Online Protection Laws. Full Issue

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Edition: Online Protection of Children
- Latest Research (Summaries)
- Article: An NPO’s Values and Identity
- Nonprofit & Partnership Spotlights
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About JoNI

Journal of Nonprofit Innovation

Who We Are

The Journal of Nonprofit Innovation (JoNI) is a publication of WikiCharities, a US-based 501c3 nonprofit organization dedicated to nonprofit transparency and collaboration in partnership with Brigham Young University (BYU). JoNI is an online journal for academic research summaries and thought papers on community and global issues. We exist to help nonprofit leaders know the latest research and collaborate on their experiences.

Our Mission

The Journal of Nonprofit Innovation (JoNI) provides a way for nonprofit leaders to stay up to date on the latest research and collaborate, building a more innovative and collaborative nonprofit sector.

Submissions

For more information on how to get involved or how to submit pieces for upcoming issues, visit us online at journalofnonprofitinnovation.org.
Summary 1
The Emergence of Deepfake Software-Compromising Cybersecurity


Abstract
One of the fastest growing fields in recent technology is artificial intelligence (AI). While AI has helped automate many repetitive tasks or simple tasks (which has led to increase in overall productivity in various fields), AI systems are usually tuned to personalize user experience, thus improving customer satisfaction. Moreover, AI systems/algorithms can analyze and draw accurate deductions and trends, which might be impossible for humans to identify, and which is crucial for making informed business decisions.

However, with the emergence of any type of technology comes their drawbacks and threats to cybersecurity. One such example is the emergence of Deepfakes, which uses a combination of machine learning and artificial intelligence technologies to mimic/manipulate the audio and visuals of a person (usually unauthorized during cyberattack). This software poses risk to individuals, because it can be manipulated to spread fake information/propaganda, which would stain their public image.

Background
Cybercriminals have taken full advantage of Deepfake technology over recent years due to the major developments and realism of the product. Improved graphics paired up with artificial intelligence personalized functions help the Deepfake user manipulate the voices and actions videos or images. Deepfakes were initially used in the movie industry to make edits on the actors and give the movie that finishing touch. However, this technology has been misused over the past few years. For instance, a study conducted in Amsterdam-based company Deeptrace Labs shows that 96% of Deepfake videos were pornographic in nature, and most of them were Deepfakes of women. This has been used as a blackmailing technique by cybercriminals, especially targeting young children and adults.

The core of Deepfake technology is created using two principles of machine learning, which are artificial neural networks called the “generator” and the “discriminator.” The artificial neural network is used to replicate human brain functions, such as being able to understand and make facial expressions. The data of various images and videos are used to help improve the Deepfake system’s ability to understand and create fake samples. The better the resolution and quality of the videos and images, the better the performance of the system. The generator creates a fake video using imaging and video editing, and then the discriminator tries to distinguish between the real and fake video. When it does, the generator will make incremental improvements and the discriminator will try to distinguish between the two again, and the cycle continues until the discriminator can no longer differentiate between the fake and real video, which would imply that the fake video would be seamless and indistinguishable by the naked eye. The same is applicable for Deepfake-generated photos.

Various agencies and individuals around the globe that have their personal vendetta try to spread misinformation to cause havoc between institutions and citizens. Many foreign countries have conducted disinformation campaigns to deceive citizens and weaken foreign affairs. For example, the Russian IRA had employed individuals and organizations to acquire the social media accounts of various US citizens. This was an
attempt by the Russians to spread fake news to deceive the citizens and turn them against the US government. The use of Deepfake made fake news more believable and dangerous.

Moreover, politicians are afraid that Deepfake would be used to manipulate what they say and spread fake news across various social media platforms. A very famous Deepfake video was made by comedian Jordan Peele, who used Deepfake to portray the former president Barack Obama delivering a public announcement. The video was intended to be entertaining but was also intended to bring awareness to the issue of the potential risks and the realism of this technology.

A study conducted by Pew Research showed that over 55% of adults get their news from various social media platforms, therefore circulation of fake news on different social media platforms can alter the perspective of many adults. Moreover, it has been increasingly difficult to differentiate between authentic news and fake news. In addition to affecting the political system, Deepfakes also have affected various businesses and journal outlets, which struggle to figure out what types of data/information is genuine or fake.

**Method**
The author analyzed various articles related to Deepfake technology. Using relevant research and statistics, he showed the negative impacts of Deepfake technology. Moreover, he showed how deepfakes have been used in movie production, but also how it has been used by cybercriminals to taint other people’s images to spread fake news and potentially ignite hybrid warfare.

**Takeaways**
Deepfake technology has become more sophisticated over the years, allowing the unauthorized creation of auditory and visual content which can be used to spread misinformation in social media by cybercriminals. The scale of the threat of Deepfake technology is both at an individual and an institutional and sometimes global level (in case of potential warfare) by eroding national security making it a serious concern for governments.

Moreover, Deepfake can be used to push an agenda since individuals are more inclined to believe what is presented on social media. Therefore, cybercriminals can take advantage of that and spread misinformation that a biased person would perceive as real information. Moreover, Deepfake can be used to manipulate a politician’s words which would have a significant impact on shaping public opinion. However, the most common use of Deepfakes is on pornographic content, where usually female public figures’ faces are edited into existing video, thereby tampering their social image.

Summary 2
Just Techno-Panic or a Real Risk? Publishing Children’s Pictures Online: A Review of Literature


Abstract
“The Internet has become an essential resource for social interaction among children, but it brings with it both advantages and disadvantages that depend in part on how it is used. This study, which is anchored in social learning theory, employed a desktop review of existing literature that focused on Kenya but covered global and other regional levels as well. The study found several benefits of the Internet for children: updating family and friends on new developments in the children’s lives, reviewing photos and other records of past events, engaging in online interactions, and increasing their capacity for learning. Nonetheless, there are also Internet-specific risks, such as access to inappropriate content and unsafe interactions with other children or adults. Other risks include “digital kidnapping” and contact with perpetrators who encourage children to engage in sexual activity. Although some countries have policies on Internet usage, few have specific policies or guidelines addressing children’s vulnerability when sharing their pictures online. Moreover, most such policies are not applied in practice, especially in African countries. The study recommends developing and implementing policy frameworks to protect children online and using privacy settings to protect their information.”

Background
“Sharenting” is the practice where parents constantly post pictures of their children on social media for the entirety of the internet to see. It has become incredibly prevalent over the past few years. A survey conducted in the United States indicates that 56% of mothers and 34% of fathers have shared pictures of their children on social media. The survey also states that “The majority of parents who use social media (74%) know of another parent who has shared too much information about a child on social media, including parents who gave embarrassing information about a child (56%), offered personal information that could identify a child’s location (51%), or shared inappropriate photos of a child (27%)” (2), demonstrating how prevalent it has become for parents to be sharing information about their children on the internet, and at times incredibly excessive amounts.

With social media usage becoming increasingly common in the world, concerns naturally arose about the privacy of sharing information on social media, especially for young children. Various countries around the world have come up with different laws and policies to protect data and children on the internet. The Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA), passed in 1998 by the United States, was designed to protect the
online privacy of children under 13, by websites requiring parental consent before obtaining data on their children. The European Union established the Safer Internet Plus Programme that seeks to create a safe internet environment for children through the filtering of content that could potentially be mentally harmful for their eyes. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states that children have the right to (Santos Pais & Bissell, 2006).

There are many such laws protecting child online privacy in Africa as well. Laws like the Rwanda Child Online protection policy and Data Protection Act in Kenya were designed to prevent the misuse of data regarding children’s information online. Section 8 of the Child Rights Act in Nigeria’s constitution states children’s rights to privacy, and Section 23 of the Cybercrimes Act in 2015 punishes child pornography and criminalizes cyberbullying. However, research has shown that these laws have not been implemented effectively.

Recently, people have become worried that parents’ habits of sharing photos of their children online without their consent does not create a good outlook on them being role models for their children, along with other concerns related to sharing personal information online. These studies seek to wonder if this concern has valid reasoning or is just a “technopanic,” a widespread fear elicited from the mass spreading of technology that does not have scientific proof to back it up.

Methods
The author performed a desktop literature review and searched for studies that had relevant content on sharenting and the protection of children’s online privacy. Using Google Scholar and Scopus as search material, they chose and read 52 articles concerning the matter, with a focus on studies in Kenya. The relevant themes included the advantages and disadvantages of sharing children’s photos online and policies put in protection of children on the internet.

Takeaways
A study found that 44% of children in Spain have experienced at least one instance of sexual harassment online, and another found that 20% of children have experienced some form of cyberbullying (77-78). Additionally, another study found that “nearly a third of the public secondary students who participated in their survey felt that sexting on mobile phones was the social media usage that had the most influence on the rate of teenage sex” (80). It can be clearly seen that verbal and sexual harassment and exploitation are among the greatest risks of sharing children’s information and photos on the internet. It’s important that parents adapt steps to address these situations through techniques like: “(a) the use of privacy settings to protect children’s information, (b) alternative ways of sharing pictures, (c) protocols on the use and sharing of children’s photos in schools, (d) avoiding the use children’s names along with images, and (e) turning off location settings on devices used to share pictures online” (81-82).

At the same time however, sharenting provides a great medium for parents to connect with each other over life stories and even help each other with difficult situations and giving each other advice. For example, sharing photos and information helps families who are physically
separated from each other to remain socially connected. A study conducted in Pakistan even found internet use to be beneficial for children, helping them boost confidence, self-esteem, and social skills (79).

Finally, the study found that while there were abundant sources of information on the benefits and risks of sharenting and child internet use in European countries and the United States, there was scarce information available in African countries like Kenya, which creates a knowledge gap between the regions and suggests that data protection laws have not been properly implemented in Africa. More effort needs to be done by policymakers in order to correct the gap and ensure the safety of children in these countries.


Summary 3
How Can Cybercrime Atlas Fight Off Cybercrime?


Abstract
“Over the past two decades, the number of cybercrimes has skyrocketed with increased digitization of almost every aspect of our lives. This digitization includes not only personal communication and financial transactions but also critical infrastructure, healthcare systems, transportation, and even national defense—all of which have become reliant on interconnected digital technologies. Moreover, increased improvement or rapid growth of technology has provided more opportunities for cyber criminals to emerge and take advantage of the loopholes in these new technologies for monetary gains or stealing data. In addition, increased connectivity has enabled cybercriminals to easily connect/communicate with their potential victims while disguising themselves as an ordinary person or a business partner. Therefore, in June 2022, the World Economic Forum (WEF) introduced the Cybercrime Atlas, an effort aimed at charting the actions of cybercriminals and establishing a global database that can assist law enforcement agencies in disrupting the cybercriminal network.”

Background
The Cybercrime Atlas was officially launched in February 2023, as a partnership between the WEF and some large companies such as Fortinet, Microsoft, and PayPal. The development of the Cybercrime Atlas began with the collaboration of skilled analysts from various organizations worldwide. They worked together to establish a standardized classification system and then selected samples for analysis, focused on 13 major known cybercriminal individuals or organizations. Analysts utilized open-resource intelligence to gather data such as the cybercriminals’ identities, known addresses, bank account and cryptocurrency wallet details, social media presence, and their use of malicious services like bulletproof hosting.

The primary goal was to compile all available open-source information on these individuals, normalize it, verify its authenticity, and create a centralized repository. Glenn Maiden, the director of threat intelligence operations at FortiGuard Labs ANZ, emphasized the
importance of collecting and investigating this data to identify the most reliable information, filter out irrelevant details, and ensure the accuracy of the gathered intelligence.

The objective of the Cybercrime Atlas initiative is to construct a comprehensive overview of the cybercrime landscape, including criminal activities, shared infrastructure, and networks. The aim is to establish connections between the gathered information about cybercriminals, ultimately aiding the security industry and effectively disrupting the cybercriminal ecosystem.

Analysts were able to extract common data between the initial 13 criminal groups, including key attack areas such as ransomware, business email compromise, malware, and card fraud. The findings of this project will be shared with global law enforcement such as Interpol and the FBI. The insights derived from this effort are also expected to encourage greater collaboration between the private sector and law enforcement agencies to combat cybercrime. Moreover, the research has brought to light the collaboration of nation state entities and cybercriminals when carrying out and operating cybercriminal activities.

In February 2023, the Cybercrime Atlas was undergoing a transformation phase from a prototype to a viable product. There were dedicated project managers for this operation to find the most viable system to set up the database in and work out the business aspects to their decisions.

However, after development one of the main drawbacks is that non-Cybercrime Atlas partnering companies won’t be able to access the repository since the primary purpose of this project is to aid law enforcement to tackle cybercriminal attacks and not to commercialize the finding. Additionally, Fortinet, one of the project’s supporters, is exploring other opportunities and ways to disrupt cybercriminal activities, including potential legal or policy changes in jurisdictions where cybercriminals operate.

**Methods**
The author rigorously analyzed the creation and implementation of the Cybercrime Atlas. The author used a lot of factual explanation to convey the creation and purpose of the Cybercrime Atlas. Through thorough investigation of the Cybercrime Atlas, the author provides its future possible uses and how it would aid the law enforcement to help disrupt cyberattacks on individuals, public sectors, and private entities.

**Takeaways**
The Cybercrime Atlas is a database pioneered by the World Economic Forum (WEF) aimed at mapping the activities of cybercriminals. The development of the Cybercrime Atlas involved gathering information from open sources about known threat actors. Analysts focused on details like names, addresses, bank accounts, crypto wallets, and social media presence. The goal was to create a repository of normalized and verified information to build a comprehensive view of the cybercrime landscape. Initial efforts focused on collecting actionable intelligence from 13 criminal groups involved in various cyberattack types, including ransomware, business email compromise, malware, and card fraud. The collected information will eventually be shared
with global law enforcement groups like Interpol and the FBI.

While primarily designed for law enforcement, the Cybercrime Atlas is still in development. It may provide opportunities for local law enforcement to enhance their intelligence. However, challenges such as dealing with threat actors providing false information remain to be addressed. Though Cybercrime Atlas is a step in the right direction to lead with cyber-attacks, there are many challenges it needs to overcome to make it favorable to all parties.


**Summary 4**

**Sharenting Syndrome: An Appropriate Use of Social Media?**


**Abstract**

“The use of social media is on the rise, and posts about anything can be shared these days, whether it be clothes, jewelry, shoes, books, or food and beverages. Some parents even use their children as objects of sharing, and post about their children continuously. Parents who use social media share important moments before and after their children are born on their social network sites accounts. Sharenting refers to the practice of parents, caregivers or relatives sharing information about their children (underage) online, typically on some online platforms. This can include photos, videos, personal stories, and other updates about the child’s life. The study aimed to examine the phenomenon of sharenting syndrome in terms of its potential to cause child abuse and neglect. In addition, the aim of this study is to explore the factors associated with and predicting sharenting syndrome by evaluating it through the lens of child abuse and neglect.

“This study was designed with a survey model among quantitative research methods. Data were collected through social network sites with snowball sampling method. The sample consisted of people aged 18 years and over from Turkey (n = 427).” (Keskin, Kaytez, Damar, Elibol, & Aral, 2023, p. 1) A total of 86.9% of the participants stated that sharing children’s photos and videos on social media platforms by parents, relatives and caregivers can be evaluated as child neglect and abuse. The variables of ‘gender’ and ‘the impact of sharing on children’ are factors that are associated with determining whether the sharenting syndrome is classified as abuse or not. Gender is a negative predictor of the classification of sharenting on social media as a type of child abuse and neglect. Since the use of social media by people is increasing, there should be measures to protect children from sharenting syndrome” (Keskin, Kaytez, Damar, Aral, 2023).

**Background**

The way people share important news and events has changed as technology has become a bigger part of our everyday lives. Parents that normally use social media platforms are likely to share significant moments before and after their children’s birth on their accounts. This is known as “sharenting.” “Sharenting” is when parents, caregivers, or relatives share content about their underage children on the Internet, including social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter (Keskin, Kaytez,
Damar, Elibol, & Aral, 2023, p. 2). Parent’s desire to be the center of attention has contributed to the rise of the “sharenting” phenomenon. This syndrome can lead to the emotional neglect and abuse of children as parents may prioritize the creation of content to engage their followers instead of the needs of their child. The higher digital skill of parents the greater possibility of engaging in “sharenting” behaviors and is strongly associated with technology-based addictions.

On the positive side, parents can support each other and share their experiences. Of the participating 385 parents in a quantitative survey model study with expert opinion, 72 percent reported that sharenting through social media is useful because it helps parents feel like they aren’t alone in their challenges.

**Negative Aspects**

*Parents may unintentionally expose their children to risks while participating in sharenting.* These risks include but are not limited to identify theft and use of children’s images on porn websites. Half of the photos shared by child sexual abusers were first posted on social media by parents as reported by the National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (Keskin, Kaytez, Damar, Elibol, & Aral, 2023, p. 3). Also, comments on posts including children can affect their self-esteem.

Among posts, researchers found the following:

- 23.4% included ads
- 13.9% contained location
- 10.4% had children’s names
- 7.1% included educational and developmental material
- 5% contained embarrassing or private content

https://doi.org/10.3390/healthcare11101359

**Methods**

This study distributed a survey online between July 2022 and September 2022. Over 400 individuals, mostly female, over the age of 18 years completed the survey voluntarily. A third of participants reported having more than one social media account. Two-thirds of participants reported having children.

**Takeaways**

Children whose parents share their pictures on social media start having a digital footprint that follows them into adulthood before they even start walking. As these children enter adolescence, they reported being embarrassed by and disapproving of their parent’s sharenting posts. However, there are positive and negative associations with “sharenting.”

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**Positive Aspects**

- 23.4% included ads
- 13.9% contained location
- 10.4% had children’s names
- 7.1% included educational and developmental material
- 5% contained embarrassing or private content
Summary 5

Children’s Online Safety: Predictive Factors of Cyberbullying and Online Grooming Involvement


Abstract

“The increase in the use of the Internet, strongly boosted by the spread of COVID-19, has amplified the risk of involvement in cyberbullying and online grooming among minors. To date, most research on these phenomena has focused on middle and high school students, with fewer studies on younger children. The present study aims to fill this knowledge gap by measuring the spread of cyberbullying and online grooming in a sample of 410 primary school students in the city of Rome and by identifying the main individual and environmental predictors associated with the involvement of children in these phenomena using factor analysis. Results indicate that both cyberbullying and online grooming are widespread among respondents, showing common traits within the four latent dimensions identified. Screen time is among the main predictors of children’s involvement, together with parental supervision, phubbing behaviours, prosocial tendencies and family socio-economic background. These findings highlight the need for further studies on representative samples of this age group, as well as for a greater cooperative effort among schools, parents and caregivers to keep children safe in the virtual world” (Tintori, Ciancimino, Bombelli, De Rocchi, & Cerbara, 2023).

Background

The research article delves into the issue of online grooming among elementary-school-aged children in Rome, focusing on the context of increased online activity prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Notably, the article highlights the concerning rise in internet usage among children aged 6 to 10. For instance, between 2019 and 2021, use of the Internet among elementary-aged minors increased from 62.5% to 89.1%, according to the National Institute of Statistics (pg. 1). While discussions about bullying and online grooming have primarily centered on older minors, this study spotlights their prevalence among younger children. It is worth noting for this summary that online grooming is defined as the manipulative process by which adult strangers establish emotional connections with minors through online platforms, with the ulterior motive of engaging in sexual abuse or exploitation (pg. 3).

Methods

To investigate online grooming among this young age group, researchers undertook a survey in Rome, encompassing elementary school children across eight schools. The survey was conducted over the span of April to May 2021 and covered topics such as online grooming, bullying experiences, screen time habits, friendship dynamics, emotional well-being, and essential demographic information. A notable cohort of 410 children participated in the survey, with the gender distribution consisting of 53.7% male and 46.3% female respondents. The central objective of the research was to illuminate the nuanced impacts of various factors, including screen time, socio-economic backgrounds, social context, and parental supervision, on children’s susceptibility to online grooming.

Takeaways

Researchers’ analysis of the data underscores the prevalence of online grooming and perpetration among elementary-school-aged minors. The data highlights two distinct groups at a higher risk.
of exposure: (1) older children whose parents exhibit low levels of education and employment status, and (2) children with limited parental oversight over their online activities. Interestingly, socio-economic status does not predict exposure to online grooming. However, the participant’s emotional well-being and discomfort were high risk factors for online grooming.

Ultimately, “the time spent in front of a screen, both on videogames and social media and [apps], is the main predictor for the involvement of kids in online grooming” (pg. 14). For instance, over half of participants reported at least a “medium” level of screen time on video games regularly (pg. 8). Meanwhile, nearly one in five participants reported a high level of screen time on social media (pg. 8). These responses correlated with risk of online bullying, leading to poorer emotional well-being for elementary-school-aged participants.

This research article examines the presence of online grooming among elementary-school-aged children in Rome, especially given increased use of the Internet and online tools since COVID-19. The study underscores parental supervision, emotional well-being, and the regulation of screen time as key mitigators against online grooming and bullying for this specific age group.
Researchers also highlighted the current situation regarding the usage of online services, as well as the threats that have an impact on users. In addition, researchers have suggested that new laws and regulations will be implemented for preventing cybercrime.

**Background**

Online web use has skyrocketed within the last decade. Users on the Internet have doubled from 2009 to 2019 (1), and there are more than 1.5 billion different websites on the World Wide Web today. From data transfer to online banking, the sharing of personal and financial information on the web has become increasingly prevalent on the web. However, as popularity on the web continues to rise, so do the various online scamming tricks that frauds use to extract user information and breach data protection security. This study aims to report the extent to which fraud has plagued the Internet and raise awareness on the need for websites to protect individual data.

**Methods**

The study analyzes different types of the number of fraud cases, scams, phishing cases, etc. in India over the past few years, recorded annually.

**Takeaways**

**Online scams have continued to grow with the increased use of online activity by users.** The number of reports from online shopping scams in India have skyrocketed from 9,953 cases in 2019 to 15,307 in 2020, with losses increasing from $4,845,452 to $8,428,525 (2173). Threat and extortion scams that hijack software and use malware to threaten job, life, etc. have also grown from around 15,000 cases in 2019 to over 35,000 in 2020, with financial losses tripling from around $40 million to nearly $120 million (2177).

Victim support services in India are mainly focused on physical/violent crime instead of financial damages, highlighting a lack of assistance for customers who suffer from online scams. The study also highlights a lack of a fast-rapid court system in dealing with online scams. They call for a need of a provision for fraud victims to file their complaints to the police, and an entirely new court in a separate cell so that they can be brought to justice (2184).

Summary 7
How Phishers Exploit the Coronavirus Pandemic: A Content Analysis of COVID-19 Themed Phishing Emails


Abstract
“This empirical study is an exploration of the influence methods, fear appeals, and urgency cues applied by phishers to trick or coerce users to follow instructions presented in coronavirus-themed phishing emails. To that end, a content analysis of 208 coronavirus-themed phishing emails has been conducted. We identified nine types of phishing messages crafted by phishers. Phishing emails purporting to provide information about the spread of the disease were the most common type of unsolicited emails. Authority, liking and commitment emerged as the most common influence methods. Fear appeals and urgency cues were present in almost all of the sampled phishing messages. Finally, the analysis of coronavirus-themed phishing emails revealed a shift in the modus operandi of phishers. The implications of these results are discussed in this paper.”

Background
The arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic has given way to a sudden surge in COVID-19 related urgency emails, websites, and other related domains, caused by rising user demand for information about the extent of the pandemic’s spread and different protection methods. Many of these new domains are actually malware or phishing scams in disguise, and previous studies have reported a significant rise in online fraud since the beginning of the epidemic. The transitioning of society towards working and doing activities online more frequently, combined with greater levels of mental anxiety due to the lack of interpersonal communication from the pandemic, puts individuals at greater risk of falling victim to various ploys of online phishing. This study seeks to uncover the “modus operandi”, or the particular methods, that online perpetrators use to send phishing scams in order to better educate the public and protect themselves from them.

Methods
The study initially retrieved 2,372 images of various phishing emails from April 1st to April 16th, 2020, during which information about the disease was the most limited and individuals were most eager to search online to retrieve it. They were found from official sources such as Action Fraud or the Federal Bureau of Investigation. They then narrowed them down to 208 unique emails to eliminate redundancy, and used them for the final analysis, although the study also states that they mainly focused on 40 emails that were particularly heavy with information (Akdemir 3). The study performed a two-part analysis on these emails; The first part examined what type of content each email contained, the second part examined what types of social engineering methods were used in the email to lure its recipients into their scam. An approach known as the Qualitative Content Analysis (QCD) method was used, where the text of the email is reduced into its basic terms and is then systematically classified into different categories, sorting them by “research findings” and “influence methods” (5-6).

Takeaways
The results found that the most popular themes of online phishing email content contained content that “pretended to offer...
solutions to prevent the spread of the coronavirus outbreak” that asked users to download malicious attachments, with 23 emails, followed by those offering “financial benefits” that tricked users into entering personal information, at five emails, and those that ask for donations towards nonprofit organizations fighting the pandemic, at three emails (Akdemir 7). The second part of the analysis, examining social engineering methods, revealed that authority (asking the user to obey an order required from a higher-up, like a company or government) was the most common method of persuasion in the emails, at 23 emails, followed by commitment (requesting the user to perform an action that “they have done before”), at 13 emails, and liking (thanking the user and appreciating their time), at 7 emails (Akdemir 8). Finally, the study also noted a linkage between emails that offered “information and solutions” to the virus and emails that used authoritative methods of social engineering, stating that 19 out of 23 information-providing emails used authoritative language in their phrasing (Akdemir 8).

The study’s results demonstrate how quickly phishers have taken advantage of the sudden change in climate from the COVID pandemic, developing 23 different email formats pretending to offer information about the pandemic to users during a period when the pandemic was at its very early stages.

The study also notes that the “modus operandi” of delivering the scams has shifted from clicking links or buttons to downloading attached files and documents, which is significant because most phishing cases previously focused on providing financial support through malicious links. The study suggests that perpetrators will continue to couple malicious COVID-19 emails with attached, downloadable ransomware, and warns users to look out for emails that are structured in such a format.


Summary 8
Teachers’ Management of Cyberbullying on China’s Social Media Sites: A Case Study in Shandong Province, China


Abstract
“In recent years, cyberbullying on social media sites has increased among adolescents and even adults. While there are many factors and forms of cyberbullying, schoolchildren are vulnerable groups that are exposed to cyberbullying threats to their mental and emotional health. On the other hand, teachers have the responsibility in the place of the parent while at school, and they need
to manage the issue at bay. This study focuses on the identification and analysis of teachers’ advice about cyberbullying, thus leading to the conceptualization of a decision-making model for the school to guide other teachers on this matter…”

Background
Cyberbullying has become a major problem worldwide thanks to the rise of technology and mobile devices becoming more prominent in day-to-day life. It is defined as the harassment and/or the act of threatening others on online social media platforms, and can have tremendous effects on mental and psychological health, especially on younger children. China has taken cyberbullying very seriously, declaring it a “national threat” nationwide, with its president Xi Jinping announcing a 1 billion-yuan campaign towards helping children avoid cyberbullies. School administrations have also been encouraged to take initiative at combating the issue. This study suggests looking at how teachers across China have dealt with cyberbullying incidents in order to obtain a better framework at dealing with them. The goals of the study are organized into two parts: To gather data on how teachers help students avoid and deal with cyberbullying confrontations, and use that data to propose a suitable decision-making model that can be implemented in schools across the nation.

Methods
The study chose one specific school to investigate, a semi-private school in the region of Shandong, China, that serves 410 teachers and over 6,000 students (5). Thirty-two teachers volunteered to participate in the study. The data was collected via an online survey, with teachers being asked to type their response to an open-ended question: “What was your best advice given to the student victims of cyberbullying?”

Takeaways
This study emphasizes the crucial role that teachers play in preventing, dealing with, and helping students who have suffered from cyberbullying incidents. The advice and knowledge they give towards cyberbullying are valuable sources of information for schools and policymakers to decide what steps to take towards cyberbullying and other sources of mental health problems in China. Teachers that responded to the survey question gave advice that were mainly split into three categories: Preventative measures (Methods to prevent cyberbullying from occurring in the first place), counteractive measures (What to do when involved in a cyberbullying incident), and corrective measures (Ways to seek help and recuperate after experiencing a cyberbullying incident).
The study contains a flow chart that lists out preventive, counteractive, and corrective measures that were stated by teachers in the event of cyberbullying. The different branches represent the different options that correspond to each type of measure. For this summary’s purposes, the information from those flow charts is outlined below:

1. Preventive Measures
   a. Control how much to share and post online
   b. Keep passwords and computer safe
   c. Think over message before posting
   d. Do not post any personal and private information
   e. Do not post grievances, without or without a person’s name
   f. Remind parents to monitor children’s activities

2. Counteractive Measures to Targeting by a Cyberbullying
   a. Do not react with an argumentative tone
   b. Stand up for yourself
   c. Block the potential bully

   d. Do not reply to anonymous/strangers’ messages
   e. Do not reply to the bully

3. Corrective Measures
   a. Do not try to resolve the issue alone
   b. Keep a record of all communications
   c. Encourage children and adults to talk to someone
   d. Know where to report cyberbullies

Research and Thought Papers
Online Safety Laws by Country

By Haoming Song & Angie Holzer, EdD, JoNI Team

Overview: Statistics show that 493.33 million cyberattacks occurred on the internet last year alone, with a hacking incident taking effect once every 39 seconds. This surge of attacks has caused significant damage to the personal data that users circulate online, with data breaches averaging $4.35 million in losses in 2022. The rising new threat combined with its tremendous digital consequences have ignited countries around the world to draft new legislation to protect their citizens from online threats. This article examines a number of countries around the world by continent and highlights laws that they have put in place to protect their nation's data from being compromised.
**Introduction**

The 21st century is distinctively marked as a period of rapid technological development. An estimated 5.3 billion people around the world use the internet in some form, making up 65% of the world population, and that number is projected only to rise (Demand Sage, 2023). However, with the proliferation of technology also comes the introduction of new threats that have surfaced within our digital environment. Statistics show that 493.33 million cyber-attacks occurred on the internet last year alone (Techopedia, 2023), with a hacking incident taking effect once every 39 seconds (Astra, 2023). This surge of attacks have caused significant damage to the personal data that users circulate online, with data breaches that resulted in $4.35 million in losses in 2022 (Techopedia, 2023). These rising new threats combined with their tremendous digital consequences have ignited countries around the world to draft new legislation to protect their citizens from online threats. This article examines a number of countries around the world by continent and highlights laws that they have put in place to address these issues.

**International Standards**

The United Nations (UN) has taken many actions to protect people online. The United Nations is an international organization that was founded in 1945 for the purpose of maintaining international peace and security. Many of the UN’s agencies have been tasked to combat various online threats. These efforts include the United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund’s (UNICEF) efforts to fight cyberbullying, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization’s (UNESCO) efforts to stop human trafficking, and the United Nations Office on Drug and Crime’s (UNODC) efforts to increase internet security, among many more agencies efforts and objectives. The UN and UNICEF have both also laid out the foundation for children’s rights through various policies and legislations, like the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Digital protection is included among these rights. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) has recommended that governments take swift action in the form of enacting policies to protect children from harm in the digital realm, stating that children “should also be protected from all forms of violence that happens in the digital

![Figure 1. DLA Piper’s Data Protection Laws of the World (DLA Piper, 2023).](image-url)

Europe

Europe is one of the frontrunners in protecting their users online, in large part due to the efforts of the European Union (EU). The political union, consisting of 27 different European countries, passed the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in 2018, laying the foundations for data protection and privacy in the EU. Under the GDPR, companies are obligated to follow strict regulations when processing user data, such as upholding data minimization, purpose limitation, and obtaining consent from the user. Data users were also given several rights over their own data, such as the right to complain, object, or request an erasure. This momentous legislation also provided special protections for children, requiring parental consent for users under the age of 13. The GDPR is considered as one of the most prominent and foundational pieces of legislation in the data protection movement. Many countries have subsequently adopted its policies, regulations and user rights, rehashing its content into their own legislations.

Some European countries outside the EU also have data protection laws. For example, Great Britain implemented the GDPR into their system through passing the Data Protection Act of 2018 (Gov.UK: The Data Protection Act, 2023). However, Russia has not passed any cybersecurity laws, and coverage of online data falls to older legislation, like personal data being protected under the Federal Law of 27 July 2006 (Data Guidance, 2022).

North America

Canada

The focal point of Canada’s data protection laws takes the form of the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA). The law forces private-sector organizations who collect and process the data of individuals to follow a series of strict requirements. It also gives individuals rights to access their own information and challenge its accuracy (Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada, 2019).

United States

Data protection in the United States is noticeably different from the European Union, in the fact that it technically does not contain a comprehensive nationwide data protection policy on the federal level. One of the only federal-level privacy laws in effect until recently, was the Privacy Act of 1974 that protects certain records of individuals, such as social security numbers, name, or other numbers or symbols dealing with personal identification, and prohibits agencies from disclosing them without user consent (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2023). Much of the robust legislations regarding online data protection have been left to the states to draft. For example, California alone has 25 different laws in effect regarding personal data, like the California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA), which formally states the personal rights of data users and imposes restrictions on processing data, similarly to the GDPR (DLA Piper, 2023).

One area in which the United States excels in comparison to other countries is extending additional specific legislation for the digital protection of children. The Children’s Online Personal Protection Act, passed in 1998, ensures the safety of minors under the age of 13 by giving parents the authority over what data websites can extract from their kids. Additionally, the act imposes further restrictions on what information can be taken from children online, and also provides a firm definition of parental consent (Federal Trade Commission, 2023). The US Congress recently followed up on this movement in 2023, introducing the Kids Online Safety Act. The bipartisan-supported bill doubles down on social media companies, requiring them to consider the safety of children through...
implementing options on their platforms for children and parents to protect their data and performing security checks (Marsha Blackburn, 2023).

**Central & South America**

Websites suggest that online safety laws or regulations in Central and South America are missing or weak. Most of the countries listed by DLA Piper’s ‘Data Protection Laws of the World’ are judged to be “limited” or “moderate”. For example, Colombia does not have any laws in effect regarding online privacy (DLA Piper, 2023). However, efforts are still being made in many countries to provide their citizens with some form of online security, like Brazil’s General Data Protection Law (LGPD) (DataGuidance, 2023).

**Mexico**

Mexico has yet to implement a cybersecurity law, and although proposals have been issued by legislators to regulate private enterprises in various manners, none have officially gone through or been discussed. Mexico continues to struggle with cybersecurity and malware attacks, with over 85 billion cyber-attacks attempted in the first half of 2022 alone, more than 40% in frequency compared to the same period in 2021 (In-House Lawyer, 2023).

**Argentina & Uruguay**

Two of the countries in this region with the strongest data protections are Argentina and Uruguay. Article 43 of Argentina’s Federal Constitution states that any person may file for access to their personal data and request correction, suppression, or confidentiality in updating it. In addition to its Constitution, Argentina also passed the Personal Data Protection Law (PDPL). It is a comprehensive data protection law that regulates data processors and gives personal rights to data users in alignment with international standards and the GDPR (DLA Piper, 2022). Uruguay’s data protection law, known officially as Data Protection Act 18331, establishes the Personal Data Regulatory and Control Unit (URCDP) as a data supervisor and regulates the use of “personal data”, which is broadly defined as data related to individuals and legal entities. The legislation also implements stricter protections of “sensitive data,” which refers to certain content like sex life, racial or ethnic information, public health, and other subjects (ITechLaw, 2023).

**Africa**

Many countries in Africa have recently passed their own national legislation cementing regarding data protection. As of February 2023, 36 out of 54 countries in Africa have implemented laws of some sort regarding data security. Many of these laws share commonalities with the European Union’s GDPR, like the same basic data user rights and also the same regulations towards data processors like purpose limitation and data minimization.

Some examples of more recent legislation passed regarding online safety in Africa include the Eswatini Data Protection Act in 2022, outlining similar regulations and personal rights as the GDPR, and including the requirement for explicit verbal consent by the individual with set guidelines on what constitutes consent. Tanzania’s Personal Protection Act, passed in 2022, also contains data processing rules and personal data rights that are covered by the GDPR. They also revised the Electronic Transactions Act in the same year, which doubled down on regulating the processing of electronic transactions, obligating senders to send a restricted amount of content and requiring consent from the receiver to go through, along with giving them a free option to opt out of the deal. Uganda recently passed the Computer Misuse Amendment Act in 2022, which prohibits sending of “unsolicited information”, which is broadly defined as “information transmitted to a person using the internet without the person’s consent” (Lexology, 2023).
Another highlight of Uganda’s legislation is its focus on child safety in particular, prohibiting the sharing of children’s data without authorization from their parents or guardians. Besides Uganda, a couple of other countries in Africa have also made efforts at specifically making the online environment safer for minors. Nigeria’s Child Rights Act distinctly states that children have the right to privacy, including on the internet, while their Cybercrimes Act, passed in 2015, institutes strict punishments on the production of pornography and film (Source). Another example of a country with specific legislation towards online child safety is Rwanda. The Rwanda Child Protection Policy, also deemed “the COP Policy”, lists out an intricate framework that the Rwandan government plans to take to ensure the digital protection of its minors, including implementing special categories for the regulation of children’s data, expanding the investigation, prosecution, and sentencing for child online sexual abuse, establishing a response system against online child abuse, and employing a committee to make sure that such rules and regulations are firmly implemented.

Asia
Many countries in Asia have passed national cybersecurity bills, monitoring the protection of citizens’ personal data, such as Japan’s Act on the Protection of Personal Information (APPI) (Didomi, 2023), the Phillipines’s Data Privacy Act of 2012 (National Privacy Commission, 2023), and South Korea’s Personal Information Protection Act (DataGuidance, 2023). Indonesia passed their first data protection law in 2022 with the Personal Data Protection Bill (Thales, 2023), and Vietnam also passed its first law regarding this topic with Decree No. 13 on the Protection of Personal Data (Squire Patton Boggs, 2023).

China
China has taken major steps towards online safety, passing three pieces of legislation that make up the core of its data protection and cybersecurity framework. The 2016 Cybersecurity Law (CSL), the first of the three passed and the first ever cybersecurity law enacted in the country, created a regime known as the Multi-Layer Protection Scheme to oversee the construction, operation, maintenance, and use of networks in the country. The second and third pieces were both passed in 2021, known as the Data Security Law (DSL) and the Personal Information Protection Law (PIPL). The former announced the emphasis of “data security” from a national perspective, although the term is broadly defined in the legislation. The latter makes up China’s privacy law, with resemblance to the GDPR in the EU (Source). China is also a standout when it comes to the data protection of children. The PIPL classifies the personal information of children under 14 as “sensitive,” and requires data processors to obtain parental consent before processing their data (Oxford Academic, 2023). More importantly, the country issued the Provisions on Online Protection of Children’s Personal Information in 2019, restressing the requirement of parental consent prior to the manipulation of children’s personal information, with strict regulations on what network operators must provide to legally obtain that consent (Library of Congress, 2019).

India
India recently revised their legislation by passing a long-due revision of the Digital Personal Data Protection Act in early August of 2023. It establishes grounds for the collection and processing of personal data. Consent is required, and it must be “freely given,” “specific,” “informed,” “unconditional,” an “unambiguous indication of consent” through a “clear affirmative action,” and be able to be withdrawn at any time. However, the act also states that consent may not be required for “legitimate uses”, such as for public health matters, compliance with the court, or during a medical emergency. A notice must be given by data processors to the clients before processing their data. Data fiduciaries are required to ensure that personal data is safely protected or erased when needed to prevent a
data breach, and in the event of such an event occurring, must inform the Data Protection Board of India under the government. Finally, the legislation contains a section designated to protect the data of children under 18, requiring parental consent and prohibiting targeted advertising towards children. The Act is set to take effect ten months after its passing, but no specific date has yet to be defined (Hunton Andrews Kurth, 2023).

**Saudi Arabia**

Saudi Arabia stands out in terms of its data protection for children specifically. Their legislation, the Children and Incompetencies’ Privacy Protection Policy, contains many protection guidelines for children’s data, with clear and concise definitions and procedures listed in the document (National Data Management Office, 2020). The specificity of the legislation has earned Saudi Arabia the position of being one of the safest countries in the world for children’s data (Comparitech, 2023).

**Australia**

Australia has a vast system of data protection and cybersecurity laws. Main data privacy protection comes in the form of the Privacy Act, enacted in 1988, which regulates the handling of all personal information by business and private entities. Such regulations expand and apply to personal information found online (DLA Piper). The Security of Critical Infrastructure Act was passed in 2018 to monitor national security and prevent risks like sabotage, espionage, and coercion, and also requires entities under the law to report cybersecurity incidents to the government (International Comparative Legal Guides, 2023).

One weakness of Australia’s robust amount of online data security legislation is a lack of specification to children’s data, which is treated and regulated in the same manner as that of adults (Comparitech).

**Conclusion**

Countries around the world have been making admirable strides towards protecting their citizens online. Representative institutions such as the European Union have paved the way for cybersecurity legislation across the world, and many countries have followed suit enacting laws modeled after the GDPR or have developed nationwide data protection or privacy legislation of their own. However, while many countries around the world have been making adamant strides to create laws, there still exists room for improvement. For example, some countries’ laws allow governments to directly bypass the regulations under certain circumstances. Although this may be desirable in cases such as national security, it can also provide unwanted loopholes contrary to the intent of the law for predatory government action, corrupt government actors, or even commercial or other entities to access data. (Comparitech, 2023). There are also regions, such as Central and South America, where cybersecurity laws are considerably weak or nonexistent. These nations need to do more to protect their citizens from harm online. **As online threats continue to be rampant in a rising era of technology, countries need to make sure that they have the laws and regulations in place to combat them.**

**References**


Thought Paper

The Power of Protective Factors: A Framework for Mental Health Action and Education

By Rich Stowell, PhD, VP of Programs, Cook Center for Human Connection

Overview: Mental health advocates, practitioners, and researchers have long used the framework of risk factors and protective factors to understand mental health. This article examines the origins of the concept of protective factors in the field of risk management and its evolution to the health and mental health disciplines. Exploring the relationship between the language of risk management and resilience is explored. The article defines and describes specific protective factors for adolescent mental health and offers examples of how they can be operationalized by mental health practitioners.
**Introduction**

In a recent advisory, the US Surgeon General, Dr. Vivek Murthy warned of the massive negative impact of the epidemic of loneliness plaguing the country. After demonstrating the ill effects of loneliness, he offers an antidote:

*Given the totality of the evidence, social connection may be one of the strongest protective factors against self-harm and suicide among people with and without serious underlying mental health challenges.* *(Office of the U.S. Surgeon General, 2023, 30)*

What is a protective factor? It sounds like the key to a solution, or even a solution itself. The surgeon general doesn’t define the term in his advisory because it has become part of the parlance of mental health in the last 30 years. This article will explore the genealogy of the term “protective factor” and how it has been appropriated in the mental health field. This discussion will lead to learning how the term has empowered mental health providers and advocates to advance mental health solutions more efficiently and effectively.

The concept of protective factors gives advocates and providers of mental health resources a useful toolkit to organize their activities by helping them direct resources, identify best practices, and educate lay people, especially teachers and parents, about the best ways to join in the effort of improving mental health for all.

**Genealogy of the Concept**

Analysis of the concept of protective factors begins with an examination of the field of risk management, a discipline which developed largely as a result of events the early 20th century (Koman, 2011).

World War I was largely understood to be an avoidable cataclysm that erupted in the wake of a series of accidents and misunderstandings. In its aftermath many scholars retrospectively evaluated events that led up to it (Pinker, 2011). They believed that leveraging the vast information and communication resources then newly available could help them systematically evaluate the uncertainties to make better predictions and decisions. In their optimistic view, better evaluation would lead to a reduction in war and ultimately a perfected society (Kloman 21). The emerging risk management movement was born.

In the aftermath of World War I, risk management practitioners moved past the ancient beliefs in luck, chance, and deity as an explanation for major events. Instead, it demanded a “logical, consistent, and disciplined approach” to organizing people and resources (Kloman, 22). The re-allocation of resources allowed governments and enterprises to invest more in large plans further into the future.

All of this was aimed at reducing waste and suffering on a large scale. The risk management movement also introduced new vocabulary. For instance, the term “risk factor” became a way to quantify riskiness and use numbers to generate probabilities and predictions.

Soon the ideas associated with risk management spread to individuals, groups, and other fields of study. The earliest use of the term “risk factor” was in finance and credit. Quickly, the medical field adopted it to label contributors to overall risk for disease. Along with it, the term “protective factor” described things that could mitigate risk.

Factors, both risk and protective, offered health practitioners a way to assess risk in increments. Protective factors became tools to reduce overall risk at lower costs. Shonkoff and Meisels use the term “protective factor” to refer to any moderator of risk (Shonkoff & Meisels, 2000, 116). The earliest examples showed the medical field’s reliance on risk management as a way of viewing public health problems and solutions. A risk factor often describes a behavior or state that could be reduced with behavioral changes. For instance, smoking was a risk factor for heart disease so smoking cessation and education programs would become a protective factor.

The terms risk factors and protective factors entered the mental health literature in the 1960s.
Early on, they were largely viewed as states or dispositions, rather than behaviors. The eminent child psychologist Martin Seligman refers to these states as “strengths of character,” mostly enduring traits that correlated with positive mental health outcomes. Weisaeth (1998) similarly wrote of “protective individual characteristics” (85).

**Risk and Resilience**

Related to the development of risk management and protective factors as theoretical concepts is the idea of resilience. That concept grew out of the study of ecological systems, but soon became embedded in efforts to explain how other systems grow, bounce-back, and achieve sustainability.

Like the vocabulary of risk management, the language around resilience spread to other domains, from cognitive science to global political economics (Holling, 1973). The application to so many disciplines make “resilience” difficult to define. Indeed, Brand and Jax have suggested that “resilience” is most powerful as a “boundary object,” a term that “facilitates communication across disciplinary borders by creating shared vocabulary” notwithstanding the differences in precise meaning of the term.

In psychology, one definition is “a person’s capacity for adapting psychologically, emotionally, and physically reasonably well and without lasting detriment to self, relationships or personal development in the face of adversity, threat or challenge” (Bonnano, 2004, 20).

Adversity, threat, and challenge tie resilience and risk at the hip. In the resilience-risk framework Copeland and Linder describe protective factors as “resources that promote resilience by reducing risk or by buffering the impact of stress on well-being.” (Copeland-Linder et al. 177). By some counts, protective factors contributed to more resilience in individuals (Yoon et al., 2021). According to an emerging consensus, resilience itself would become a protective factor.

**Types of Protective Factors**

Now, protective factors are part of the common vocabulary of the language used to study and understand mental health. They are “characteristics associated with a lower likelihood of negative outcomes or that reduce a risk factor’s impact.” (Risk and Protective Factors, n.d.).

Another way to put it is that they blunt or counter the effect of risk factors. As currently understood, some protective factors are fixed: they don’t change over time. Others are considered variables. **Protective factors fall into three categories, according to Garmezy:**

(a) individual characteristics, (b) family characteristics, and (c) community characteristics.” (Garmezy, 1991, 422). These categories have subsequently been affirmed by others.

The first category refers to individual dispositions, traits, and characteristics. They are often enduring but can be taught.

The second type is marked by ties that the individual can rely upon during times of stress. The most important of these relationships is in the family. Parenting, above all, is included in many important factors that have been demonstrated in studies.

The third type are the external supports that bear upon the individual. These are community supports, extra-familial relationships, school support, work, and church, “that reward the individual’s competencies and determination, and provide a belief system by which to live.” (Garmezy, 422). They are social and societal.

In the mental health realm, and particularly for youth, it is important to note that these types of
factors radiate outward from the individual. In each category, protective factors are variables that can be quantified, measured, and studied. The following is a list of some of the most mentioned and studied factors for youth mental well-being.

**Individual Characteristics**
- Positive self-concept or self-esteem (Copeland-Linder et al., 2010)
- Attachment style (Monaco et al., 2019)
- Optimism in the face of hardship or grit (Dailey et al., 2023)
- Meaning in life (Brassai et al., 2011)

**Family Characteristics**
- A home relatively free of conflict (Wille et al., 2008)
- Parents engaged in achievement-oriented activities (Shonkoff & Meisels, 2000)
- Parents who exercise firm and consistent rules enforcement (Shonkoff & Meisels, 2000)
- Parents who provide liberal nurturing and support (Crouch et al., 2019)

**Community Characteristics**
- Exposure to stimulating, supportive schoolteachers (Copeland-Linder et al., 2010)
- Participation in extracurricular activities (Magson et al., 2021, #)
- Affiliation with a church group (Garmezy, 1991)
- Membership in a group marked by strong cohesion (Weisaeth, 1998)

Returning to Gen. Murthy’s advisory, social connectedness is inherent in many of the above-mentioned factors. He calls it one of the most powerful. Connection is a combination of many of the protective factors listed above. Put a different way, social connection can be achieved through factors in all three categories, and it can be enhanced by combining factors. It is becoming clear that social connection—as an amalgam of other protective factors—is the super factor for mental well-being.

### How Caregivers can Employ Protective Factors
Organizations committed to improving mental health for individuals and groups can contribute to the public good by understanding the protective factor framework. Such organizations include non-profits dedicated to a particular group or a particular outcome, like eradicating suicide. Or organizations dedicated to research to understand variables in the most pressing mental health problems. Or clinical providers who need to know where to focus their therapy. Or funding groups that want to put money toward practices that make a difference.

There are three main benefits that the protective factor framework gives all these groups: it helps direct resources, it focuses on best practices, and it can begin an education for lay people.

Protective factors are precise enough to be measured, and through consistent research, refined. These refinements then become part of the service model created by the many organizations dedicated to helping individuals improve their mental health.

### Direction of Resources
The identification of factors supported by peer-reviewed research helps organizations allocate resources. It’s particularly powerful to sort scientific aims from ideologically driven ones. It also helps funders direct grants and other funds by giving them a score card or a rubric by which to judge competing funding requestors.

The Cook Center for Human Connection (the organization for whom the author works) is both a public-good organization and a grantor of funds. Protective factors have helped in both regards, giving us the research-based justification for our work, helping us identify areas of emphasis to meet our mission, and at the same time provide a rationale for the hundreds of thousands of dollars we dispense in grant opportunities every year.

### Best Practices
As researchers and experts (like those at the Office of the Surgeon General) learn more about the factors that lead to mental well-being,
organizations operationalize them for individuals. This results in a consensus around best practices.

For instance, resources like ParentGuidance.org, an offering of the Cook Center for Human Connection, gives parents courses about how to reduce conflict in the home, strengthening one of the demonstrated family protective factors. The course is developed by clinicians informed by the latest research data. Moreover, as more parenting courses are added to the ParentGuidance.org library, research around protective factors will guide which topics are chosen and how they are taught.

Every day, the precision and rigor of protective factors research gives organizations in the mental health space a list of action items.

**Education**

Action items are no good unless someone completes them. Knowing protective factors is one thing for organizations dedicated to the cause of mental health, but quite another for individuals who need them in their lives.

The real power in protective factors is that they give individuals—parents, teachers, therapists, or any adult of influence—clear things to do. They are powerful insofar as they can be translated into action: “protective factors can be used to pinpoint specific targets for intervention” (McGinnis, 2022). In this way, parents and other trusted adults can introduce the factors into the lives of children and measure in their own way, changing a variable here and there, in the aim of helping their children thrive.

The risk management field developed to help large organizations minimize the negative effects of risk while maximizing opportunities. Protective factors represent a conceptual framework that emerged from organizational risk management and found a useful application in mental health studies.

**References**


Thought Paper

An NPO’s Values and Identity

By William B. Calder

Abstract: Values become an organizational “petri dish” that soon establishes the culture of the workplace. This article reinforces the notion that effective leaders know how to leverage NPO values to ensure positive organizational results. Therefore, values provide a useful context for NPO behaviour and how individuals interact and carry out their assigned tasks. Core beliefs manifest themselves through NPO actions and form the basis of its identity as an organization which permeates everything that it does. Values must be discovered, explained, and put into practice; since they are the basis of initiatives and heighten the further development of an organization’s vision and mission statements. Having a statement of values that is all talk and no commitment undermines NPO leadership and credibility. A culture created from values influences everyone. Constant changes in the service landscape highlight the importance of understanding core values.
Introduction
Understanding values is critical, and anyone who has ever participated in strategic planning exercises knows the importance of this understanding along with other invaluable organizational statements (namely, vision, and mission). However, stakeholders can view these statements in quite different ways often influenced by their values and/or possibly influenced by their unique role within the organization. Their beliefs act as a “perceptual lens” to understand and assess governance policies, administrative practices, planning, and ongoing initiatives. Values are core beliefs defining how an organization behaves or acts. Therefore, all non-profit organizations need a forceful and well-articulated vision and mission to complement their strong values-based initiatives.

Our core values (convictions, beliefs, ideals) may be challenged by others but do define who we are as individuals, influence how we interact, influence decision-making, and identify what we consider to be important. From a broader, societal perspective, values shape the basis of our laws and outline how individuals should act as responsible citizens.

Enduring values provide a very powerful and inescapable presence in the lives of individuals and organizations (Chatman & Cha 2003). From psychological research, we learn that core beliefs are part of an individual’s self-concept and are considered essential to the experience of life’s meaning (Lydon, 1996). The research found evidence that the pursuit of life goals aligned with values is positively associated with personal results, which included job attitudes and work performance, life satisfaction, and subjective well-being (Judge et al, 2005; Sheldon et al, 2004). However, these research findings also reveal many parallels in how values can impact an NPOs operation since values provide a useful backdrop for the workplace.

The power of organizational values matches the degree to which they are consistently believed throughout various stakeholder groups. By investing in their identification, values help to determine a clear strategic direction (vision) and are critical in establishing a meaningful purpose (mission). NPO leaders’ major challenges are a firm commitment to quality and assessment of their organization’s achievements.

Our values express who we are, influence how we relate with others, impact our decisions, and reflect what we consider important. These values, beliefs, or personal convictions guide our actions in a particular way and critically impact us throughout life. Expressed values can account for why some individuals gain a reputation for having leadership qualities, for example being confident, and empathetic, or can guide other individuals in their career pursuits. We soon recognize that the discovery of one’s core values and how well they are articulated to others can have a significant role in developing one’s personal “brand” or identity.

Undeniably, values can be refined and interpreted; they can be breached and returned to; practiced and improved upon but rarely do one’s core values change. One’s core values, then, come from many experiences in our lives and perspectives. They are also drawn from one’s ethnic, religious, or cultural backgrounds and often from generational perspectives, for example, Generation X or Baby Boomers. Also, values are derived from an individual’s academic studies or discipline. For example, one might expect that accountants and psychologists would have very different perspectives. Certainly, generational issues cloud value viewpoints. Generation Y and millennials would have different values-based positions often reflective of the period in which they were raised. As well, values may also derive from one’s primary role in life, such as a mother, father, student, and even leadership positions in the work world including manager, director, and coordinator. These role-based groupings can adopt different views from other values-based group perspectives. Identifying core values is an unending process of discovery.

Strong values guide NPOs in a particular way not because it is expedient to do so, but rather because they have intrinsic worth towards achieving strategic goals and objectives. Values increase the constancy of conduct especially in confusing, changing, and
stressful circumstances. The workplace is less likely to mistake the distinction between what is right and what is wrong with clearly defined values. Continuously behaving aligned with established and shared values should be a lasting stakeholder expectation.

Commonly held values provide powerful influences in the workplace. Values define an organization and prove to be a strong foundation for its actions. The diverse nature of today’s NPOs recognizes the diverse nature of their values. Operational challenges have forced many NPOs to reassess their working philosophy and collective beliefs. Values once revealed and acted upon can assist organizations in conducting their business mandate. With commonly held beliefs, a values-based NPO more accurately aligns those defining ideals with its day-to-day actions. Therefore, a non-profit organization’s behavior begins from the ‘inside out,’ meaning that its values represent an important context about “why” NPOs do what they do. Its articulated values are then followed by its actions and activities.

Distinctive Organizational Values
Many values found in the non-profit sector seem distinctive in their contributions to others despite an almost identical service mandate declared by many Boards/trustees and the government. Organizational sizes, an emphasis on the human condition (for example, homelessness, and mental health issues), income sources, and managerial structure, make it difficult to speak in generalities about this distinctiveness. Most NPOs share at least some of their organizational structures, decision-making processes, and responsibility to the greater good with other NPOs within the community and private sectors. Therefore, it can be difficult to see or "feel" large differences between NPOs that have similar purposes and functions.

Values never come neatly packaged for NPOs to select and then adopt as their own organizational beliefs. Discovering an organization’s core values, while not an easy task, is a more enduring and more accurate reflection of an organization’s principles because they weave together stakeholders’ beliefs, creating powerful statements of an NPO’s convictions.

Thus, the term distinctive is approached with caution in defining their value sets, and the term unique values are often avoided. Point in fact; many stakeholders may not be able to sense any quality differences at all. Despite these cautions, almost all NPOs can claim some degree of distinctiveness in most of the following areas:

1. NPO roots are based broadly on partisan government values and mandates in their early formation usually defined through legislative actions.
2. NPOs exist to change individuals and the communities they serve.
3. Traditionally, NPOs have been financed through government grants and donor fundraising.
4. They share a pledge to the underlying values of quality service, good governance (through their Boards and trustees), and lasting development of its staff and beneficiaries.

Most initiatives, such as developing programs to benefit others, building improved delivery systems, and strengthening support services, start from the ‘inside out.’ These actions mean that an organization’s values are articulated first because these values represent an important context about “why” NPOs do what they do.

As compelling statements, values need to be “seen” by others, for example, funders, community, and staff. Unfortunately for many NPOs values appear as just mere bullet points in annual reports, fundraising material, grant proposals, promotional brochures, home pages, and marketing-related documents. However,
beyond those bullet points values must be owned by everyone involved in the organization. From our values, a culture quickly develops, and NPOs with strong cultures achieve higher results because everyone keeps their focus both on what to do and how to do it. Successful NPOs rely on these compelling statements of beliefs to chart new choices in building a future capacity for change.

Values then have those qualities and standards that NPOs genuinely embrace. They are worthwhile as seen by stakeholders because they serve as strong principles for those individuals that govern, lead, serve, and manage, as well as the places where individuals work.

Values become an organization’s identity and permeate everything that it does. For example, an NPO may identify ‘access’ (to its services) as an established value, and when services are planned employees think mainly about how to remove any access barriers to encourage the widest possible participation. As well, another NPO might value ‘performance quality’, especially when building a budget and assigning financial priorities. In this value set, the NPO may opt for improved financing for programs with quality results, which means there needs to be a quality return on investment for financial support. This reasoning is why proper assessments around VVMs need to be in place.

Some NPO or other CED agencies may address their belief systems as being the personal interactions among professional colleagues. Exemplified as follows, ‘our work environment is based on mutual respect, honesty, and ethical treatment of one another.’

While others may see their values as more about alliances or partnerships, identified, such as “our work focuses on teamwork and collaboration.” These organizations soon realize that discovering and clarifying values provides everyone with guiding lights, that is, choosing among competing priorities about how individuals and groups should work together.

Where Do Organizational Values Come From?
Values have a dramatic effect on how organizations work and are often discovered when stakeholders can “see” and experience them in current initiatives and practices. They are shaped through an inherent working culture, permeated internally by employees. They are most likely influenced by their surrounding community’s social beliefs based on an organization’s traditions which are reflected through their foundational roots.

Undeniably, values can be refined and interpreted differently; they can be breached and returned to, practiced, and improved on but rarely do they change. Truly, you can only discover an organization’s values, by observing its actions and initiatives.

Beliefs come from life experiences and perspectives, drawn from academic, ethnic, religious, or cultural backgrounds, including generational perspectives; influenced by an individual’s role, from an NPO’s support staff, professional staff, volunteers, and those individuals in leadership positions.

NPO employees are a diverse group of individuals and have established value systems just like other groups do. Academic disciplines often influence value perspectives. Intuitively one might expect that engineers, accountants, psychologists, social workers, computer technicians, and nurses, as examples, would have different value sets and viewpoints, which could shape NPO goal attainment and priorities.

One might expect that generational groupings would have different value perspectives, which could shape NPO practices. Generational issues veil value viewpoints. Baby boomers, Generation X, Millennials (Generation Y), and Generation Z, all would potentially have quite different values-based positions on NPO initiatives which would be reflective of the time in which they were raised.

One’s title or role within an NPO can also bring cultural perspectives inherent in these responsibilities. Leaders and governing bodies shape organizational values by bringing their own value sets to policy development and
operational processes. NPO positions adopt different viewpoints from their unique perspectives shaping ideas about how an NPO uses its finances, operational risk-taking allowed, and suitable strategic directions.

Values are also drawn from ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds influencing ideas about stakeholder relationships; however, the intertwining and sometimes conflicting values of individuals may promote a degree of instability within an NPO. These values-based group networks may create a working tension between individuals which can cause confusion and misinformation about an NPO's genuine core values. Consistent and suitable value sets assure that all constituent groups agree about what is important and help drive decisions about what priorities will be the focus of strategic planning and continuing operations.

Our beliefs can be refined and interpreted; they can be breached and returned to, but they do not change. Values are an unending process of discovery and rediscovery. Values cannot be "injected" into an organization's core beliefs; for they must be so inclined to hold them. So, in the spirit of finding them, the question is, "How do we get people to share an NPO's core values?" The task is finding the right people as future employees who already hold those core values. The hiring of personnel is for the culture that they will be working in. The HR challenge is to attract and retain those individuals who are inclined to share an NPO's values.

Regardless of a value base and orientation, beliefs become the guiding principles on which plans are formulated around resource allocation and development, and where other informed decisions are being made. Values then become the root of any planning process critically assisting an NPO in conducting its business, strategically. Values and the culture they create are the collective behavior of people using common goals, shared beliefs, habits, working language, systems, and symbols. It is interwoven with processes, technologies, learning, and significant events. If an organization does not act on sound values, each member of a constituent group has an excuse to cut corners or perform less ethically.

If an NPO declares, explains, and instills sound values in all its constituent groups it can be a motivating force for advancing teamwork through a shared sense of purpose. Therefore, before developing vision and mission statements, it is essential to discover or at least clarify those things that stakeholders hold important, which are identified in its core values as guiding principles.

Leaders can spend much time drafting, crafting, and redrafting statements like their vision, mission, and goals, and spend little time trying to align organizational actions with its core values. Effective leaders of visionary NPOs concentrate chiefly on the process of alignment between actions and values, not on crafting a perfect "values statement."

False assumptions about values can lead to misunderstandings and failed projects. In a search to understand what values tell us, there is little debate that values have a powerful influence on the way NPOs operate. Here are a few examples that reinforce this value conflict:

- An NPO may identify “transparency” as one of its core values but restricts stakeholder involvement in decision-making processes.
- An NPO declares “diversity” as a value and yet its employee base does not reflect this belief in its staffing make-up (and diversity ratios of staff) compared to the broader community that it serves.

These examples are just two ways in which an NPO may not adhere to its stated values when decisions are being made. For leaders, one key fact about values stands out—values impact the way strategic direction and change happen. What is important to an NPO? How are strategic decisions made? Who is in charge? How do leaders relate to employees and constituent groups? What employee behaviors are rewarded, and which ones are recognized? The answers to these questions may vary from one NPO to another. Leaders must understand their underlying values. These beliefs directly influence the way direction and change will be accepted and how much work will eventually be required to ensure successful results.
Values and the culture they create are the reflective behavior of people using common goals, shared beliefs, habits, working language, systems, and symbols. It is interwoven with processes, technologies, learning, and significant events. In addition, different individuals bring to the workplace their uniqueness, knowledge, and ethnic culture. So, values and culture encompass moral, social, and behavioral norms based on the beliefs, attitudes, and priorities of employees. Values critically assist an NPO in conducting its business, strategically (Tromp & Ruben, 2004).

Values guide conduct and relationships and form a backdrop for selecting work strategies. In general, culture is concerned with beliefs based on how people interpret experiences and behave, individually and in groups. Cultural statements become operationalized when leaders explain and publish the values which provide patterns for how employees should behave. Organizations with strong cultures achieve higher results because employees focus both on what to do and how to do it. Indeed, an NPO’s culture can be transformed but it takes strong leadership to continue it. Collective beliefs can influence words, policies, procedures, and actions.

Developing a Values Statement

There is not only one way to develop a values statement since they can be culture-specific, but also participants may use a variety of methods ranging from analytical and rational to creative and divergent approaches. The methods may also include, among other approaches, focused discussions or sharing work stories. It is critical to discuss with constituent groups how they might like to discover their organization’s values.

Discovering values is a difficult task and only through clarifying those values that an NPO’s purpose and strategic direction are made. Laying out through discovery an organization’s values always come first in a defining process followed next by its vision and finally its mission. While there are many ways to identify values, the direct approach seems the simplest.

Assessing Values

A statement of values is the basis for what an NPO considers important and drives how it behaves. An assessment of how stakeholders support those declared values through their actions is a signal of their acceptance and the critical role that they play in overall success achievements.

Core values drive critical decisions about priorities in strategic and operational planning. The importance of ideals depends to a greater extent on their integration within an organization’s culture. A value such as ‘transparency in decision making’ and ‘mutual respect among constituent groups’ help to make sense of a multitude of an NPO’s actions.

Assessment and justification are processes and an integral part of any planning process. For those individuals who seek improved success performance measures, the evidence of the realization of accomplishment of its values through initiatives and behaviors is quite useful. Leaders rely on these verifiable statements by which to launch new programs, introduce improved support services, strengthen their operations, and build an organizational ability for change.

Without evaluation of achievement, especially around one’s beliefs, how then can leaders declare that an organization was successful by any

Employees who have a sense of ownership of how an NPO works are more motivated than those who feel that they just work for the organization. The more engaged people are in their work, the more committed they are and try to do their best. We know that non-profits play a significant role in the “fabric” of communities. Their guiding principles as defined by their values drive them forward, enlightening their vision, mission, and resultant strategic priorities.
achievement standards? The proof of success is as important as the services that NPOs provide. In an era of distinguishing between competing organizations, a continuous evaluation process helps to explain just how serious an organization is about its existence. Addressing fiscal challenges has forced many organizations to reassess their operations and to re-examine their beliefs, strategic direction, and sense of purpose, which shows confidence and improved understanding by others.

Values statements appear in annual reports, proposals for grant funding, and “promotional” material. Values are deeply held ideals and priorities; their underlying assumptions influence day-to-day behaviors. Values may claim such notions as respect for individuals, accountability practices, quality programming, workplace relevance, fiscal transparency, strategic cooperation, partnerships, and alliances, and an unwavering commitment to learner success among other convictions. Values need not be unique since commonly held values across many NPOs make inter-NPO transactions and cooperation more effective.

Values guide personal conduct for stakeholders, as they realize the strategy to achieve the organizational mission, by realizing its vision. The working environment within which values take place in an organization’s culture. Values once discovered, affirmed, and assessed assure that constituents grasp their importance and how these ideals can drive critical decisions about priorities used in strategic and operational planning.

Leaders will need to assess their organization’s values to assure all those involved are agreeing about what is important and what values drive decisions. The assessment also helps identify what priorities will be the focus of periodic strategic planning. Strong values go with a clear strategic direction which is critical to setting up a strong vision.

The measurement questions around values become “What actions by individuals and constituent groups support each explained value? How does an NPO assess stakeholder support? And how do the assessment results need to be communicated? For example, an NPO claims “respect and trust” as values but undermines them by doing something completely different. Misalignments between beliefs and actions exist not because the values are false, but rather occur because of years of entrenched and makeshift policies and practices. Assessing actions by leaders to find out how values are practiced and supported would complement any comprehensive evaluation.

Values and the subsequent culture they create are the collective behavior of people using common goals, shared beliefs, habits, working language, and symbols. It is interwoven with processes, technologies, learning, and significant events. Individuals bring to the workplace their uniqueness, knowledge, and ethnic culture.

If an NPO does not work on sound values, then each member of a group has an excuse to cut corners or perform less honorably or ethically. If an NPO declares and instills sound values in all its constituent groups, it can be a motivating force for lasting teamwork through a shared sense of purpose.

NPO values focus on matters such as social learning environment, an excellent standard of quality and performance, accountability, and transparency, as well as commitments to diversity and common respect among stakeholders. Therefore, before setting out on developing those other important statements, namely vision and mission, it is vital to discover or clarify those beliefs that stakeholders hold important—their values and guiding principles.
Success is about upholding organizational values and realizing a vision and mission even through the most demanding times. VVM assessments improve an ability to meet and exceed standards, all of which help an NPO look at its relevance, and progress, and possibly discover if it is indeed the best it can be.

Before setting out to develop a vision and a mission, it is important to identify and clarify those issues that are important. Value statements appear less often than vision or mission statements in organizational writings and material even though they represent one of an organization’s critical foundational pillars. Values guide an organization’s conduct to provide a fair return for all stakeholders, as it carries out its strategy to achieve its mission, by fulfilling its vision. The environment within which these values take place is a non-profit’s working culture.

Values govern strategic initiatives an NPO is either now considering or possibly changing. And when its values are deeply entrenched and widely shared by stakeholders, an NPO’s culture of values soon becomes a way of life in the workplace shaping its strategic goals. Currently, NPOs are voicing their core beliefs as a significant part of their underlying practices or policies and decision-making strategies. Strong values account for a reputation of strategic qualities such as leadership, innovation, and satisfaction rates, which helps in developing an organization’s branding.

**Values Evaluation**

NPO leaders (and Boards, as well) need to assess their organization’s values as a continuing activity. This action can ensure everyone involved agrees with the organization’s essential beliefs and what drives their decisions. Also, this assessment helps identify what priorities will be the focus of any type of future strategic planning. A values assessment can be allied with questions, such as

- What importance do stakeholders place on the NPO’s stated values?
- What operational actions support each articulated value?
- How does an NPO assess this support?

**Values Evaluation**

Without a comprehensive evaluation of agreement and achievement, especially around beliefs/convictions, then how can a governing Board and other leaders declare that an NPO was successful or even extraordinary by any standard of behavior? Remember, “What you cannot measure may not matter at all.”

In an era of distinguishing among competing NPOs, a continuous evaluation process helps show stakeholders how serious an NPO is about its existence. However, knowing exactly what shared values are and how they are assessed displays confidence and understanding with stakeholders, government, and funders.

An NPO’s beliefs are a foundational declaration and critical in its overall planning and operations. Values are intrinsic guidelines, not dependent upon a particular situation, for making strategic choices that shape longer-term behavior, which determine what may be expected from an organization. The evaluation of their relevancy and currency in achieving or exceeding organizational, community, and funder expectations need to be looked at by addressing their understanding, acceptance, unique role, and placement in day-to-day practice.

Generally, core values are summarized in just a few words, namely "It is the basis of how NPOs do things." Values and the culture that it creates is the collective behavior of people using common goals, and shared beliefs. They encompass moral, social, and behavioral norms based on the beliefs, attitudes, and priorities of their stakeholders. Established values match the degree to which they are continuous and normally held throughout various stakeholder groups, such as by Board members, administration, and staff. There can be no greater time for an NPO than now to clearly express its value statements at the first strategic opportunity.

An opinion on values from several internal constituent perspectives may be just the beginning needed for a more comprehensive
assessment process. As NPOs gain more experience with assessments the process can expand to external stakeholder groups as well. NPOs are the strongest when their values, interests, and points of view can pull together for the common good. An engaged and empowered organization works best when everyone understands their tasks and responsibilities along with the rationale behind their assignments. Endless changes in the non-profit landscape highlight the importance of understanding an organization’s core values.

NPOs have always been agents of social, cultural, and economic development. More than ever, they are scrutinized by stakeholders as to how well they are performing; that is, are they achieving the desired future and subsequent results for others? Therefore, an inescapable reality is an unending examination of its VVM statements. NPOs will only sustain their success if groups work together, respecting each other’s roles and understanding their core values, vision, and mission. The cornerstone of future planning and development begins with compelling VVMs statements; initially, no other activity is more important than these three statements. It requires Board members, administrators, and managers with a strong commitment and capacity to steer the whole development process forward in positive ways. Leaders supported by strong VVM statements offer a tremendous competitive advantage over others who operate without them. Therefore, what is needed is a vision and mission with values-based actions to propel non-profit organizations into a preferred future. It is through proper assessments that these critical statements become more relevant, tangible, and understandable.

**Discovering Success through Assessments**

Values, vision, and mission statements are the basis for organizational actions, from their behaviors (actions-based values) to a preferred future (defined through vision), as well as an enduring sense of purpose (mission). Therefore, these statements need to have stakeholder agreement, since every initiative, every decision, and every policy needs to start with the question: how will this action advance this organization’s VVMs, and in what ways? Sorensen (2016) argues for the continued importance of these statements in offering something much more meaningful than repetitive promises of accomplishment and excellence by leaders.

Individuals do not “buy into” core values but rather are predisposed to holding them. Once an organization discovers its values it should set in place processes to apply meaningful assessments. Many evaluation approaches can be used (for example, interviews, and focus groups); which may introduce an evaluation process to discover their relevance in day-to-day operations. NPO beliefs are foundational declarations that are critical in its overall planning and operations. Values are intrinsic guidelines not dependent on any situation, which shape long-term behavior. Evaluating their relevancy and currency in achieving or exceeding expectations may be looked at by addressing several key questions. An evaluation process would yield better quantitative and qualitative data about values if constituent groups were identified with the survey results.

It is important to distinguish individual views since each perspective is essential in defining an NPO’s culture of values. Feedback from different stakeholder groups around an NPO’s interest in defending its declared values in the competitive marketplace would be insightful especially if results were impacted by lower enrollment or reduced revenue. Evaluation of values would include the opinions of external groups as well, such as advisory committees, funders, and community organizations. In this way, the overall evaluation can be seen from
both internal and external perspectives, which addresses objectivity issues.

Discovering values is one issue; living by them in the workplace is something quite different. Having a statement of values that is all talk and no commitment undermines so much in an organization. Occasionally, NPOs may claim “respect and trust” as their core values but also undermine them by doing something different.

Misalignments exist not because these values are false, but rather the misalignments possibly occur because of years of entrenched and improvised policies or practices. Assessing NPO actions to discover how their values are currently practiced and supported would complement any comprehensive evaluation.

Diverse Value Statements
Not every organization will approach explaining its values in the same way; therefore, it is important to recognize and respect different approaches used to develop these statements. Some NPOs are passionate about a vision of something specific that needs attention. For example, homelessness or the use of a vaccine to prevent diseases, while others have a broader view of how they would like the future to look and more tentative notions about how to get there. Other agencies do their best at identifying and analyzing problems and working through solutions. While others are motivated by the need to work with people they respect or admire, or to get to know new people with whom they share interests. Different ways of defining values statements may seem foolish or even alarming to some leaders; but NPOs are strongest when many aptitudes, interests, and points of view can pull together for the common good.
Investigating the Potential Benefits of Standards-Based Grading Practices at Urban Secondary Schools in Southern Utah: A Qualitative Study

By April Larsen, EdD, Associate Faculty, University of Arizona Global Campus

**Overview:** The letter-grade method has been used for many decades but may not be the best for reporting student achievement. The purpose of this qualitative study is to evaluate whether other grading methods are more effective in promoting student achievement and learning.
Introduction

The letter-grading system has been used for many decades in public education. Recent research suggests that this method may not be the best way to communicate student learning (Guskey, 2019; Knight & Cooper, 2019). Often, teachers factor non-learning elements into a student’s grade, such as classroom behavior and attendance (Scarlett, 2018). When these non-learning elements are included, students’ grades can be inflated or lowered, making them inaccurate representations of student learning (Arsyad Arrafii, 2020). Another potential issue with the letter grade system is that students tend to focus on earning a particular grade instead of learning the course material (Buckmiller et al., 2017). Many students agreed that the letter grade system does not adequately measure what they have learned (Erbes et al., 2021).

Townsley and Buckmiller (2020) discussed the need for a switch to standards-based grading, which separates a student’s content mastery from their work habits, and more clearly outlines areas of proficiency and weakness. Standards-based grading practices allow teachers to encourage students to engage with the content and focus on mastering it (Boesdorfer & Daugherty, 2020). Many students and schools prefer the letter-grade method for various reasons (Erbes et al., 2021). This research study sought to understand the advantages and disadvantages of letter grading and standards-based grading in terms of promoting student achievement and reporting student learning to stakeholders. Understanding the benefits and drawbacks of each grading method can inform best grading practices for educators.

Letter grades create barriers to learning because students tend to become focused on earning a particular grade rather than on mastering the material (Buckmiller et al., 2017). Many parents are familiar with this system because it is most likely the one that they experienced during their secondary school years (Peters et al., 2017). There are still many colleges and universities that continue to use letter grading, which may also be a reason for high schools to continue its use to provide a smooth transition for students as they move on to higher education institutions (Peters et al., 2017).

Standards-based grading is a progressive alternative to grading that may more adequately serve educators and students, as well as communicate student learning more accurately (Townsley & Buckmiller, 2020). Achievement averages on standardized tests were higher among students whose teachers employed standards-based grading methods than those who used traditional letter grading practices (Veenstra, 2021). On the year-end SAGE test, students in a standards-based grading cohort scored 11.5% higher than their peers in the traditional letter grading cohort (Poll, 2019). Standards-based grading encourages students to engage with and master course objectives (Townsley, 2019). This method focuses on progression toward mastery, which can reduce students’ anxiety and give them the courage to take risks in their learning (Dempsey & Huber, 2020). Under this grading system, teachers’ curriculum is often more aligned with the state standards and better meets the needs of each learner (Pak et al., 2020). Teaching becomes responsive to learning as students monitor their progress and receive targeted, helpful feedback (Buckmiller et al., 2017). There are challenges in transitioning to standards-based grading for educators, students, and parents, as this system differs greatly from the traditional letter grading system.

It is important for educators to utilize grading methods that foster student learning, promote student achievement, and accurately communicate student progress to stakeholders. Standards-based grading is associated with best teaching practices that differentiate instruction and create a student-centered learning environment (Knight & Cooper, 2019). When standards-based grading follows a specific set of principles to assess student learning, the resulting grades more accurately reflect students’ mastery of course material (Scarlett, 2018).
The participants in this basic qualitative research study included ten teachers, four parents, and two secondary school principals who have experienced both the letter and standards-based grading methods in recent years. This study was guided by three research questions. Research question one explored the reasons educators believe that standards-based or letter grading methods have a greater impact on student achievement at secondary schools in southern Utah. Findings were split, with ten of 12 educators affirming that standards-based grading improved student learning outcomes the most. Two educators were in favor of standards-based grading but did not feel this method increased or decreased student achievement. The other educator did not have strong feelings about either grading method.

Research question two investigated parent beliefs regarding standards-based or letter grading methods in terms of improving student achievement and reporting learning. Multiple reasons were revealed for preferring one system over the other. Some parents preferred the clarity and anxiety-reducing aspects of standards-based grading and felt this system provided a coherent overview of their child’s progress. Others favored awarding a grade for every assignment and believe letter grades better motivate students to excel.

Research question three delved into educators’ views of the advantages and disadvantages of each grading method. All educators readily admitted that letter grading is an easier method to implement than standards-based grading. Yet most educators argued that standards-based grading provides all stakeholders with a more accurate report of student learning. Many teachers and one principal claimed standards-based grading methods have improved their instructional practices and led to greater student achievement.

Many educator and parent participants voiced concerns regarding the inadequacy of letter grades to properly represent student learning. Students may focus more on accumulating points and earning a letter grade than mastering course material (Buckmiller et al., 2017). Educators expressed concerns that letter grade methods concentrate on work completed rather than knowledge and skills mastered. Participants were troubled over grade lowering or inflation due to attendance, classroom behavior, and other non-learning elements. These practices inappropriately represent what students have truly learned (Scarlett, 2018). Related letter-grade concerns of parents surrounded a teacher’s subjective weighting of assignments and lack of opportunities for students to repeat/revise assignments. Students themselves often admit letter grades do not appropriately reflect what they have learned (Erbes et al., 2021).

Standards-based grading provides students with multiple opportunities to achieve and demonstrate proficiency. Some parents and students reported dismay that every assignment a student completes is not recorded or given a grade under standards-based grading practices. Educators acknowledged this grading paradigm shift can be difficult for stakeholders to understand and embrace. Homework and assignments are viewed as practice under standards-based grading methods, wherein students can simply focus on learning and mastering course material (Townsley, 2019a). Educators described the reluctance of some students to engage in these practice assignments because they are aware their grade will be unaffected by them. They maintained the remedy to this problem is educating students and parents about the purpose and research behind standards-based grading. Townsley and Buckmiller (2020) explained standards-based grading separates content mastery from students’
work habits and is a superior method for discovering areas of proficiency and weakness. Educators affirmed that standards-based grading restores the purpose of education to properly educate students and accurately report student achievement.

Findings from this study suggest standards-based grading likely leads to greater learning outcomes. Some educators provided clear evidence of elevated student learning and growth, particularly on end-of-level assessments. Prior research aligns with these findings, as students utilizing standards-based grading procedures scored higher on year-end assessments than those using letter grade methods (Poll, 2019; Veenstra, 2021). Increases in proficiency were often attributed to the clarity of learning objectives and grading rubrics, improved instructional practices, meaningful feedback, and intentional, focused assessments. Other teachers reported achievement was neither enhanced nor decreased because of standards-based grading implementation.

In terms of motivation to learn, most parents concluded letter grades encourage students to put forth more effort. Students may appreciate the competition engendered by letter-grades, which can promote productive behaviors (Erbes et al., 2021). Some teachers agreed students may be less motivated by standards-based grading, but they argued that standards-based grading requires students to self-monitor and self-assess their progress, which is conducive to deeper learning. Standards-based grading makes students partners in their learning as they progress toward mastering clearly defined and well-taught concepts and standards (Knight & Cooper, 2019). While parents admitted letter grades may be more motivating, they also produce greater anxiety for students. They explained this is exacerbated when teachers weigh certain assignments heavily or inconsistent grading practices are used within schools. Letter grades prompt students to focus on earning a particular grade rather than learning course concepts, which creates anxiety for students (Dempsey & Huber, 2020).

Educators reported that standards-based grading practices increased teacher workload, especially during the initial implementation period. Teachers had to re-evaluate and reconfigure their teaching and assessment strategies. Townsley (2019) agreed that standards-based grading requires time and effort for teachers to adapt. Prior studies revealed teachers find this undertaking worthwhile, as it leads to more purposeful planning and comprehension of students’ academic needs (Townsley & Buckmiller, 2020). Educators likewise confirmed an improvement in their instructional practices and an enhanced focus on strategic instruction, which they assert has been highly beneficial for their students. Principals applauded teachers’ efforts to redesign their assessments and teaching strategies to align with standards-based grading practices. They contended the clarity students gain from well-defined objectives and rubrics helps them understand what proficiency looks like and provides a clear and supportive path for them to achieve it.

**Preceding studies claimed standards-based grading is a progressive method that encourages best teaching practices, a culture of student-centered learning, and effective measures to report student achievement** (Knight & Cooper, 2019; Townsley & Buckmiller, 2020). Most study participants believed that letter grades are an outdated practice that is still in use due to familiarity and tradition but is not in students’ best interests. Present-day research contends standards-based grading methods foster a curriculum that is well-aligned with state standards and better meets the needs of each learner (Pak et al., 2020). Eighty percent of participants endorsed standards-based grading as a superior teaching and learning practice in secondary education classrooms. Principals explained more schools are currently piloting standards-based grading practices within various classes. They believed additional secondary schools in the district would likewise transition to these methods.

**Results from this study highlight the difficulty in transitioning to standards-based grading methods because letter grading is a familiar technique that is deeply embedded in the educational system.**
system rooted in tradition. Community education and support are critical factors in successful standards-based grading implementation. Recent research and outcomes from this study suggest that standards-based grading likely increases student achievement, reduces student learning anxiety, and more accurately reports student learning. As communities partner with schools and families to better understand and support standards-based grading practices, schools will be more focused on their primary purpose of educating students, assessing student learning, and reporting student progress to stakeholders.

References


Factors Influencing Employee Satisfaction in Nonprofit Organizations in the United States

A Literature Review

By Kristi Egbert, Graduate Student, Minnesota State University, Makato

Overview: In 2014, the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics reported private industry wages for those in for-profit and nonprofit organizations. Those in management, professional, or related job titles earned fewer hourly wages than their for-profit counterparts. Wages do not keep employees satisfied. Identifying what keeps employees satisfied while working at nonprofit agencies is critical because employees and the organization have a mutually beneficial relationship (Brittain Richards & Hinton). This paper’s objective is to identify the factors that keep employees satisfied at nonprofit organizations in the United States.
Introduction
Employment is a crucial part of many people’s lives. Jobs can be a significant part of any employed person’s life. Employees impact how well an organization does internally and externally and how well processes efficiently function (Sharma et al., 2015). If a business does not do well, it cannot help, serve, or meet the needs of the public. For nonprofit organizations to run, they need employees, and these employees also experience job satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Job satisfaction is someone’s overall view (Okpara, 2006) and feelings about the different facets of their job (Dhanapal et al., 2013). Job satisfaction relates to employee and organizational well-being (Brittain Richards & Hinton) effectiveness, and efficiency (Sharma et al., 2015). Brittain Richards & Hinton (2015) said some benefits of satisfied employees included increased productivity, decreased turnover, and increased job-specific skills.

In 2014, the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics reported private industry wages for those in for-profit and nonprofit organizations. Those in management, professional, or related job titles earned fewer hourly wages than their for-profit counterparts. The hourly rate for those in production, transportation, and material moving occupations at nonprofits was less than those in similar occupations at for-profit companies (Bishow & Monaco, 2016). Wages do not keep employees satisfied. Identifying what keeps employees satisfied while working at nonprofit agencies is critical because employees and the organization have a mutually beneficial relationship (Brittain Richards & Hinton). This paper’s objective is to identify the factors that keep employees satisfied at nonprofit organizations in the United States.

The Work Itself and Organizational Incentives
Nonprofit employees find satisfaction with their work context. Studies concluded that nonprofit employees find job satisfaction in the work itself (Brown & Yoshioka, 2003; Lee & Sabharwal, 2014; Haley-Lock, 2007; Benz, 2005; Weisberg & Dent, 2016). For workers to find satisfaction within the work itself, employees’ recruitment (Weisberg & Dent) and background play a role (Lee & Sabharawal). Employers who want to increase their employees’ job satisfaction can aim to hire employees whose educational background complements the position employers want to fill (Lee & Sabharwal).

Employees can feel satisfaction in the work in which they are knowledgeable. For employees to stay and find satisfaction in the work itself, employees need to connect with the organization’s mission. For example, Brown & Yoshioka (2003) said employees who felt happy in the job itself believed in the company’s mission statement and could see that their efforts contributed to its mission. Haley-Lock (2007) found that employees who focused their job duties on advancing a social cause, like a nonprofit’s mission, achieved satisfaction not only in the job itself but also with job opportunities. As employees increasingly dedicate themselves to the organization’s mission and connect with the company, they see how their skills and work output contribute to the organization, and this increases their job satisfaction (Haley-Lock). Weisberg & Dent (2016) found that nonprofit employees get intrinsic job satisfaction through the work itself and when they make a difference as they fulfill the organization’s mission. Social causes or the organization’s mission and employees’ commitment to them create satisfaction. As employees see how their knowledge and contributions lead to fulfilling a social cause they find valuable, or the company’s mission, and see how this impacts a community where the nonprofit serves, they show commitment to an organization and find their work rewarding.

The work itself and intrinsic benefits influence job satisfaction. Benz (2005) said nonprofits offered more benefits other than monetary and material rewards when compared to for-profit companies. Benz found that intrinsic benefits kept employees satisfied with the work itself and its context. Employees find satisfaction in having a work environment and work that benefits the
community. Weisberg & Dent said employers who want to increase intrinsic job satisfaction and motivate employees could strive to provide employees with meaningful work, recognize employee contributions to the organization’s mission, let employees feel responsible, and provide chances for achievement and growth within the company. Organizations can communicate their appreciation and recognize employees’ work to build a relationship between the organization and the employee (Knapp et al., 2017). Employees can find satisfaction in their work when they and the organization recognize their commitment and contribution to fulfilling the company’s mission.

Employers can give employees a chance to be responsible and provide a clear path for moving up in the company to increase satisfaction. Weisberg & Dent (2016) provided suggestions for increasing autonomy and responsibility. Supervisors could involve employees in collaborative conversations around decisions, problems (Brimhall, 2019), and policies that meet the organization’s mission to increase satisfaction in their employees’ jobs (Weisberg & Dent). Weisberg & Dent said that as supervisors strive to include employees, it can give them a voice and allow coworkers to hear each other’s perspectives. This invites creativity and opportunities to gather insights from employees to broaden the number of possible solutions to a problem (Weisberg & Dent).

Organizations looking to attract new and keep current talent should also provide opportunities to move up in the company (Weisberg & Dent, 2016) keep employees satisfied (Slater & Slater, 2018). In addition, a company that is aware of employees’ need for job security (Slater & Slater) and works to build a culture that supports their employees impacts their turnover rate and satisfaction levels (Knapp et al., 2017).

**Organization Culture and Practices**

Organizational cultures and practices impact employees’ job satisfaction. When organizations show employees that their culture exhibits support, shows they care whether an employee has job satisfaction, and values individual contributions that impact the company mission, these can shape job satisfaction and employees’ intent to leave (Knapp et al., 2017). However, when individuals work for a nonprofit that they respect and feel pride working for as they bring about the company’s goals and mission by meeting a specific community need, not only do individuals (Stater & Stater, 2018) but managers also feel pride in their company, and this leads to job satisfaction (Lee, 2015). With this pride, employees’ need for fulfillment and purpose in work that they need to feel to stay at their company and be productive still gets met.

Building a culture that supports autonomy and clarity impacts employees’ job satisfaction. Letting managers feel independent in how they do their job (Slater & Slater, 2018) but still providing clarity regarding their role in job duties and responsibilities helps them increase their job satisfaction (Lee, 2015). For workers to feel satisfaction and fulfillment, nonprofits must also structure jobs to provide employees autonomy (Knapp et al., 2017). More specifically, Lee found that when a nonprofit’s leadership supported a culture of autonomy in ways to complete tasks and provided guidance in expectations, this could improve job satisfaction in managers and reduce turnover. This lets employees feel independent and responsible as they display and apply their unique skills to the position (Knapp et al.). This can mean supervisors should be clear about what they expect but give employees a chance to fulfill these expectations in a way unique to their skills, knowledge, background, and creativity.
exclusion. Brimhall (2019) found that leaders who supported an innovative and inclusive climate were factors related to job satisfaction. Brimhall said leaders could shape a work environment if they create a culture of inclusion and work to involve all employees in important decisions actively. The study stated that these organizational practices produced an inclusive climate when all felt important and recognized. An opportunity for all voices to be heard and recognized can mean there can be diversity of thought and a safe space to develop, collaborate, and generate new ideas individually or collaboratively. When leaders use this kind of engagement in nonprofit organizations to create an inclusive and innovative space, job satisfaction increases (Brimhall).

Leaders throughout a nonprofit should work to build inclusivity by making sure all employees have an opportunity to feel heard. As employees feel included at work with their leaders, they can bring together innovative solutions that meet an organization’s mission.

Brimhall & Mor Barak (2018) also studied workgroups regarding inclusion. These consisted of employees who had the same supervisor and had regular contact with coworkers (workgroups) to complete their work. Inclusion at this organizational level also increased employee job satisfaction (Brimhall & Mor Barak; Brimhall et al., 2022). Brimhall & Mor Barak claimed that employees with positive views toward innovation also had higher levels of job satisfaction. Leaders and coworkers are influential in helping individuals feel a part of the organization. Not encouraging innovation or failing to give employees a chance to be heard and taken seriously can lead to individuals who do not feel included and do not find satisfaction in their jobs.

Relationships
Supervisors, as well as coworker relationships, impact satisfaction. According to Slater & Slater (2018), a supervisor who cared about an employee’s well-being had a more significant, positive impact on workers’ job satisfaction than for-profits. For nonprofit employees, the relationships they build with their supervisors and coworkers and their behavior and actions toward employees are more important than job characteristics because they contribute to job satisfaction (Slater & Slater). Slater & Slater suggested that organizations that want to attract and keep employees committed and satisfied should encourage employees to foster productive and reciprocal relationships in their workgroup. This proposes that organizations should foster environments where employees have time to get to know each other, understand each other’s work styles and preferences, and encourage interaction.

Valuable relationships are rewarding and meaningful in a work culture that builds job satisfaction. Brimhall et al. (2022) suggested that supervisors and coworkers who showed commitment to their immediate workgroup had increased job satisfaction. Workgroups that show commitment as they dedicate time to help each other seem to make the work context more enjoyable for employees.

Conclusion
Lee (2015) said high turnover rates impact a company’s productivity levels and ability to meet community needs. When employees connect with the organization’s mission and see how they contribute to the mission, employees find job satisfaction (Haley-Lock, 2007). Employees find the work itself satisfying when they can see how their utilization of knowledge and skills benefit a social cause with sometimes visible, positive results to a community (Haley-Lock). Intrinsic benefits such as responsibility, achievement, and growth opportunities also increased employee job satisfaction (Weisberg & Dent, 2016). Autonomy increases job satisfaction as it is important for individuals to complete their jobs in ways they feel best fulfills the company’s cause (Weisberg & Dent; Knapp et al., 2017). Inclusive cultures are important (Brimhall, 2019; Brimhall & Mor Barak, 2018), especially for employees of color to feel job satisfaction (Brimhall et al., 2022). Within these cultures, positive relationships with supervisors (Mathieu & Nabiak, 2016) and coworkers contribute to job satisfaction (Slater & Slater, 2018).

Nonprofit organizations meet a wide variety of different community needs. Findings from these studies may change when tested in one specific
nonprofit over another. Future studies can compare job satisfaction in individuals with different levels of emotional, physical, and mental effort to see if the factors that lead to job satisfaction are similar among different groups. Future studies can study teleworker relationships and companies with national or international work teams as these relationships and work locations continue to evolve and expand.

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Thought Paper

Feminist Pragmatism in the Nonprofit Sector

By Elise Lael Kieffer, PhD, Director - Nonprofit Resource Center, Murray State University

Overview: Many nonprofit organizations are founded with passion and energy, rather than with expertise. Meanwhile, theorists and researchers write about that sector with distance from the day-to-day practice. This article relies on the analogy of a bicycle wheel to understand the inter-workings of the nonprofit sector, as a whole. The analogy is understood and interpreted through the philosophical lens of Feminist Pragmatism and aims to begin a conversation among and between nonprofit researchers, practitioners, educators, and recipients of services. When all are in communion, the wheel functions perfectly.
About Author
Elise Lael Kieffer, PhD - Dr. Kieffer currently serves as Program Director and Assistant Professor of Nonprofit Leadership Studies at Murray State University in Murray, Kentucky. She is also Executive Director of the Nonprofit Resource Center which provides technical support for nonprofit organizations across Western Kentucky.

Introduction
I am a nonprofit professor and researcher. I began my professional career as a nonprofit practitioner. It is in the space of intersection between those two perspectives that I present this food for thought and contemplation. These roles are not disparate or incongruent. They are both necessary and reliant on one another. The recognition of the value both bring into the nonprofit conversation strengthens the sector.

My individual nonprofit journey began as a participant of services in nonprofit arts organizations. That progressed into a career in nonprofit management that continued to evolve into research and higher education. In every stage of my involvement within the sector, there was some level of awareness that the organization was a highly evolved organism, impacted by others and impacting still more. I do not suspect that my experience is unique. I rather think that my journey was the same or similar as many others who fluidly navigate the different channels within the nonprofit sector.

The different aspects of the nonprofit sector create tensions between researcher, practitioner, educator, and recipient and this article presents Feminist Pragmatism, understood through the analogy of a wheel with spokes, as an effective and useful philosophy for maneuvering that space of difference. The tensions are not obstacles. They are necessary for the whole sector to function optimally.

Methodology
This is a conceptual project, rooted in the desire to understand the intersections and interactions between the theories and practice of the nonprofit sector and their influences on nonprofit education. Relying on researcher experiences in the field of practice and interpreting those experiences through a review of literature from both nonprofit researchers and philosophers, this paper opens a philosophical discussion into the complexities of the nonprofit sphere and attempts to facilitate future conversations by providing a framework for discourse.

Spokes in the Wheel
I would like to present an analogy for the many inter-workings of the nonprofit sector. Consider the spokes of a bicycle wheel and how each bears part of the weight of the rider and the pressure of the motion. Spokes don’t push out toward the tire, rather, they all work together to pull the wheel in toward the center. That consistent exertion of tension around the whole wheel supports the rider and moves them forward (Wicks, 2010). Just as enormous force is applied to the hub of the wheel, so external pressures affect the nonprofit sector, requiring regular adaptation and adjustment. Together, the spokes of the wheel move the power from the external force (the rider) to propel the bike forward. That application of force is even distributed around all spokes in the wheel such that none bears too much burden. They work together and all succeed (Wicks, 2010).

The nonprofit sector is the wheel itself (Figure 1). The spokes working to make the wheel work are theory, research, education, programming, and administration. For the sake of this illustration, spokes are defined as follows.

Theory: Reflection on past and current practice and the pursuit of future opportunities through abstract or theoretical understanding. Theory advises research and education.

Research: Study of past and current practice toward the development of future practice

Education: The formal preparation of the current or future nonprofit workforce as driven by higher education.

Programming: Includes the “boots on the ground” providing the specific services that serve the mission of each nonprofit organization.
**Administration**: In simplest terms, these are the people who work in the office. It includes but is not limited to management, resource development, finance, and technical support.

![Figure 2](image)

The nonprofit sector as spokes in a wheel

The philosophy of Feminist Pragmatism was developed through Jane Addams’ years of work in the social sector. Perhaps it should go without saying that the philosophy might still hold value today within the nonprofit arena. This article serves to make explicit the existing application of feminist pragmatism to the relationship between the theory, practice, and research arms of the nonprofit sector.

Jane Addams utilized her version of Pragmatism to effect change and to encourage participation from beneficiaries of the social services she facilitated. The social sector in which she worked strived to meet needs that government agencies either could not, or would not, meet. The “wicked problems” that persisted despite efforts to solve them, became the targets of her philosophy at work. According to Hookway (2013), Addams keen understanding and integration of experience and research enabled by Pragmatism provided an avenue for evaluation and reflection of existing institutions and practices.

William James utilized Pragmatism as a mediating philosophy that had the potential to settle disputes that other philosophical approaches might perpetuate. Conflicts with no apparent solution could, in fact, be solved with a Pragmatic approach. It is the Pragmatic emphasis on cooperation, communication, and context make it uniquely adaptable to reassessment, reevaluation, and reapplication (Hookway, 2013). Pragmatism is not static but ever-changing, just like our society.

Dewey challenged the dichotomy between the theoretical and practical by promoting the idea that our lived experiences are the very processes by which we gather information that then advises future decisions and experiences, including research and education (Hookway, 2013; Garrison, 2008). We approach our methods as devices to then be evaluated on how successfully they achieved the desired objective. Perhaps administrative success and effective organization facilitates financial freedom for the program director and innovation for the researcher.

Jane Addams and John Dewey worked together at the Hull House in Chicago, Illinois to improve immigrant neighborhoods. They changed their local society in important ways through social activism, policy making, and direct service. As pragmatic activists, Addams and Dewey developed an active theory of participatory democracy, which emphasized community involvement in the assessment and solution to identified challenges. This multi-stakeholder approach was never intended to create theories for pontification. It was directly applied to problem-solving and resolution (Shields, 2008). In that diverse atmosphere, Addams sculpted the philosophy of feminist pragmatism to be effective and efficient, and willing to challenge the status quo. Her shift to functional problem-solving was the greatest change from its classical pragmatism roots.

**Conclusion**

Feminist Pragmatism is, by design, philosophy in action. It is misapplied if it is only a group of theorists or scholars pontificating. The function of this philosophy is that it fluidly moves from theory into practice into evaluation and then back for reevaluation and new theory development. Too often in nonprofit practice we put out fires as they start. Perhaps with an integrated approach to the broad sector as one organism, theorists, researchers, practitioners, and recipients could all confront the “wicked problems” that continue to affect our society.
Pragmatists of all varieties reject abstract and strictly epistemological applications and instead endorse fallibilism, recognizing that our beliefs are shaped by our own limited knowledge, experiences, and social histories. In this way, they are better able to confront the dangers and pitfalls of mere subjectivity or blatant objectivity, rather, encouraging a functioning working balance between lived experience and acquired wisdom (Dieleman, 2017). Feminist pragmatism in application requires listening and mediating among a diverse community of inquiry coming to the conversation with different backgrounds, educations, and experiences all working together toward a beneficial common goal (Lake, 2017; Shields, 2005).

The practical nature of pragmatism requires that we do not just conjecture and hypothesize, but that we come to a conclusion and act. These actions must be based on many perspectives and inputs and subject to regular review for desired outcomes that make a difference in society (Lake, 2014; Shields, 2008). No matter where you work in or around the nonprofit sector, I implore you to ask this question: How is your organization, your research, your curriculum inviting all voices into the conversation? How are you evaluating past endeavors and improving them for the future? The goal of this inquiry is to facilitate and improve conversations between and among practitioners, researchers, educators, and recipients of services—the spokes of our wheel, to ensure that the wheel of our nonprofit sector is functioning for everyone. Feminist pragmatism is uniquely situated to enable us to do just that.

References


Nonprofit & Partnership Spotlights
Nonprofit Spotlight
KMS Foundation

**HQ:** Utah, USA

**Mission:** The mission is to empower all children through music and dance, promoting cultural preservation and expanding children’s musical horizons.

**Services:** We aim to inspire children to embrace their unique cultural background while instilling a lifelong love for the Performing Arts. The foundation believes that art is a universal language that transcends cultural barriers and unites entire communities. During our after-school program, we provide resources to develop children’s leadership skills and talents as the artists of tomorrow.

**Partnerships:** We partner with the Utahzolanos, which focuses on helping the Latino community stay with current events and news. We also partnered with the administration staff at RSL Academy as they graciously let us use their space (two classrooms) for our program.

**Projects:** We are currently working on our Super Christmas Navideño Show, highlighting Christmas in different rhythms.

**Experience:** As a Reading Specialist at a nearby Middle School, I have the privilege of working with students who have low Lexile scores. In addition, I act as a mentor for immigrant children who have recently arrived in the United States and are still learning how the school system works. Through my interactions with them, I have come to understand the struggles they face and the desperation they feel as they try to adjust to a new culture and environment where language is a significant barrier. While they are proud of their heritage and the place they were born, they also want to belong in their new home.

Unfortunately, despite their best efforts, their grades began to decline. I started to think that playing music might help them feel connected to their culture and identity. As many of the children were born in countries such as Chile, Venezuela, Mexico, Guatemala, and Peru, I began playing music from renowned Latin American artists whenever they came to my classroom. The results were remarkable: their faces lit up every time they entered the classroom, and they forgot how difficult homework might be. They would sing along to the tunes played and even start dancing in their seats. This sense of belonging helped improve their scores and desire to improve themselves. They felt validated, and they found a sense of identity. This experience made me realize that music, as a conductor of energy, is medicine for all problems, even the ones immigrant children face.

**Current Needs:** Salaries & Costumes: As a brand-new non-profit, we need help with sustainability and funding. The funding we receive will be used to pay our professional instructors and will provide the costumes and outfits the children will use for their show.

**Innovative Approach:** We aren’t your typical music school. Our program includes three elements: voice, dance, and rhythm. We include these three elements on stage and give children an opportunity to perform and continue developing their performing abilities. We cater to a broader audience and enhance the appeal of the art forms as we teach both traditional Latin instruments and contemporary styles like Latin Hip-Hop indicating a blend of traditional and modern elements. Our innovative approach lies in its comprehensive, culturally rich, and diverse teaching methods, aiming to instill a love for performing arts in all children while embracing and celebrating cultural heritage.

**WikiCharities Profile:**
https://www.wikicharities.org/nonprofit/USA/93-1498062
Partnership Spotlight 1
Venturefy

HQ: Israel

Partnership Announcement: WikiCharities and Venturefy are working together to help improve transparency in the nonprofit sector.

What is Venturefy? Venturefy is the blue check for business; a revolutionary new platform leveraging a unique blend of artificial intelligence (AI) and user-generated content to build the world’s largest database of verified corporate relationships.

Mission & Vision: Our mission is to catalyse a world of corporate trust & transparency.

Consumers are more skeptical than ever and are increasingly demanding transparency from the companies they do business with.

With Venturefy, you’ll have the confidence to know you are doing business with verified partners with whom you can drive growth & create a sustainable future.

Value to the Nonprofit Community
Data-Driven Decision Making - Our B2B relationship data provides deeper insights into the nonprofit sector, helping you make data-driven decisions and strategic plans.

Improved Networking & Collaboration - Our mapping of business ecosystems can facilitate better networking and collaboration among nonprofits; nonprofits can better understand their position in the broader ecosystem and identify potential partners, donors, or opportunities.

Optimized Fundraising Strategies - Venturefy can offer insights into donor networks, enabling nonprofits to target their fundraising efforts more effectively. This can result in optimized donor engagement and increased fundraising success.

Visit: https://www.venturefy.com

Partnership Benefits with WikiCharities:
We are helping make WikiCharities the most transparent and trustworthy platform in the nonprofit sector.

Real-time Verification - the nonprofit sector is constantly evolving, with new relationships and collaborations forming every day. We can provide a real-time verification mechanism for these relationships, increasing trust in the nonprofit ecosystem.

Enhanced Transparency - Our ability to track and monitor relationships can add an extra layer of transparency and validation to WikiCharities’ nonprofit profiles; enhancing trust among users, donors, and the nonprofits themselves.

Data-Driven Decision Making - With access to our extensive data on B2B relationships, you can gain a deeper understanding of the sector’s landscape, informing strategic planning and operational decisions.

Visit: https://www.venturefy.com
Services
Venturefy leverages AI to track and monitor relationships of companies, nonprofits, and other corporate entities. With Venturefy, nonprofits on WikiCharities can effectively navigate their ecosystem, leading to better collaboration and increased impact.

Working Together - Greater Impact:
WikiCharities and Venturefy are teaming up to help provide a more transparent way to find partnerships and connections between organizations.

In the News:

**Israeli startup is using AI to create blue checkmarks for businesses**
Venturefy AI says aiming to catalyze a paradigm shift in corporate transparency with more than just a tool in a reflection of a commitment to building a ‘better, more transparent business world’

Why Improve Transparency?
In a post-covid, AI-enhanced world, consumers are more skeptical than ever. They are demanding transparency from the companies they do business with.

The Venturefy platform is more than just a tool - it's a reflection of a commitment to building a better, more transparent business world.

Lack of trust and transparency can lead to lost revenue, damaged reputation, and even legal and regulatory penalties.

Visit: https://www.venturefy.com

Enhanced Non-Profit Onboarding
Offer corporations the opportunity to complete an integrated onboarding directly on the venturefy platform to seamlessly apply for Wiki-Charities validation.

Organisations vetted and approved by Wiki-Charities representatives can display the official validation badge on the venturefy platform.
Partnership Spotlight 2
Maxsip: Free Internet

HQ: New York, USA

About
Our company exists to help get the word out that everyone has the ability to “get connected” and regardless of their circumstances shouldn’t be excluded from accessing the internet.

Maxsip Telecom is an authorized internet service provider partner of the FCC that provides internet to families and households that qualify for the Affordable Connectivity Program. The US Government, Federal Communications Commission and Maxsip Telecom are working together to provide free internet access for low income families to ensure that they can access the internet they need for work, school, healthcare and more. Aside from free internet access, households are also able to receive a government subsidized device in order to access their free internet benefit. In the event that a family member such as a parent or guardian does not qualify for the program but has a child that is eligible, that child can qualify the household for the ACP. Children on programs such as Medicaid, National School Lunch/Breakfast Program, Pell Grant, or enrolled in Community Eligible Provision School are automatically qualified for the Affordable Connectivity Program ensuring that a child is able to access their free internet benefit.

Mission
Our vision is to help facilitate a country where all are truly equal in their ability to access knowledge and the tools necessary to succeed through the technology that we help distribute nationwide.

Value to the Nonprofit Community
There are many nonprofits currently in existence. However, even they struggle to sometimes get their message out and reach the people they are catering too. Maxsip helps these people find the organizations that cater towards them as well as providing a platform for nonprofits to offer more to those they are trying to help.

Partnership Benefits with WikiCharities
The benefits of WikiCharities partnering with Maxsip are clear. There are many in today’s population that need a degree of assistance and a helping hand in today’s difficult economic circumstances. Maxsip has the resources and relationships to provide Tablets and Free Internet and WIKI Charities has the extensive and detailed knowledge of where to locate those in need, and how to access them in order to give them the benefits Maxsip has to offer. It’s a win for both of our companies as well as those in need of our services who now have greater access to knowledge and resources.

Service
Anyone can either call our toll free 888 number or go online to our website and sign up. Once the individual qualifies through the government verification process, we mail out a brand new tablet with an active SIM card included.

Get Involved
Partnering with Maxsip is easy. Just give us a call and well help both individuals and organizations get set up immediately. The whole process is quick and we can help you help others with ease.

Visit: https://maxsipconnects.com/wikicharities
Submissions

Call for Submissions
We are currently accepting articles, thought papers, and potential nonprofit spotlights for our journal. All submissions should be sent through our ScholarsArchive portal. Links can be found on our official website, www.journalofnonprofitinnovation.org/submissions.

Latest Research (Summaries)
We are looking for articles that use innovative thinking and approaches to community and global issues. Have you done research in a specific area? Are you an expert in a certain field? We want to hear from you!

Research & Thought Papers
We are looking for thought pieces from nonprofit leaders that have first-hand experience with community and global issues. Share your experiences and give us your thoughts on a specific topic!

Nonprofit & Partnership Spotlights
Is your nonprofit doing noteworthy things that you want others to know about? Spotlight your nonprofit in our journal! Note: To spotlight your nonprofit, you must be WikiCharities validated.

Upcoming Issues in 2024
- Partnerships & Collaboration
- Artificial Intelligence & Data
- Charitable Giving
- Health

Submission Deadlines
Visit our website for up-to-date information on deadline. www.journalofnonprofitinnovation.org