

Invited Essay

A Content Analysis of the Journal of Nonprofit Education and Leadership: Results from Empirical and Theoretical Article Analysis

Heather L. Carpenter

Louisiana State University Shreveport

Michael Taylor

Seton Hall University

Hunter Goodman

University of Arkansas, Cooperative Extension

Jeannie Fox

Hamline University

Claudia Petrescu

Kansas State University

Abstract

This study reports a content analysis of the first 10 years of the *Journal of Nonprofit Education and Leadership (JNEL)*. A team of 10 researchers spent two years piloting, and comprehensively reading and coding 97 theoretical articles published between 2010-2020. This analysis found the journal published education and leadership-focused articles with an emerging area of democracy-focused articles. The journal produced a mix of quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods articles, which differ from previous content analysis studies conducted in other nonprofit and philanthropic studies journals. The keywords were separated into the 16 categories of the NACC curricular guidelines, which demonstrated the variety of education and leadership-focused topics covered in the first ten years of the journal. This study has implications for nonprofit and philanthropic studies as *JNEL* is a lesser-known emerging journal that caters to practitioners and scholars.

Keywords: *Content analysis, journal, nonprofit and philanthropic studies, NACC*

Introduction

The *Journal of Nonprofit Education and Leadership (JNEL)* was founded in 2010 to improve nonprofit education and leadership by disseminating peer-reviewed manuscripts centered on professional practice, research, and theoretical discussions. JNEL publishes scholarship of various types, including research articles, case studies, interviews, and book reviews. This article examines the content of the research articles published in the journal to date. It more specifically discusses the results of a multi-phased content analysis study that researchers, practitioners, and scholars may use to understand the evolution of the nonprofit studies (NPS) field through the lens of the *JNEL*, the preeminent and only peer-reviewed journal dedicated to nonprofit and philanthropic studies education. *JNEL* was selected because it is a unique journal with a purpose of publishing papers from academics and practitioners and it is the only journal in the nonprofit and philanthropic studies that focuses on nonprofit education.

In fall 2020, a team of scholars embarked upon a content analysis study to understand the evolution of nonprofit education by researching what keywords and theories emerged from the first 10 years of *JNEL*. The main research questions from this study included:

1. What is the nature of the research articles published in the first 10 years of *JNEL*?
2. Do research articles in *JNEL* reflect topics of interest within nonprofit education?
3. Has “democracy” emerged as a focus of *JNEL* research articles”?

Herein, we report on the project’s progress, which began in 2020 and will be completed in 2022. This paper reports on the preliminary keyword results and sorts them into main categories. Previous content analysis studies of nonprofit and philanthropic studies journals conducted by scholars (Coule et al., 2020, Ma & Konrath, 2018; Marberg et al., 2019; Minkowitz et al., 2020) revealed similar themes and theories across nonprofit and philanthropic studies journals. In addition, a previous content analysis study has been conducted on one journal (Bingham & Bowen, 1994).

The team broke the project into three phases: First, we comprehensively read and analyzed all articles in the first four volumes (our pilot phase), which helped refine our coding excel spreadsheet. Then we reviewed all the empirical and theoretical articles, which we will be reporting results in this paper. The third and final phase was to analyze the case studies and all other articles in the journal, which will be reported in a subsequent paper.

Literature Review

The emerging field of nonprofit and philanthropic studies education has been well documented by scholars such as Mirabella (2007) and O’Neill (2005), and Ashcraft (2001). After the launch of undergraduate nonprofit education through American Humans in 1948, graduate degrees in nonprofit education emerged closer to the 1980s. In addition, the Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action (ARNOVA) launched in 1971 extended legitimacy to the field of nonprofit and philanthropic studies. When nonprofit scholars first published about nonprofit educa-

tion and nonprofit academic programs, their publications were accepted into mainstream nonprofit journals such as *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* (NVSQ) and *Nonprofit Management and Leadership* (NML). However, over time there became more of a need to launch a separate nonprofit education focused journal. Although there is the *Journal of Public Affairs Education*, many nonprofit and philanthropic studies education programs do not fall within the “public affairs” discipline. As the number of nonprofit and philanthropic studies academic programs grew, so did the field of nonprofit and philanthropic studies education. In recent years, Weber and Brunt (2020, 2021) have tracked the development of NACC centers and undergraduate nonprofit education. In addition, Mirabella and Eikenberry (2017) have researched a more critical perspective of nonprofit education.

The *Journal of Nonprofit Education and Leadership* was founded in 2010 by Western Kentucky University Research Foundation with Norman A. Dolch as the inaugural editor. The mission of the journal has been to “publish quality manuscripts to disseminate the latest knowledge related to nonprofit education and leadership to help develop theory and practice. The journal seeks quantitative and/or qualitative research findings; conceptual or theoretical discussions; or program best practices” (JNEL, n.d.). The journal published two volumes a year for the first few years of its existence until Sagamore-Venture started publishing the journal in 2015 and switched to four issues a year.

Recent research has questioned the legitimacy and quality of nonprofit and philanthropic studies journals. Additionally, Walk and Andersson (2020) indicated the Social Sciences Citation Index might not be the best way to measure journal quality. They explored stated preference and created a ranking system for nonprofit-focused academic journals, with scholars ranking JNEL on all three tiers of perceived quality. A limitation of their research is in failing to survey practitioners and only selected nonprofit scholars. They explained that newer journals are often perceived as of lesser quality. Since JNEL is a newer, lesser-known journal whose goal is to reach scholars and practitioners, other ways might be determined to measure its quality. Therefore, it was necessary to review content analysis articles of more established and well-known nonprofit academic journals to inform our study development and methodology.

Minkowitz et al. (2020) reviewed 927 articles from the: *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* (NVSQ), *Nonprofit Management and Leadership* (NML), and *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* (Voluntas) from 2013-2018 and found distinctive themes and keywords. Ma and Konrath (2018) used science mapping to review 12,016 articles from 12 different journals to identify a large database of nonprofit and philanthropic studies and conducted a deeper thematic analysis of 2848 articles from 1986-2015 within NML, Voluntas, and NVSQ. They created clusters and identified major research topics and most cited article types within nonprofit and philanthropic studies. Marberg et al. (2019) used the Stanford Modeling Toolbox to review titles and abstracts from 1,418 articles from NML, NVSQ, and Voluntas to determine the main research themes and track the development of nonprofit research from 1990-2010. They identified four periods in the evolution of the critical research areas over time.

In the last study reviewed, Coule et al. (2020) conducted content analysis articles from NVSQ, NML, and Voluntas to determine the coverage of critical theory. This re-

view of critical theory caused the researchers to explore the word democracy which emerged as an overall keyword in the study.

Evolution of the Word Democracy

In higher education, many words are used to describe the ways citizens, current and future, are a part of building a stronger, more vibrant community. From civic and community engagement; social justice and social action; to democracy, the evolution can be explored of a student or community leader moving from volunteer to engaged champion of progress in their surrounding community or world. Break Away, a nonprofit dedicated to alternative break education, describes The Active-Citizen-Continuum (2014) as a member who is not concerned with their role in society to then a volunteer who is well intentioned but not well educated on social issues to next a conscientious citizen who is concerned with discovering the root causes of issues in the community to ultimately an active citizen where community becomes a driver in values and life choices. This Continuum (2014) is a good model and framework for how the authors arrived at the term *democracy* as an encapsulating term for community-centric engagement.

Two founding leaders in education outline fundamental values that have guided the evolution of community-engaged education. First, John Dewey's belief, as espoused in *Democracy and Education* (1916), that an education of the mind alone without an understanding of one's impact on society is not a true education is an underlying principle to democracy in higher education. Second, Ernest Boyer's *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate* (1990) described the role faculty play in an academic climate that challenges learners to understand their role in the broader community landscape. Both Dewey and Boyer, along with scholars that have followed in their example, challenge society to invigorate ways for students, practitioners, and academics to integrate community and academia seamlessly for greater impact and deeper understanding of citizenship and education.

The *Journal of Nonprofit Education and Leadership's* (JNEL) mission crosses the boundaries of nonprofit leadership and education in ways that expand the field of knowledge and advance its application in community-centric practice. There are a multitude of ways nonprofit education intersects with community-driven leadership. Engagement is seen as a continuum from engagement to action. Consistent with the history of engagement in higher education from 2010-2020, civic engagement, social action, social justice, and democracy are some of the words used to describe forms of education and leadership within engagement. The researchers arrived at democracy as a culminating term for all forms of community-centric engagement.

Moreover, due to much of JNEL's readership being engaged and interested in nonprofit management education, the team also turned to resources from the Nonprofit Academic Centers Council (NACC), "an international membership association comprised of academic centers or programs at accredited colleges and universities focused on the study of nonprofit/nongovernmental organizations, voluntary action, and/or philanthropy" (2021). NACC has continually published undergraduate and graduate-level curricular guidelines for academic programs at colleges and universities in the United States. The third revised edition of the *Graduate Curricular Guidelines* covers 16 categories of nonprofit activity that form the recommendations of topic material "to help in the development of courses, programs and degrees" (NACC, 2015). Taking into

consideration the previous content analysis studies, we designed our study and analysis techniques informed by this existing research.

Methods

The *Journal of Nonprofit Education and Leadership (JNEL)* occupies a unique niche within the nonprofit studies literature, as it focuses primarily on nonprofit education with an academic and practitioner focus. The journal publishes scholarship in various formats including research articles, case studies, interviews, notes and book reviews. Given that 2021 marked the 10th anniversary of *JNEL*, the research team of 10 individuals conducted a content analysis of research articles published between 2010–2021 in Volume 1, Issue 1 through Volume 10, Issue 4. The content analysis, which is a systematic analysis of recorded materials, was conducted through a four-stage process (Brown & Hale, 2014, p. 109). The content analysis was focused on 97 research articles.

The first stage of the content analysis consisted of a pilot study conducted by six research team members for the purpose of creating a coding sheet to be utilized to collect data from *JNEL* research articles. A subset of the research team was divided into three teams with two coders in each team. The research articles from the first four volumes of *JNEL* were divided among the three research teams, and each coder was instructed to read the full articles and to identify (1) the primary topic, (2) any theoretical frameworks utilized, (3) research design utilized, (4) any data sources utilized, and (5) a list of keywords that best summarize the article. Once completed, coders met with their coding partner to merge and create mutually agreed-upon team coding sheets. The three teams coding sheets were combined into a single data set for analysis.

In the second stage, the full research team of ten met to discuss the coding process and review the resulting data from the pilot study. The pilot study revealed the need for modifications to our coding process. Coders expressed confusion with the coding sheet and instructions, including difficulties with distinct differences like theory and empirical articles. These difficulties led to significant variations between teams in the information provided within individual variables. The set of keywords generated in the pilot study were idiosyncratic (i.e., teams used different terminology for similar concepts) and specific (i.e., keywords included terminology such as organization names unique to a specific article). The research team was interested in assessing the relevance of these keywords across each of the articles in the four volumes. The keyword data was cleaned to address the issues of idiosyncratic terminology including correcting differences in spelling (e.g., nonprofit, non-profit, Nonprofit) and combining of common concepts (e.g., nonprofit sector, third sector, voluntary sector).

Using text mining software within the R statistical package, the frequency of the appearance of the coder identified keywords within each of the articles in the data set was generated, revealing the usage patterns of the most common concepts appearing within the first four volumes. The research team reviewed and discussed the keyword frequency data to develop a taxonomy that captured the concepts included within the research articles. Not surprising, given the name of the journal, most of the keywords could be easily categorized as related to either education or leadership. In discussing the taxonomy to be applied in the full study, a third, unexpected, category of interest developed: “democracy” to capture the interrelated concepts of social justice, civic en-

agement, social justice, and critical theory. It also led us to a third research question arose: “Has democracy emerged as a focus of *JNEL* research articles?”

Stage three was the start of data collection for the complete study of all ninety-seven research articles contained within *JNEL* Volume 1 through Volume 10 issue 4. Prior to beginning the coding process, a subset of the research team read each of the articles and designated the type of research article (empirical or theory) and the primary focus of the research within the article (democracy, education, or leadership). It is important to note that most of the articles in the journal cover multiple focus areas. For example, education articles often analyze pedagogy or curriculum related to aspects of leadership or democracy. This information, along with the article name, issue and volume number, and the coding team assigned to the article were prepopulated into an improved coding sheet with revised instructions.

The revised coding sheet required coders to provide a summary of the article content and three to five keywords for each article. For theory articles, coders were asked to provide the name of theories utilized within the article. For empirical articles, coders were asked to provide information on (1) the academic literature referenced in the article; (2) the empirical methodology used (mixed methods, quantitative, quantitative); and (3) the data collection techniques employed (surveys, interviews, focus groups, etc.). The revised coding sheet was provided to five coding teams comprised of two coders each. The same coding process used in the pilot study was followed (i.e., coders read and code each article and then meet with partner to merge coding and resolve any discrepancies).

In the fourth stage of the content analysis, the coding sheets of the five teams was combined into a single data set and data cleaning (typographical errors, repetition of entries, uniformity of terminology, spelling, capitalization, etc.) was conducted. The research team met regularly to review and discuss the data. The keyword variable and the empirical literature variable required recoding to accommodate our analysis. Then a subset of the research team mapped each of the keywords into the 16 Nonprofit Academic Centers Council Graduate Curricular Guidelines categories, further refining the categories (Brown & Hale, 2014, p. 209). The choice to use the NACC guidelines to organize our keyword analysis is based on their common use as a taxonomy of topics included within quality nonprofit management education (NACC, 2015). Because the curricular guidelines are organized around the content matter and not pedagogy or educational approaches, an additional category (education and pedagogy) was created to accommodate keywords that did not map into the 16 NACC categories but were central to teaching. This decision rule (Schreier, 2012, p. 103) was formed on a desire only to analyze keywords appropriate to the nonprofit operational activity covered in the curricular guidelines and not falsely represent how this content is taught.

The coding of theories employed within the theoretical articles resulted in idiosyncratic terminology use across research teams, which were reorganized into broader theoretical themes to allow for descriptive analysis. The initial recoding of these two variables was conducted by two subsets of the research team. They were then reviewed and refined through review and discussion among the entire research team. The final data set consists of the 19 variables (see Appendix 1 for details).

Results

Our content analysis produced descriptive analysis of the scholarship contained the research articles published in Volume 1 through Volume 10, Issue 4 of *JNEL*. The discussion of the results of the content analysis is organized by our research questions:

1. What is the nature of the research articles published in the first 10 years of JNEL?
2. Do research articles in JNEL reflect topics of interest within nonprofit education?
3. Has “democracy” emerged as a focus of JNEL research articles”?

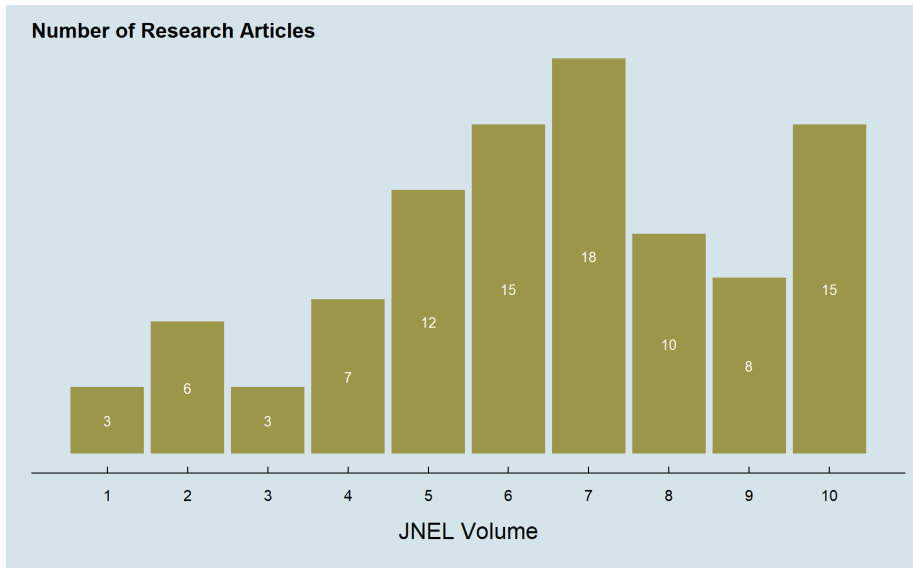
RQ1: What is the nature of the research articles published in the first 10 years of JNEL?

This research question was answered by reviewing the volume of research articles, research type and results of empirical and theoretical article results.

A total of 97 research articles were identified and coded for this content analysis. Figure 1 illustrates the distribution of research articles over each of the first 10 volumes of the journal.

Figure 1

Number of Research Articles (Volumes 1–10)



The results show that Volumes 5, 6, 7, and 10 contained the most coded articles in this study. Beginning with Volume 5, the journal has been published by Sagamore-Venture, which has resulted in the production of four issues per volume, as opposed to the previously published two or three issues per volume.

As highlighted in Table 1, of the research articles published in the first 10 years of *JNEL*, the majority are empirical (73.2%) rather than theoretical (26.8%). This is not surprising given that the journal was launched during a period of time when the focus in nonprofit research was on Marberg et al. (2019) identified fourth evolutionary stage of nonprofit research that focused on nonprofit education and strategy.

Table 1

JNEL Research Article Types

	Frequency	Percent
Empirical	71	73.2
Theory	26	26.80
Total	97	100

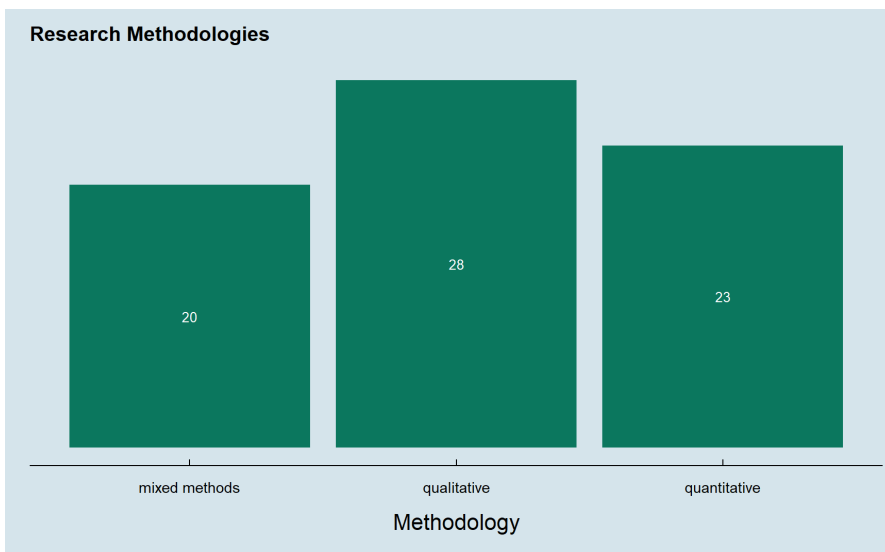
Empirical Article Results

To further enhance our understanding of *JNEL*'s emergence and evolution, the better understand the nature of these articles, within empirical article results, three additional characteristics: (i) methodological approach (ii) data collection technique, and (iii) empirical literature referenced were analyzed.

The seventy-one (71) empirical research articles employed a variety of methods (Figure 2).

Figure 2

Types of Methodologies Used Within Empirical Articles

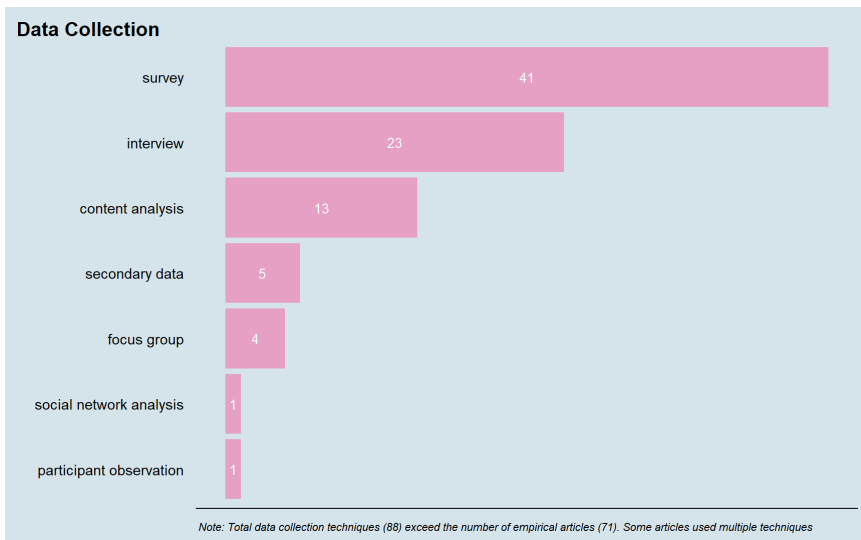


As Figure 2 shows, 28 of the 72 empirical articles utilized qualitative methods (39%), followed by 23 that employed quantitative methods (32%), and 20 articles used a mixed-methods approach (28%).

The data used in these empirical articles were collected using seven different techniques. Multiple articles used a combination of these data collection techniques. Figure 3 shows the three dominant data collection techniques were surveys, interviews, and content analysis.

Figure 3

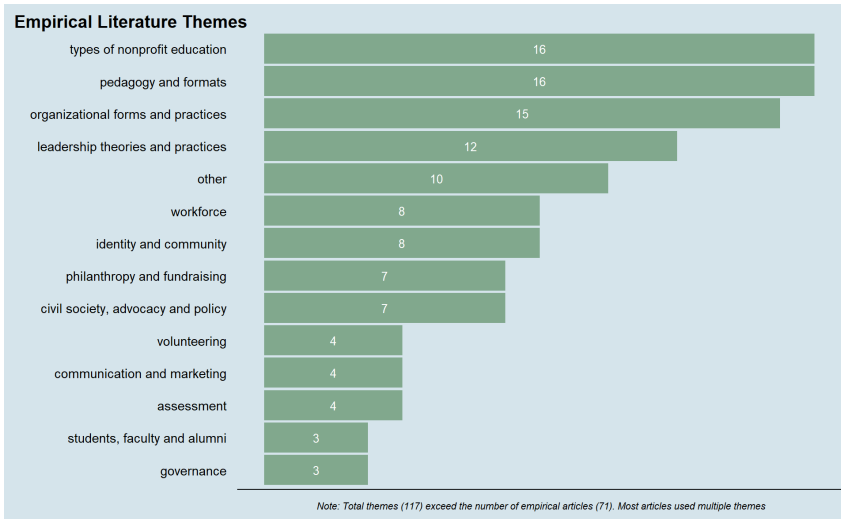
Data Collection Techniques Used Within Empirical Articles



Surveys were utilized in 41 of the empirical articles (47%), interviews in 23 articles (26%), and content analysis in 13 articles (15%). Less common data collection techniques included using secondary data in five articles (6%) and focus groups in four articles (4%). Finally, one empirical article (1%) employed social network analysis, and another article used participant observation (1%).

Empirical Articles and the Literature

The initial coding of the academic literature referenced within the 71 empirical articles identified 313 distinct literature areas. We used iterative, qualitative analysis to group the literature areas into 14 broader categories. As illustrated in Figure 4, the four most common literature themes are: types of nonprofit education (14%), pedagogy and formats (14%), organizational forms and processes (13%), and leadership theories and practices (12%). This indicates to the areas of research importance given by researchers to Malberg et. al (2019) fourth evolutionary stage, that is focusing on education, strategy and regulations.

Figure 4*Literature Themes Within Empirical Articles***Theoretical Article Results**

Next, we focused our attention to understanding the nature of the theoretical articles, which were coded to identify the theories utilized. Through the coding process we identified 18 theories. These were utilized a total of 34 times within the 26 theory articles. Many of these articles incorporated more than one theory. Table 2 details the frequency of the theories.

Table 2*JNEL Research Type by Theory Used*

	Frequency	Percent
advocacy	1	2.94%
capacity building	1	2.94%
civil society	1	2.94%
collaboration, partnership, and shared leadership	4	11.76%
community	1	2.94%
comparative	1	2.94%
critical and race	2	5.88%
design	1	2.94%
giving	1	2.94%
historical	2	5.88%
leadership	1	2.94%
learning and pedagogy	8	23.53%
neoliberal and economic	1	2.94%
open systems	1	2.94%
organizational	3	8.82%
social entrepreneurship	2	5.88%
strategic management and thinking	2	5.88%
volunteer management	1	2.94%
Total	34	100

Table 2 demonstrates two areas of theory dominate the articles published in *JNEL*. The most common is learning and pedagogical theories (24%) and collaboration, partnership, and shared leadership theories (11.76%).

In conclusion, RQ1 identified a higher frequency of empirical articles, that listed qualitative methods more frequently than quantitative methods, and with surveys being a popular data collection method. In addition, the most popular literature topic was types of nonprofit education and pedagogy formats.

RQ2: Do research articles in *JNEL* reflect topics of interest within nonprofit education?

Research question two is answered through coding of the keywords that emerged in *JNEL* over the past 10 years. In addition, to understand the relevance of *JNEL* to nonprofit education, the keywords were compared to the Nonprofit Academic Centers Council (NACC) curricular guidelines for nonprofit educators.

Two-hundred and sixty-one keywords were identified, which appeared 517 times within the 97 research articles in the data set. Most of these keywords were unique to single articles. As discussed in the methods, in addition to the 16 NACC categories, an

additional category of pedagogy and education was included in the analysis. Appendix 2 shows the keywords that were assigned to each of our 17 categories.

Table 3 contains the frequency distribution of keywords within each of the seventeen NACC thematic categories.

Table 3

Frequency Distribution of Keywords by NACC Categories

	Frequency	Percent
advocacy and social change	29	5.7
assessment and evaluation	20	3.93
comparative global perspectives	31	6.09
education and pedagogy	149	29.27
ethics and values	14	2.75
financial management and accountability	7	1.38
fundraising and resource development	29	5.7
governance and leadership	28	5.5
history and theories	12	2.36
human resource management	37	7.27
internet technology and data management	3	0.59
leadership and management	113	22.2
marketing and communications	4	0.79
nonprofit economics	3	0.59
nonprofit finance	6	1.18
nonprofit law	2	0.39
scope and significance	22	4.32
Total	509	100

Figure 5 displays the categories in rank order from the most to least common NACC keyword category.

Most keywords are contained within the two most common categories of education and pedagogy, comprising 30% of all keyword occurrences, followed by leadership and management, comprising 22%, which answered research question two of alignment of JNEL keywords with NACC curricular guidelines and topics of interest in nonprofit education.

RQ3. Has “democracy” emerged as a focus of JNEL research articles”?

As research question one demonstrated the frequency of the types of JNEL research articles of empirical and theoretical articles, research question three also identifies the main focus on the research within each article type.

Research Focus Area and Research Type

The three focus areas as described in the methods section were Democracy, Education, and Leadership. Figure 6 shows the distribution of the focus of the research based on article type.

Figure 5

Keywords Mapped to NACC Categories

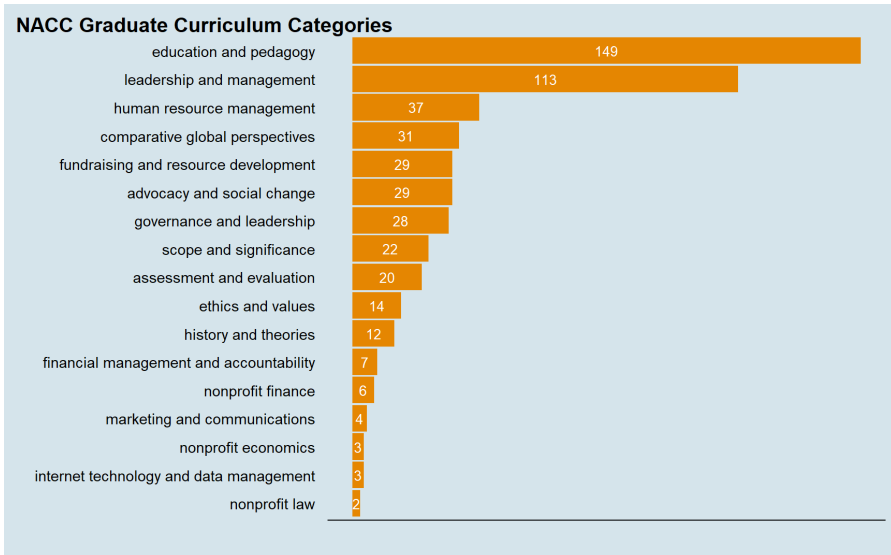
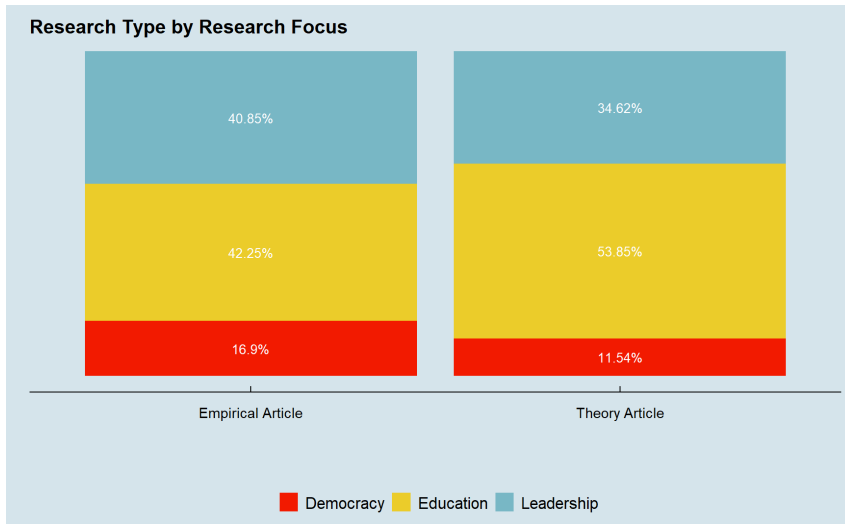


Figure 6

Focus Areas of Research Articles by Article Type



As shown in Figure 6, empirical research articles have a similar emphasis on education (42%) and leadership (41%). Theory articles focus primarily on education (54%), followed by leadership (35%). Articles with a primary focus on democracy constitute a much smaller proportion of both empirical (17%) and theory articles (12%). However, examining the research type of all articles within each volume of the journal (Figure 7) illustrates that the democracy research focus did not emerge until Volume 5 and has appeared consistently in each volume since.

Figure 7

Composition of Research Focus Across Journal Volumes

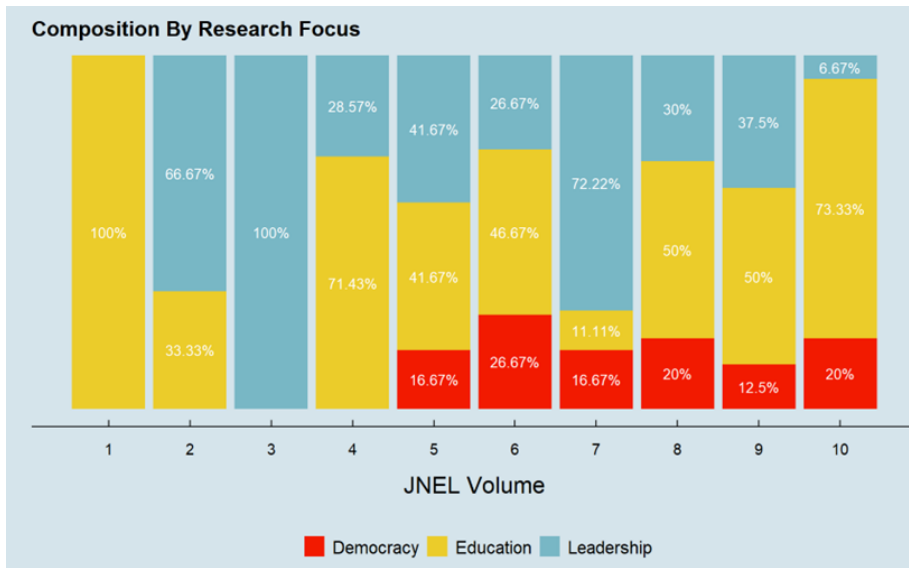


Figure 7 also illustrates two volumes focused on leadership and education exclusively. However, the researchers acknowledge that we assigned a particular focus based on the article, but some touch multiple areas based on their scope. It is also important to note that some volumes of the journal featured special invited topics (i.e., international nonprofit leadership education). The invited issues did not impact the research composition for Figure 7 as they still focused on the three-part focus on education, leadership, and democracy in the journal's focus.

Discussion and Conclusions

With the nonprofit sector's role and visibility, there is a strong interest in understanding the nature of the field, the theories that advance the practice, and the practices that shape the evolution of nonprofit organizations. The interest of nonprofit researchers to understand the type of articles and research themes published in the main nonprofit studies journals provides a link to the interest in understanding the evolution of the research and the evolution of the professional practices. *JNEL*, as the preeminent and only peer-reviewed journal dedicated to nonprofit and philanthropic studies edu-

cation, is also one of the few journals that informs the knowledge needs of academicians and practitioners (pracademics) alike.

As the analysis of the 97 *JNEL* articles regarding the keyword sorting of education, leadership, and democracy categories are at the intersection of those who teach (academicians) and study practices (pracademics). This section discusses the similarities and differences of the *JNEL* content analysis findings to the NPS content analysis studies discussed in the literature review.

Content Analysis Differences

The categories of education and democracy are different from the previous content analysis findings conducted in the nonprofit studies field, such as Minkowitz et al. (2020) and Ma and Konrath (2018). As demonstrated by answering research question three, democracy emerged in *JNEL* in 2015 and demonstrates the evolution of the field of nonprofit and philanthropic studies.

Another keyword in the journal is leadership, which overlaps with Minkowitz et al. (2020) findings. For example, in *JNEL*, leadership as a research focus accounts for 39% of the articles published, and leadership is predominant in the empirical research with 76% of articles (29 out of 38). It is worth noting that within the empirical articles, leadership theories and practices account for 10% among all empirical articles, and organizational forms and processes account for 13%. Between these two findings, there is a strong interest among researchers to analyze and identify ways to improve organizational leadership and management.

With regard to another difference between the *JNEL* content analysis and the other nonprofit articles' content analysis, since education is specific to *JNEL* as a research focus area, none of the other analyses of top-ranked nonprofit journals has education as a distinctive theme and/or keyword. Also, given the journal's name, the focus on the empirical articles for understanding types of nonprofit education (14%) indicates the interest in bettering the ways to prepare the nonprofit workforce.

Another difference between the findings and those of the other nonprofit studies content analysis studies is the type of research methods used, which was discussed when answering research question one. *JNEL* articles were balanced in their qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. However, the other nonprofit studies are heavily focused on quantitative analysis, except for the Coule et al (2020) critical perspectives and critical theories content analysis study, which includes more qualitative methods articles. Within the *JNEL* empirical articles, 39% used qualitative research, with surveys (46%) and interviews (26%) being the most frequently used data collection techniques.

The analysis of *JNEL* theoretical articles indicated that 18 theories within the 26 theory articles were the learning and pedagogy areas. This focus differentiates *JNEL* from the other NPS content analyses. It also indicates that *JNEL* has identified a niche for researchers and is becoming the main venue for shaping the pedagogy of the nonprofit education field.

Similarities to Content Analysis Studies

Another overlap of similar keywords found in the other content analysis conducted in nonprofit studies is the advocacy, collaboration, volunteer (management) research found by Minkowitz et. al (2020), and Ma and Konrath (2018). The *JNEL* content analysis identified volunteering is one of the themes used within empirical articles

and volunteer management within the theoretical articles. However, volunteering is not a predominant theme or frequently focused upon area in *JNEL*.

Furthermore, another similarity in the analysis of *JNEL* article keywords was in relation to the Nonprofit Academic Centers Council (NACC) Curricular Guidelines, which was identified with research question two. The comparison found that many of the NACC guidelines were addressed in *JNEL* articles, but perhaps not with the same weight per each topic.

Implications for the Journal and the Field

This research has implications for the journal and the field in demonstrating that a content analysis can confirm or challenge a journal's main focus. In the case of *JNEL*, the content analysis confirmed the focus of the journal being nonprofit and philanthropic studies education, leadership, and the emerging area of democracy. In addition, Walk and Andersson (2020) indicated there are other ways to determine journal quality other than impact factor journal rankings. As *JNEL* is a newer journal and not yet included in the Social Sciences Citation Index, there are alternative ways to indicate quality. The content analysis study demonstrated quality through confirming *JNEL*'s purpose and connection to nonprofit practitioners. Moreover, as *JNEL*'s mission focuses on both education and practice, this research confirmed *JNEL* is not indented to duplicate but stand apart from other nonprofit and philanthropic journals.

The content analysis also found the use of mixed methods, setting *JNEL* apart from other journals in the field and confirming that the journal is practitioner friendly (by publishing numerous qualitative studies written by practitioner-scholars). Future discussions among journal editors should include open access measures, which would allow all practitioners to access the journal articles.

Limitations

Although this data provides implications for nonprofit and philanthropic studies, a few limitations must be noted. As with all content analysis studies, the methods had some limitations. Researchers identified the primary category of each article being education, leadership, or democracy. However, some articles could fit multiple categories. In addition, members of the *JNEL* editorial board coded the articles, and some whom were authors of papers included in the study. The team made efforts to minimize coding bias by not coding their own articles, and they coded in teams to avoid coding bias.

Even with these limitations, this study discussed the keywords, article types, and methods of *JNEL* from its inception in 2010 through its first 10 years of publication to 2020, volume 4. Although the title of the journal might be a predictor of the themes of articles published within a journal, the authors contributing to *JNEL* led to a substantial percentage of both leadership and education articles published within the past ten years. However, the emergence of democracy among the themes indicates that leadership and education are not entirely conclusive. Future analysis may indicate whether democracy promoting activities in the classroom and sector have become a core tenet within nonprofit studies. In addition, the journal included a balance of the qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods described in the journal articles. Moreover, the analysis of the 97 articles shows that *JNEL* is growing confidently as a journal, but also as a venue for academicians and practitioners in understanding the needs of the nonprofit workforce, identifying ways to best prepare students for challenging work while understanding how best to lead and manage nonprofit organizations.

Future research that moves beyond research articles, focusing on case studies and other forms of scholarship, will shed more light on whether the journal is indeed meeting the needs of its constituents. A mapping of case study keywords, for example, would provide an understanding if the case studies published in *JNEL* are aligned with the NACC categories, therefore truly serving the educational needs of nonprofit professionals. Furthermore, a mapping of journal authors by their discipline, geographic locations or nonprofit subsector might provide further insight on the “practitioner friendly” aspect of the journal.

Acknowledgments: The authors would like to acknowledge the larger research team that has been involved in various aspects of the conceptualization, coding, and review of the research contained within this article: Norman Dolch (JNEL), Yuan Daniel Chang (University of Minnesota), Jennifer Amanda Jones (University of Florida), Stuart Mendel (National Center for Nonprofit Enterprise), and Roseanne Mirabella (Seton Hall University). We would also like to thank graduate students Elizabeth Coontz and Sarah Logan (Institute for Nonprofit Research and Nonprofit Administration, Louisiana State University Shreveport) for their research assistance.

References

- Ashcraft, R. F. (2001). Where nonprofit management education meets the undergraduate experience: American humanics after 50 years. *Public Performance & Management Review*, 25(1), 42–56.
- Bingham, R. D., & Bowen, W. M. (1994). “Mainstream” public administration over time: A topical content analysis of *Public Administration Review*. *Public Administration Review*, 54(2), 204–208.
- Boyer, E. L. (1990). *Scholarship reconsidered: Priorities of the professoriate*. Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.
- Breakaway. (2014). *The Active-Citizen-Continuum*. <http://alternativebreaks.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Active-Citizen-Continuum-2014.pdf>.
- Brown, M., & Hale, K. (2014). *Applied research methods in public and nonprofit organizations*. John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated.
- Dewey, J. (1916). *Democracy and education: An introduction to the philosophy of education*. Macmillan.
- Coule, T., Dodge, J., & Eikenberry, A. (2020). Towards a typology of critical nonprofit studies: A literature review. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*. <http://shura.shu.ac.uk/26050/3/Coule-TowardsTypologyCritical%28AM%29.pdf> *Journal of Nonprofit Education and Leadership*. (n.d.). *About*. <https://js.sagamorepub.com/jnel/about>
- Ma, J., & Konrath, S. (2018). A century of nonprofit studies: Scaling the knowledge of the field. *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 29(6), 11391158. https://www.ipearlab.org/media/publications/Ma_Konrath_Century_of_nonprofit_studies_6LLxL35.pdf

- Marberg, A., Korzilius, H., & Kranenburg, H. van. (2019). What is in a theme? Professionalization in nonprofit and nongovernmental organizations research. *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, 30(1), 113–131. <https://doi.org/10.1002/nml.21355>
- Minkowitz, H., Twumasi, A., Berrett, J. L., Chen, X., & Stewart, A. J. (2020). Checking in on the state of nonprofit scholarship: A review of recent research. *Journal of Public and Nonprofit Affairs*, 6(2), 182–208. <https://doi.org/10.20899/jpna.6.2.182-208>
- Mirabella, R. M. (2007). University-based educational programs in nonprofit management and philanthropic studies: A 10-year review and projections of future trends. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 36(4_suppl), 11S-27S.
- Mirabella, R. M., & Eikenberry, A. M. (2017). The missing “social” in social enterprise education in the United States. *Journal of Public Affairs Education*, 23(2), 729–748.
- Nonprofit Academic Centers Council, Curricular Guidelines, Third Revised Edition. (2015). <https://www.nonprofit-academic-centers-council.org/curricular-guidelines/>
- Nonprofit Academic Centers Council. (2021). *About Us*. <https://www.nonprofit-academic-centers-council.org/>
- O’Neill, M. (2005). Developmental contexts of nonprofit management education. *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, 16(1), 5–17.
- Schreier, M. (2012). *Qualitative content analysis in practice*. SAGE.
- Walk, M., & Andersson, F. O. (2020). Where do nonprofit and civil society researchers publish? *Perceptions of Nonprofit Journal Quality*. *Journal of Public and Nonprofit Affairs*, 6(1), 79–95. https://scholarworks.iupui.edu/bitstream/handle/1805/20957/Walk%20Andersson_journal%20quality_JPNA_oa.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y
- Weber, P. C., & Brunt, C. (2021). Mapping NACC centers: The past and future trajectory of academic nonprofit centers. *The Journal of Nonprofit Education and Leadership*, 11(3), pp. 66–93.

Appendix 1

Data Set Variables, Description, and Coding Responsibilities

Variable Name	Description	Coding Responsibility
Collected for all articles		
CODERS	<i>assigned coding team</i>	prepopulated by the research team
VOL_ISS	<i>volume and issue</i>	prepopulated by the research team
NAME	<i>article title</i>	prepopulated by the research team
TYPE	<i>empirical or theory</i>	prepopulated by the research team
FOCUS	<i>democracy, education, or leadership</i>	prepopulated by the research team
DESC	<i>brief article summary (open-ended)</i>	entered by the coding team
KEYWORD	<i>3-5 keywords (open-ended)</i>	entered by the coding team
NACC	<i>NACC category matching individual keyword</i>	recoded by the research team from keyword responses
Applicable to Empirical Articles Only		
METHOD	<i>empirical methodology (drop-down menu with the option of "other")</i>	entered by the coding team
DATA	<i>data collection process (drop-down menu with the option of "other")</i>	selection from the drop-down menu with "other" as a choice
LITERATURE	<i>empirical literature used (open-ended with examples provided in instructions)</i>	open-ended with examples provided in instructions
THEME	<i>the theme of the empirical literature</i>	recoded by the research team from literature responses
Applicable to Theory Articles Only		
THEORY	<i>theory used (open-ended with examples provided in instructions)</i>	open-ended with examples provided in instructions

Appendix 2

Mapping of Keywords to NACC Categories

<i>NACC Categories</i>	<i>Keywords</i>
<i>comparative global perspectives on the nonprofit sector, voluntary action, and philanthropy</i>	China, cross cultural dialogue, culture, Czech Republic, democratization, developing countries, faith based, Finland, folkbildning, government structure, India, Israel, Latin America, Lebanon, NGOs, nonprofit sector, religion, Rwanda, social democratic, South Korea, Sweden, United Kingdom
<i>scope and significance of the nonprofit sector, voluntary action and philanthropy</i>	charitable organizations, civil society, government relationships, health and human service organizations, nonprofit centers, nonprofit organization, parent teacher associations, public private partnerships
<i>history and theories of the nonprofit sector, voluntary action and philanthropy</i>	constructive developmental perspective, corporatist, critical theory, design, feminism, historical perspectives, institutionalism, knowledge generation, pracademic, social cognitive theory, systems thinking
<i>ethics and values</i>	accountability, anti-racism, diversity, equity lens, ethics, gender, inequality, race, socioeconomic status, transparency, trustworthiness
<i>nonprofit governance and leadership</i>	affective motives, board, board chairs, board dysfunction, board governance, change management, executive director, governance, interpersonal relationship, leadership perspectives, network governance, nonprofit executives, practitioner, rational motives, school boards, shared governance, stakeholder management, stakeholder perceptions
<i>public policy, advocacy, and social change</i>	activism, advocacy, affordable housing, child sex ratio, civic foundations, community engagement, friend groups, human services, injustice, public affairs, public policy, public service, public service motivation, social awareness, social capital, social change, social justice, social movements, social norms, socialization, student loan debt
<i>nonprofit law</i>	risk-management, Volunteer Protection Act
<i>nonprofit economics</i>	markets, neoliberal
<i>nonprofit finance</i>	financial capital, investors, relational capital, return on investment, symbolic capital
<i>fundraising and resource development</i>	advancement, development, direct giving model,

Appendix 2 (cont.)

	donor engagement, donors, fundraising, grantmaking, philanthropy
<i>nonprofit financial management and accountability</i>	financial health, financial performance, financial sustainability, operating reserves, organizational slack
<i>leadership, management, innovation, and entrepreneurship</i>	abilities, authentic leadership, capacity building, collaboration, community partners, competence, competition, connective leadership, contracting relationships, cross sector, distributive leadership, emerging leaders, emotional intelligence, heroic leadership, leader perspectives, leadership development, leadership inclusiveness, management strategies, managerial leadership, membership benefit, mentoring, mission, networking, nonprofit leadership, nonprofit management, organizational capacity, organizational change, organizational culture, organizational development, organizational effectiveness, organizational stability, organizational structure, partnerships, professional leaders, professionalization, program planning, self-awareness, self-efficacy, servant leadership, service delivery, shared leadership, small nonprofits, social enterprise, social entrepreneurship, social innovation, social problems, stakeholder engagement, strategic input, strategic leadership, strategic management, succession planning, technical assistance, transformational leadership, trust building, visionary leadership, youth development
<i>nonprofit human resource management</i>	career development, employees, field placement, field supervision, human capital, professional development, skill development, training, volunteer engagement, volunteer management, volunteer motivations, volunteer readiness, volunteer retention, volunteer satisfaction, volunteering, volunteers, youth work
<i>nonprofit marketing and communications</i>	brand management, communication, public perception
<i>information technology, social media, and data management</i>	digital literacy, social media
<i>assessment, evaluation, and decision-making methods</i>	accreditation, assessment, capacity measurement, client, community impact, data-driven management, evaluation,

Appendix 2 (cont.)

	evidence-based program registries, learning outcomes, organizational self-assessment, program evaluation
<i>education and pedagogy*</i>	action learning, active learning, adult education, alumni, applied education, charter schools, critical thinking, curricular guidelines, curriculum development, experiential learning, experiment faculty perspectives, followership, graduate education, high impact practices, hybrid learning, instrumental education, intellectual dynamism, K-12 education, leadership education, leadership studies, learning reciprocity, learning styles, liberal arts education, NACC, NLA, nonprofit and philanthropic studies, nonprofit management education, online learning, open course, organizational learning, pedagogy, service learning, student associations, student development, student engagement, student experience, student perception, student portfolio, student satisfaction, transformative learning, undergraduate education, visual literacy, writing, youth education

** The NACC Graduate Curricular Guidelines are topical and do not cover education and pedagogy, so this category was used to capture those keywords that did not apply to the coding*