You belong with me
Empirical research on normative distance between faculty and fundraisers[1]

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Abstract

In times of declining public funding, fundraising is vital also for public universities. Collaboration of fundraisers and faculty members has been found crucial to improving fundraising results: Faculty members have a high level of legitimacy to advocate for the university, numerous contacts with prospects and have relevant knowledge on the case for support. However, collaboration of faculty and fundraisers often proves challenging: faculty members find working with fundraisers time-consuming and ineffective, whereas fundraisers feel hindered by status differentials. How can this crucial collaboration be improved? I address this question in my qualitative study via three in depth-case studies in the US, UK/Ireland and Switzerland. To this end, I build on organizational distance theory, i.e. the distance that arises between groups due to organizational conditions, and social distance theory, or more precisely, normative distance, i.e. the perceived distance between the two groups. First, my qualitative study finds that the impact of organizational distance on collaboration beats that of social distance. Second, it shows that semi-decentrally organized fundraising is more successful than central or decentral fundraising structures. Third, it contributes to the comparative analysis of philanthropy that is underexplored in current philanthropy scholarship.

Keywords: Fundraising, higher education, social distance, collaboration, fundraisers, faculty

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1. Introduction

Successful collaboration of faculty and fundraisers is crucial for fundraising results, for good reasons: Faculty members have a high level of legitimacy when advocating for the university (Weinstein & Barden, 2017), numerous contacts via service contracts who can be approached for fundraising (Eddy, 2010; Shaker, 2015), and relevant knowledge for targeting and communicating funding projects because of their insights and needs (Elliott, 2006; Shaker, 2015). Thus, convincing faculty to collaborate is an important task of fundraisers. Nevertheless, many fundraisers find it difficult (Pray, 1981). Yet, how can collaboration be improved? Should it be addressed at the level of the actors? Should fundraisers make more of an effort to engage with faculty members? Or should faculty members be contractually obliged to support the institution, e.g. via fundraising? Or is it an organizational question at universities, such as the optimal reporting line for fundraising staff; should fundraising be organized centrally or decentrally – or in a mixed form?

The first level of this study is that of the actors. Fundraisers serve as a support service for the organization, they are not involved in direct value creation as is faculty. Furthermore, they are subject to clear hierarchies: in expert organizations, experts have a higher status and more power than non-experts (Mintzberg, 1979). Fundraisers are exposed to faculty members who enjoy considerable autonomy and power at the university. While some universities, e.g. in the United States, require commitment to the institution via certain service components in their work contracts, faculty members at most universities enjoy considerable freedom from instruction, which is based on the fundamental principle of freedom of research and teaching (Karran, 2009; Vrielink, Lemmens & Parmentier, 2011). This imbalance of power between faculty and fundraisers reflects on their collaboration: if faculty members are unwilling, fundraisers have little leverage to demand their contribution (Svenningsen-Berthélem, Boxenbaum & Ravasi, 2018).

The collaboration between the actors takes place within the university organization. The second level of this study therefore also deals with organizational considerations. When fundraising is decentrally organized, fundraisers work more closely with faculty members. However, fundraising outcomes then mainly benefit decentralized units, and less so the institution at large. Some universities have therefore decided to organize fundraising centrally (von Schnurbein & Fritz, 2014). This enables them to link the organization's strategic priorities directly to fundraising efforts. Yet, this form of organization can make collaboration between fundraisers and faculty more difficult. Research has dealt with this issue in detail (Eddy, 2010; Elliott, 2006; Shaker, 2015; Weinstein & Barden, 2017). To the best of my knowledge, however, there are no studies that examine the respective perceptions of faculty members and fundraisers.

The third level this study addresses is societal. As research shows, culture impacts fundraising results: Countries with a higher institutionalization of philanthropy are likely to realize higher fundraising donations (Wiepking et al., 2021). When it comes to raising funds for higher education, the perception of responsibility for higher education also plays an important role in the acceptance of fundraising for universities: As Haibach explains, the

decisive factor is whether the financing of education is perceived as a public or private task (1998). In the US, fundraising for higher education dates back to the 1930s (Burk, 2013). In Europe, on the other hand, the structural and strategic orientation of university fundraising has been largely lacking to date, because universities here are traditionally financed mainly by public funds (Pérez-Esparrells & Torre 2012: 56; von Schnurbein & Fritz 2014). Due to cultural differences, American approaches cannot simply be copied across into European situations. Instead, it is necessary to formulate European approaches. Learnings from the U.S. can serve as an important guide in this process.

In this qualitative study, I draw from organizational distance as well as social distance theories. Data was collected in three in-depth public university case studies: one in the U.S. with high, one in in Switzerland with low, and a third one in UK/Ireland with medium level of fundraising success. 24 semi-structured interviews with faculty members and fundraisers and a keyword-sorting inspired by William Stephenson were conducted. This way, both the organizational as well as the social distance dimension was captured.

The contributions of this study are threefold, both theory- and practice-related: Regarding the former, while contributing to research on social distance, the study also contributes to the comparative analysis of philanthropy that is underexplored in current philanthropy scholarship. Practice-related, I show that the quality of collaboration depends primarily on organizational conditions that can only be changed to a limited extent by the actors involved. Second, the study shows that fundraising organized in a half-decentralized setting beats both centrally as well as decentrally organized fundraising in public universities.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows: In the next section, I point to the relevance of distances in organizations and the respective theory with focus on organizational and normative distance as part of social distance. What follows is the methodology section; then, the case selection and data collection are presented and explained. The results section provides a summary of the findings of the study, which are discussed in the subsequent section. The study concludes with practical pieces of advice for university management on how to improve the collaboration of fundraisers and faculty members.

2. Theory: Distances in organizations

Social space between humans can be physical or cultural. It includes "the extent to which people experience a sense of familiarity (nearness and intimacy) or unfamiliarity (farness and difference) between themselves and people belonging to different social, ethnic, occupational, and religious groups from their own" (Hodgetts & Stolte, 2014). Distances within organizations determine the quality of collaboration between actors. It is generally presumed that distances within organizations have a negative impact on information flows and collaboration (Akerlof, 1997; Dolfsma & van der Ejki, 2016), while proximity has a positive effect, which is expressed in propinquity (Byrne, 1961; Napier & Ferris, 1993; Triandis, 1960).

Research has identified many different dimensions of distance in organizations. This has also led to some confusion in terminology. Among other things, research distinguishes between organizational distance, i.e. distance between different units (Dolfsma & van der Ejik, 2016), hierarchical distance (Banet et al., 1976; Napier & Ferris, 1993), functional distance, i.e. for instance the distance between headquarters and affiliates (Alessandrini et al., 2009), cultural distance (Hofstede et al., 2010), psychological distance or social distance, the physical or personal distance between actors (Karakayali, 2009). Actors are exposed to a combination of them, which are determined by organizational factors such as hierarchy or number of units. Others, such as elements of social distance, can be influenced by actors. This raises the question of whether collaboration can be improved by changing certain elements of social distance. In relation to fundraisers, this could mean, for example, that if they try to make a concerted effort to get to know the faculty, they would actively reduce social distance. This study will examine whether this approach has a productive effect on collaboration or whether collaboration depends primarily on organizational distance.

2.1. Organizational distance

The specialization of organizations leads to the formation of individual departments or units (Blau, 1970). However, this can have a negative impact on collaboration across units by hindering the flow of information (Reagans & McEvily, 2003). Dolfsma and van der Ejik refer to this type of distance as "organizational distance" (2016). Gatekeepers and boundary spanners are personnel to overcome barriers within organizations (Tushman, 1977).

Research on higher education fundraising has debated intensely whether fundraising should be centralized or set up in decentral units (Haibach, 2008; Tanno, 2019; von Schnurbein & Fritz, 2014; Weinstein & Barden, 2017; Worth, 2017). The decentralization of fundraising carries with it the risk of a lack of coordination: donors may be contacted by different departments at the same time (Weinstein & Barden, 2017), which may ultimately lead to a reduction of the donated amounts (Haibach, 2008). This is probably the reason why most universities recently swapped to centralizing their fundraising departments (Von Schnurbein & Fritz, 2014). Yet, for the collaboration with faculty, a decentralized approach seems more promising than a centralized one (Worth, 2017). For my study, I therefore chose three different organizational settings of fundraising departments: One decentralized, one centralized, and one in a mixed setting.

2.2. Social distance

The concept of social distance originates from Simmel's 1908 text "Space and the Spatial Orders of Society" (1983). I define it according to Magee and Smith (2013: 159) as "a subjective perception or experience form of another person or persons". Simmel explains that social interactions are both embedded in outer and inner space in parallel, not necessarily in a synchronized manner: Thus, inner closeness is possible despite external distance (Simmel, 1983: 482). Simmel goes one step further emphasizing that distance can also be constitutive of closeness, as is shown by the example of friendship: "There are probably very few

relationships of friendship which do not interweave some kind of distancing into their closeness" (1983: 483). Park supplements the two spaces with four dimensions of (inner) distance - affective, normative, interactive and cultural distance (1924). Research posits that distances influence each other (Karakayali, 2009; Lopez, 2021). However, empirical studies of this presumption are currently lacking. For my study, the normative distance is particularly relevant: It is based on "collectively recognized norms about membership status in a group" (Karakayali 2009: 541). Norms determine membership of social systems in different degrees and thus structure collaboration (Karakayali, 2009). Norms are supra-individual but must be subjectively reflected at the actor level, probably affecting the affective distance between actors. If norms contradict subjective feelings of belonging, either norms or groups will lose their very existence (Karakayali, 2009).

If we apply Simmel's finding on the asymmetry of distance to these two social distances, it becomes clear that actors must navigate a network of distance relationships. The right balance between proximity and distance is crucial for collaboration: "In the distant relationship understanding is lost; in the close relationship the professional loses his objectivity" (Kadushin, 1962: 517). In general, scholars tend to conceptualize the dimensions of social distance as symmetric between actors (Simmel, 1983; Karakayali, 2009). However, there is no compelling reason to presume this in general. It is precisely a specific feature of social distance that it depends on the perception of the actors. This almost inevitably implies that two actors perceive the distance between themselves differently. Magee and Smith (2013) for instance show that perceived distance between actors is related to their power position: Powerful actors tend to perceive their counterparts as more distant, whereas powerless actors perceive themselves as closer to their counterparts.

3. Method

To answer the research question, it was necessary to compare normative and organizational distances with each other. This required a method that could operationalize both types of distance. To this end, I used Stephenson's Q-Sort technique (1956), which I adapted slightly. Q-sort asks individuals to sort keywords according to their stated preferences. It allows for various instructions to be given before sorting (Müller and Kals, 2004). Thus, in the present research, it was possible to carry out the sorting twice with the same subjects but with different instructions.

Q-Sort sorts a selection of items according to certain criteria such as attitude or thinking behavior (Stephenson, 1956). Developed in the 1960s, the method has been used in behavioral sciences and business management (Furnham, 1990; Chatman, 1991; Sung and Choi, 2018). In Q-Sort, many items are sorted interdependently by a small number of participants (Stephenson, 1956). Müller and Kals distinguished between naturalistic, ready-made, and standardized Q-samples according to the origin of the statement (2004). The keywords used in this study were developed by two experts as naturalistic Q-samples. Each keyword was printed on a sorting card with its definition on the back to increase the consistency of understanding among respondents.

In its original form, the Q-Sort technique requires participants to sort keywords or statements according to their preferences on at least 10 levels (Stephenson, 1956). I slightly modified this method for the present research. I had participants rank the keywords top-down in a pyramid configuration, with five priority levels of decreasing relevance. One keyword was to be put on the first level, three on the second, five on the third, seven on the fourth, and nine on the fifth. This resulted in a maximum contrast of the top keywords, which could then be compared between actors. Additionally, this made the sorting easier for participants because the distribution was intuitively understandable. I used a five-point ordinal scale, which was both easy to complete for the participants and at the same time provided sufficiently detailed data for the subsequent analysis.

This study compares organizational distance with normative distance between the actors. My study evolved in three steps. Step one: Sorting of the keywords by participants according to the relevance to their own daily work. A comparison of the two groups revealed how different their activities are, i.e. their organizational distance. In Step two I then used the same method to determine the normative distance: Here I asked the participants to sort the keywords according to their expected relevance for the daily work of the other group. In the second round, the fundraisers sorted from the perspective of the faculty members and the faculty members sorted from the perspective of the fundraisers. A comparison with the sorting in the first round shows how close the actors feel to each other, i.e. their normative distance. This yields two distance values per relationship – instead of only one had social distance been conceptualized symmetrically. In Step three of the analysis, I then compared the normative distance with the organizational distance between the actors.

3.1. Case selection

According to Yin, cases should either yield the same results or contradictory theoretical results that are predictable (2018). Cases were selected by holding the variable of sponsorship constant; culture of the institution, organization, the power and age of the fundraising department comprised the dependent variables.

Sponsorship: The relevance of fundraising departments is much greater in private than in public universities. In public universities, funds generated through fundraising are mainly used for strategic priorities and not daily operations, thus only supplementing public funding. Therefore, the power differential between fundraisers and faculty members is particularly large in public universities. For consistency, in this study, only public business universities were selected for case studies.

Culture: Research has shown that fundraising underlies cultural and institutional impacts (Wiepking et al., 2021). To take this into account, three business schools were selected as institutions that are comparable between themselves but located in different countries: In the U.S., in UK/Ireland and in Switzerland.

Organization: The organization of the fundraising department has a strong effect on how fundraisers work with the faculty. It is of great interest to practitioners, especially university

management, to thoughtfully position fundraising departments within the university organization. Therefore, three cases with different fundraising organizations were selected for this study: one fully centralized, one fully decentralized and one mixed.

Fundraising success: As research shows, fundraising success is a result of the effective collaboration between faculty and fundraising (Weinstein & Barden, 2017; Eddy, 2010; Shaker, 2015; Elliott, 2006). Thus, I used the portion of the overall university budget attributable to fundraising proceeds as a proxy for the quality of collaboration of the fundraisers with the faculty. Care was taken to select cases with different proportions of the university budget coming from fundraising.

Age of the fundraising department: It can be assumed that the duration of fundraising efforts influences how they are perceived by the faculty. Therefore, three universities were chosen whose fundraising departments had been in existence for different lengths of time. The youngest fundraising department also had the least fundraising budget share, while the oldest department had the highest.

Case 1

Case Study 1 was a medium-sized US-university (15,000 to 25,000 students). The university had at that time been involved in fundraising for over 30 years. Five years prior, the university had undergone a major organizational change. The Business School was reorganized and brought under new management. This also had major consequences for its fundraising. The university had a total budget eight times larger than that of the Case 2 university, which had the second-largest budget of the three universities studied here. The Case 1 share of budget coming from fundraising was the largest of the universities studied, around 10%.

The organization of fundraising, which also includes alumni relations, presents itself in a mixed form: Certain simpler tasks such as thanking donors, organizing events and the like are handled centrally, while contact with donors is decentralized. The fundraisers report to the respective vice presidents as well as to the central fundraising department, which in turn reports to the provost, also an academic position. This leads to a double subordination for the decentralized fundraisers.

The decentralized fundraisers share office space with the fundraisers of other departments and those fundraising for the university as a whole. They maintain a close exchange with all their colleagues and with the dean of the school, but not with the faculty, which is quite surprising given their organizational anchoring.

Figure 1. Mixed organized fundraising in case 1
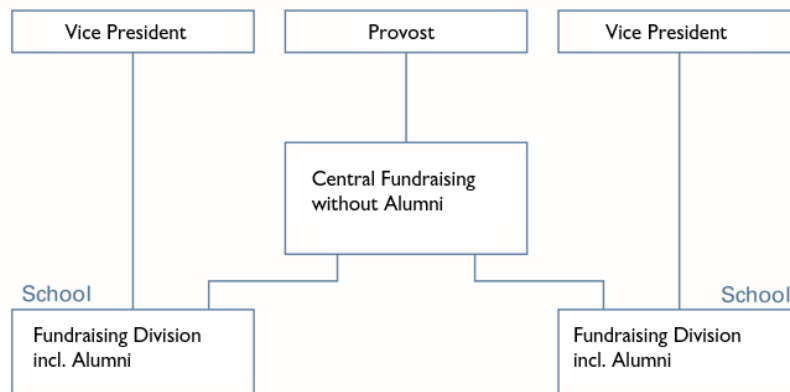
Case 2

The university in Case Study 2 is based in UK/Ireland and was the largest of the three universities studied here (25,000 to 35,000 students). Their fundraising office had a history of more than 20 years. During that time, there had been minor reorganizations and leadership changes, but none that were fundamental. The budget was about one-eighth that of the Case 1 university and twice that of the school in Case 3. The share of the budget raised through fundraising efforts was less than 5%.

Fundraising for the Business school differs significantly from fundraising for other schools at the university: the Business School's fundraising, including alumni relations, is organized completely decentrally, reports to the dean of the Business School and is strongly oriented towards its own organizational unit, while contacts with central fundraising are rare. The other fundraisers of the university are centrally organized and report to the President. The fundraisers of the business school have their offices in the same building as the faculty members, with whom they work closely together.

Figure 2. Decentrally organized fundraising in case 2
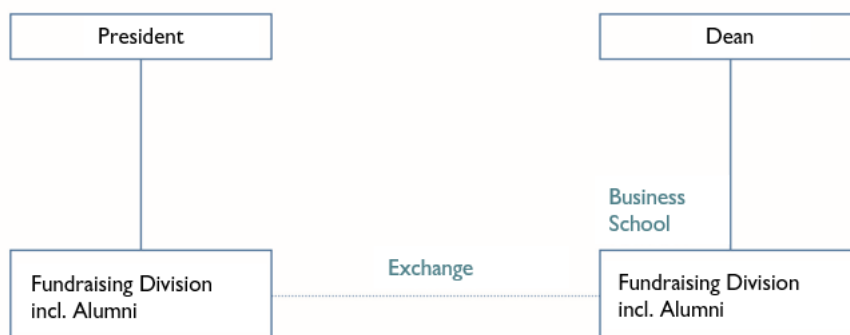

Case 3

Case Study 3, the Swiss university, was the smallest of the three universities (5,000 to 15,000 students). Until 12 years previous, all fundraising activity was done by faculty members. At that time, a central fundraising office was created. After that point, there was very little collaboration with the faculty. The faculty, however, also continued to carry out its

own fundraising efforts. The budget for this university was the smallest of the three, about half the size of the next highest (Case 2). The share of funds raised via fundraising, including those raised by faculty members, was less than 5%.

The faculty of this school generates the largest share of third-party funds through practice collaborations. The fundraisers' workplaces are on campus, but in a different building from the faculty. Fundraising reports to the Executive Vice President, which is the highest ranking non-academic position in the university hierarchy.

Figure 3. Centrally organized fundraising in case 3
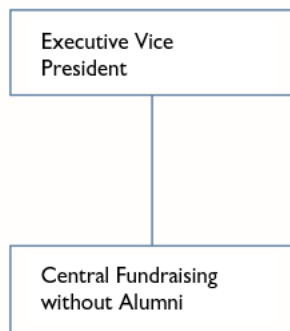
3.2. Data collection

A total of 24 interviews were conducted, eight per case study. Four fundraisers and four faculty members were interviewed per case. For the sake of completeness, all seniority levels were covered for both fundraisers and faculty members. Organizational settings are reflected in participants of both central and decentral fundraising departments: At the two universities with decentralized and mixed fundraising structures, I interviewed fundraisers from both centralized and decentralized fundraising departments, whereas at the university with centralized fundraising, I was only able to interview centralized fundraisers.

Table 1. Number of interview partners per function

Functions	Case 1	Case 2	Case 3
Decentral fundraiser	2	1	
Decentral fundraising manager		1	
Central fundraiser	1		1
Central fundraising manager	1	2	3
Junior faculty member	1	1	
Senior faculty member	2	1	2
Senior faculty member, university manager	1	2	1
Senior faculty member, former university manager			1

4. Results

4.1. Step 1: Organisational distance

First, the self-perceptions of the two groups were assessed in the three cases. To do this, I add up the ranks (1-5) that a keyword received. Keywords with low sums are thereby more significant, while keywords with higher sums are less important. The additions were made per case and across cases. Thus, I determine the profiles of the groups. By comparing them, I can measure the organizational distance between the two groups in the three cases. I therefore formed the difference of the absolute amounts, again, per case and across cases. It shows, the two groups differ significantly in all three cases.

The greatest differences were found in the keywords Relevance to practice, Relationship management, Freedom of research and teaching, Third-party funding, Scientific publications, Teaching and Ensuring the financial resources of the university with a numerical deviation of 18 to 25. The groups rate the following as most similar: University self-government, Conferences, Collegiality, Truth, Reputation, and Professionalism with a deviation of 1 to 4.

My study also allows for evaluation on a case-by-case basis, enabling comparison between institutions. Organisational distance is lowest in Case 1 at 60, followed by Case 2 at 78, and highest in Case 3 at 92.

Table 2. Values per keyword per case and in total

| Keywords | Self-Perceptions per Case, in total and in difference | | | | | | | | | Normative distance per Case, in total and in difference | | | | | | | | | |
| | Fundraiser | | | | Faculty | | | |Δ| | Fundraisers to Faculty | | | | | Faculty to Fundraisers | | | | |
	1	2	3	Σ	1	2	3	Σ	Σ	1	2	3	Σ	|Δ|	1	2	3	Σ	|Δ|
Talent development	14	14	16	**44**	14	13	11	**38**	6	17	18	18	**53**	15	19	18	14	**51**	7
University self-governance	19	20	16	**55**	20	17	17	**54**	1	16	18	15	**49**	5	18	19	18	**55**	0
Relevance to practice	20	19	20	**59**	12	16	13	**41**	18	15	17	11	**43**	2	16	13	11	**40**	19
Conferences	20	19	17	**56**	20	19	19	**58**	2	18	14	16	**48**	10	20	20	19	**59**	3
Relationship Management	9	9	10	**28**	15	15	19	**49**	21	19	17	15	**51**	2	12	9	15	**36**	8
Collegiality	14	14	15	**43**	15	14	16	**45**	2	17	18	19	**54**	9	16	18	19	**53**	10
Freedom of Research and Teaching	19	20	16	**55**	11	10	12	**33**	22	6	10	11	**27**	6	18	19	16	**53**	2
Knowledge	16	16	17	**49**	14	12	13	**39**	10	8	10	13	**31**	8	18	15	15	**48**	1
Truth	12	10	13	**35**	12	13	14	**39**	4	18	18	17	**53**	14	19	19	19	**57**	22
Organizational robustness	15	16	15	**46**	17	19	19	**55**	9	18	19	19	**56**	1	18	16	13	**47**	1
Equal opportunities	15	16	17	**48**	15	20	17	**52**	4	17	17	19	**53**	1	20	18	18	**56**	8
Compliance with rules	15	17	11	**43**	17	19	19	**55**	12	19	19	18	**56**	1	17	19	16	**52**	9
Reputation	13	13	17	**43**	13	15	14	**42**	1	11	15	8	**34**	8	12	12	18	**42**	1
Own income	18	16	19	**53**	14	16	16	**46**	7	19	18	10	**47**	1	14	17	19	**50**	3
Third-Party funding	9	14	11	**34**	19	17	18	**54**	20	17	15	14	**46**	8	10	10	10	**30**	4
Scientific publications	20	20	19	**59**	17	8	9	**34**	25	11	12	13	**36**	2	20	16	20	**56**	3
Teaching	18	19	20	**57**	15	12	9	**36**	21	9	7	17	**33**	3	17	19	17	**53**	4
Professionalism	16	12	13	**41**	15	12	13	**40**	1	13	17	14	**44**	4	13	15	15	**43**	2
University cohesion	18	15	14	**47**	18	18	20	**56**	9	19	18	20	**57**	1	14	19	15	**48**	1
Ensuring the financial resources of the university	8	13	16	**37**	16	19	20	**55**	18	19	17	20	**56**	1	5	11	8	**24**	13
University positioning	16	12	14	**42**	15	18	16	**49**	7	18	10	17	**45**	4	8	6	8	**22**	20
Total amount									**220**					**106**					**141**

4.2. Step 2: Normative distance

In the second step, normative distance was measured. Additionally, it was compared to the organizational distance in the first sorting round. The normative distance for fundraisers (106) is significantly lower than that for faculty (141). The cases show that the normative distance varies between 56 and 70. It is greatest among fundraisers in Case 1 (70) and smallest among both groups in Case 2 (56 each). Fundraisers (58) and faculty members (63) of Case 3 lie in between.

Table 3. Organizational and normative distances per case

Keywords	Case 1			Case 2			Case 3		
	|Org. distance|	|Norm. Distance Fundraiser-Faculty|	|Norm. Distance Faculty-Fundraiser|	|Org. distance|	|Norm. Fundraiser-Faculty|	|Norm. Distance Faculty-Fundraiser|	|Org. distance|	|Norm. Distance Fundraiser-Faculty|	|Norm. Distance Faculty-Fundraiser|
Talent development	0	3	5	1	5	4	5	7	2
University self-governance	1	4	1	3	1	1	1	2	2
Relevance to practice	8	3	4	1	1	6	7	2	9
Conferences	0	2	0	0	5	1	2	3	2
Relationship Management	6	4	3	6	2	0	9	4	5
Collegiality	1	2	2	0	2	4	1	3	4
Freedom of Research and Teaching	8	5	1	10	4	1	4	1	0
Knowledge	2	6	2	4	0	1	4	0	2
Truth	0	6	7	3	2	9	1	3	6
Organizational robustness	2	1	3	3	5	0	4	0	2
Equal opportunities	0	2	5	4	0	2	0	2	1
Compliance with rules	2	2	2	2	2	2	8	1	5
Reputation	0	2	1	2	0	1	3	6	1
Own income	4	5	4	0	2	1	3	6	0
Third-Party funding	10	2	1	3	2	4	7	4	1
Scientific publications	3	6	0	12	4	4	10	4	1
Teaching	3	6	1	7	5	0	11	8	3
Pro-fessionalism	1	2	3	0	5	3	0	1	2
University cohesion	0	1	4	3	0	4	6	0	1
Ensuring the financial resources of the university	8	3	3	6	2	2	4	0	8

University positioning	1	3	8	6	8	6	2	1	6
Total amount	60	70	60	78	56	56	92	58	63
Delta amount Org. Distance – Norm. Distance		10	0		22	22		34	29

4.3. Step 3: Comparison of organizational and normative distance

In the third step, organizational and normative distance can be compared with each other. This allows the accuracy of the normative distance of the two groups to be compared with each other depending on the case. Here it can be seen that both groups feel closer to each other than they organizationally are: With one exception (fundraisers in Case 1), the normative distance is always smaller than the organizational distance. The delta between organizational and normative distance is greatest in Case 3 (34 for fundraisers, 29 for faculty), followed by Case 2 (22/22) and smallest in Case 1 (10/0).

5. Discussion

The assessment of organizational distance shows that the two groups are significantly different. Organisational distance is greatest at the Swiss university, where fundraising is organized centrally. This is not surprising: Since the faculty is decentralized, there is a big difference in this case of a centralized fundraising organization. The university with the smallest organizational distance between fundraising and faculty is the one in Case 1. This was not to be expected, as this university has a mixed fundraising structure. It therefore appears that the mixed form is superior to the two distinct forms not only for managerial reasons, because it eliminates their disadvantages, such as the complex coordination of fundraising (Weinstein & Barden, 2007), but also because it has a positive effect on the organizational distance from the faculty compared to the centralized organization. Additionally, other factors, such as the culture of the country where the university is located and the age and success of the fundraising department, might impact the organizational distance between the two groups (Wiepking et al., 2021). This includes the fact that university fundraising in the U.S. has a long tradition dating back almost 100 years (Burk, 2013), which has also led to a high level of acceptance among faculty members.

The analysis of normative distance showed that Case 2 not only has the smallest normative distance between the groups but also boasts an unexpected symmetry: the fundraisers and the faculty perceive each other as being very similar, numeric results are exactly the same. The symmetrical conception of distances corresponds to the position of research (Simmel, 1983; Karakayali, 2009) but contradicts expectations: social distance is determined and perceived by actors. Only in exceptional cases can it be assumed that their mutual perceptions correspond. The fact that this is the case for fundraisers and faculty in Case 2 shows the high level of alignment between the two groups., which may be helped by the decentralized organization of fundraising in Case 2.

In general, organizational distance has no impact on normative distance – neither in a positive nor in a negative sense. It is noteworthy that fundraising success is also not reflected in normative distance, because otherwise the normative distance in Case 1 would have had to differ from that in Case 2 and even more significantly from that in Case 3. There is consensus in research that fundraising success is a result of collaboration between faculty and fundraising (Weinstein & Barden, 2017; Eddy, 2010; Shaker, 2015; Elliott, 2006). Fundraising success could therefore be conceived as an expression of interactive distance. If the success of fundraising is not reflected in normative distance, this means that normative distance is not influenced by interactive distance. This contradicts current research assumptions on social distance (Karakayali, 2009; Lopez, 2021) and should be further investigated in further empirical studies.

A clear difference emerges when comparing the normative distance between the two groups: fundraisers perceive faculty members as significantly closer than faculty members perceive fundraisers. This confirms the findings of Magee & Smith (2013), who show that social distance is dependent on power structures: powerful actors feel more distant from those with less power than vice versa.

Furthermore, this study allows for a comparison of normative distance with organizational distance, thereby assessing the accuracy of the actors' perceptions. These are most accurate in Case 1 and least accurate in Case 3, which are likely due to differences in organizational distance. It is therefore clear that organizational distance, which results from the location of the fundraising department within the university organizational structure, is reflected in normative distance and thus has an impact on cooperation and fundraising success. This underscores the importance of careful organizational positioning of fundraising, a noteworthy insight for university management when structuring or reorganizing fundraising departments. However, there is hope for better cooperation between the two groups: overall, it can be seen that, apart from the fundraisers in Case 1, the normative distance is always smaller than the organizational distance. This shows that actors are making an effort to move closer to each other.

6. Findings

This study examines and compares the organizational distance and normative distance between fundraisers and faculty members at business universities to find ways to improve their collaboration via three in-depth case studies in the U.S., UK/Ireland and in Switzerland. It has shown that the normative distance between the groups is smaller than the organizational distance in all three cases. This is a positive sign for collaboration: the actors seem to care to get along with each other and do not distance themselves from one another. When comparing the two groups, fundraisers show less normative distance from faculty members than vice versa. This is also an expression of the fact that fundraisers try to engage with faculty. Overall, it was found that the degree of organizational distance is a stronger predictor of successful collaboration between the two groups than normative distance. Normative distance, in turn, appears to be influenced by organizational conditions such as the

placement of the fundraising department at the university. Notably, interactive distance was found to have no influence on normative distance. Lastly, it turns out that the long tradition of fundraising in Case 1 and its cultural anchoring had a positive effect on the collaboration between the two groups by reducing the organizational distance between them.

6.1. Implications for practitioners

The study shows that the quality of collaboration cannot be improved by fundraisers and faculty simply by "getting to know each other better", as the two groups already feel closer than they actually are. Instead, the focus should be on reducing organizational distance, which is a crucial task for university management. The study suggests that fundraising departments for public business schools should be organized in a mixed set up. Furthermore, the study shows that fundraisers benefit from the acceptance of their profession, as is the case in the U.S. Therefore, any measures to improve the faculty's perception of fundraisers should be supported — which eventually may lead to higher fundraising results.

6.2. Limitations and further research

The number of interview partners was relatively small, with a total of n = 24. It would therefore be worthwhile to conduct a similar study with a higher n-value. Additionally, participants were interviewed at only one point in time, which is why this study can only provide a snapshot of the greater situation. It would be of interest to conduct such a survey repeatedly over time to also explore longitudinal developments. This study consists of three in-depth case studies, whereby the cases include four dependent variables. In order to determine their individual effects on fundraising success, a follow-up study is needed. From the perspective of social distance theory, this study provided initial evidence that normative distance may not be influenced by interactive distance, as previous research has suggested. Empirically testing this finding would also be a noteworthy task for a follow-up study.

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