the ridiculous distortions they throw at us." The second stated, "The Green Party is committed to continually striving to create an anti-oppression environment for marginalized communities who are subject to systemic violence and oppression in their daily lives." Both emails use "marginalized," but the word choice in the first email projects a tone of anger and defensiveness while word choice in the second projects a tone of compassion and helpfulness. The technique of using different tones but

a unifying word allows the writer to address two audiences that have the same goal but different reactions to rhetoric. One reacts to anger and the other to reason.

It is also interesting to look at avoidance and how it affects the meaning of the letter. For example, campaign donation requests tend to avoid the term "politician" because it has a negative connotation and, in its stead, use terms such as Democrat or Republican, nominee, fighter, outsider, or candidate.

In the vast majority of fundraising letters, the linguistic meaning and the speaker meaning are the same. There is little wiggle room in fundraising because of audience variety and the possibility of being misunderstood. However, semantics allows the writer to occasionally break from the linguistic meaning in order to paint a mental picture for the reader by using charged language. For example, an email donation request from Trump Headquarters reads, "President Trump is counting on top supporters like you to step up and become 2017 Sustaining Members to **combat the flood** of fake news and obstructionist **attacks** from the Left" (emphasis added). This excerpt uses semantics to evoke feelings of danger and violence in the reader. Another political organization, the Daily Kos, uses graphic language to paint a mental picture and set the tone of the email with charged language, "Jennifer, this is bulls—t" (redaction in original email). Again the writers break from the linguistic meaning of the word and use speaker meaning to express how they feel about a particular political situation and convey a sense of wrongness to the reader.

However, not all breaks from linguistic meaning introduce charged language. The Carter Center uses a clever play on the cliché "waging war" when they list "waging

peace” as one of the cores of their mission. The UCI Fund opens their email with “I’ve never met a fellow Anteater that I did not consider family.” This seems an odd beginning to a letter, but the writer’s audience is fellow alumni from the University of California, Irvine. The linguistic meaning and the speaker meaning are not the same, but the speaker meaning positions the writer as a member of the discourse community of UCI alumni.

Certain semantic choices are also effective in provoking an emotional reaction from readers. Consider the use of the word “fuel” from a Greenpeace fundraising initiative regarding the Keystone XL pipeline.

- (s) ... Will you help **fuel** our resistance to this disastrous project — and support all Greenpeace does to protect the environment — by making your **strongest** donation today? ... The process of extracting tar sands from the ground and converting it into **fuel** involves strip mining giant swaths of land while creating loads of toxic waste and air and water pollution ... We are fighting this **battle** with a **full-scale resistance on all fronts**: ... Let’s show Trump and **polluters** everywhere what this community is made of. **Fuel** the resistance against KXL, the oil and gas industry, and this administration’s disastrous environmental policies with your **strongest** donation today.

P.S. Nebraska may well be our last stand in our **battle** to stop KXL. Please make an urgently needed gift now to support all of our work and to join us in this **fight** before it’s too late. (Greenpeace, emphasis mine)

“Fuel” is used in two contexts within this letter. The first and last instances ask for a monetary donation to help the resistance to the pipeline. The second is the most

common use of “fuel” as energy. However, in the second, Greenpeace is conscientious of the process of conversion, and in the full letter, they carefully detail the environmental problems to the reader using words such as “dirtiest,” “toxic,” and “pollution.” Using “fuel” in these two vastly different ways serves two purposes. First it juxtaposes Greenpeace’s mission of “fueling the resistance” with the mission of those who support the pipeline—Greenpeace cares about protecting the environment while pipeline supporters do not—and it indicates that Greenpeace is energized against “Trump and polluters everywhere.” Greenpeace chooses the word “polluters” to refer to the supporters of the pipeline, which prevents readers from interpreting the role as positive.

“Supporters” has a positive connotation and would undermine the point Greenpeace makes for its readers. They, instead, use the term “support” when asking for donations so that the positivity is reflected on the donor and not the “polluters.” “Polluters” also implies activity rather than passive support. The use of the word brings to mind people actively destroying the environment, which is the point of the letter.

Peninsula Family Service invokes compassion and warmth with their appeal to different definitions of family and their reference to a popular movie.

- (t) Do you remember the final scene in *Mrs. Doubtfire*? A lipsticked Robin Williams gazes lovingly into the camera and tackles a little girl's heart wrenching question about life after divorce. His insights on "family" are unexpectedly profound: "My dear Katie, there are all sorts of different families. Some families have one mommy or two mommies; some families have one daddy or two daddies. Some children live with their grandparents, and some live with foster parents. And some

live in separate homes, in separate neighborhoods, in different areas of the country-and they may not see each other for days, or weeks, months, even years at a time-but if there's love, dear, those are the ties that bind, and you'll have a family in your heart, forever." ... Recently widowed, and without children or grandchildren to dote on, Rosa is still far from alone. Thanks to compassionate donors like you, she has a daily ride to our Fair Oaks Adult Activity Center where her friends await. "This is my family. These are the wonderful people I share my breakfast and lunch with. The garden in the back is where I plant tulip bulbs each spring and pick tomatoes in the summer. This is where my life has purpose."

The organization redefines what family means so that they can introduce a woman who would otherwise be alone with no life partner, no children, and no grandchildren—no “family.” The redefinition of the word brings Rosa’s story to the readers and encourages them to donate so that others can have family.

CHAPTER V: RHETORICAL ANALYSIS

One of the major constructs approached in the rhetorical analysis is how requestors use rhetorical appeals, moves, and other features to position themselves with regard to the reader and how writers effectively develop relationships and persuade the reader to make a donation. Positioning through rhetoric uses conceptual ideas that rely on an understanding of relational positions as processes based on interactions with other individuals. It involves using language and rhetorical concepts to establish the writer's credibility and place the writer and reader in a relationship.

Rhetorical features also provide a means for the writer to move past persuasion into manipulation in order to achieve the desired goal. Sorlin (2017) notes that the difference in persuasion and manipulation lies in the function of the communication. In persuasion, the speaker and the hearer have access to the same information, but the speaker attempts to convince the hearer of a specific point. In manipulation, the speaker withholds or unfairly represents the information. According to Van Dijk (2006), manipulation in discourse suggests that the speaker abuses power to convince others to act in a way that benefits the speaker but not necessarily the hearer. The speaker influences the narrative by putting forth information that fits the speaker's agenda through four main strategies:

- (1) Incomplete or lack of relevant knowledge – so that no counter-arguments can be formulated against false, incomplete or biased assertions.
- (2) Fundamental norms, values and ideologies that cannot be denied or ignored.
- (3) Strong emotions, traumas, etc. that make people vulnerable.

- (4) Social positions, professions, status, etc. that induce people into tending to accept the discourses, arguments, etc. of elite persons, groups or organizations. (Van Dijk, 2006, p. 375, original used letter numbering)

Except for the first, Van Dijk's strategies fall into at least one of the rhetorical appeals that will be discussed in the next chapter; however, in many cases, the speaker produces a manipulative text by coupling politeness or conceptual metaphor with the rhetorical appeals.

Brown and Levinson's (1987) seminal work regarding politeness strategies explains that participants in communication have a positive and negative face—the public image displayed in specific situations. Negative and positive face refers to the position of the participants in relation to each other. Negative face is the freedom to act as desired without imposition while positive face is the maintenance of a positive self-image and desire that the self-image is appreciated (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

There are many threats to a participant's negative or positive face (Brown & Levinson, 1987); however, in this study, the reader of the email does not interact with the speaker, so information regarding the reader's face is not available. Likewise, information regarding the speaker's face beyond the letter is unavailable. Therefore, the only threat to face is from the speaker's positive face (wants hearer to respond as requested) to the hearer's negative face (wants to maintain freedom to act).

- (u) In this season of celebration, our thoughts turn to you, our Buckeye family. In winter's cold, your friendship brings warmth and joy, and your generosity builds upon the great Buckeye tradition of giving. You give. It's what you do. It's who

you are. And it connects Buckeyes across the years and around the world. As you plan for holiday meals, gift exchanges and celebrations, please take a moment to make your gift to Ohio State Mansfield. (Ohio State Mansfield)

The letter in (u) threatens the hearer's face twofold. First, like all the texts examined for this paper, it makes a request, which puts pressure on the hearer to act. However, it also compliments the hearer's generosity and expresses admiration. Both of these linguistic choices appeal to the hearer's positive face (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Ohio State Mansfield focuses on the potential donor and the help needed. The tone of the letter is grateful and humble. However, charged language can also be used to threaten negative face even if the hearer is not the object of the language.

(v) YOU are the reason our government is back open. Ever since the Schumer Shutdown, we received 48 petitions per second from Americans like you, demanding Democrats stop holding our military hostage to give amnesty to illegal immigrants. Democrats in red states we won big league saw how ANGRY you were with their disgusting tactics, and couldn't go on any longer. This is how we win – by rallying together and fighting! But during this shutdown, Pelosi raised hundreds of thousands of dollars from her radical base that wants unchecked illegal immigration. We can't let them get away with it. We will never forget the names of EVERY single liberal obstructionist responsible for this disgusting shut down, and we will work to FIRE them come November. Contribute \$1. (Trump Make America Great Again Committee)

Sample (v) first compliments the hearer by stating (in all capital letters) that the hearer is solely responsible for reopening the Government. The speaker then embraces the hearer as part of the group by using the phrase “Americans like you” along with the use of “we” to include the hearer in the speaker’s group (Van Dijk, 2006). Despite the charged language, this example of positive politeness softens the threat to the negative face that comes at in the form of an imperative statement—“Contribute \$1—at the end of the letter (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Writers must make linguistic and rhetorical strategy choices to manage how others see them (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Holtgrave & Perdew, 2015). These strategies require writers to use complex concepts such as metaphorical language to effectively interact with their readers.

Metaphorical Constructions

Metaphorical constructions consist of two elements: the tenor (literal) and the vehicle (figurative). Metaphor focuses attention on one aspect of an experience, which in turn, downplays or ignores other aspects. This technique can be used in manipulation by showing only what the speaker wants the hearer to know (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; McCagg, 1998) and by evoking strong emotions from the reader such as anger, pity, or guilt. Charged language relies on metaphor—often conceptual metaphor—to bring familiarity to the cause and to evoke feelings that motivate the reader to give.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) define metaphor as “understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another” (p. 5). They posit that understanding through the metaphor is embedded in cultures as a conceptual system and is not part of language

alone but also part of thought, experience, and function. Lakoff and Johnson give the example of argument being discussed in terms of war—we attack our opponent with strategy; we target in on the opponent’s weakness; we win or lose. The conceptual metaphor in fundraising allows the writer to influence the readers’ emotions or moods without overtly telling them how to feel. McCagg (1998) discusses the role of conceptual metaphor in fundraising and explains that the nature of the device focuses our attention on specific details while hiding—without deceiving—other information.

Consider the following examples. The first is an example from Alabama Senate candidate Doug Jones (D) and the second is from Alabama Senate candidate Roy Moore (R). During the 2017 special election campaign, Moore was accused of sexual misconduct with minors, and those accusations were detrimental to his campaign. Letters (w) and (x) address those accusations.

(w) Can you donate \$5 to our Special Election campaign tonight? The Special Election is just six days away, and it’s still a complete tossup. Anything you can donate now will help us contact voters and tip the scale in our favor: This campaign isn’t about me. It’s not about Roy Moore. It’s about giving folks everywhere something to believe in. People want something to vote for, not just to vote against. When Alabamians go to the polls next week and make their choice, I want them to know a vote for me is a vote for affordable healthcare, for stronger schools, and for better jobs. But I need your help to reach every last voter in time. Your support has gotten us so far. Now I need you to get us over the finish line. (Doug Jones).

- (x) The Obama-Clinton Machine's liberal media lapdogs just launched the most vicious and nasty round of attacks against me I've EVER faced. I won't get into the details of their filthy and sleazy attacks. I refuse to repeat their lies. The forces of evil are on the march in our country. We are are (sic) in the midst of a spiritual battle with those who want to silence our message. The forces of evil will lie, cheat, steal—even inflict physical harm—if they believe it will silence and shut up Christian conservatives like you and me. Their goal is to frustrate and slow down our campaign's progress to help the Obama-Clinton Machine silence our conservative message. That's why I must be able to count on the help of God-fearing conservatives like you to stand with me at this critical moment. I believe you and I have a duty to stand up and fight back against the forces of evil waging an all-out war on our conservative values. So will you take a stand by chipping in a donation to let me know you've got my back in our all-out war against the Obama-Clinton Machine? (Roy Moore)

The charged language of the Moore letter (see *Table 2*) sets a defensive tone that is reflected as a conceptual metaphor of war: "forces of evil" (used three times), "on the march," "spiritual battle," "stand up and fight back," and "all-out war" (used twice). On the other hand, Jones relies on virtue and goodwill with a focus on affordable healthcare, stronger schools, and better jobs. Jones is careful to avoid hot button issues such as gun control and abortion, and he is careful to avoid attacking Roy Moore. Instead, he focuses on his own message and how he can better the lives of his potential constituents.

The Moore letter moves the reader away from the allegations against the candidate and focuses on what he portrays as a war being waged on him by the opposing political party. Doug Jones uses the conceptual metaphor of a scale; though, his use is subtle and expressed in syntax rather than semantics. Jones balances his letter with compound sentences, simple sentences in sequence with the same subject, and parallel lists. The only mention he makes to hint at the metaphor is “tip the scale in our favor.” This scale metaphor represents justice, so it hints at Jones’s success as an attorney without taking focus from the issues of the election. Moore wants his supporters to feel like their values are being attacked while Jones wants his supporters to think about justice.

The Greenpeace letter in (s) strategically uses the conceptual metaphor of war throughout the email with word choices such as “battle,” “fight,” “full-scale resistance,” and “front.” This focuses the reader’s attention on the problem they want to discuss and the cause they want to fund. The word “strongest” seems an odd modifier for “donation,” but it is used twice in this context because strength plays into the metaphor. Use of “strongest” engages the donor—a person of strength—in the war and gives them a vested interest. The Human Rights Campaign also uses the war metaphor in a fundraising campaign supporting the LGBTQ community serving including those serving in the military. The use of “launched an all-out assault,” “fight back,” and “battle” underscores the discrimination towards the marginalized community. The organization also incorporates (in this and other letters) the anti-Donald Trump slogan “Love trumps hate.”

Goering (2004) examines metaphor in relation to positioning with her discussion of relational communication theory and its importance in fundraising. She discusses two constructs, dominance and affiliation, and argues that these constructs provide the framework for relationship judgments. Dominance refers to "the degree of control one participant in a relationship has over the behavior or beliefs of another" (p. 288). Affiliation refers to "the degree of affective connectedness one feels for another" (p. 289). Writers, however, do not overtly position themselves within a relationship but, rather, suggest a dominance or affiliation with use of metaphors, which connects the donor with the cause and creates familiarity where there was none (Goering, 2004). Goering breaks these metaphorical relationship constructs into four types:

1. Friend/family: "High degree of affiliation and relatively equal power"
2. Savior: "Considerable affiliation, but it also implies that the donor ... is dominant in the relationship"
3. Investor: "High power but relatively low affiliation"
4. Partner: "Relatively low affiliation and equal power" (pp. 290, 294)

In the following excerpt from Wikipedia, for example, the use of singular and plural first person pronouns as well as precise religious wording creates a "savior" relationship metaphor and attempts to create a certain reality in the mind of the reader.

- (y) A year ago, you donated \$10 to keep Wikipedia online for hundreds of millions of readers. I'm surprised by and deeply grateful for your continued support. We need your help again this year. I ask you, humbly: please renew your donation today.
- When I made Wikipedia a nonprofit, people warned me I'd regret it. And here we

are, over a decade later, and it's still the only top ten website that's run by a nonprofit and a community of passionate volunteers. Has it crossed my mind how much money we could have made if we were a traditional website? Sure. But I believe people wouldn't feel motivated to create content for Wikipedia, and you wouldn't trust it, if we were in this for our own benefit. Wikipedia isn't mine, it's for everyone. If all our past donors gave again today, our fundraiser would be over within an hour. We're not there yet. Please help us end the fundraiser and improve Wikipedia. We are the small non-profit that runs one of the top websites in the world. Wikipedia is something special. It is like a library or a public park. It is like a temple for the mind, a place we can all go to think and learn. To protect our independence, we'll never run ads. We are sustained by donations from our readers. (Wikipedia)

The Wikipedia request uses a subtle suggestion of a "savior" relationship between requestor and donor. The writer's message is that Wikipedia would not exist without the donor, but this is not the extent of the savior metaphor. The use of "hundreds of millions" attributes great importance to the cause, and "you donated \$10 to keep Wikipedia online" expressly puts the success or failure of the website in the hands of that particular donor and his or her \$10. "Humbly" places social distance between the requestor and the donor by giving power to the donor and placing the requestor in a position of submission (Upton, 2001). Many religions consider humility a virtue, and the letter furthers the religious aspect with "temple of the mind." Although very subtle and possibly unintentional, the collocation of "passionate" and "crossed" alludes to the Christian

savior and crucifixion. At the end of the letter, the writer asks the reader for donations to “protect” and sustain.”

The use of pronouns strategically strengthens the savior metaphor. The letter uses the first person pronoun to place further distance between the reader and writer instead of suggesting intimacy. Once the distance is established, the writer maintains it by putting “we” at the mercy of “you”—“We need “your” help to be successful. In this case, the first and second person pronouns are used to separate the requestor from the donor. The donor is dominant because “we” are in need and the “you” can save them.

Goering’s second example of relationship metaphors is represented by a fundraising letter from Hillary Clinton (z), in this case, and investor relationship.

(z) Republicans are coming after us with everything they've got. So right now we have to fight harder than ever for the Democratic vision where everyone has the same chance to get ahead, and we have to get voters to the polls. If we don't, then come November we will see Republicans elected in droves, and their disastrous plan will win out. That's why I'm asking you to stand with me today. Primary season is here - right now- and we need you in this critical moment. Please join me in my fight to win the Democratic nomination, strengthen the Democratic Party, and take on these Republicans in races across the country with a contribution of \$20.16, \$25, \$50, or more to the Hillary Victory Fund today. I cannot sit by and watch what Republicans will do to this country. I spent the last year talking to families across the country - in diners and coffee shops, at small businesses, in schools, and even around kitchen tables. I have heard the worries

that keep Americans up at night, and the hopes and dreams that get them up every morning. These are the people who need a champion in their corner. (Hillary Victory Fund)

Clinton uses terms such as “fight” and “champion in their corner” in this excerpt, and the entirety of the letter also mentions “struggle,” “playing by the rules,” and “strength,” which bring the image of a boxer to mind for the reader. Clinton is placing herself in the position of a winning fighter instead of in the position of someone who needs help. “Please join me” could denote a partnership; however, she continues that clause with “in my fight,” which puts the fight squarely in her hands. This positioning puts the reader in the role of an investor in the Clinton campaign. Clinton’s use of first person pronouns furthers the investor metaphor. She is frequent with the use of the singular because she is intentionally setting herself apart from everyone else. She is the champion. No one else can do what she can do. She also uses the first person plural, but the antecedent is ambiguous and changes within the letter. In this case, the reader must infer the reference (Biber, 1999). This ambiguity allows Clinton to reach out to members of the Democratic Party but also to potential donors who may not be affiliated with the party at all. The ambiguity of the pronouns coupled with the metaphorical language gives the reader high power (donations to advance the campaign) but low affiliation (Clinton alone is the one who can make the difference).

The Trump campaign (represented here by a letter from his son Eric Trump) also uses metaphor and first person pronouns, but this example suggests a family/friend relationship.

(aa) Friend, There's new opposition against my father and this Administration every day. The mainstream media continues to play politics, creating division and turning the American people against one another. But as a loyal supporter of our movement, I know you know the truth. My father has spoken out time and time again against those who have tried to bring this country down, and will always do so to protect hardworking Americans whose values have been forgotten by Washington. To stand with us, please consider making a crucial end-of-month contribution before the deadline tomorrow: Contribute \$1. We're working to change the course of this country for the better. My father will always stand for what is right, Friend, and hopes you will too. Please, make a contribution of just \$1 to help us crush our goal this month. (Eric Trump)

The family/friend metaphor in (aa) begins by addressing the letter to "Friend." Other writers choose to address the donor by name, but both methods serve the same purpose—to establish a familial or friendly intimacy with the reader. Eric Trump authors the email, discusses his father's candidacy, and appeals to the reader's support. He states, "I know you know the truth," which implies closeness between Trump and his reader. He then requests that the reader "stand with us." The use of "with" gives the reader equal power and suggests that the reader is part of the "us."

Goering's final relationship is that of a partner who has equal power but with a low affiliation. In this relationship, the writer gives the reader equal weight in getting to a goal, but someone else is responsible for the actual labor. All the reader has to do is make a donation to be part of a group who is making a difference.

(bb) Next week will be too late because with only 10 days left until Christmas, we're still facing the challenge of raising enough money to purchase toys for millions of less fortunate children. Unfortunately the need is widespread across our country – and far greater than local toy donations are able to fill ... Don't you agree that in spite of our country's economic struggles, no child should ever have to suffer the crushing disappointment of being forgotten at Christmas? Since 1947, the Marine Toys for Tots Program has been saving Christmas for impoverished families across our nation ... With a modest donation now, you still have the ability to fulfill the Christmas dreams of a less fortunate boy or girl, who might otherwise awaken to nothing under the tree on Christmas morning. Right now, Marines and volunteers are scrambling, desperate to make sure no child is forgotten on their list – and you can still help. Please click on the "Donate Now" button and make a contribution today. Together, we can accomplish this mission! (Toys for Tots)

The excerpt above could initially be seen as a savior relationship. The reader can “fulfill the Christmas dreams of a less fortunate boy or girl,” but the role does not fall solely on the donor. The language makes it clear that this is a partnership relationship between the writer and the reader. The letter tells the reader that there are local toy donations, but they are not enough. It also states that “Marines and volunteers are scrambling.” Others are working and donating to make Christmas special for the children. The purpose of the letter is for additional monetary help giving the donor equal power with other donors, Marines, and volunteers but low affiliation. Nothing beyond the donation is requested. The relationship is underscored with the use of the first person

plural pronouns. The use of “our country’s economic struggles” and “our nation” unite the reader and the writer as part of the same group. At the end of the letter, the writer states that “Together, we can accomplish this mission,” which further stresses the partnership between the organization and the donor.

Rhetorical Appeals

The rhetorical appeals of *pathos*, *ethos*, and *logos* are the foundation of persuasive arguments. The difficulty in fundraising—or any work of persuasion—is navigating the type of appeals that will be most effective in any given audience. Therefore, requests frequently use more than one appeal in order to influence a greater number of people.

Connor and Gladkov (2004) argue that all three rhetorical appeals are important; however, they posit that a positive and hopeful audience is more receptive to action than a pessimistic and distrusting audience and that the writer must present the proposal in a way that appeals to the emotions and allows the audience to feel compelled to act. They underscore Aristotle's ideas of virtue, intelligence, and goodwill and suggest that these are key to the writer's image and, ultimately, successful persuasion.

Like Connor and Gladkov, Brader (2005) discusses how moods affect the processing of information. He agrees that optimistic attitudes show a correlation between emotion and credibility when he states that positive moods allow the person to fall back on existing beliefs and rely on the credibility of the speaker rather than the content of the message. This is reflected in the Jones letter (w). Jones’s target audience recognizes the importance of the issues he mentions, which relate him to the reader both emotionally and credibly. Negative moods, on the other hand, connect emotion with logic because the

reader relies more on the content of the message than other considered factors such as the speaker. Moore, too, relates to his intended audience by capitalizing on fear, discontent, and religion (x). He appeals to *logos* by assessing blame to Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton and—by referring to his Christian duty to fight them—Moore implies that a vote for him is a vote for God. Though Brader does not specifically discuss credibility or logic, he states that emotions are short-term, so it is difficult to determine their affect on a long-term situation. This is significant because fundraisers display a high level of urgency in their plea for funds. Once the emotion subsides, the potential giver may have moved on to something else (Brader 2005). This supports the idea that credibility and logic are more powerful motivators—at least for some donors—because they are more long-lasting and centered in a process that does not change as quickly as emotion or mood. However, this is not to underplay the significance of emotion as a motivating factor. In her discussion about dominance and affiliation, Goering builds on Grace's argument that an emotional concern is mandatory for donors, but that concern must be coupled with an intellectual connection with the cause (Goering 2004, Grace 1997). The emotional appeal is vital; though it may come in different approaches depending on whether the reader is positioned as affiliative or dominant (Goering 2004).

However, it is important to note that in his discussion on political persuasion, Brader (2005) states that enthusiasm and anxiety are the two emotions with the most influence. Enthusiasm reinforces a person's goals and prompts them to remain involved. A person who is motivated by fear or anxiety breaks out of his or her routines and focuses on a change; however, that change often comes after the election and may not

raise interest in the election itself (Brader, 2005). Fundraising letters—especially those with political connections—capitalize on this fear and often use charged language to stoke anxiety to encourage the audience to proffer donations. Brader also states that a sense of nostalgia can be roused through images or words that may be associated with positive or negative feelings such as success or failure. Letters attempt to tap into that nostalgia by using words such as "remember" or "think back to." Not all attempts at nostalgia are as overt, though. Often, a narrative will evoke a universal emotion such as sadness or hopelessness or helplessness, sometimes ending on a tragic note (failure) and other times telling an uplifting story of how an organization pulled a person or family out of despair (success). In other cases, a letter will thank the donor for past donations and explain how that money was used to further the organization's cause, which appeals not only to the reader's emotions but to logic (cause/effect) and *ethos* (how the money was used).

Emotion is only one driving motivation for a potential donor. Others are swayed by logic or by the credibility of the cause. The challenge for the writer is to decide which appeal or which combination of appeals to use to maximize the impact on the entire target audience. This part of the study uses categories adapted from the works of Connor and Gladkov (2004), Biber (2007), and Connor and Lauer (2010). The table below provides the persuasive categories used for this analysis. Based on Biber, cause/effect, means/ends, and consequences are combined. However, Connor and Lauer's distinction between situation, empathy, and values remain separate. Two *logos* categories, Model and Ideal or Principle, are also named by Connor and Lauer; however, in this study,

model and example were considered as example, and ideal or principle was considered as audience values. This study also discusses urgency as a *pathos* appeal. Each letter was analyzed and the rhetorical appeals were categorized (see charts in subsections below).

Discussion up to this point implies that Aristotelian rhetorical appeals are three-fold: *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*. While that is certainly true, there are persuasive strategies within each appeal that allow the writer to tailor the communication to an audience.

Brader (2005) reports that psychologists and political scientists have determined that emotions are equally effective on rationality as the subversion of rationality. "Anxious citizens are more likely to be attentive and make reasoned choices, while enthusiastic citizens tend to rely on party predispositions" (p. 389). Brader refers to political campaign advertising in his discussion; however, the same idea can be extrapolated and applied to fundraising in general, but specifically fundraising that focuses on a particular ideology.

(cc) I love this time of year, and not just because of all the holiday cheer. Today is the Winter Solstice, when we have the shortest day and the longest night of the year. Why does that make me happy? Because for the next six months, every day will be a minute or two longer, and every night will have a minute or two less darkness. There is so much darkness in our world right now, from environmental disasters to climate change, to just about everything the Trump administration has done. But light is coming to push out the darkness, and we are fighting as hard as we can to ensure that it shines where it will do the most good. You know what Greenpeace is doing to prevent greedy corporate executives and corrupt politicians from spreading their darkness. We appreciate all you've done to help

us, but at this time of transition from darkness to light, I'd like to ask you to do more. Please make a special cast-out-the-darkness contribution to Greenpeace now. And don't forget, your gift to Greenpeace could be doubled by a group of donors who will match it, dollar for dollar. Their offer is good up to a total of \$167,000 in donations, but it only lasts until the end of the year. These donors made their offer in order to help us reach our 2017 fundraising goal of \$3.25 million. Think of everything that money will do to expose the involvement between shady politicians and fossil fuel companies; to illuminate the fact that oil executives knew their companies were causing climate change decades ago and did nothing to stop it; to shine a spotlight on oil spills, habitat destruction, ground water poisoning, and all the other assaults on our planet and its oceans. (Email letter from Greenpeace)

- (dd) Often the greatest gifts are the simplest – like Jesus in a manger, wrapped in a simple sheet. You have an opportunity before the close of 2017 to send a meaningful and simple gift which can help change lives. Please make a donation today to our Most Urgent Needs Fund or give a tangible gift to those in need through the Seasons of Hope online gift catalog. A gift of only \$20 can put Scripture in the hands of someone who has never before owned a Bible. Donating \$45 can help feed and educate kids living in impoverished communities. Giving \$100 can help repair broken water pumps to restore clean water to a neighborhood. Together, we can share the Hope of Christ with those living in

extreme poverty around the globe. I wish you and yours a memorable holiday filled with the light and joy of our Savior. (Email Letter from Bright Hope)

Both letters appeal to ideology: (cc) appeals to supporters of the environment and (dd) appeals to Christians—specifically those with a focus on missionary work.

Considering Bader's argument regarding anxiousness versus enthusiasm, (dd) approaches the audience as anxious with the use of *logos* persuasive strategies.

Biber (2007) modifies the system established by Connor and Lauer (1985) so that it will apply specifically to fundraising. For example, Connor and Lauer list cause/effect, means/ends, and consequences as three separate categories. They also have individual categories for appealing to audience views: emotion in audience's situation, audience's empathy, and audience's values. Biber combines the former three categories, which works well for academia; however, the three categories better serve fundraising as Connor and Lauer defined them. Biber's combination of the three into a single category—Appealing to the Audience's Views—makes sense in academia because the purpose of asking someone to imagine themselves in a particular situation is to evoke empathy. However, the difference is that Emotion in Audience's Situation contains a statement or directive that triggers an emotion of fear or anger or joy (Connor and Lauer). Frequently, this directive is "imagine if..." Because of this difference, the three strategies are considered separately in this study. Consider the following letter from Food for the Poor where all three of these particular *pathos* strategies are used.

(ee) Imagine not eating for days, and not knowing when or if you'll ever get to eat again. (Emotion in Audience's Situation)

- (ff) That is the grim reality for this poor family in Haiti. When I met Odette, she did not know when she'd be able to feed her family again. Odette and her husband, Jerome, care for their two grandchildren after the death of their daughter, but because of their age and poor health it's hard for them to find work. She worries that her two grandchildren aren't getting enough to eat, and she has no way to find food. It's heart-wrenching to see children live like this, and unfortunately it's not a unique case. Poor families like Odette's suffer with no hope of when they will get to eat again and they have no idea how they will survive. (Audience's Empathy)
- (gg) But you can help. You can save the lives of innocent children with your gift for food. And your gift will go even further, because a generous friend will match every dollar you give with a dollar's worth of food. Please, take advantage of this incredible opportunity to save the lives of precious little ones with your most generous gift today! (Audience's Values)

The organization begins the letter by appealing to the audience's assumed current situation (able to eat on a regular basis) and directs them to imagine the alternative of not being able to eat. The appeal to situation leads directly into the appeal to empathy. First, the audience imagines what it is like not to eat then they immediately read the tragic story of Odette and Jerome who lost their daughter and cannot feed the grandchildren they are raising. Immediately, there is a call to action. Words such as "heart-wrenching," "innocent children," and "precious little ones" appeal to the values of the audience to take care of children. Another appeal to values is stating that "a generous friend" will match money with that much food. The donor's money goes further if someone is matching food

for dollar. The emotional argument becomes intertwined by nature, and direct appeals to audience are often dependent on each other, which makes separation even more difficult. However, it is important to recognize the different role each strategy plays in the discourse. Food for the Poor uses three distinct appeals as motivators for different audience types while still presenting an effectively cohesive and moving letter.

Table 2. *Persuasive Categories within Rhetorical Appeals*

<i>Logos</i>
Example – Descriptive or Narrative
Classification
Comparison
Contrast
Degree
Authority
Cause/Effect – Means/Ends – Consequences
Stage in Process
Information
<i>Pathos</i>
Emotion in Audience’s Situation
Audience’s Empathy
Audience’s Values
Vivid Picture
Charged Language
Urgency
<i>Ethos</i>
First Hand Experience
Showing respect for audience interests and points of view
Showing shared interests and points of view
Showing writer's good character and/or judgment.

Logos

Logos is used in 97% of the sample; however, in 51% of those instances, it is used with *pathos*, *ethos*, or both. Findings for the individual *logos* categories are represented in Figure 4.

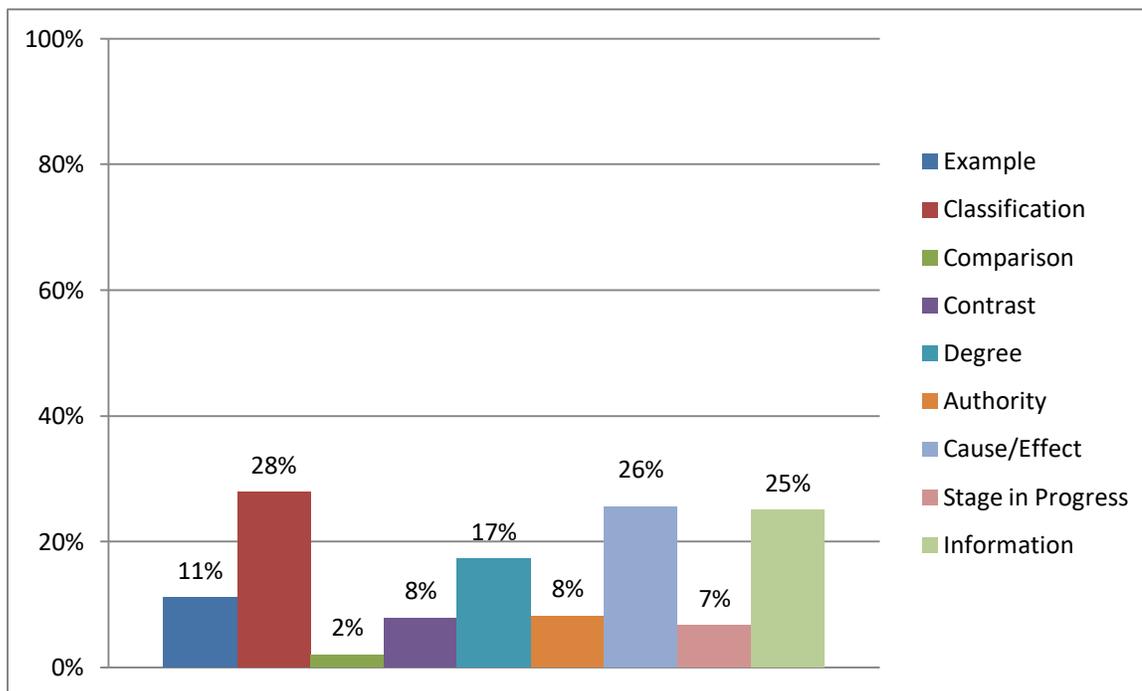


Figure 4. Representation of Logos Appeal in Fundraising Corpus

The first element of the *logos* appeal looked at in this study is the example. In this case, the writer wants the reader to conclude that if something is true for one person, then it is true for another. The appeal can present itself as descriptive or narrative and is often seen as an anecdote about someone that the organization has helped in some way. For example, a local YMCA facility advertises its summer learning camp by telling the story of a seventh grader, Weston, who read on a fourth grade level when he came to the program. “Weston spent the summer of 2016 getting high, getting into fights and hanging with a very bad crowd. He had just finished seventh grade. Barely. Then his mother died.” The letter goes on to tell how the summer program turned Weston’s life around by

teaching him to read on his grade level, changing his attitude, and giving him responsibility. It is a powerful story about a young man's struggle, and the letter writer wants the reader to conclude that the summer program helped Weston, so it can help other at-risk children. Other organizations go one step further and rename the person from the anecdote in their request for donations.

Classification allows the writer to place the reader within a certain class in order to show the benefits of being in that class (Connor and Lauer, 2010). Connor and Gladkov (2004) explain that a writer may position the reader in a position of "nobility" by associating the desired action with an elite group who act the same. Boys and Girls Clubs of America sent the following email. "Imagine being 10 years old with no place to go after school, wandering the streets, alone and afraid. That's precisely what little Mona's life was like until a perfect stranger — someone just like you — stepped up and gave her a gift that would change her life forever: a Boys & Girls Club membership. That stranger was her hero." The writer placed the reader in the same classification as the stranger who became Mona's hero. The writer chose the powerful word "hero" instead of a less flashy but possibly more accurate "advocate" or "supporter."

Comparison (often an analogy) and contrast are relatively self-explanatory, but Connor and Lauer specify that contrast demonstrates how something the reader thought to be similar is actually very different. The letter from Second Harvest Food Bank seen in (j) illustrates that not all Thanksgivings are the same for every family. It begins with a description of a typical Thanksgiving—"the abundance of good food, warmth, and laughter that will be shared with close friends and family"—but goes on to point out that

not everyone will be able to enjoy these seemingly simple traditions. Instead, they struggle to pay bills and are unable to provide even a “modest meal” for their families. The readers are forced to realize that their mental picture of Thanksgiving is not the same for everyone.

The degree technique relies on the assumption that if one thing is true, then the other is. So if one thing happens, the other should happen. The writer uses this device by implying that if someone has already donated, then they should donate more (Connor and Gladkov, 2004). This technique is underrepresented in the sample because most uses come in “thank you” letters after a donation is made or as a pop up request when finishing an online donation—Doug Jones of Alabama utilized this tactic. However, Food for the Poor includes degree when reaching out to past donors. “Thank you very much for your donation to Food for the Poor. We are deeply grateful for your generosity. Your gift will provide life-saving aid to the poorest of the poor. If you haven't already, please consider joining a Food For The Poor Monthly Giving Club, the most convenient way to help the poor on a regular basis. You can also share your support of Food for the Poor on your Social Networks.” The Food for the Poor contribution thank you letter uses degree in two ways. First, they ask the donor to join the monthly giving club; then, they ask the donor to share their support on social media outlets. They assume that the reader will be willing to give additional money because they have already supported the organization. They recognize, however, that that may not be an option, so they request that support is shared on social media. The degree argument is that if you give, you will give more, or if you give, you will tell others.

Authority is the act of using a prestigious name to motivate the reader to act. The writer may drop the name in without explaining who the person is assuming that the reader will understand the connection and consider the person authoritative (Connor and Gladkov, 2004). In a letter from WCBE radio, a radio personality tells the anecdote of working with “Heather Anderson.” The radio personality does not explain who Heather Anderson is until near the end of the letter. Instead, she mentions Ms. Anderson’s name then begins discussing women’s equal rights in the workplace and primarily media. She then names women who work on her station of which Ms. Anderson is one.

The authority technique is challenging because it could be considered *logos* or *ethos*, especially when the authority is someone outstanding in the field. However, Connor and Lauer (1985) categorize authority as *logos*, and in the samples in this study, the person of authority is not necessarily someone related to the field. The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) sends a letter written by American author Toni Morrison. Marlo Thomas is the National Outreach Director for St. Jude Children’s Hospital. She is the daughter of founder Danny Thomas, and she has a long history with St. Jude, but she does not have expertise in medicine. Humanitarian and even political campaigns often use celebrity spokespeople to raise the authority of their organization and encourage donations.

The cause/effect technique is the most used device not only for the *logos* appeal for overall rhetorical appeals. The writer motivates the reader by contrasting the consequences of taking or not taking a particular action. The description of the consequences puts the choice to act in the hands of the donor (Connor and Gladkov,

2004). In this Habitat for Humanity letter, the writer asks the reader to donate \$25 and states that the donation will be tripled and that it is critical for a family in crisis. The letter ends by capitalizing “only” implying that the \$25 is the only way to help the family. \$25 donation + triple match = family home. No donation = no family home.

(hh) Please, can you step up with a gift of \$25 today? That could become \$75 with this match! Your response is urgently needed. It will be critical for a family in crisis. There's a family right now that is ready and waiting to partner with us and invest the sweat equity to build themselves a safe and decent home and escape poverty and bad circumstances. All we need is your gift — and it will be worth TRIPLE! Please don't wait. Your gift can multiply to transform the lives of a family who needs an affordable home ONLY if you reply before midnight tonight.

The stage in process technique closes the gap between an accepted idea and the proposal by showing that the proposed action is a stage in a process. The writer allays the reader's preconceptions about something being impossible by showing the steps to reach the proposed ending or reviewing steps that have already been taken (Connor and Gladkov, 2004). The following email updates the organization's donors on the upcoming completion of a project but expresses that more funds are needed to finish the process.

(ii) The Planetary Society's LightSail® 2 spacecraft is getting ready to make space exploration history as the first to demonstrate controlled solar sail flight of a CubeSat. We are completing final testing and entering the final phase of preparations before it launches aboard a SpaceX Falcon Heavy rocket—currently

scheduled for spring 2018. But we need your support now to get to the launch pad! (Planetary Society)

Within this study, stage in process also refers to a detailed plan to accomplish the goal set forth for the funds. The following example from Greenpeace is from the same letter as sample (s). The writer explains specific plans to address the KXL pipeline and gives an overall timeline of the actions that the group will take to protest.

- (jj) We are fighting this battle with a full-scale resistance on all fronts: **On Sunday August 6**, we will stand with indigenous people and supporters, climate activists, pipeline fighters, and water protectors in Lincoln, Nebraska at the March to Give Keystone XL the Boot. **Next week**, we will be joining our allies at a **week-long** public hearing being held by the Nebraska Public Service Commission (PSC), **after which** the PSC will be voting on whether to accept or reject TransCanada's permit application. (Greenpeace, emphasis mine)

Finally, the information technique presents facts and relies on statistics and accurate data (Connor and Gladkov, 2004). At 30%, is the second most used of the *logos* techniques because it allows the writer to give factual information without an emotional angle especially in education and science. Consider the following excerpt. Alabama Public Television simply states the programming that is offered through their service. They do not appeal to *pathos* or *ethos*; however, they do list programming from a variety of genres and ages. "Outstanding PBS series such as Antiques Roadshow, Masterpiece, Nature, NOVA, and PBS NewsHour depend on viewer support, as do PBS KIDS

programs, including the exciting new series Splash and Bubbles” (Alabama Public Television).

Pathos

Bazerman (1998) opines that *pathos* is key to fundraising success. He states that emotions—particularly shame and pride—represent a social rupture in the need situation (something shameful) and social healing in the act of charity (something commendable). He discusses the importance of forming a relationship with donors and tells of Roe Anne White of Giving Solutions. Ms. White develops a relationship with her donors through correspondence, and she often sends notes, news articles, and social invitations.

Bazerman quotes her as saying, "People give to people; they don't give to organizations" (p. 12), and he argues this is a fundraising basic (Bazerman 1998). Myers (2007) agrees with Bazerman, but instead of shame, he opines that pity is the motivating factor of emotional appeals.

Easterseals¹ is an example of the successful use of *pathos*. Its direct mail letter asks, “What does your gift to Easterseals mean?”

(kk) It means breaking down barriers and paving pathways to independence for people with disabilities, veterans and seniors. It means turning “impossible” into “someday.” It means Easterseals will be there to offer support and care, for today and tomorrow. Your gift helps families like the Hammonds. Recently, Keith Hammond – a father of two young adults with autism, Hillary and Steven, and

¹ Easterseals is a humanitarian organization with a mission to help people and families living with disabilities.

manager of adult day services at Easterseals Greater Cincinnati – reached out to share with us his Easterseals experience: “I was like many Americans. I was independent and tough, like John Wayne. If I couldn’t do it myself, I didn’t care to have it done. I didn’t need anybody but me. Our daughter, Hillary, changed all that. When your baby isn’t developing typically, and physicians are concerned, and diagnoses like autism are discussed, you quickly and humbly learn that sometimes you can’t do everything yourself. (Easterseals)

This letter uses only the *pathos* appeal in the body of the email. There is one line above the “Give Now” button that states “Give your support by December 31 with your tax-deductible gift today,” which serves as the only instance of another appeal (*logos* in this case) in the entire letter. This particular sentence appeals to *logos* by suggesting a cause and effect between the reader’s donation and the services provided; however, it is important to note that “by December 31” and “tax-deductible” serve as appeals to *pathos*. The former appeals to urgency by giving the audience a deadline for the donation while the latter appeals to audience’s values—in this case, a tax deduction. Despite the disproportionate use of *pathos*, Easterseals brings in \$204 million in private donations per year (Forbes 2017).

Pathos is used in 57% of the sample letters; however, in 80% of those instances, it is used with *logos*, *ethos*, or both, which suggests that potential donors also need logic or *ethos* to act on their emotions. Findings for the individual *pathos* categories are represented in Figure 5.

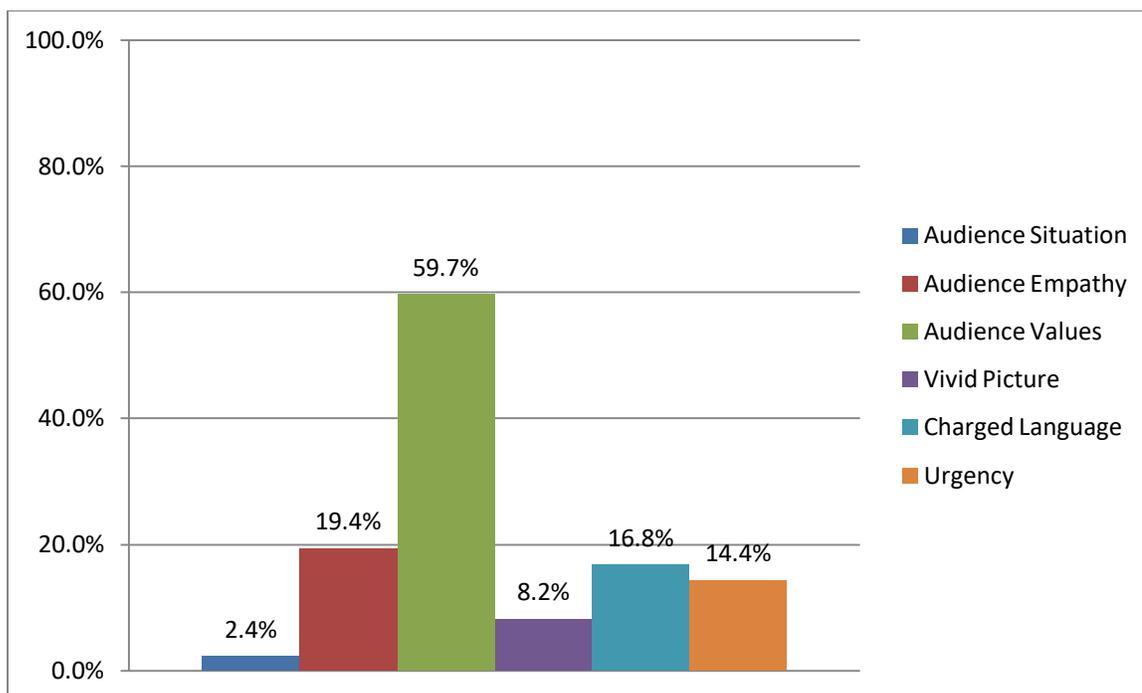


Figure 5. Representation of Pathos Appeal in Fundraising Corpus

The first category of *pathos* is evoking emotion by placing the audience in the situation of the people who need help (Connor and Gladkov, 2004). This creates an “it could happen to me” mentality in the reader. The research in this study shows that this is used most often in humanitarian and, especially, medical efforts. St. Jude Children’s Hospital, for example, begins one of their letters with “Four words no parent wants to hear. ‘Your child has cancer.’” This chilling first sentence puts the reader in the situation of facing the loss of a child and feeling the helplessness and frustration that would come with trying everything to save your child.

Not all situations allow the writer to place the reader in someone else’s shoes. In this case, the writer must appeal to empathy. However, in order to evoke empathy and pity, the writer must write in vivid detail so that the reader is in close proximity even if

not in the place of the person needing help. Therefore, audience's empathy and vivid picture must be used together to be effective. The letter from Islamic Relief USA in (I) uses this combination technique. Most people know what it is like to be cold, and it is instinctual to seek warmth. The writer describes Mohammed's plight in heart wrenching detail (as discussed in a previous chapter).

The appeal to audience values is a commonly used *pathos* appeal that outlines the benefit for donation to the potential donor. For example, the benefit offered by WCBE is interruption-free music and television while Wikipedia offers access to the ad-free website. The primary benefit boasted by most fundraising organizations is tax-deductions (Connor and Gladkov, 2004). PETA offers a subscription to their magazine to anyone making an annual donation of \$16. WOSU public media reminds viewers that their programming is free but that it needs to funding to remain free. These are both non-tax-related benefits to the donor.

Other appeals to audience values come through recognition of important ideologies. Consider the National Park Foundation's call to nostalgia in order to remind the potential donor of the relationship between parks and childhood.

(II) ...I hope you'll think about the parks you visited in your childhood, the vacations you've taken over the years, and the adventures you may have planned for your children and grandchildren. I hope you'll agree that our work is important ... and that it inspires you to support our national parks in this pivotal time as the National Park Service begins its second century of stewardship

Consider the Jones and Moore letters (w) and (x). Both letters appeal to reader emotion; however, (x) focuses on fear with little appeal toward virtue or goodwill. Arguably, the only appeal toward virtue manifests as the Christian appeal with words such as "evil," "Christian," and multiple instances of "conservative."

Charged language is the second most used of the *pathos* appeals at 22%. The purpose of charged language is to anger readers and provoke them into action (Connor and Gladkov, 2004). The Daily Kos uses charged language when asking for donations to endorse Senate candidates: "This is complete abdication of the Senate's responsibility to consider a president's nominations, a deliberate attempt to sabotage Democratic presidencies, and an organized effort to grind Supreme Court business to a halt just as Republicans have ground Congress to a halt." Linguistic choices such as "abdication," "sabotage," and "grind to a halt" make it clear to the reader that the writer believes that Republicans are intentionally damaging the Supreme Court. This charged language is intended to rile the reader into the act of making a donation to endorse Democratic candidates.

The use of charged language, however, can be risky. The organization may alienate potential donors based on ideological differences. For example, the NRA Foundation's Back Our Blue initiative seeks to procure donations of funds or vehicles to support police forces across the United States. Yet, the email states, "It's Time We Honor Our Law Enforcement Again. Our nation's police officers put their lives on the line every day to protect those in need—including the ignorant and ungrateful who direct criticism toward the entire profession." This charged language gives the impression that the

organization will only take donations from people who agree with the NRA's political stance—they polarize those who disagree with them no matter the degree or ideology of the disagreement. The ACLU appeals to the other ideological side when they state, "But the fight is far from over. It's going to take all of us – day by day – to defeat the hateful, xenophobic, anti-democratic agenda of Trump and his cronies, like Jeff Sessions and Kris Kobach." However, the ACLU defends groups that have been described using the terms “hateful” and “xenophobic” (ACLU, 2018). For example, the ACLU represented Jason Kessler, the organizer of the violent 2017 Charlottesville, Virginia rally, when his permit was revoked at the last minute. David Cole, the Legal Director of the ACLU, issued a statement explaining and defending their decision to represent Kessler (Cole, 2017). He states, "The power of our First Amendment advocacy turns on our commitment to a principle of viewpoint neutrality that requires protection for proponents and opponents of our own best view of racial justice. If we defended speech only when we agreed with it, on what ground would we ask others to tolerate speech they oppose?" Cole's argument is that the ACLU protects the freedom of speech for all Americans—not just the ones they agree with. However, their fundraising email uses charged language against a specific group of Americans.

Ethos

Goering, Connor, Nagelhout, and Steinberg (2001) agree that fundraising falls into the three Aristotelian rhetorical appeals; however, they argue that the credibility appeal is the most influential because it promotes donor trust (Goering et al., 2011). This

excerpt from a Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) direct mailing shows the powerful nature of promoting a trust relationship in academic fundraising by using *ethos*.

(mm) A century ago, MIT had the courage and confidence to build something designed to last 100 years: the great central structures known as the “Main Group.” It was an act of bold aspiration: a million square feet, including a dome larger than the US Capitol’s. It also constituted a radical experiment in practicality: an academic complex designed on the lines of a flexible, light-filled factory and build mainly from steel-reinforced concrete, a novel material that had perhaps never been used on such a scale before. (Massachusetts Institute of Technology)

MIT’s letter has elements of pathos with phrases such as “courage and confidence” and “bold aspiration.” These elements support Bazerman’s argument that the emotion of pride is a key element of fundraising. However, the majority of the letter focuses on ethos. Even the two phrases mentioned can double as elements that highlight credibility. Arguably, the intent of the letter is that the source of pride for MIT is its credibility. However, this single paragraph in a multiple paragraph letter touts MIT’s accomplishments. A million square feet. A dome larger than the US Capitol. Practicality. Material never used before on a large scale. These instances are specifically chosen to prove to the donor that any funds raised will be well used. After all, this particular structure has lasted 100 years—as mentioned twice in the first sentence of the letter. Bhatia (1998) states that organizations establish their credentials by pointing to their successes and long histories. He further states that organizations establish the needs of the

community and determine how the organization will help to meet those needs. MIT's letter is an example of this in action.

Ethos is used the least of the rhetorical appeals in 41% of the sample with 20% of those instances accompanying *pathos*, *logos*, or both. It is also interesting that 86% of the uses are in the environmental and science division. The findings for the individual *ethos* categories are represented in Figure 6 below.

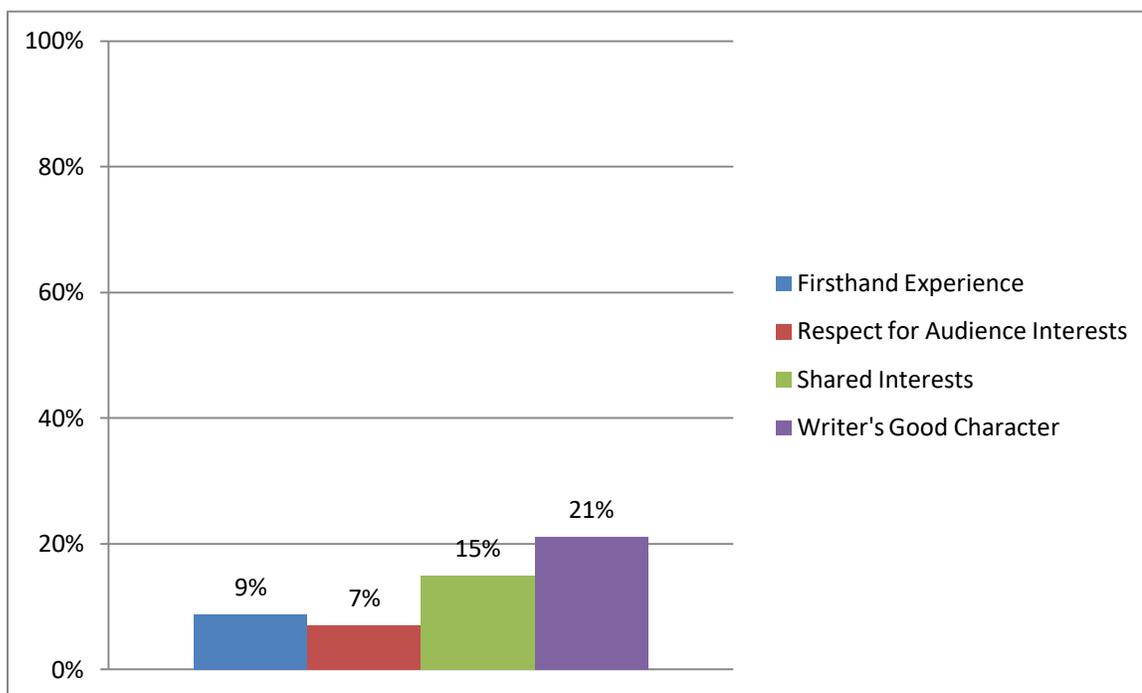


Figure 6. Representation of Ethos Appeal in Fundraising Corpus

The firsthand experience appeal differs from the example *logos* appeal in that it is a personal statement. The writer for the OEC states, "I know firsthand what it's like to live in the shadow of oil and gas operations. My elementary school sat on a cliff near an oil refinery. At an early age, I saw classmates suffering from asthma and cancer due to the pollution flowing onto our playground and into our homes. This was many years ago,

and ever since, I've fought so that other families wouldn't have to go through the same thing." The writer does acknowledge that she (she states later that she was a little girl when this happened) was affected by the oil refinery, but the impact was what she saw of other people. Instead of giving a descriptive example as would be done for *logos*, the author simply wants the reader to know that she has some experience living near oil refineries. Her intent is to bring credibility to her request for a donation.

Another method for the *ethos* appeal is to show respect for the audience's interests. This establishes goodwill between writer and reader, which in turn, brings credibility to the writer. (Connor and Gladkov, 2004). The Alzheimer's Association takes an interest in their donor by stating, "Marcia, I know you have many reasons for supporting the Alzheimer's Association. I know this is a cause that you take personally." Even though this "personalized" statement is included in the form letter, the use of the name and the recognition that the cause is something the donor cares about makes the reader feel as if the writer cares about him or her.

Much like respecting the audience's interests, expressing shared interests with the reader also boosts credibility and encourages the reader to keep reading or to donate. This is, by far, the most used of the *ethos* appeals appearing in 51% of the samples. Sharing interests is often, but not always, expressed with the use of first person plural pronouns. MIT uses "we" and "our" to reinforce a shared interest with their alumni: "It is hard-not to be proud of what our community has accomplished thus far; as we approach 50, it is time to reflect on where we have been and where we want to go." However, the pronoun usage is not the only means of establishing a shared interest with the reader. Alabama

Senate primary candidate Luther Strange asks his supporters to forward the email to their friends and family and states, “Doing so will guarantee we have the numbers to take down the Swamp and bring home a victory both for Alabama and the President!” He assumes that his readers are Trump supporters, so he emphasizes that shared interest between him and them.

The final method for *ethos* appeal is showing the writer’s good character. The writer emphasizes his or her image in regard to the Aristotelian ideals of goodwill, intelligence, and virtue. The writer implies that the reader's recognition of his or her upstanding character and strong virtues means that the reader has the same goodness. Consider Doug Jones’s campaign letter reminding his voters of his seminal prosecution: “I prosecuted members of the KKK for killing four innocent girls in the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing. I knew it was never too late to fight for justice, civil rights and progress. That’s why I’m running for Senate. I want our children and our grandchildren to grow up in a fair and just America, with good health care, a clean environment, and access to a great education.” An interesting spin on the appeal to good character is when a third party speaks on behalf of someone. Noble laureate, Toni Morrison speaks about the virtues of Morris Dees, founder and chief counsel of the SPLC: “That’s what I love about my friend Morris—he stands up to hate, racism, and intolerance with a deep passion and a remarkable clarity of purpose.” Morrison’s assessment of Dees may even be more powerful than Doug Jones because the readers can also stand up to hate, racism, and intolerance, and probably many of them have. On the other hand, they likely cannot

prosecute someone for a hate crime. They can relate better to Dees than to Jones.

However, Jones's good character is clear in his letter, which is an effective appeal.

Combination

As mentioned above, Ritzenhein (1998) argues that successful fundraising appeals do not expect donors to act based on either logic or emotion alone but instead combine *logos* and *pathos*, specifically. Ritzenhein argues that potential donors need a logical reason to act regardless of the emotional or ethical inclination to give. This study shows that over half of the samples in each category use multiple appeals with the Humanitarian category using over 80%.

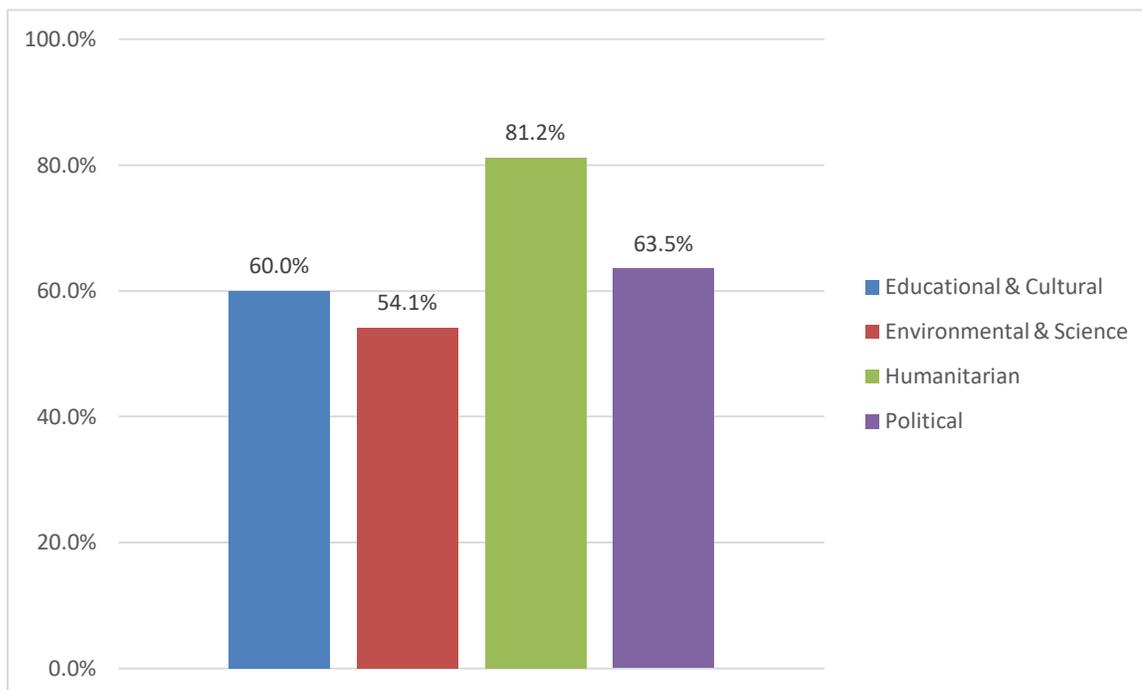


Figure 7. Combination of Rhetorical Appeals

Consider this appeal for funds from the Mid-Ohio Foodbank:

(nn) Your donation to Mid-Ohio Foodbank is so much more than money. It provides meals and hope to people who are facing hunger this holiday season and in the upcoming cold winter months. They are children, seniors, veterans, and families; they are our neighbors, coworkers, and friends. The demand for food continues to grow each day – stretching our resources to the limit. Please help! Your \$15 donation today will provide food for 60 meals – if you donate \$25 – that’s enough food for 100 meals. Anything you can give will help us provide food to those who would otherwise go without this fall. The more you give, the more people you can help. (Mid-Ohio Foodbank)

In this direct mail letter, the fundraising organization appeals to the *pathos* (emotions) of the reader by coupling meals with hope and specifying at risk citizens (children, seniors, veterans) and families. They go further by putting hypothetical faces with the hungry they want to help who instead of being referenced as a faceless, collective entity are specified as: neighbors, coworkers, and friends. This forces the reader to identify with the people who need help and possibly suggests that the reader may not realize that someone close to them is hungry and in need of assistance. It may be their neighbor or friend, after all. The letter then switches direction by telling exactly where the money goes, which appeals to the reader’s logic—\$15 feeds 60 and \$25 feeds 100. This makes mathematical, financial, and logical sense to the reader. The letter ends with a direct appeal to *logos* and a subtle appeal to *pathos* when it states that more people are helped with more money.

Rhetorical Moves

Rhetorical moves serve as a template for the writer and for the reader. The template is malleable, however, giving the writer creative space, but the reader expects to find certain information such as the cause or issue that needs to be addressed and funded, the reputation of the requesting organization, and a request to do something specific—in this case, make a monetary donation. Without these moves, readers may become confused about what is expected of them.

This chapter looks at six major moves in fundraising solicitation letters: (1) get attention, (2) introduce the cause, (3) establish credentials/justification, (4) solicit response, (5) express gratitude, and (6) external verification. As mentioned, Upton combines introduce the cause and establish credentials; however, in this study, these two moves are often distinct or combined with another move rather than each other. It could be argued that the postscript is a rhetorical move; however, it is treated as a structural component in this study as it often contains one or more of the six studied moves—usually Solicit Response—supporting Edles’s (2006) statement that the postscript should be used to remind the reader of the organizational needs and repeat the request for a donation.

Move 1: Get Attention

Getting the attention of the reader is essential to an effective letter and to audience engagement (Hyland, 2005). Edles succinctly points out that “You won’t raise a nickel if nobody reads the letter” (2006, p. 219). The opening sentence or paragraph must grab the readers and move them to increase the likelihood that they will finish reading (Edles,

2006). A bland opener turns readers off and may even prevent them from continuing to read the letter or opening the email.

Edles equates the subject line of an email with the envelope of a direct mail letter and states that both are important to stimulating the audience's attention; however, this research shows that both are used less than 50% of the time for attention getting. The attention getters occur primarily in the first sentence or paragraph of the letter.

As can be seen in Figure 8 below, the majority of direct mail and email solicitation requests use the get attention move with 83% and 84%, respectively. Those that do not use the move typically fall into two categories: local and established organizations. For example, the Clinton Foundation and the American Heart Association occasionally rely on name recognition to entice the reader and begin the letter with an introduction to the cause. Save the Bay, a regional organization established to protect the San Francisco Bay, begins with “since you first joined Save The Bay in 2014, you’ve done so much to protect our beloved San Francisco Bay and the quality of life it offers to all who call the Bay Area home.” While this would fall under Upton’s (2002) definition of get attention (offer general pleasantries), it does not meet the criteria implied by Edles (2006) and does not align with the get attention moves of other fundraisers, which tend to be startling or emotionally provocative.

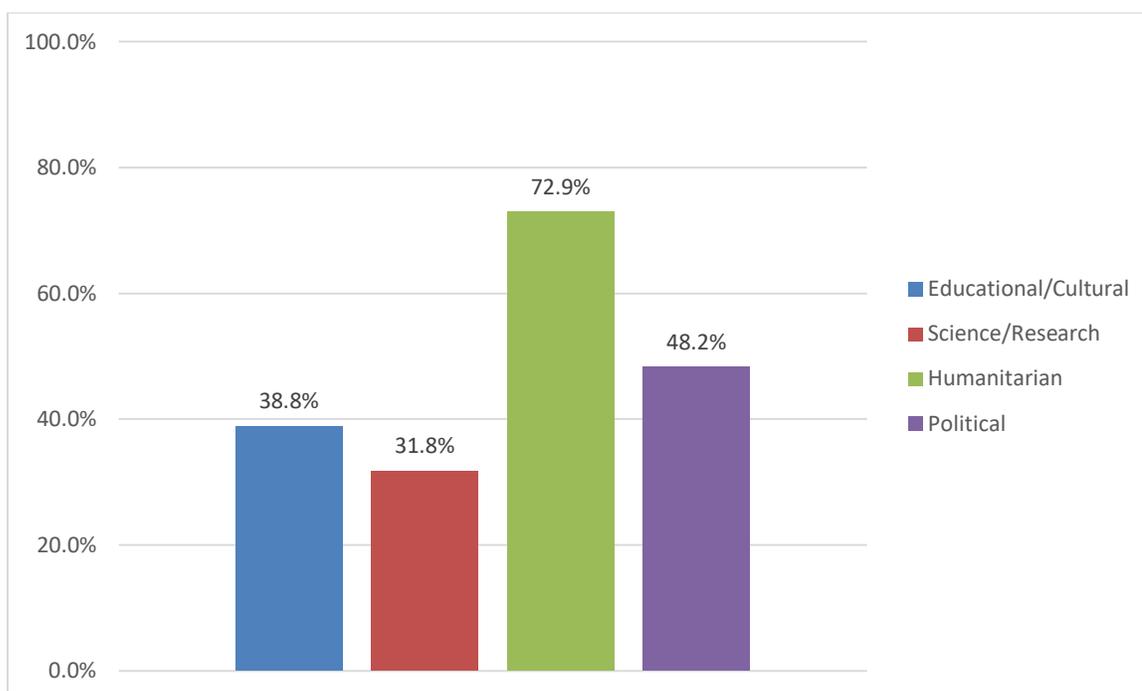


Figure 8. Move 1: Get Attention in Fundraising Corpus

As discussed above, examples (rr), (ss), and (tt) represent the get attention move; however, some instances are more subtle while still being startling or emotionally provocative. Visualization such as pictures of abused animals or starving children is often used in conjunction with written communication but is sometimes used in its stead.² Another means of getting attention is through personal narrative from someone affected by the specific problem or helped by the organization. These narratives are often included as an insert in direct mail or as an image in either direct mail or email instead of within the letter itself. Many of the narratives are written by affected individuals but still others are written by someone on their behalf.

² Visual rhetoric was not part of this study.

- (oo) Nobody forgets that feeling, knowing your baby should be in your arms. The sounds and smells of the hospital room—worried, waiting for the nurses, trusting them to bring back your little girl. My daughter, Vivian, was born 50 days premature. It was one of the happiest days of my life and also one of the scariest. As a mom, you want to keep your newborn safe—nurturing her, protecting her, providing for her—but it doesn't always turn out that way. The nurses and doctors saved my daughter's life, but I know they didn't do it alone. It was the researchers, the support staff and all the teams behind the scenes. It was people like YOU who pitched in to change the world for a family like mine (March of Dimes).
- (pp) Our client, Tanya Gersh, a mother, has endured months of hellish, anti-Semitic intimidation at the hands of neo-Nazis. She received threats that included horrifying images invoking the Holocaust. In one, Tanya—who is Jewish—is being sprayed with a green gas. More than once, she answered the phone and heard only gunshots. Even her 12-year-old son wasn't spared. She was heartbroken when he received a tweet with the image of an open oven. The message: *"psst kid, theres (sic) a free Xbox One inside this oven."* (Southern Poverty Law Center)

Example (oo) represents a personal statement written by a mother whose daughter was born nearly two months premature. Tanya Gersh's story in (pp) is told by Morris Dees, founder and counsel for the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC). Both stories serve as the get attention move by using emotionally provocative stories. The mother's story appeals to a parent's universal fear of helplessness when a child is sick. While Mr.

Dees's story also appeals to the fear someone in Ms. Gersh's position may feel, it more broadly appeals to a universal anger that someone would be treated with such cruelty. Mr. Dees also mentions Ms. Gersh's young son to reiterate the importance of protecting the family from harassment and threats of violence before they escalate into acts of violence. Both stories appeal to a universality and moves the audience to read on and possibly donate to the cause.

The Get Attention move does not always stand alone. Consider the following opening paragraph from a Toys for Tots email where Move 1 and Move 3 are combined:

(qq) As I reflect on Veteran's Day and on all of the hard work and sacrifices our Marines have made, I am reminded that not all of their hard work is done on the battlefield. Many of our Marines and volunteers have been working tirelessly for the last couple months preparing their local Toys for Tots programs to be ready to assist millions of families in need of help providing toys and gifts for their children this Christmas holiday season.

This email gets the audience's attention by mentioning Veteran's Day and reminding the audience of the sacrifices made by the Marines. This also serves to establish the credentials by suggesting that service members and veterans are trustworthy and upstanding. After all, they have a holiday celebrating their service. The paragraph then builds on the reputation of the Marines in order to introduce the Toys for Tots program. There are only two sentences in the paragraph, but three moves: get attention, introduce the cause, and establish credibility. Get attention and introduce the cause do not overlap each other, but establish credibility overlaps both.

Email often approaches the get attention move differently than direct mail by using the subject line to grab the audience's attention. The following subject lines also serve in the attention getting role.

(rr) "It's high time for Congress to end marijuana prohibition" (Libertarian Party)

(ss) Mom, why can't we play outside? (Habitat for Humanity)

(tt) "Stop this bigot from getting into the Senate" (DNC Rapid Response)

It is not unusual for email subject lines to serve as attention grabbers. However, in many cases, the email message also contains a getting attention move within the email. In the cases of (rr), (ss), and (tt), the subject line serves as the move itself. The first line of (rr) is "On Jan. 4, acting against the advice of his own Task Force on Crime Reduction and Public Safety, U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions rescinded the Cole Memorandum" and then follows with the legal history of cannabis regulation over the current and past presidential administrations. The first paragraph of (ss) reminds the potential donor about previous contact and potential to double the donation while (tt) grabs attention with the subject line and then starts the message of the email with "Earlier today, Joe Arpaio announced that he is running for Senate in Arizona." The benefit of the subject line attention getter is that the writer can launch directly into establishing the cause within the letter itself. It also increases the likelihood that the recipient's curiosity will be piqued prompting him or her to open and read the letter.

Move 2: Introduce the Cause

Regardless of whether the goal of an organization is primarily to procure funds or to establish and maintain relationships, introducing the cause is essential for success.

Edles (2006) mentions a variety of elements in the fundraising letter. Three of those elements—central themes, descriptions of the people who will be helped, and benefits to the donor—are often included within the introduce the cause move. It is important to note, however, that 27% of the letters specify a benefit to the reader list and 50% of those list tax-deductions or some other tax related benefit. Tax-related benefits tend to come at the end of the letter instead of within the introduce the cause move. See Figure 9.

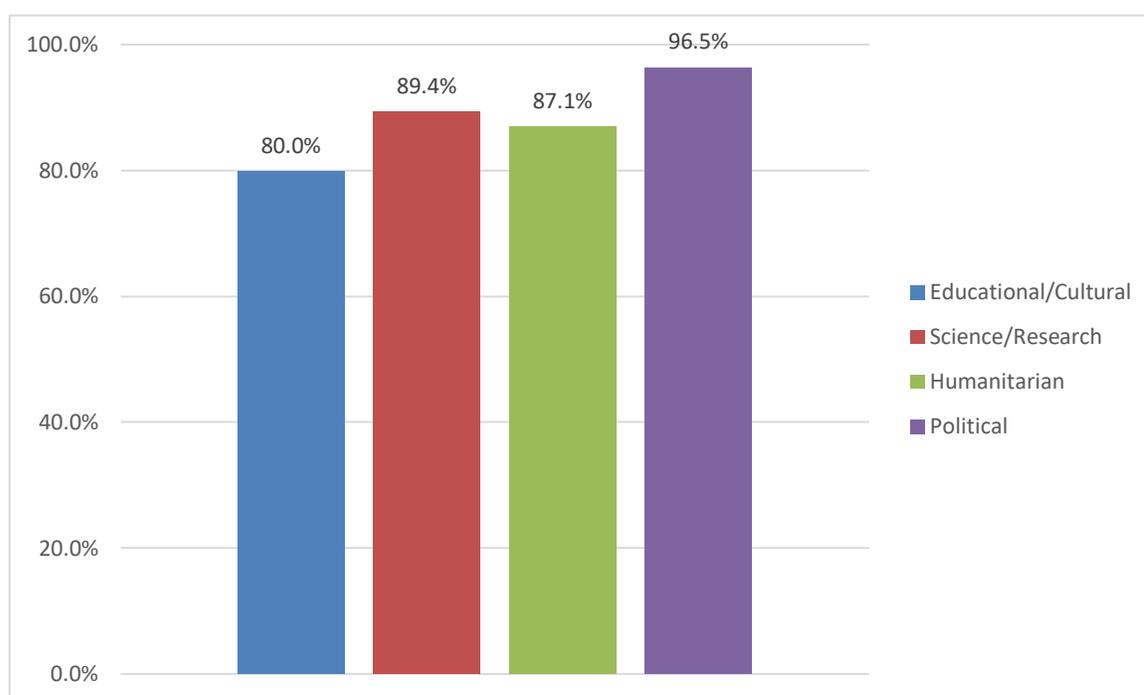


Figure 9. Move 2: Introduce the Cause in Fundraising Corpus

Another element—personal stories—can be included within introduce the cause, but this research shows that it is often included elsewhere (such as getting attention) or not at all. Introduction of the cause is used in nearly all of the direct mail and email letters—100% and 97%, respectively. The 3% discrepancy between direct mail and email may be due to embedded links within the email letters, which often navigate the reader to

a personal story, a detailed account of organizational needs, or a description of the cause.³ For example, the fundraising letter for Westerly Library contains only two sentences: “As the 125th Anniversary year comes to a close, we want to sincerely thank everyone who has helped us make this such a special year. If you have not had a chance to give to the Annual Fund, there is still time to do so and lock in a tax savings for 2017.” The logo appears on the email and an appeal to “Help Us Reach Our Annual Fund Goal” appears just above the letter, but there is no information about what Westerly Library does or who it benefits. However, the click for donation takes the reader to the library website, which goes into detail about the library, programs, and mission. On the other hand, the Columbus Symphony fundraising letter gives no information regarding the cause, and the link provided takes the reader to a donation site with no information about the symphony or its projects. Interestingly, there are options to add donations for two specific people—David Frost and Anne Melvin—but no explanation of who they are. There are no further links provided on the donation site. Watsi—an organization allowing donors to pay for surgeries for specific patients—likewise has little information about the program or how it works. It simply asks the donor to give Watsi gift cards. The link provided gives more information about the charity, which is run as a crowdfunding site whose patients are vetted by the organization’s medical partners to ensure that they meet specific criteria (Watsi).

³ While some direct mail solicitations provided web addresses for their readers, it was not a significant representation and was, therefore, not considered in this study.

The other emails provide varied information when introducing the cause, but all focus on explaining what the charity does so that the potential donor can make an informed decision about whether to donate.

- (uu) As we move into a new year, I want to share with you some powerful moments from this past year highlighting UNICEF's lifesaving work. From the ongoing violence in Syria to the Zika virus epidemic to Hurricane Matthew, children have faced unfathomable hardships. But with the help of UNICEF, these same children have overcome adversity and seen inspiration, kindness and hope. (UNICEF)
- (vv) You know the drill. After each mass shooting, members of Congress offer their thoughts and prayers. Yet time after time, there is no meaningful discussion of what we can actually do to stop the epidemic of gun violence in this country. Here's the truth: will universal background checks, an assault weapons ban, fixing NICS, banning bump stocks and more stop every gun death? Of course not. But I shudder to think what it says about us as a nation if we don't even attempt to make a good faith effort to try and end this carnage. (DNC)
- (ww) Your generous donation supports our mission to eliminate Alzheimer's disease through the advancement of research; to provide and enhance care and support for all affected; and to reduce the risk of dementia through the promotion of brain health. (Alzheimer's Association)

All of the examples above inform the reader about the cause. UNICEF focuses on what they did the past year and how they have helped in the wake of violence and natural disaster. The DNC takes a different tack by expressing concern about the future in terms

of gun violence and outlining the actions that need to be taken. The Alzheimer's Association focuses on their ongoing mission of research, support, and prevention. Looking to the future and looking to the past are common tropes within fundraising discourse.

Move 3: Establish Credibility

Hyland (2015) states that we construct our identities and, thus, our credibility through our mastery of discourse communities and that we gain approval through our control of the discourse. However, fundraising reaches across discourse communities, so commonalities between the writer and the reader may not exist in every situation. Hyland addresses this by stating, "Our membership identities and the language and texts associated with those identities influence our linguistic choices, even outside the confines of the discourse community" (Hyland, 2010, p. 160). Therefore, members of particular discourse communities incorporate those identities into fundraising even while reaching outside the communities. Connor and Gladkov (2004) point out that the writer represents the organization and must establish credibility so that potential donors see the organization as trustworthy. Trustworthiness and reliability are key factors considered when a donor determines whether to donate. For this reason, justification is included within the Establish Credibility move. Justification is the method used by organizations to explain how the funds will be spent. Often, the writer lists issues that need funding such as research or food. Others list specifically how the funds will be used. Helping Out Pets Everyday (HOPE) specifies that a \$65 donation will provide a spay surgery while \$95 will provide neuter surgery and \$30 will provide a microchip. Smile Train also

breaks down donation amounts to specify what will be paid for, which enables the donor to decide how much to donate and possibly increase the donation.

Figure 10 represents establishment of credibility for the cause or organization within the letter. It is important to note that those numbers do not include embedded links or reliance on name recognition.

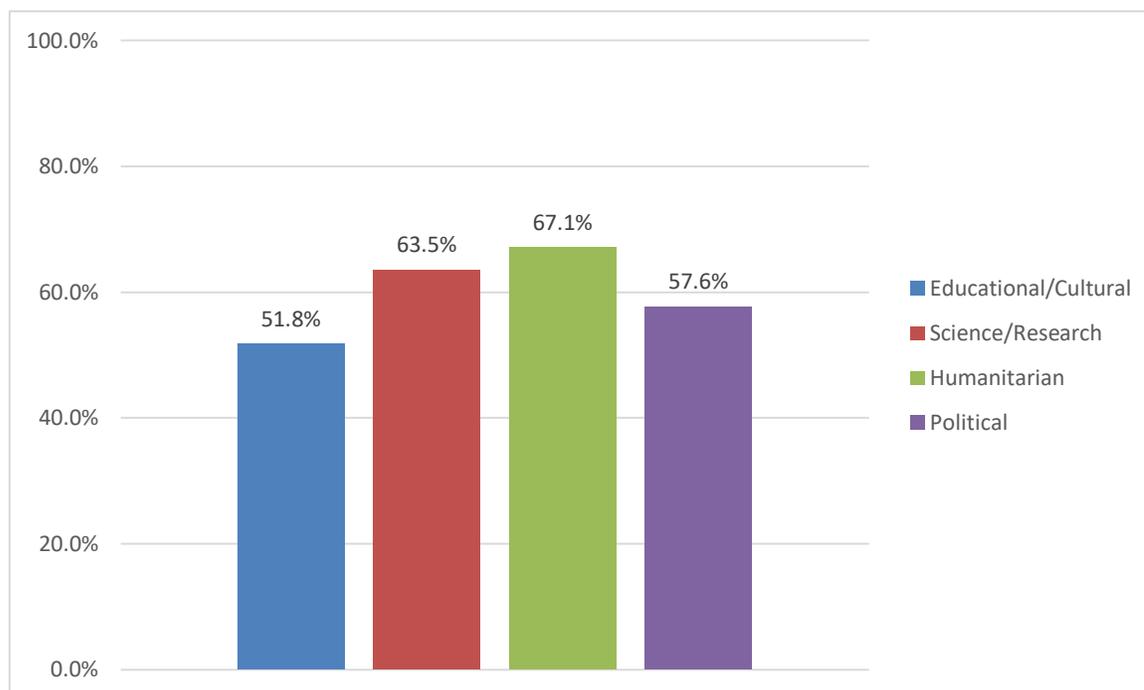


Figure 10. Move 3: Establish Credibility in Fundraising Corpus

(xx) Because Smile Train already has a cure for clefts...

...because we have a network of 2,100+ partner surgeons who *dedicate* their time and their talents to provide FREE cleft repair surgery to poor children...

...because we run one of the most efficient charities in the world...

...because every child's cleft can be repaired with a simple, relatively inexpensive surgery that gives him or her a new smile and a second chance at life...

...will you join us by making a gift to save one child suffering with an untreated cleft? (Smile Train, ellipses are included in original letter)

(yy) My name is Michelle. I currently live in my sister's two-bedroom apartment. My five-year-old son Durrell, my newborn daughter Mia, my mother, and I all share one of the bedrooms. It's very cramped, but it is hard to find a home that I can afford. I work for a credit union where I process people's mortgages every day. I often think, "if only I could have a mortgage" ... Fortunately, you have given me the chance to become a homeowner! ... Now I have to work for it! I am volunteering hundreds of hours to help build my home. The work is labor intensive, but every time I go out to the construction site, I am building my dream. Thanks to you, next year, my family and I will have our own home. We'll be stable. (Habitat for Humanity)

(zz) In 2018, Y.E.S.⁴ will grow to two one-week sessions, scheduled for July 9-15 and July 23-29. This expansion doubles the number of students experiencing this life-changing program, developing into strong leaders in their communities, and competing for college scholarships. Y.E.S. encourages young adults to become active citizens and leaders of tomorrow by learning about the Constitution and Bill of Rights, the federal government and the importance of engaging in civic affairs. Competitive team debates and casual current events discussions highlight the diverse backgrounds and beliefs of participants while fostering fellowship and respect. The program's nonstop agenda also includes exciting activities and

⁴ NRA Youth Education Summit

opportunities, from meeting with members of Congress and visiting NRA headquarters to touring historic sites and monuments in the D.C. area and reflecting on the dedicated service of the nation's military. (NRA Foundation)

The examples above establish the credibility of the cause. Smile Train, letter (xx), states that they already have a cure for clefts and lists three credentials establishing themselves as an efficient and experienced organization. They follow up immediately with a request for a gift. Smile Train inverts the typical order of the sentence, and the four subordinate clauses before the independence clause would create an awkward reading in most cases. However, the technique is effective for the fundraising letter because the focus is on the work that Smile Train does and not on the gift. The request for a gift slides in effortlessly as the main clause, but it is punctuated as if it were one of the reasons for the cure for clefts. This simultaneously establishes the credibility of the organization and names the potential donor as part of that credibility.

Michelle's personal statement serves as the entire fundraising letter for Habitat for Humanity. Michelle uses her story to appeal to the reader's emotion, but she also appeals to credibility. She discusses her volunteer hours and her employment status, and in the full letter, she discusses her status as a full-time undergraduate student. The purpose of Michelle's letter is three-fold. She must grab the reader's attention while she establishes the cause, but she must also establish her credibility and prove that she deserves a home. Consider the SPLC letter in (pp). The letter is written by Morris Dees. He is the founder of the SPLC, a reputable organization with a long history, so he is able to tell an emotionally provocative story and does not have to explain why Ms. Gersh deserves to be

protected from violence. Habitat for Humanity is also a reputable organization with an equally long history—it is only five years younger than the SPLC. However, Michelle must prove that she is credible. Michelle and Ms. Gersh both represent others in their situations; however, Michelle is someone in need speaking for other people in need, so she must use her own credibility to establish the credibility of other Habitat for Humanity homeowners. She does so by mentioning her accomplishments and goals and by informing or reminding the reader that she volunteers to build her new home.

In (zz), the NRA Foundation uses an approach similar to that of Smile Train by discussing how the money will be used to help others. However instead of a bulleted list, the NRA Foundation incorporates the list into a narrative. This structure allows the writer to maintain a conversational tone while subtly addressing some of the issues that have surrounded the organization in recent years. Word choices such as “life-changing,” “active citizens,” and “leaders of tomorrow” appeal to the parental nature to help their child become successful. “Team debates,” “casual current events discussions,” and “diverse backgrounds and beliefs” appeal to parental nature to want their children to be well-rounded team players. The letter not only establishes credibility that the funds will be used as promised but also that the cause itself is worthy of funding.

Move 4: Solicit Response

Solicit response is used in every category as shown in Figure 11 and the only move that is represented in all but two organizations.

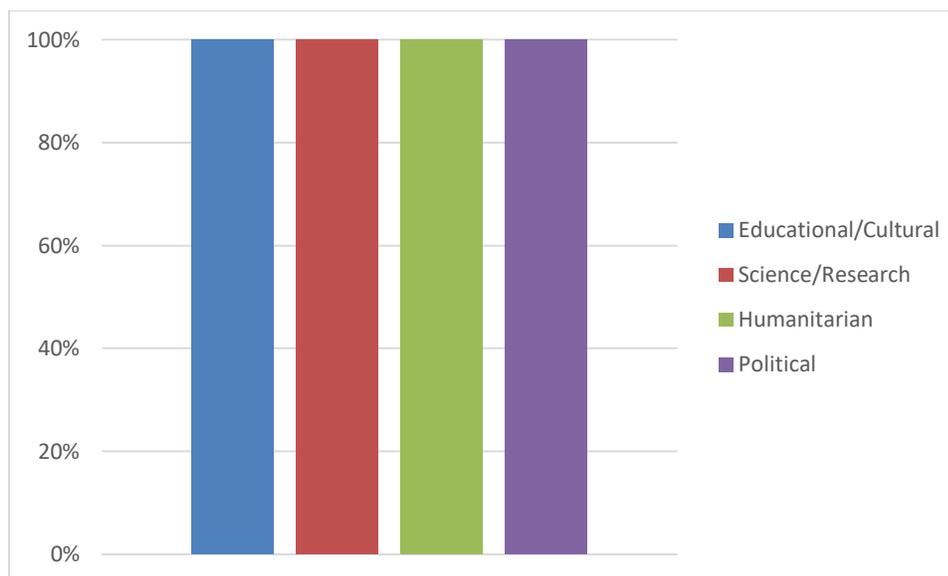


Figure 11. Move 4: Solicit Response in Fundraising Corpus

Direct Relief and AHA Shiva Vishnu Temple discuss fundraising, but there is no request for funds or other financial help. Still, the solicit response move is arguably the most important move in the letter because it tells the reader what it needs. For example, Oxfam America⁵ is an organization dedicated to helping global poverty. The organization sends out fundraising emails, but a recent email did not solicit for funds but instead asked for opinion through a short survey. Other emails—such as those for political campaigns—request attendance at a rally or a fundraising event rather than a donation through the email. Therefore, the solicit response move must clearly represent what the writer wants the reader to do. Edles states that a donation should be requested at least twice in each letter (2006). Only five of the fundraising letters (excluding Direct Relief

⁵ Oxfam America is part of the global organization Oxfam. This particular letter was not included in the study because it is not a fundraising letter.

and AHA Shiva Vishnu Temple) made a single solicitation for funds—Long Gray Line (United States Military Academy), World Convention (a religious organization), Marco Rubio political campaign, Ralph Northam political campaign, and Real News Network (internet news broadcast organization).

As mentioned, neither AHA Shiva Vishnu Temple nor Direct Relief ask for a donation or solicit a response of any kind from the audience. AHA Shiva Vishnu Temple thanks contributors and provides examples of funding levels but never asks for donations. Direct Relief includes a logo with an embedded link to the donation website. However, there is no indication whatsoever that the logo serves as a link. This is an anomaly from the other organizations but not an anomaly within itself. Three Direct Relief letters were studied. All discussed donations, but none actually asked for money.

(aaa) These relief efforts have been made possible due to the tremendous outpouring of generosity from individuals, foundations, and companies to help support people as they recover from the impact of these massive storms. Thank you for your support, and for being part of Direct Relief (Direct Relief).

The full email focuses on establishing credentials, which also introduces the cause. However, only one sentence mentions fundraising, and it does not ask for a donation. Another email from the organization mentions fundraising from external verification sources: *Forbes* and Charity Navigator.

(bbb) ...*Forbes* magazine again rated Direct Relief 100% efficient in fundraising – **we don't spend much, and what we do is paid for by a bequest to Direct Relief, not supporters' financial contributions** – and ranked the organization as the

seventh largest charitable organization in the United States. The numbers and analyses on which Forbes' rankings and ratings, like Direct Relief's perfect 100 score on Charity Navigator and other such high marks, are based are obviously important and I'm pleased to share them with you because they **reflect the use of your money** (Direct Relief, emphasis mine).

This excerpt specifically mentions fundraising and cited sources to prove to the reader that the organization is responsible with their donations. Still, even within the full email, there is no request for a donation. It is interesting to note that the link provided in the emails routes to a website that uses all six rhetorical moves. Readers are unaware of what the organization wants them to do unless they click the link provided.

Move 5: Express Gratitude

Baker (2008) states that expressions of gratitude indicates good character on the part of the writer and reminds the readers about what type of people they want to become. Therefore, gratitude is key in fundraising even before a donation is made. Bhatia (1998) and Upton (2002) agree that expressing gratitude is a significant rhetorical move in fundraising discourse; however, despite the consensus of importance, this study shows that just less than half of the corpus utilizes the move, as represented by Figure 12.

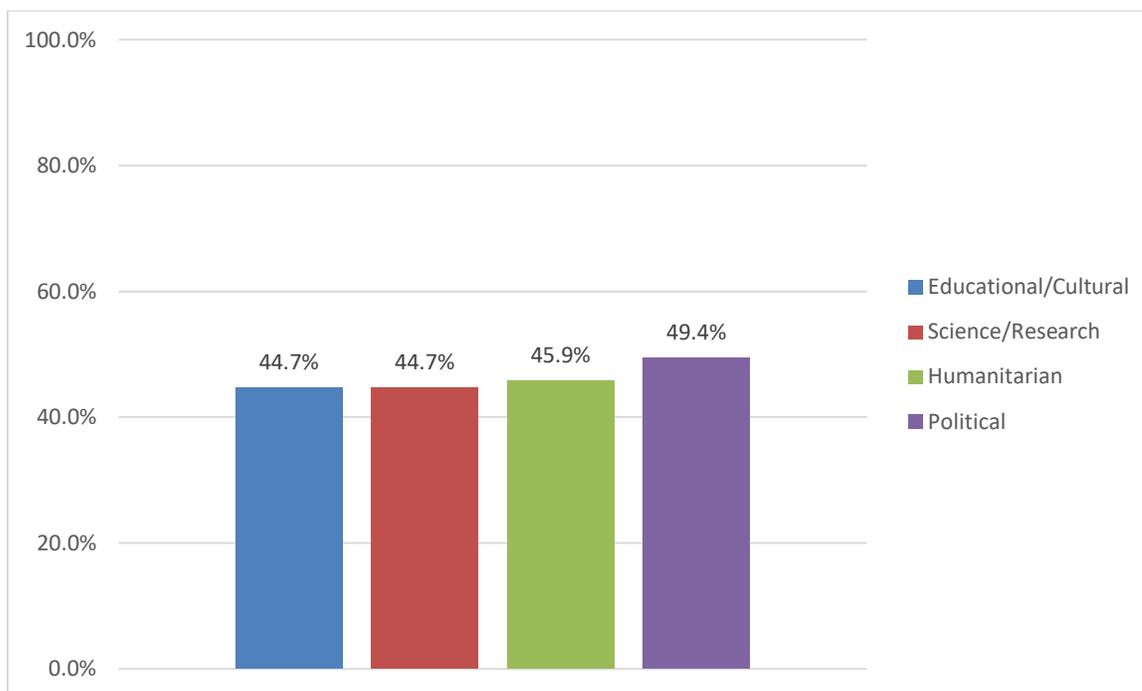


Figure 12. Move 5: Express Gratitude in Fundraising Corpus

It must be noted that fundraising guide manuals tend to recommend expressions of gratitude to be sent after a donation is received, which may account for the low percentages (see Edles, 2006; Waters, 2014). However, the discrepancy between the moves in direct mail versus email must be addressed. The tendency in direct mail is to send a reply envelope and not include a website address while email provides clickable links to a donation pages. The automation of the email request makes it possible for an immediate thank you to be sent to the donor; therefore, the expression of gratitude is not as vital to the original letter as it is for direct mail. Professionals in direct mail fundraising recommend that the expression of gratitude be sent after the donation is received (Edles, 2006; Pettey, 2008; Tempel, 2015); however, the delay between the organization receiving the donation, responding with an expression of gratitude, and the

donor receiving the response may take days or weeks. This delay may account for the higher occurrence of the move in the direct mail. The writer wants to ensure that he or she expresses gratefulness to the potential donor, but the immediacy of email is not available with direct mail.

Move 6: External Verification

The final rhetorical move in this study is external verification. This move allows the writer to alert the reader to approvals outside the organization. Mentions of external verification usually occur at the end of the letter as a footnote and not as part of the body of the letter. This allows the writer to include corroboration of the organization's reputation within the fundraising community, financial responsibility regarding collected funds, and accountability to their staff and volunteers without disrupting the appeals in the body of the letter. Charity Navigator, Better Business Bureau, and Charity Watch as well as national databases and local sponsors give donors the option to investigate the quality of the charity and the charity's spending habits. It speaks to the credibility of the organization and proves a level of transparency to the reader. However, because this verification is external to the organization, it is included as a move apart from Establish Credibility.

Based on the results of this study, external verification is slightly more frequently used in direct mail correspondence than in email correspondence at 29.9% and 25.8%, respectively. Direct mail provides external sponsors, accountability foundations, or information regarding their federal 501 (c)(3) or 501 (c)(4) status. Email requests do the same but have the opportunity to provide links to those organizations. Both direct mail

and email political fundraising campaigns provide information that an ad was paid for and/or approved by the candidate. While the verification move is not included in all correspondence, it is an identifiable form of the *ethos* appeal and may affect a potential donor's decision to give to the organization; therefore, it cannot be neglected. The results of individual categories are represented in Figure 13.

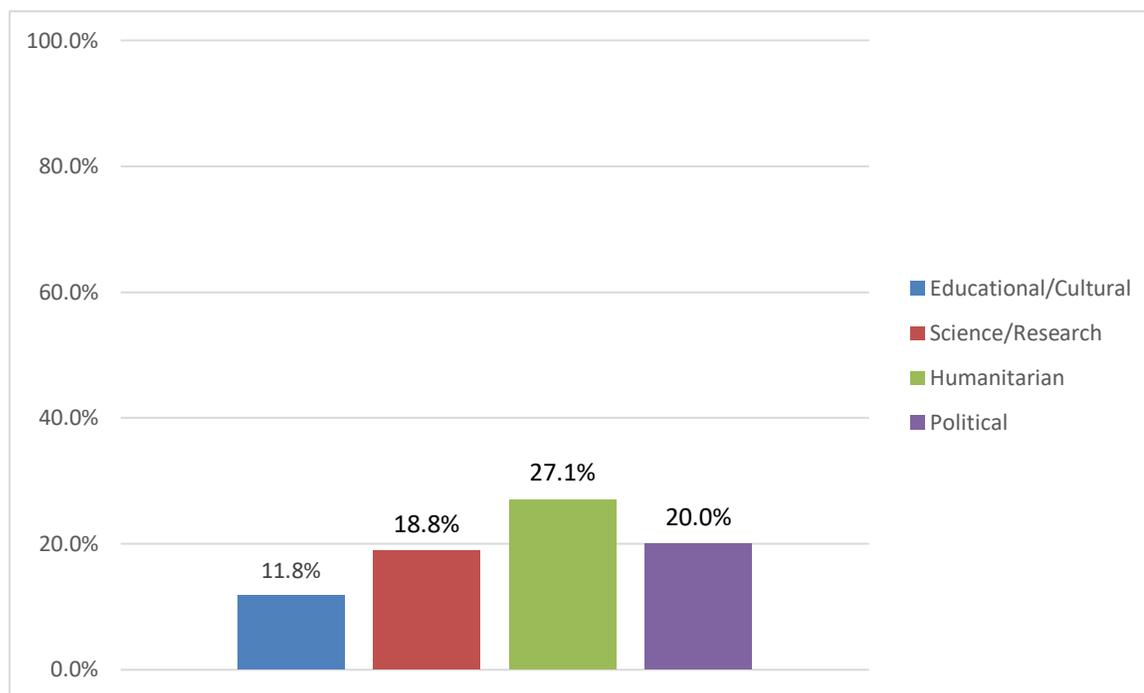


Figure 13. Move 6: External Verification in Fundraising Corpus

CHAPTER VI: DISCUSSION

This dissertation examines the linguistic and rhetorical properties within organizational solicitation letters and how those properties allow writers to position themselves successfully with regard to their functions and their goals. The study examines the data through the lens of technical communication, which allows not only a study of the language use itself but an analysis of how that language relates to other communications within the genre. However, it is important to note that there is no data, outside of tax information for an entire organization, to gauge effectiveness of individual request attempts outside the corpus itself.

Bhatia (1998) states that the main purpose of the fundraising request letter is to solicit support, which is a straightforward directive and offers Schervish's (1997) eight variables of motivation. Schervish's variables derive from his research with millionaires, but he created broad categories that reflect motivation for giving in general: 1) Communities of participation; 2) Frameworks of consciousness; 3) Direct requests; 4) Discretionary resources; 5) Models and experiences from one's youth; 6) Urgency and effectiveness; 7) Demographic characteristics; and 8) Intrinsic and extrinsic rewards.

Bhatia (1998) adds voluntary action and noncompetitive stance to the variable. He points out that contributing to an organization is strictly voluntary and organizations rarely use high pressure techniques as opposed to commercial endeavors. Bhatia furthers that the incentive for giving is the act of giving itself. Commercial advertising and philanthropic discourse both use the tactic of competition, but charitable organizations utilize product differentiation instead of blatant competition rhetoric (1998). This study supports Bhatia's

assessment that competition for fundraising discourse is not overt. Only the political subgenre frequently expresses blatant competition with another group. However, the other subgenres offer no reference to competition at all—even through product differentiation. Instead, the organizations detail information about their cause or organization and rely on rhetorical moves and appeals.

The function of fundraising is to bring monetary donations into a particular organization, but the goal is to create lasting relationships with those donors. Writers must intentionally position themselves in a way that creates a juxtaposition of stance and engagement in order to establish a conversational and reciprocal tone where the writer's attitude and authority is clear but the reader's values and opinions are respected. This relationship encourages trust in the writer and motivates the reader to make a donation and to respond to future solicitations. This balance can be problematic, however, due to the lack of a common discourse community, which must be addressed through strategic use of linguistic and rhetorical elements. Successful fundraising discourse purposely balances quantitative elements of linguistics including boosters, hedges, directives, or questions and qualitative elements such as metaphor or politeness. However, linguistic balance alone falls short in effective solicitation. The writer must also address rhetorical moves and appeals—again quantitative, such as the defined moves in this study or the techniques for *logos* and *ethos* appeals, and qualitative, such as the techniques for *pathos* appeals. This balance allows the writer to reach a greater audience, which increases the potential of success.

Straightforward and quantitative linguistic elements, such as the markers for stance and engagement, coupled with systematic appeals to *logos* and *ethos* draw in readers who prefer a logic or credibility-based argument. They also provide a foundation for persuasion that the writer can build on through the conceptual elements of *pathos*. The use of rhetorical appeals allows the writer to make a plea to the reader using *logos*, *ethos*, *pathos*, or a combination of the three. The writer can reach a larger audience by appealing to one reader's sense of empathy, another's sense of wanting to belong, and still another's need to know how the donation will be used. The most used category within the rhetorical appeals is the *logos* category of cause and effect. In some instances, this is direct and uncomplicated: "your financial donation keeps WCBE on the air and feeds those in need" (WCBE). Other times, the cause and effect incorporates other elements such as charged language and classification: "If dedicated conservatives like you don't step up right now, the consequences could be disastrous" (Republican Party). The frequent use of this technique implies that writers are successful with that particular approach; though, this study does not have access to that data.

Rhetorical moves serve as a template for the writer and for the reader. The template is malleable, however, giving the writer creative space, but the reader expects to find certain information such as the cause or issue that needs to be addressed and funded, the reputation of the requesting organization, and a request to do something specific—in this case, make a monetary donation. Without these moves, the reader may become confused about what is expected such as with the Direct Relief fundraising letters, (aaa)

and (bbb), where no solicitation is made within the letter and no visual rhetoric is provided.

Possibilities for Further Study

One interesting avenue for future study is that of visual rhetoric. Many of the Humanitarian organizations supply pictures of ravaged countries and starving children. Others provide pictures of children with no hair or scarves on their heads to hide their baldness. Animal protection and care groups show the extremes of beaten dogs or adorable kittens. While pictures are certainly powerful, another popular form of visual rhetoric, specifically with political campaign groups, is the use of red and blue and all capital letters. A study of how visual rhetoric is used across genres of fundraising within rhetorical moves such as Getting Attention would be an interesting addition to the discourse on the subject.

Another opportunity would be to analyze Edles's (2006) reasons for giving and how linguistic elements as well as rhetorical appeals and moves are incorporated. For example, Edles states that one reason someone may donate is for recognition. AHA Shiva Vishnu Temple does not ask for funds, but they do honor sponsors who donate a certain dollar amount with a plaque. Another of Edles's reasons for giving is admiration for a professional leader. Many organizations use the authority element of *logos* to appeal to readers. In this study, Marlo Thomas, Al Gore, and Toni Morrison support and write the requests. Good business and financial planning considerations are addressed in terms of tax benefit to individuals and businesses. However, a thorough analysis of how these reasons are addressed in a corpus would be a valuable addition to the discourse.

Conclusion

This study investigates solicitation letters from various fundraising organizations to determine how they construct positioning using quantitative and qualitative linguistic elements, rhetorical appeals, and rhetorical moves. The analysis shows that requestors use conceptual and methodological linguistic and rhetorical elements to position themselves and their readers within a reciprocal conversation. Writers simulate this dialogue by rousing feelings of pity, guilt, nostalgia, and anger so that the reader feels a sense of comradery with the writer and a motivation to donate to the cause.

The study also looks at genre variation within fundraising and how a defined set of criteria differs between genres. The organizations were relatively balanced across the discourse types defined with regard to rhetorical moves. This can likely be attributed to the lack of a discourse community, or rather the flattening of the discourse community from specialized groups to general population. The study also demonstrates relatively equal use of the linguistic elements of stance. However, differences appear with regard to techniques used for rhetorical appeals and for linguistic elements of engagement.

Investigation within the fundraising genre requires a study of both linguistic and rhetorical devices to ensure a complete picture of language use. Corpus discourse analysis allows investigation of individual texts within specific categories and holistically within the defined corpus. The nature of fundraising requires diligence on the part of researchers to keep data current and track developments within the genre that may be caused by political changes within society, demographic changes within the intended audience, or advances in technology and media. This dissertation combines proven

principles from respected researchers to build a framework that can be used to continue research within this promising field of linguistics.

As mentioned, this study is a corpus-based discourse analysis that examines fundraising through the lens of Applied Linguistics and Technical Communication. The Technical Communication aspect of the study offers suggestions for more effective communication within the genre. For example, the findings regarding charged language and political ideology show that writers appeal to an ideologically like-minded audience. This knowledge could be used to encourage the curtailment of polarizing language and possibly encourage writers to reach out to other ideological groups for support. An overarching theme within the corpus for this study is that of political ideology. Every category had at least one text that takes an overtly political stance. Of the Environment, Research, and Science samples, 38% take a political viewpoint, and 25% of Humanitarian samples take a political stance. It stands to reason that 100% of the Political samples hold to some political ideology, but 52% of the texts in that category use charged language to incite anger or fear in the reader. The intent of charged language is to unite a target audience, but it also potentially polarizes any unintended or secondary audience. Therefore, there is a risk of limiting donations to those who agree ideologically with the writer and alienating those who disagree ideologically but agree with the cause as illustrated with donation requests from the ACLU and the NRA's Back the Blue Program. Recognizing this polarization allows the writer to use language that navigates beyond values distinct to their organization and possibly establish a relationship with someone outside their expected audience.

This analysis shows that fundraising organizations fall short in several areas of rhetorical moves. Expression of gratitude is one such insufficiency despite agreement among researchers that this particular rhetorical move is significant and underscores the good character of the writer (Baker, 2008; Bhatia, 1998, Upton, 2002). The external verification move was also sparsely used. These areas could be shored up to strengthen the efficiency of the solicitations and become more appealing to the reader. For example, local or small organizations that do not benefit from national name recognition should consider providing links or other external verification options for their readers. This creates transparency and reassures the potential donors that they are giving to a reputable organization and that their funds will be used as promised.

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