

**Towards a typology of critical nonprofit studies: A  
literature review**

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# Toward a Typology of Critical Nonprofit Studies: A Literature Review

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## Abstract

This review examines scholarship in key nonprofit journals over four decades. Its purpose is to (a) analyze the extent, nature, and contribution of critical nonprofit scholarship and its trajectory over time and (b) call on scholars, research institutions, and journals in the field to engage the kinds of insights these increasingly marginalized approaches bring, providing space for them to join, challenge, and shape the research conversation. Findings show only 4% of articles published within the period examined adopt critical approaches, with great variability in the ways articles exemplify core tenets of critical scholarship, and a general dampening of critical work over time. This conservatism may result from the rejection of less understood philosophies and methodologies of critical inquiry in favor of more mainstream (positivistic) models of social science. Our primary contribution is to advance a typology explicating the pluralism inherent in critical approaches to nonprofit studies, and their strengths and limitations.

## Keywords

critical theory, critical management studies, critical nonprofit studies, literature review

## Introduction

This article examines the extent, nature, and contribution of critical nonprofit scholarship<sup>1</sup> over time in key field-specific journals. Although other management and

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organization-oriented fields have developed sophisticated understandings of what it means to use critical approaches (e.g., Adler et al., 2008; Baker & Bettner, 1997; Bull, 2008), understanding of such perspectives and what they offer to the nonprofit domain is nascent. In beginning to address this neglect, we pursue the following questions: *How critical is nonprofit scholarship? What is the nature of this critical work and how has it changed over time? What has it contributed to understandings of nonprofit organizing?* We address these questions through an analysis of critical papers in three key journals—Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly (NVSQ), Nonprofit Management and Leadership (NML), and *Voluntas*—from their inceptions through 2009. Our emphasis on field-specific journals is inherently restrictive; however, we wish to focus our attention on scholarship that utilizes theory to advance understandings of nonprofit work and organization, rather than that which utilizes nonprofits as mere context for perusing theoretical advancement, as is often the case in disciplinary-specific publication outlets.

We use the term “critical” to denote more than the commonly expected standard of skepticism or critical thinking in scholarly works (Brown, 2005). It signifies a fundamental, often historically specific critique that is attentive to the conditioning effect of social, economic, cultural, and political structures—such as capitalism, patriarchy, or imperialism—on orthodox practice and understanding (Agger, 1998; Kellner, 2008; Keucheyan, 2013; Lee, 1990). The aim of critical work is the creation of more equitable and sustainable practices rather than preservation of the unjust and destructive social and economic systems many managers, management practices, and organizations serve to reproduce (Adler et al., 2008). Critical scholarship, in particular Foucauldian and Habermasian inspired analyses, makes different assumptions to mainstream theory (most often designed to increase the productivity and functioning of the world as it presently exists) about the relationship between knowledge and politics (Torgerson, 1986). Rather than being neutral or unbiased, knowledge production processes deployed to understand organizations and management practices are understood to serve or privilege particular interests, perspectives, and social groups over others. From this perspective, knowledge production in the nonprofit field becomes a topic of inquiry in its own right, open to critique and challenge.

The margins between mainstream and critical nonprofit scholarship are fuzzy, contested, and cannot be easily delineated. As Adler et al. (2008) point out, there is

no sharp line dividing “really radical” from “merely reformist” criticism . . . [the boundaries of the mainstream] expand as once critical issues and concepts are taken up in the mainstream; on the other hand, reformist criticism often opens the door to more radical change. (p. 125)

In addition, critical scholarship is inspired by diverse theoretical resources, from variants of Marxism, the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory, by the work of thinkers such as Foucault and Dewey, and by various social/intellectual movements such as feminism and environmentalism. As such, there is little unity in critical theory or critical nonprofit scholarship and to organize our review according to specific schools of

thought or theoretical resources would be futile, obscuring the variety we found in the articles as shown below. Rather, in developing a typology of critical nonprofit research we assessed the literature by drawing heavily on Fournier and Grey (2000), Grey and Willmott (2005), and Adler et al. (2008), who discern several common tenets<sup>2</sup> of critical management studies, namely

1. *Challenging structures of domination* through highlighting the sources, mechanisms, and effects of the various forms of contemporary, normalized domination represented by capitalism, patriarchy, and so on;
2. *Questioning taken-for-granted assumptions* within societies, organizations, and among management practices;
3. *Going beyond instrumentalism* by challenging the view that the value of social relations in societies and the workplace is essentially instrumental or should be geared only toward profitability;
4. *Paying attention to power and knowledge* through a concern for showing that forms of knowledge, which appear to be neutral, reflect and reinforce asymmetrical relations of power.

Critical research can be a powerful antidote to “the managerialization of the world” (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000), thus holding significant appeal to faculty, students, practitioners, and policy makers disaffected with the narrow, technocratic focus of “management science.” It provides theoretical tools for uncovering oppressions in and transformation of nonprofit work and organization including, for example, employment/volunteering within nonprofits and their engagement in and with the wider world. It also foregrounds normative notions of the way work could or should be organized to achieve more just and sustainable organizations and societies, including articulating an ethics of care, solidarity, community, and equity. Following a series of natural and social crises around the globe, including wars, famines, mass-unemployment, and discrimination, it is not enough to work for greater efficiency (professionalization/marketization) or modest technocratic reform in nonprofit work and organization. In this sense management education, as the training ground for nonprofit and public administration elites, is an important site of intervention. Not least because it offers the opportunity for challenging students to recognize the oppressive nature of the system they are preparing to join or are already members and encouraging them to make reflective choices about the potentially exploitative dimensions of their current or future roles (Adler et al., 2008).

Our approach invites questions about the implications of mainstream knowledge production processes and education in the field. Nevertheless, our primary concern is with the nature and consequences of knowledge about nonprofit work and organization produced by *applying* the tenets of critical research explicated above and how it has changed over time. We begin the article by outlining the method adopted to undertake the literature review. We then present and discuss our findings, organized around four categories of critical nonprofit scholarship. These categories were formulated through an inductive analytical process assessing if and how the tenets of critical scholarship are exemplified

in research articles. We find great variability in this regard and little unity in the critical work featured in particular-field journals. Our primary contribution is to advance a typology that explicates the pluralism inherent in critical approaches to nonprofit studies, and their strengths and limitations. In doing so, we move beyond the overly restrictive view that critical scholarship is constituted only by explicit use of “Critical Theory.” This broadened perspective identifies how nonprofit scholars in general—not just critical theorists—can advance knowledge development in the field; not least, by laying bare the often omitted or overlooked ways nonprofit organization and action operates in society, which can reproduce as well as challenge and transform oppression and inequities in our societies. The article concludes with a discussion of why we might see a dampening of critical perspectives over time and where additional critical research might advance theory development and empirical findings in contemporary nonprofit studies.

## Method

After developing our research questions, we defined inclusion and exclusion criteria, located and selected studies, then analyzed, interpreted, and presented the results. Unlike most science-based systematic reviews, we adopt no “hierarchy of evidence,” which privileges quantitative data or certain methodologies; this would be inappropriate for our subject matter and our own knowledge constituting assumptions. Our process is outlined in more detail below.

### *Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria*

We defined our inclusion criteria as peer-reviewed papers, conceptual and empirical papers (to include all study designs), published between 1970 and 2009, and addressing any aspect of nonprofit organization/action. Research notes, editorials, and book reviews were excluded.

### *Locating and Selecting Studies*

Studies were located in the online archives of three key field-specific journals from their inception through 2009. *NVSQ* was first published in 1972, followed by *NML* and *Voluntas* in 1990. These journals were chosen because

1. They are the longest established interdisciplinary, peer-reviewed journals publishing the largest volumes of nonprofit research, thus influencing dominant discourses in the field over time.
2. They are identified as the leading publication outlets for nonprofit studies (see Maier et al., 2016, and Google Scholar).
3. Two decades is considered an appropriate timeframe for literature reviews of a field (see Brudney & Kluesner Durden, 1993); *NVSQ* has published nonprofit research for over four decades, while *NML* and *Voluntas* have done so for over two.

**Table 1.** Population and Sample of Articles.

| Journal         | Date range | All articles<br>Number |       |       |       |       | Articles deemed critical<br>Number (% of all articles) |        |           |         |         |
|-----------------|------------|------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--|--------|-----------|---------|---------|
|                 |            | 1970s                  | 1980s | 1990s | 2000s | Total | 1970s  | 1980s  | 1990s     | 2000s   | Total   |
| <i>NVSQ</i>     | 1972–2009  | 211                    | 343   | 320   | 394   | 1,268 | 9 (4%)   | 6 (2%) | 2 (0.5%)  | 4 (1%)  | 21 (2%) |
| <i>Voluntas</i> | 1990–2009  | —                      | —     | 164   | 189   | 353   | —  | —      | 12 (7%)   | 17 (9%) | 29 (8%) |
| <i>NML</i>      | 1990–2009  | —                      | —     | 205   | 241   | 446   | —  | —      | 9 (4%)    | 13 (5%) | 22 (5%) |
| Total           |            | 211                    | 343   | 689   | 824   | 2,067 | 9 (4%)   | 6 (2%) | 23 (3.3%) | 34 (4%) | 72 (4%) |

Note. *NVSQ* = *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*; *NML* = *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*.

We created a broad list of more than 70 keywords to select articles for review. Key words referred to leading theorists (e.g., Dewey, Habermas, Foucault, Marcusa, Marx, Bourdieu), specific schools of thought (e.g., Labor Process Theory, Frankfurt School of Critical Social Theory, etc.), and social/intellectual movements (e.g., Feminism, Environmentalism, etc.). (See the appendix for a complete list of search terms.)<sup>3</sup> The keyword search returned 511 articles published over the four decades (142 in *NVSQ*, 148 in *NML*, and 221 in *Voluntas*).

We then screened this group of articles by reading the abstracts of each paper to assess if it fell within the parameters for inclusion and displayed tenets of critical scholarship described above. If this was unclear from the abstract, the paper was kept in the pool for further review. Articles that were clearly not critical were omitted. The remaining 158 articles were read in full, decade-by-decade, to assess if and how they exemplified the core tenets of critical research described in the introduction (i.e., challenges structures of domination, questions the taken-for-granted, goes beyond instrumentalism, and/or pays attention to power and knowledge). At the end of this process, 72 out of 2,067 articles published across the three journals between 1972 and 2009 were assessed as adopting a critical perspective (see Table 1).

### Analyzing, Interpreting, and Presenting Results

The articles were analyzed for the theoretical and methodological approaches adopted, which topics were addressed, and how critical approaches were used to advance such topics. At the outset, articles were read and assessed independently by at least two of the research team to ensure consistency of interpretation. Remaining articles were assessed by one team member; once we were confident regarding consistency, then a sample of random articles were checked by a second reader. Analysis and interpretation of articles and presentation of results were discussed in regular meetings among the three researchers, resulting in the development of four types of article:

*Category A:* Articles embodying multiple tenets of critical scholarship, as defined in the introduction.

# Volunteers in Feminist Organizations

Diane Metzendorf, Ram A. Cnaan

The use of women volunteers, a hotly debated issue among feminists in the 1970s, currently receives little attention, even in the literature. What few studies are available are often contradictory. These studies approach the issue of women volunteering from three main perspectives: (1) as a substitute for work, especially for married women, (2) as a stepping stone for entry into the work force, or (3) as a form of exploitation. Two main groups of women volunteers are identified in the literature: middle- to upper-class civic leaders and lower- to middle-class service providers. In this article, we examine whether the use and management of women volunteers in feminist organizations is consistent with feminist ideology that opposes unpaid work by women. Our findings, based on a sample of 100 feminist organizations, indicate that the use of volunteers is often contrary to feminist ideology. We conclude with a discussion of ways in which volunteer management in feminist organizations can be made more compatible with feminist ideology.

**Figure 1.** Category A abstract.

*Category B:* Articles that question taken-for-granted assumptions within societies, organizations, and among nonprofit management practices.

*Category C:* Articles that pay explicit attention to power and knowledge in research.

*Category D:* Articles that expose but do not challenge issues of interest to critical nonprofit scholarship, such as social stratification, power, privilege, race, and gender inequalities.

Figures 1 and 2 provide illustrative abstracts of two articles that fall within “feminist critique” or “gender and diversity studies” to illustrate our categorization process. In Figure 1, Metzendorf and Cnaan (1992) address Criteria 1 of Adler et al.’s (2008) framework by engaging feminist ideology as a counter movement to patriarchy. Feminist ideology aids their critique of societal expectations of women volunteers, highlighting how volunteering can be a form of exploitation. They also address Criteria 2 by questioning the taken-for-granted assumption that feminist organizations and their management practices exemplify the ideology they exist to advance in society, namely women’s equality. Finally, in gearing their discussion toward the reconciliation of volunteer management in feminist organizations with feminist ideology, they move beyond an instrumental view of social relations in the workplace (Criteria 3 of Adler et al.). As



# Is There a Glass Ceiling for Women in Development?

Susan D. Sampson, Lynda L. Moore

*This article reports the results of an empirical study of salary equity for Women in Development of Greater Boston. The study objectives were to examine whether a glass ceiling exists for women in development in the New England area and develop a historical review of equity progress as compared to previous studies. Issues specific to women in the development field were identified and recommendations given to address identified needs. The findings substantiate the existence of a glass ceiling with a significant difference in average salary and representation in upper management. Furthermore, the study revealed that the salary gap between men and women is widening over time. Perceptions of barriers to women's advancement and organizational practices that would contribute to equity were also assessed. Recommendations for future research and organizational practices are presented.*

**Figure 2.** Category D abstract.

such, this article was assigned to our Category A: articles embodying multiple tenets of critical scholarship, and exemplifying the “most critical” work.

In Figure 2, Sampson and Moore (2008) take salary equity for women as their focus. The article establishes the existence of a glass ceiling for women, finding significant and increasing differences in salary and representation at senior management levels. The article concludes with recommendations and best practices for remedying these issues to “address major challenge(s) affecting productivity and effectiveness” (p. 337). So, while the article is critical to the extent of opening a gender-based issue to scrutiny, it maintains a functionalist orientation with respect to improving (diversity) management practices within the accepted order, representing a technocratic and reformist rather than radical critique. It does not challenge the social relations and structures that create and sustain inequality and was therefore assigned to Category D, exemplifying the “least critical” work.

## Findings

Before explicating the four categories of articles summarized above, it is useful to highlight a number of trends in the critical scholarship reviewed between 1972 and 2009 in relation to the journals examined and their relationship to the four categories, topics addressed, type of article, and methodological approach (see Table 2).



**Table 2.** Summary of Critical Scholarship.

| Characteristic  | 1970s<br>Number (%) <sup>a</sup> | 1980s<br>Number (%) | 1990s<br>Number (%) | 2000s<br>Number (%) | Total<br>Number (%) <sup>b</sup> |
|---|----------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|----------------------------------|
| Explicit use of critical theories   | 3 (33%)                          | 3 (50%)             | 7 (30%)             | 14 (41%)            | 27 (38%)                         |
| Nature of critical approach:  |                                  |                     |                     |                     |                                  |
| Category A—Multiple tenets of critical scholarship                            | 3 (33%)                          | 3 (50%)             | 7 (30%)             | 11 (32%)            | 23 (32%)                         |
| Category B—Question taken for granted   | 1 (11%)                          | 0 (0%)              | 8 (35%)             | 10 (29%)            | 19 (26%)                         |
| Category C—Pay attention to power and knowledge                               | 0 (0%)                           | 1 (17%)             | 1 (4%)              | 5 (15%)             | 7 (10%)                          |
| Category D—Expose issues; not normative                                       | 5 (56%)                          | 2 (33%)             | 7 (30%)             | 8 (24%)             | 23 (32%)                         |
| Topic   |                                  |                     |                     |                     |                                  |
| Nonprofits and civic virtue/ social capital                                   | 3 (33%)                          | 1 (17%)             | 1 (4%)              | 5 (15%)             | 10 (14%)                         |
| Feminist critique/gender and diversity studies                                | —                                | 1 (17%)             | 6 (26%)             | 6 (18%)             | 14 (19%)                         |
| Global civil society  | —                                | —                   | 1 (4%)              | 7 (20%)             | 8 (11%)                          |
| Philanthropy and volunteering   | —                                | —                   | 5 (22%)             | 6 (18%)             | 11 (15%)                         |
| Nonprofits and (changing) societies   | —                                | 2 (33%)             | 2 (9%)              | 2 (6%)              | 6 (8%)                           |
| Marketization   | —                                | —                   | 1 (4%)              | 1 (3%)              | 2 (3%)                           |
| Management practices  | —                                | —                   | 3 (13%)             | 4 (12%)             | 6 (8%)                           |
| Theory–practice divide  | —                                | —                   | —                   | 1 (3%)              | 1 (1%)                           |
| Social movements and counter movements  | 4 (44%)                          | —                   | —                   | —                   | 4 (6%)                           |
| Nonprofit relations (state–voluntary–citizen/inter- and intra-organizational) | 2 (22%)                          | 2 (33%)             | 4 (17%)             | 2 (6%)              | 10 (14%)                         |
| Article type:   |                                  |                     |                     |                     |                                  |
| Essay/conceptual  | 1 (11%)                          | 1 (17%)             | 6 (26%)             | 10 (29%)            | 18 (25%)                         |
| Essay with illustrative examples/cases  | 3 (33%)                          | 2 (33%)             | 1 (4%)              | 1 (3%)              | 7 (10%)                          |
| Empirical   | 5 (56%)                          | 3 (50%)             | 16 (70%)            | 23 (68%)            | 47 (65%)                         |
| Methodology:  |                                  |                     |                     |                     |                                  |
| Case study/multiple case study  | 5 (100%) <sup>c</sup>            | 3 (100%)            | 12 (75%)            | 12 (52%)            | 32 (68%)                         |
| Ethnography/auto-ethnography  | 0 (0%)                           | 0 (0%)              | 0 (0%)              | 3 (13%)             | 3 (7%)                           |
| Survey  | 0 (0%)                           | 0 (0%)              | 3 (19%)             | 8 (35%)             | 11 (23%)                         |
| Secondary data analysis (quantitative)  | 0 (0%)                           | 0 (0%)              | 1 (6%)              | 0 (0%)              | 1 (2%)                           |

<sup>a</sup>% of all critical articles in decade. <sup>b</sup>% of all critical articles. <sup>c</sup>% of all empirical papers in decade.

### The Journals

Only 38% of the 72 articles deemed critical explicitly engage with critical theories; this is most prevalent among Category A articles and those featured in *Voluntas* and

*NVSQ*. *NVSQ* published the lowest volume of critical scholarship (2%) relative to its total number of published articles and this has decreased over time, while *Voluntas* consistently publishes the highest (8%). Overall, *NVSQ* published 29% of the critical articles across all three journals, *NML* published 31%, and *Voluntas* published 40%.

Critical scholarship across the journals is polarized, with 32% of articles falling in Category A and thus meeting multiple core tenets of critical research and 32% falling in Category D—only partially meeting Criteria 1 by highlighting (but not challenging) the effects of structures of domination. This polarization was less prominent in the 1990s and 2000s as the overall number of articles increased. The majority of critical scholarship in *Voluntas* (45%) falls into Category A (embodying multiple tenets of critical scholarship), closely followed by 38% in Category B (questioning the taken for granted within societies, organizations, and among non-profit management practices). In *NML*, the largest proportion of critical scholarship (50%) falls into Category D (exposing relevant issues of interest to critical nonprofit scholarship rather than providing a normative critique). The majority of critical scholarship in *NVSQ* (38%) falls into Category D, followed closely by 33% in Category A.

## Topics

The most common topic addressed by critical scholarship is Feminist Critique and Gender and Diversity Studies (19%). However, the largest group of such articles falls in Category D—representing the least critical scholarship. Philanthropy and Volunteering (15%; majority Category B), Nonprofits and Civic Virtue/Social Capital (14%; all Category A), and Nonprofit Relations (14%; majority category D) are also popular topics. Topics such as Nonprofits and Civic Virtue/Social Capital, Nonprofit Relations, Nonprofits and (Changing) Societies, and Feminist Critique and Gender and Diversity Studies have been present in critical nonprofit scholarship over 3–4 decades, while interest in Social Movements and Counter Movements appeared to fade after the 1970s. Popular new entrants to the field from the 1990s include Global Civil Society, Philanthropy and Volunteering, and Management Practices.

## Article Type

Empirical studies represent the majority of articles (65%). Notably, however, there was an almost even split between empirical and essay-style papers (most often providing illustrative examples) in the 1970s and 1980s. By the 1990s and 2000s, over two thirds of published articles were empirically based analyses; essay-style/conceptual papers no longer provided illustrative examples. In other words, we saw a shift from essays with illustrative case examples (with no methodological account) in the first two decades, to a clear division between conceptual papers (with no illustrative cases) and empirically based case studies with detailed methodological accounts in the second two decades.

## Methodology

The majority of empirical studies (68%) adopt a qualitative case study approach, and these appear across all decades. Ethnographic studies emerged in the 2000s while surveys first appeared in the 1990s and increased during the 2000s, representing over a third of articles published in that decade. Almost two thirds of survey-based articles fall within Category D, representing the least critical in our framework.

The remainder of this section presents the four categories of articles, coalesced around the main topic they address, although there are often overlapping topics in play.

### Category A: Articles Embodying Multiple Tenets of Critical Scholarship

The first set of 23 articles (see Table 3) represents the strongest critical work, insofar as they simultaneously exemplify multiple tenets of critical scholarship identified in the introduction and offer up the most radical critiques of all the articles reviewed. These articles challenge structures of domination and then meet several other criteria: questioning the taken for granted within societies, organizations, and among management practices; moving beyond instrumentalism; and/or paying attention to power and knowledge. Of these, 16 draw explicitly on critical theories, eight do not; 14 are empirical, 10 are essay/conceptual papers; 13 appeared in *Voluntas*, seven in *NVSO*, and four in *NML*. These articles are discussed further below in relation to their topics of focus.

*Feminist critique.* From the mid-1980s onward, several articles engaged in feminist critique of nonprofit organizations, demonstrating how broadly accepted discourses and practices perpetuate sexist bias in both academia and nonprofit organizations. Feminist theoretical resources are deployed to expose how sexist bias, erroneous assumptions, and “academic machismo” render women’s work—in both knowledge production about nonprofits and voluntary work in nonprofits—invisible, secondary, and unimportant (Christiansen-Ruffman, 1985); how volunteer labor in feminist organizations can be a form of exploitation that undermines the very ideology they exist to advance (Metzen-dorf & Cnaan, 1992); and how normalized assumptions regarding class, sexual orientation, race, and feminist ideology can (sometimes adversely) impact the structuring of nonprofit services to battered women (Kenney, 2005).

*Global civil society.* Other Category A research turned its attention toward non-Western and global contexts to show how discourse and power operate to constrain and liberate action in civil society. Rather than taking civil society as an “unequivocal good,” such scholarship concerns itself with the material and discursive constraints of civil society for addressing gender-based insecurity (McDuie-Ra, 2007) and international development (Ebrahim, 2001), and how nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have challenged if not overcome these constraints, not least through appropriation of dominant discourses to serve their own ends. These articles inextricably link discourse with action in the form of grassroots mobilization, advocacy, and organizing strategies (Diaz-Albertini, 1991; Roca, 2007).

**Table 3.** Category A Articles, by Topic.

| Author(s)   | Year | Journal         | Title  | Type                    |
|---|------|-----------------|--|-------------------------|
| <b>Feminist critique</b>                          |      |                 |  |                         |
| Christiansen-Ruffman, L.                          | 1985 | <i>NVSQ</i>     | Participation Theory and the Methodological Construction of Invisible Women: Feminism's Call for Appropriate Methodology   | Essay                   |
| Metzendorf, D., & Cnaan, R. A.                    | 1992 | <i>NML</i>      | Volunteers in Feminist Organizations   | Empirical               |
| Kenney, S. J.                                     | 2005 | <i>NML</i>      | Domestic Violence Intervention Program: Unconditional Shelter?   | Empirical               |
| <b>Global civil society</b>                       |      |                 |  |                         |
| Díaz-Albertini, J.                                | 1991 | <i>Voluntas</i> | Non-Government Development Organizations and the Grassroots in Peru  | Empirical               |
| Ebrahim, A.                                       | 2001 | <i>Voluntas</i> | NGO Behavior and Development Discourse: Cases From Western India   | Empirical               |
| Taylor, R.  | 2002 | <i>Voluntas</i> | Interpreting Global Civil Society  | Essay                   |
| McDuie-Ra, D.                                     | 2007 | <i>Voluntas</i> | The Constraints on Civil Society Beyond the State: Gender-Based Insecurity in Meghalaya, India                             | Empirical               |
| Roca, B.  | 2007 | <i>Voluntas</i> | Organizations in Movement: An Ethnographer in the Spanish Campaign Poverty Zero  | Empirical               |
| <b>Nonprofits and changing societies</b>          |      |                 |  |                         |
| Hogan, H. J.                                      | 1981 | <i>NVSQ</i>     | Philosophic Issues in Volunteerism   | Essay with illustration |
| Horch, H.-D.                                      | 1994 | <i>Voluntas</i> | On the Socio-Economics of Voluntary Organizations  | Essay                   |
| Wolch, J.   | 1999 | <i>Voluntas</i> | Decentering America's Nonprofit Sector: Reflections on Salamon's Crises Analysis   | Essay with illustration |
| Elstub, S.  | 2006 | <i>Voluntas</i> | Toward an Inclusive Social Policy for the UK: The Need for Democratic Deliberation in Voluntary and Community Associations | Essay                   |
| <b>Nonprofits and civic virtue/social capital</b> |      |                 |  |                         |
| Lenkersdorf, C.                                   | 1976 | <i>NVSQ</i>     | Voluntary Associations and Social Change in a Mexican Context  | Essay                   |
| Rosenzweig, R.                                    | 1977 | <i>NVSQ</i>     | Boston Masons, 1900–1935: The Lower Middle Class in a Divided Society  | Empirical               |
| Bolduc, V. L.                                     | 1980 | <i>NVSQ</i>     | Representation and Legitimacy in Neighborhood Organizations: A Case Study  | Empirical               |
| Lansley, J.                                       | 1996 | <i>Voluntas</i> | Membership Participation and Ideology in Large Voluntary Organizations: The Case of the National Trust                     | Empirical               |
| Lagerspetz, M., Rikmann, E., & Ruutsoo, R.        | 2002 | <i>Voluntas</i> | The Structure and Resources of NGOs in Estonia   | Empirical               |

(continued)

**Table 3. (continued)**

| Author(s)   | Year | Journal         | Title  | Type      |
|---|------|-----------------|--|-----------|
| Eliasoph, N.  | 2009 | <i>Voluntas</i> | Top-Down Civic Projects Are Not Grassroots Associations: How the Differences Matter in Everyday Life | Empirical |
| Evers, A.   | 2009 | <i>Voluntas</i> | Civicness and Civility: Their Meanings for Social Services   | Essay     |
| Gelles, E., Merrick, M., Derrickson, S., Otis, F., Sweeten-Lopez, O., & Folsom, J. T. | 2009 | <i>NML</i>      | Building Stronger Weak Ties Among a Diverse Pool of Emergent Nonprofit Leaders of Color              | Empirical |
| LiPuma, E., & Koelble, T. A.  | 2009 | <i>Voluntas</i> | Social Capital in Emerging Democracies   | Essay     |
| Davidson Cummings, L.   | 1977 | <i>NVSQ</i>     | Voluntary Strategies in the Environmental Movement: Recycling as Cooptation                          | Empirical |
| Philanthropy Fischer, M.  | 1995 | <i>NVSQ</i>     | Philanthropy and Injustice in Mill and Addams  | Essay     |

Note. *NVSQ* = Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly; *NML* = Nonprofit Management and Leadership.

*Nonprofits and changing societies.* These articles address the relationship between nonprofits and changing demands in the societies within which they are embedded. They warn of nonprofits' vulnerability to (undesirable) transformations as a result of commercialization, bureaucratization, professionalization, oligarchization, loss of autonomy, and goal displacement (Horch, 1994). Rather than accepting such trends as inevitable changes with which nonprofits must learn to effectively cope, they are theorized to negatively affect the solidarity of organizational members, thus eroding a key value of nonprofits. Possible remedies to such structural social transformations are offered up including the institutionalization of moral responsibility (as a counter to self-interest) outside the contemporary political state, not least through volunteerism as an ethical or moral project (Hogan, 1981); the adoption of practices consistent with deliberative democracy (Elstub, 2006); and joining the margins in an effort to weave new, more humane, and inclusive societies and decentering away from dominant institutions, powerful groups, and privileged places (Wolch, 1999, p. 25).

*Nonprofits and civic virtue/social capital.* These articles challenge the notion that voluntary associations, such as social clubs, fraternal organizations, other civic associations, or social movements, actually provide the social benefits for which they are celebrated. Rather, they can reflect and perpetuate social stratifications (Rosenzweig, 1977), cultural imperialism (Lenkersdorf, 1976) and colonialism (Lagerspetz et al., 2002), be oligarchic and serve as a mechanism for elites to justify (class) inequalities and social relations (Bolduc, 1980; Lansley, 1996) and delay rather than create social change (Davidson-Cummings, 1977). "Voluntary," "civic," or "empowerment" projects can be a far cry from the Tocquevillian model of civic associations and rather than civility being an

inherent feature of “the civil sphere,” civility is perhaps more accurately treated “as a way of doing things and talking” that can happen (or not) anywhere (Eliasoph, 2009, p. 294). Such assertions serve to challenge prevalent sector-based conceptions of civil society (Evers, 2009) and collectively remind us that the social benefits that nonprofits can produce—such as civility, representation of the most vulnerable in society, and transformational social change—are accomplishments, not foundational features.

Articles also critique Putnam’s social capital concept, in particular that bonding social capital can create exclusions in society, precluding bridging across racial or other social divisions (Gelles et al., 2009), and that social capital theorizing in postcolonial democracies needs to consider not only bonds of trust but also the underlying political economy and social inequities that produce strong or weak social capital in the first place (LiPuma & Keoble, 2009). In particular, the social capital concept needs theoretical extension for postcolonial states to foreground “historically entrenched forms of economic and political inequality” (LiPuma & Keoble, 2009, p. 7).

*Philanthropy.* Finally, this category offers an analysis of “philanthropy” and unpacks how it can perpetuate injustice. Fischer (1995) treats the ideas developed by Jane Addams and John Stuart Mill, both of whom highly valued the positive benefits of philanthropic works but also recognized their potential for perpetuating injustice, as discourses on voluntary action. Holding the discourses of Addams’s social ethics in opposition to Mill’s individual ethics exposes the patriarchy and hierarchy inherent in individual ethics, resulted in such consequences as blaming the poor for their poverty rather than its root causes in industrial capitalism. This scholarship provides an important counterpoint to the general acceptance of individualist assumptions in society, reviving the values of solidarity and social ethics.

Collectively, these articles contribute to nonprofit studies and practice in unique ways. They address the overarching bias in the field that emphasizes—and sometimes unquestioningly assumes—the positive benefits of civil society and nonprofit organizing. The mainstream view can overlook the ways nonprofits and voluntary action sometimes reflect and reproduce normalized domination, socioeconomic inequalities, instrumental relations, and power asymmetries. Much Category A work challenges the assumed value of social relations as essentially instrumental. It reminds us that management and organizing in and around the modern nonprofit (like in the modern firm) has often become guided by a narrow goal—efficiency—rather than by the wider societal interests such as justice, community, human development, and ecological goals underpinning organizational purpose. It also draws our attention to the ways civil society more broadly, especially within certain political cultures or given political economies, can constrain emancipatory projects initiated by particular civil society organizations. Critical literature on NGOs in developing countries and global contexts, for example, demonstrate the difficult challenges that nonprofits face in addressing poverty, racial injustice or gender inequity, and other issues in postcolonial contexts. Also inherent in this scholarship is the belief that a qualitatively better form of society, organization, and management is possible; the reproduction of divisive and destructive structures, processes, and practices is neither natural, unavoidable, nor eternal (Adler et al., 2008).

At a meta-theoretical level, discourses and practices are taken as precarious and the outcome of continuing struggles to impose, resist, and transform them. Category A scholars, for the most part, take the social world as constituted by social and linguistic meanings and interpretations, with discourse constructing social and organizational “realities.” Nonprofit researchers and practitioners are inherently embedded and embodied in historical, cultural, institutional, and linguistic communities that are constitutive of particular understandings of the world, and meaning is created in the moment between people; it is negotiated and specific to time and place. This type of scholarship provides an agency-orientated approach by focusing on the contested interactions between state, nonprofit, private entities, and citizens, where social realities are constructed and reconstructed to serve particular ends.

### ***Category B: Articles That Question Taken-for-Granted Assumptions Within Societies, Organizations, and Among Nonprofit Management Practices***

The 19 articles in Category B (see Table 4) primarily focus on a single aspect of critical scholarship: bringing taken-for-granted assumptions about societies, organizations, and nonprofit management practices into question. Because these articles exemplify one criterion of critical scholarship—and many provide less radical, less historically specific critique—we deem this scholarship less critical than Category A work. Four articles in Category B draw upon critical theories, 15 do not; 14 are empirical papers, five are essays/conceptual articles; 11 appeared in *Voluntas*, five in *NML*, and three in *NVSQ*. These articles are discussed further below in relation to their topics of focus.

**Management practices.** These articles make explicit the impact of managerial assumptions and practices on nonprofit behavior. They challenge taken-for-granted assumptions about management, taking a skeptical stance on the transference of management practices from Western contexts to NGOs in other cultural contexts (Jackson, 2009), explore network versus capitalist forms of organizing as a means to obtain legitimacy and financial resources (Angell, 2008) and for serving minority populations (Stroschein, 2002), or reposition evaluation and constructions of “organizational effectiveness” as political acts rather than an objective activity (Tassie et al., 1998). Others point to the dangers of aligning organizational processes and practices, namely planning and change, too heavily toward exogenous events (Salipante & Golden-Biddle, 1995; Wolch & Rocha, 1993).

**Marketization.** Macro-level critiques provide historically sensitive accounts challenging the assumption that marketization is a recent phenomenon and demonstrating that nonprofits have long relied on commercial income to advance social mission (Wilson, 1998) and suggest mechanisms of deliberative democracy to “resist colonization by the market” and “democratize everyday life” (Eikenberry, 2009, p. 584).



**Table 4.** Category B Articles, by Topic.

| Author(s)   | Year | Journal         | Title  | Type      |
|---|------|-----------------|--|-----------|
| <b>Management practices</b>                         |      |                 |  |           |
| Wolch, J. R., & Rocha, E. M.                        | 1993 | <i>NML</i>      | Planning Responses to Voluntary Sector Crises  | Empirical |
| Salipante, P. F., & Golden-Biddle, K.               | 1995 | <i>NML</i>      | Managing Traditionality and Strategic Change in Nonprofit Organizations  | Essay     |
| Tassie, B., Murray, V., & Cutt, J.                  | 1998 | <i>Voluntas</i> | Evaluating Social Service Agencies: Fuzzy Pictures of Organizational Effectiveness   | Empirical |
| Stroschein, S.                                      | 2002 | <i>Voluntas</i> | NGO Strategies for Hungarian and Roma Minorities in Central Europe   | Empirical |
| Angell, O. H.                                       | 2008 | <i>Voluntas</i> | From Market to State Networking: The Case of a Norwegian Voluntary Organization  | Empirical |
| Jackson, T.   | 2009 | <i>NML</i>      | A Critical Cross-Cultural Perspective for Developing Nonprofit International Management Capacity   | Essay     |
| <b>Marketization</b>                                |      |                 |  |           |
| Wilson, R.  | 1998 | <i>Voluntas</i> | Philanthropy in 18th-Century Central Europe: Evangelical Reform and Commerce   | Empirical |
| Eikenberry, A. M.                                   | 2009 | <i>NVSQ</i>     | Refusing the Market: A Democratic Discourse for Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations  | Essay     |
| <b>Nonprofit relations: state/voluntary–citizen</b> |      |                 |  |           |
| Rosenbaum, W. A.                                    | 1977 | <i>NVSQ</i>     | Slaying Beautiful Hypotheses With Ugly Facts: EPA and the Limits of Public Participation   | Empirical |
| Henriksen, L. S.                                    | 1996 | <i>Voluntas</i> | Voluntary Organizations and Local Government: Lessons from a Danish Case Study   | Empirical |
| Toepler, S.   | 1998 | <i>Voluntas</i> | Foundations and Their Institutional Context: Cross-Evaluating Evidence from Germany and the United States  | Essay     |
| Zimmer, A.  | 1999 | <i>Voluntas</i> | Corporatism Revisited—The Legacy of History and the German Nonprofit Sector  | Essay     |
| <b>Philanthropy and volunteering</b>                |      |                 |  |           |
| Brilliant, E. L.                                    | 1993 | <i>Voluntas</i> | Theory and Reality in the Vision of Adriano Olivetti   | Empirical |
| Turniansky, B., & Cwikel, J.                        | 1996 | <i>Voluntas</i> | Volunteering in a Voluntary Community: Kibbutz Members and Voluntarism   | Empirical |
| Schervish, P. G., & Havens, J.                      | 2002 | <i>Voluntas</i> | The Boston Area Diary Study and the Moral Citizenship of Care  | Empirical |
| Shaw, S., & Allen, J. B.                            | 2006 | <i>Voluntas</i> | “We Actually Trust the Community:” Examining the Dynamics of a Nonprofit Funding Relationship in New Zealand   | Empirical |
| Ostrander, S. A.                                    | 2007 | <i>NML</i>      | Innovation, Accountability, and Independence at Three Private Foundations Funding Higher Education Civic Engagement, 1995 to 2005                              | Empirical |
| Hustinx, L.   | 2008 | <i>NVSQ</i>     | I Quit, Therefore I Am? Volunteer Turnover and the Politics of Self-Actualization  | Empirical |
| Shaw, S., & Allen, J. B.                            | 2009 | <i>NML</i>      | “To Be a Business and to Keep Our Humanity”: A Critical Management Studies Analysis of the Relationship Between a Funder and Nonprofit Community Organizations | Empirical |

Note. *NML* = *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*; *NVSQ* = *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*.

*Nonprofit relations: State/voluntary–citizen.* Several articles expose the problematic incursion of bureaucratic and market-based assumptions into institutional arrangements in different national contexts. In particular, they challenge assumptions of nonprofits as the antithesis of bureaucratically and paternalistically organized public services, due to processes of co-optation (Henriksen, 1996) or, in contrast, link the legitimacy and identity crises among nonprofits to a corporatist model of state–nonprofit relations (Zimmer, 1999). Others charge a debilitating administrative and regulatory climate with weakening the foundation community (Toepler, 1998) or bring the assumed effectiveness of emerging legislative and structural arrangements as a cure for the ills of the traditional administrative process into question by showing their potential to reproduce the voice of the bureaucrat rather than the voice of the people (Rosenbaum, 1977).

*Philanthropy and volunteering.* The articles within this theme reassess prevailing assumptions about volunteering and philanthropy. They problematize the assumption that volunteer motivations in capitalist environments are the same as those in communal ones (Turniansky & Cwikel, 1996); that the philanthropic concept and the assumed borderlines between philanthropic, third sector, and political activities are applicable across historical and cultural contexts (Brilliant, 1993); or the theoretical basis of dominant explanations of philanthropic behavior more broadly (Schervish & Havens, 2002). Such advances present an alternative to “theories of selflessness, altruism, guilt, noblesse oblige, and generalized reciprocity based on trust, in which charitable behavior is usually framed” (Schervish & Havens, 2002, p. 48) as well as highlighting how philanthropy and volunteering may be gaining fundamentally different qualities as a result of broader social and cultural transformations (Hustinx, 2008) and intensified managerialization of foundation–grantee relationships (Ostrander, 2007; Shaw & Allen, 2006, 2009).

These articles questioning the taken-for-granted assumptions within and about societies, organizations, and among nonprofit management practices, and tend to make less use of critical theoretical traditions. Nevertheless, they make an important contribution through their concern for the erosion or transformation of some of the fundamental norms associated with nonprofit work and organization in various contexts, from discourses of care (in contrast to bureaucracy or market), the role of civil society, citizens, volunteering, or the politics of evaluation, among others. These studies remind us to examine these trends and their underlying assumptions, and think through their implications, perhaps as a means to be deliberate about choices. Laying bare the assumptions of the market, of bureaucracy, of rational management, and of the academy (and so on), we can begin to question how they shape nonprofit behavior and their effects on citizens; a necessary step toward social transformation, greater humanity, equity, and social justice. Their central contribution to nonprofit scholarship is in subverting the tendency for social relations—between societies and individual citizens, between states and voluntary action, between funders and nonprofits—to become taken for granted. They question, for example, the self-evidence of assumptions that

marketization and professionalization of the nonprofit sphere are natural or inevitable and instead work to establish alternatives.

### *Category C: Articles That Pay Attention to Power and Knowledge in Research*

This set of seven articles (see Table 5) also privileges a single aspect of critical scholarship: paying attention to power and knowledge in research. They show that forms of knowledge which appear to be neutral instead reflect and reinforce asymmetrical relations of power. In a broad sense, these studies coalesce around inadequacies in social science research practices; some open up relations of power in knowledge production processes to direct scrutiny and critique. It is perhaps unsurprising, given this line of inquiry, that all seven articles are essays/conceptual pieces rather than empirical analyses. Four articles draw explicitly on critical theories, three do not; three appeared in *Voluntas*, three in *NVSQ*, and one in *NML*.

*Global civil society.* Category C articles on global civil society foreground power relations and normative aspects of global civil society to advance progressive conceptualizations of the field (Munck, 2006). Such scholarship challenges current modes, priorities, and funding of global civil society research, arguing for a redress of its bias, asymmetry, and bifurcation (Fowler, 2002) and pointing to several shortcomings in approaches to measuring civil society. In particular, the failure to take account of other (non-Western) civil society traditions or to address the relationship between global civil society, conflict, and violence is rendered problematic (Anheier, 2007).

*Nonprofits and societies.* Several articles take up the intersection between nonprofits and wider institutional and societal arrangements, tracing how particular features of knowledge production—such as the now ubiquitous nature of sector-based labels (Srinivas, 2009) or the disciplinary-specific evolution of scholarship on corporations, government, and nonprofits (Van Til, 1987)—serve to obscure the nature and role of nonprofit action. Such scholarship points to the need for theory advancement across disciplinary and theoretical perspectives, including Dewey's theory of democracy, Marxism, and neo-conservatism to aid understanding of how nonprofits can and do articulate and mediate "the crucial boundary between the state and the economy in contemporary society" (Van Til, 1987, p. 51). Other theoretical resources such as critical management studies, critical development studies, and the work of theorists such as Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse, Derrida, and Habermas provide the basis for questioning and rejecting "sector" labels that obscure the considerable variation among organizations identified with such labels, and what *specific* organizations do. In turn, this creates space to focus instead on "the knowledge required to manage NGOs, the ethical consequences of exercising such knowledge, and the political interests such knowledge serves" (Srinivas, 2009, p. 616).

**Table 5.** Category C Articles, by Topic.

| Author(s)                              | Year | Journal         | Title  | Type                    |
|--|------|-----------------|--|-------------------------|
| Global civil society                   |      |                 |  |                         |
| Fowler, A.                             | 2002 | <i>Voluntas</i> | Civil Society Research Funding from a Global Perspective: A Case for Redressing Bias, Asymmetry, and Bifurcation   | Essay                   |
| Munck, R.                              | 2006 | <i>Voluntas</i> | Global Civil Society: Royal Road or Slippery Path?   | Essay                   |
| Anheier, H. K.                         | 2007 | <i>Voluntas</i> | Reflections on the Concept and Measurement of Global Civil Society.  | Essay                   |
| Nonprofits and societies               |      |                 |  |                         |
| Van Til, J.                            | 1987 | <i>NVSQ</i>     | The Three Sectors: Voluntarism in a Changing Political Economy   | Essay with illustration |
| Srinivas, N.                           | 2009 | <i>NVSQ</i>     | Against NGOs? A Critical Perspective on Nongovernmental Action   | Essay                   |
| Philanthropy                           |      |                 |  |                         |
| Carson, E. D.                          | 1993 | <i>NML</i>      | On Race, Gender, Culture, and Research on the Voluntary Sector   | Essay                   |
| Theory–Practice Divide                 |      |                 |  |                         |
| Benson, L., Harkavy, I., & Puckett, J. | 2000 | <i>NVSQ</i>     | An Implementation Revolution as a Strategy for Fulfilling the Democratic Promise of University-Community Partnerships: Penn-West Philadelphia as an Experiment in Progress | Essay with illustration |

Note. *NVSQ* = *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*; *NML* = *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*.

*Philanthropy.* One article raises important points connecting race, gender, power, and knowledge. Carson (1993) argues that “scholars, practitioners, and research institutions, as a matter of practice, [should] ask the question of whether race, gender, or culture would significantly change their research findings” (p. 327) and delineates the consequences of failing to do so for various disciplines such as history, economics, and political science.

*Theory–practice divide.* Finally, scholarship in this category proposes a redress to the privileging of academic voice and power within research processes and accounts through methodological reform. “Dewey-inspired implementation revolutions,” involving participatory action research, are theorized to hold the promise of democracy and healing of the theory–practice divide. Here, academic–practitioner collaboration “is imperative for advancing both knowledge and human welfare” (Benson et al., 2000, p. 25).

These articles collectively take up the issue of knowledge production in the nonprofit field most directly. They provide robust conceptual analyses of privilege, by virtue of academic or professional expertise or of position, race, gender, or culture

among others. They also make the case for reflexivity in nonprofit research. Such scholarship thus serves to raise awareness of the conditions under which research accounts are generated, and how the accounts produced are influenced by these conditions, including showing that knowledge, which can appear to be neutral, in fact reflects and reinforces asymmetrical relations of power. We saw, for example, studies challenging assumptions about socially constructed terms such as “non-governmental organization” and “third sector” that imply uniformity across organizations and obscure a more nuanced and perhaps more accurate understanding of what these organizations are, do, and produce in society. Critical scholars assess these terms in relation to the struggles to establish their meaning and ask how it is that certain meanings have become dominant and taken for granted, and what alternative possible meanings have been excluded in this process. This line of scholarship could usefully be applied to understand how nonprofits themselves produce knowledge and the extent to which they use it to exert control, over whom and with what consequences, or how entire fields or networks drive knowledge production processes to determine notions of efficiency and effectiveness, for example (Post & Dodge, 2018).

### *Category D: Articles Exposing Relevant Issues to Critical Nonprofit Scholarship*

The final set of 23 articles (see Table 6) considers issues of central concern to critical scholars. Rather than challenging structures of domination, questioning the taken for granted, going beyond instrumentalism, or paying attention to power and knowledge, however, these studies are limited to establishing the existence of normalized domination (e.g., pay gaps, conflict, asymmetrical relations of power and control) and improving practices within the existing order. They do little or nothing to call for change to address these conditions. We therefore consider this to be the least critical category, and the closest to mainstream nonprofit scholarship within our typology. Three of these articles connect with critical theory-informed ideas, 19 do not; 19 are empirical papers, three are essays/conceptual; 12 appeared in *NML*, eight in *NVSQ*, and two in *Voluntas*.

*Gender and diversity studies.* This theme represents the largest group in Category D. Large scale, survey-based empirical studies examine gender-based pay gaps and a glass ceiling phenomenon among various categories of employee or organization (Carson, 1994; Gibelman, 2000; Gray & Benson, 2003; Mesch & Rooney, 2008; Sampson & Moore, 2008; Shaiko, 1997; Thompson, 1995). Case study research further documents gender imbalances at the leadership level, particularly among board members and larger, more well-connected organizations (McKillop et al., 2003) and calls for changes to existing diversity management approaches through encouraging bridging social capital in mission-driven organizations (Weisinger & Salipante, 2007). Two essay articles document aspects of feminist organizing, such as its role in (de) institutionalization (Bordt, 1997) and volunteering as women’s strategy in philanthropy (Plemper, 1996).

**Table 6.** Category D Articles, by Topic.

| Author(s)  | Year | Journal         | Title   | Type      |
|--|------|-----------------|---|-----------|
| Gender and diversity studies   |      |                 |   |           |
| Carson, E. D.  | 1994 | <i>NML</i>      | Diversity and Equity Among Foundation Grantmakers   | Empirical |
| Thompson, A. M.  | 1995 | <i>NML</i>      | The Sexual Division of Leadership in Volunteer Emergency Medical Service Squads   | Empirical |
| Plemper, E.  | 1996 | <i>Voluntas</i> | Women's Strategies in Dutch Philanthropy  | Empirical |
| Bordt, R. L.   | 1997 | <i>NVSQ</i>     | How Alternative Ideas Become Institutions: The Case of Feminist Collectives   | Empirical |
| Shaiko, R. G.  | 1997 | <i>NML</i>      | Female Participation in Association Governance and Political Representation: Women as Executive Directors, Board Members, Lobbyists, and Political Action Committee Directors | Empirical |
| Gibelman, M.   | 2000 | <i>NML</i>      | The Nonprofit Sector and Gender Discrimination  | Empirical |
| Gray, S. R., & Benson, P. G.   | 2003 | <i>NML</i>      | Determinants of Executive Compensation in Small Business Development Centers  | Empirical |
| McKillop, D. G., Briscoe, R., McCarthy, O., Ward, M., & Ferguson, C. | 2003 | <i>Voluntas</i> | Irish Credit Unions: Exploring the Gender Mix   | Empirical |
| Weisinger, J. Y., & Salipante, P. F.                                 | 2007 | <i>NML</i>      | An Expanded Theory of Pluralistic Interactions in Voluntary Nonprofit Organizations   | Empirical |
| Mesch, D. J., & Rooney, P. M.  | 2008 | <i>NML</i>      | Determinants of Compensation: A Study of Pay, Performance, and Gender Differences for Fundraising Professionals   | Empirical |
| Sampson, S. D., & Moore, L. L.                                       | 2008 | <i>NML</i>      | Is There a Glass Ceiling for Women in Development?  | Empirical |
| Nonprofit relations: inter- and intra-organizational                 |      |                 |   |           |
| Elkin, F., & McLean, C.  | 1976 | <i>NVSQ</i>     | Pressures Toward Cooperation in Voluntary Associations: The YMCA and YWCA in Canada   | Empirical |
| Hannah, S. B., & Lewis, H. S.  | 1982 | <i>NVSQ</i>     | Internal Citizen Control of Locally Initiated Citizen Advisory Committees: A Case Study   | Empirical |
| Redekop, P.  | 1986 | <i>NVSQ</i>     | Interorganizational Conflict Between Government and Voluntary Agencies in the Organization of a Volunteer Program: A Case Study   | Empirical |
| Murray, V., Bradshaw, P., & Wolpin, J.                               | 1992 | <i>NML</i>      | Power in and Around Nonprofit Boards: A Neglected Dimension of Governance   | Empirical |
| Phillips, R.   | 2002 | <i>NML</i>      | Is Corporate Engagement an Advocacy Strategy for NGOs? The Community Aid Abroad Experience  | Empirical |
| Schneider, J. A.   | 2003 | <i>NML</i>      | Small, Minority-Based Nonprofits in the Information Age   | Empirical |

(continued)

**Table 6. (continued)**

| Author(s)                                     | Year | Journal     | Title   | Type               |
|---|------|-------------|---|--------------------|
| <b>Philanthropic leadership</b>               |      |             |   |                    |
| Knight, L. W.                                 | 1991 | <i>NML</i>  | Jane Addams and Hull House: Historical lessons on nonprofit leadership                | Empirical          |
| Van Slyke, D. M., & Newman, H. K.             | 2006 | <i>NML</i>  | Venture Philanthropy and Social Entrepreneurship in Community Redevelopment           | Empirical          |
| <b>Social movements and counter movements</b> |      |             |   |                    |
| Albrecht, S. L.                               | 1972 | <i>NVSQ</i> | Environmental Social Movements and Counter-Movements: An Overview and an Illustration | Essay/illustration |
| Morrison, D. E.                               | 1973 | <i>NVSQ</i> | The Environmental Movement: Conflict Dynamics   | Essay/illustration |
| Ross, R. J.                                   | 1977 | <i>NVSQ</i> | Primary Groups in Social Movements: A Memoir and Interpretation                       | Essay/illustration |
| McMillen, D. B.                               | 1978 | <i>NVSQ</i> | The UMW as a Social Movement  | Empirical          |

Note. *NML* = *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*; *NVSQ* = *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*.

*Nonprofit relations: Inter- and intra-organizational.* Another group of studies consist of empirical analyses of distributions of power and control. They elucidate interorganizational conflict arising from the co-optation of gender-based identities (Elkin & McLean, 1976); power and autonomy asymmetries within state–nonprofit interagency networks (Redekop, 1986) and corporate–NGO advocacy strategies (Phillips, 2002); and the digital divide between mainstream nonprofits and those which are small scale and serving Latino and African American communities (Schneider, 2003). Studies of intraorganizational and group dynamics bring issues of power and control in and around nonprofit boards (Murray et al., 1992) and locally initiated citizen advisory committees (Hannah & Lewis, 1982) into sharper focus and call for a broader examination of power dispersion that moves beyond key relationships and roles.

*Philanthropic leadership.* Some articles emphasize the importance of individual philanthropists (such as Jane Addams and Tom Cousins) and their leadership behaviors by documenting the benefits of democratic management practices in relation to cultures and structures of individual initiative and self-governance (Knight, 1991) and in leveraging public–private partnerships to redevelop an area of disinvestment and poverty through venture philanthropy investments (Van Slyke & Newman, 2006).

*Social movements and counter movements.* Social conflict in the context of social movements took prominent place in the 1970s, highlighting the ideological foundation of conflict between environmental movements and growthist counter-movements in favor of industrial growth and development (Albrecht, 1972). In a challenge to Marx’s class conflict theory, such scholarship advances the argument that conflict in the environmental movement has not evolved between the owners of wealth and exploited workers in a capitalist society, but between all those who face the costs of environmental protection



(from industrialists to low-wage workers) and environmental advocates (Morrison, 1973). Also noteworthy are the interorganizational politics of social movements and the role of primary groups in growth, maintenance, and change (Ross, 1977) and questions of whether social movements can remain forces for social change even when their tactics have become normalized (McMillen, 1978).

This set of articles partially meets the criteria for critical work insofar as it highlights the consequences of various forms of domination (e.g., gender-based pay gaps, asymmetrical distribution of power and control in collaboration or decision-making). They nevertheless fall short of challenging the social structures and practices that create and sustain such inequalities in the first place. In other words, they remain close to traditional or mainstream theory in their drive toward increasing productivity and effectiveness of the nonprofit world as it presently exists, and tell us more about how the world is than about how it ought to be (Horkheimer, 1937). Many share traditional theory's preference for the "scientific method" and knowledge constituting assumptions that position the social world as a concrete structure. Research accounts are taken to be an objective representation of social and organizational "reality" and concern themselves primarily with what "reality" comprises, how it is structured, what its characteristics are, and how it works, whether through qualitative or quantitative modes of knowledge production. These articles reflect a rather conservative approach that documents but does not fundamentally challenge ontological constructions of, for example, gender and gendered practices in society. Perhaps here, more than anywhere, the tenets of critical scholarship could be adopted much more rigorously to address such issues as race, class, gender, and social conflict than is being done at present. We nevertheless include them in our review as they provide the kind of technocratic reformist critique that, as Adler et al. (2008) note, can provide the platform for more radical intellectual critique and social transformation.

## Conclusion

We find that nonprofit scholarship, as reflected in the leading field-specific journals, is variable in the extent to and the ways in which it exemplifies the core tenets of critical scholarship. By focusing on what articles "do" in relation to key tenets of critical research, we have moved beyond the overly restrictive view that it is constituted only by that which makes explicit use of "Critical Theory." Instead, we adopt a pluralist approach to understanding critical work. Even so, only 4% of all the articles published across three key nonprofit journals over four decades adopted a critical approach. Despite being the longest established journal, publishing the highest number of articles per decade, *NVSQ* has published the fewest critical articles. Moreover, *NVSQ* has decreased its coverage of critical work from its inception in 1972, whereas *Voluntas* and *NML* publish higher levels and show an upward trend since their inception in 1990. That said, the majority of critical scholarship featured in *NML* falls within Category D, which is the least critical work included within our typology. Not only does *Voluntas* publish the highest volume of critical articles, almost half of them fall within Category A, thus exemplifying the most critical scholarship. Critical scholarship in *NVSQ* is polarized between Category A (the most critical work) and Category D (the least critical work). Even the most critical

work exhibited in Category A did not fully draw on more radical critical traditions or theories seen in other disciplines (Adler et al., 2008). We would encourage scholars who aspire to the critical project to connect more explicitly with critical theoretical resources; where scholars draw on critical theories in undertaking their analytical work, they more commonly achieve a more radical critique that exhibits multiple tenets of critical scholarship (see Category A articles).

Why do we see such conservatism in the use of critical approaches in the nonprofit field? We suggest several possible answers to this question. First, critical research often adopts epistemologies and methodologies that are not well understood because they do not follow positivistic, hypothesis-testing, deductive models of social science research that dominate teaching and publishing in our field. In the publishing process, critical research is often assessed against positivist standards or quality criteria, which are incommensurate with the logic of critical inquiry and post-positivist methodologies (Coule, 2013, 2017). Such dynamics likely have a dampening effect on critical work. This seems to be borne out in our findings showing the shift toward empirical papers, more detailed methodological accounts, and from case study to survey research over time within our sample articles. It is noteworthy that almost two thirds of survey-based articles fall within Category D—representing the least critical scholarship within our typology. Related to this, tenure and promotion decisions can depend on publishing work in mainstream journals where the positivist paradigm is dominant, or the highest ranking field-specific journals where it has become dominant over time, as is the case with *NVSQ*. Early career scholars may adopt publication strategies that avoid critical work altogether, or normalize critical research accounts to achieve conformance to mainstream quality criteria.

Nevertheless, this review shows the richness and variability of contributions that critical scholarship can make to the field and suggests how those contributions can be further strengthened. Our hope is not that all scholars embark on the critical project, or that critical research becomes mainstream. Rather we call on scholars, research institutions, and journals in the field to more fully appreciate the kinds of insights that critical work can bring and provide space for such work to join, challenge, and shape the research conversation.

In a global climate of sociopolitical unrest in many spheres of life, we may see a resurgence of social movements and counter movements toward which critical scholarship could refocus its attention through the kind of robust class and social conflict analyses prominent in the field in the 1970s. Future critical research should explore the ways nonprofit organizations attempt to address some of the challenges presented by the 21st century—such as the immigrant crisis, Brexit, and conservative, autocratic governing regimes, or environmental crises in poor indigenous communities and communities of color. It can also give attention to the organizations that support the creation of new demands on the state and society by formerly excluded groups. But it should also turn its attention toward the ways this type of action for social change is constrained and suppressed. Discourse analysis has been a particularly fruitful analytical tool for this type of analysis. Furthermore, scholars who are sensitive to the ways that societal changes—such as marketization and bureaucratization—affect nonprofit behavior can make more use of critical theoretical perspectives to draw out the implications of these trends. An important

analytical strategy involves contrasting ideas such as marketization or bureaucratization with ethical and moral frameworks that have guided nonprofits toward more radically democratic action in the past, such as Jane Addams' social ethics. Finally, scholars who document consequences of oppression (e.g., glass ceilings and racial barriers) can perhaps develop more normative analyses that question the role managerialist practices have in perpetuating (or liberating) these types of inequities, rather than simply aligning with the status quo. Several of the studies we have reviewed in this article provide ample resources for developing these lines of inquiry and advancing the field.

## Appendix

### Search Terms

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|                             |                  |                             |
|-----------------------------|------------------|-----------------------------|
| Adorno                      | Derrick Bell     | Karl Marx                   |
| Andrea Dworkin              | Derrida          | Kimberlé Crenshaw           |
| Angela Harris               | Dewey            | Labor Process Theory        |
| Anthony Giddens             | Dworkin          | LGBT                        |
| Appiah                      | Edward Said      | Lyotard                     |
| Baudrillard                 | Environment*     | Marcuse                     |
| Bell Hooks                  | Environmentalism | Mari Matsuda                |
| Blau                        | Fanon            | Marilyn Frye                |
| Bourdieu                    | Feminis*         | Marx*                       |
| Chakrabarty                 | Feminism         | Mead                        |
| Charles Lawrence            | Follett          | Merton                      |
| Critical                    | Foucault         | Nancy Fraser                |
| Critical AND Nonprofit      | Frank Fischer    | Parker Follett              |
| Critical Environmentalism   | Frankfurt School | Patricia Williams           |
| Critical Feminism           | Fraser           | Postcolonial*/postcolonial* |
| Critical Management         | Gender           | Postmodern*                 |
| Critical Management Studies | Gender AND Pay   | Postructural*               |
| Critical Policy             | Giddens          | Pragmatism                  |
| Critical Policy Studies     | Gouldner         | Queer Theory                |
| Critical Postmodernism      | Habermas         | Race Theory                 |
| Critical Pragmatism         | Hartmann         | Snider                      |
| Critical Race Theory        | Heidi Hartmann   | Social Theory AND Critical  |
| Critical Theory             | Horkheimer       |                             |
| Karen Gilliland Evans       |                  |                             |

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## Notes

1. By nonprofit scholarship, we are referring to work on the full breadth of nonprofit organization and action, both formal and informal, captured in but not limited to terms like civil society (organizations), nongovernmental organizations, social movements, philanthropy, and voluntary action.
2. What these criteria mean, or how they manifest, in the context of nonprofit studies is explicated throughout the “Findings” section of the article.
3. We tried to be as inclusive as possible in identifying critical work; however, we acknowledge that other keywords could possibly be added to this list to reflect other views about important critical theorists, schools of thought, and social/intellectual movements.

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