

Business Ethics Journal Rankings as Perceived by Business Ethics Scholars

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ABSTRACT. We present the findings of a worldwide survey that was administered to business ethic scholars to better understand journal quality within the business ethics academic community. Based upon the data from the survey, we provide a ranking of the top 10 business ethics journals. We then provide a comparison of business ethics journals to other mainstream management journals in terms of journal quality. The results of the study suggest that, within the business ethics academic community, many scholars prefer to publish in the top business ethics academic journals over other mainstream management journals. Furthermore, the results of the study suggest that within the business ethics academic field there are two dominant academic communities: one in Europe and one in North America. Each of these academic communities has its own preferred publication outlets, suggesting a potentially problematic bifurcation of business ethics scholarship.

KEY WORDS: academic community, business ethics scholars, CSR, journal quality, survey, ranking

Introduction

The last few decades have witnessed the emergence of the business ethics field as its own academic discipline (Enderle, 1996a, b; Freeman, 2000). While many scholars have noted the lack of a common definition or a common approach for business ethics (Garriga and Melé, 2004; Lewis, 1985), the importance of researching and teaching business ethics is generally accepted (Sims and Felton, 2006; Trevino et al., 2006). Recent ethical lapses by Bernard Maddoff, Sir Allen Stanford, and individuals in the banking industry as well as Satyam, Enron, WorldCom,

Parmalat, and Vivendi further highlight the importance of researching and teaching business ethics. With the birth of the business ethics field, various academic journals have emerged to focus on business ethics research.

Understanding the quality of business ethics journals is important for researchers as well as for practitioners in the business ethics community who seek to be informed by the best research in the field. Moreover, because research quality is a primary criterion upon which most business schools evaluate faculty research performance (Webster and Conrad, 1986), understanding research and journal quality is vital. To this end, many schools have established formal lists of desirable journals (Van Fleet et al., 2000) or other measures to gauge journal quality.

Establishing objective measures of journal quality has been a pursuit in most disciplines, including both the social and “hard” sciences. Over the last 20 years, studies within the management field, for instance, have assessed journal quality in information systems (Lowry et al., 2004), international business (DuBois and Reeb, 2000), finance (Chan et al., 2000), economics (Mason and Steagall, 1997), marketing (Theoharakis and Hirst, 2002), accounting (Lowe and Locke, 2005), management (Coe and Weinstock, 1984; Johnson and Podsakoff, 1994), and human resource management (Caligiuri, 1999). To date, however, we are aware of only three attempts within the business ethics field to establish journal and/or author quality. These studies include research by Wicks and Derry (1996), Sabrin (2002), and Paul (2004). Each of these studies has provided a greater understanding of the quality of business ethics journals, but none provides a comprehensive peer evaluation of the various journals within the field. As a

result, there is a need for further research into journal quality within the business ethics academic community.

In the following article, we present the results of a worldwide survey that was administered to active scholars in business ethics to document perceived journal quality. Based upon this survey, we first present a list of the top business ethics journals as suggested by business ethics scholars. Second, we provide evidence, based upon the results of the survey, to suggest that many business ethics scholars would rather publish their research in the top business ethics journals than in top mainstream management journals. Third, based upon the data from the survey, we suggest the existence of two fairly distinct communities within the business ethics field: one in Europe and one in North America. Each of these groups has their own preferred publication outlets for business ethics research.

Literature review

Assessing journal quality in any discipline is challenging. It may be even more so in the field of business ethics. Business ethics researchers tend to come from a variety of backgrounds, rather than from a single discipline. Consequently, business ethics researchers may hold disparate notions about the characteristics of strong research and about outlets for publishing their work. Research suggests that business ethicists come from such diverse backgrounds as strategy, organizational behavior, philosophy, theology, human resource management, accounting, public management, and marketing (Hoopes et al., 2009). Perhaps, the most obvious gulf in research preferences lies between scholars trained in a primarily theoretical tradition (e.g., philosophy or theology) and those trained in an applied tradition (e.g., strategy or marketing). The multidisciplinary nature of business ethics (De George, 1987) makes a common understanding of high-quality business ethics journals particularly elusive.

Wicks and Derry (1996) provided the most comprehensive assessment of business ethics journal quality by using opinion-based surveys (an approach similar to our current project). The authors developed a comprehensive list of business ethics journals and compared their reputation to that of the journals

in the wider management literature. However, the data used in the study were based solely on the views of participants at a single Society for Business Ethics (SBE) conference and included only 34 responses – providing a somewhat narrow perspective on journal quality. Given that participants had to be physically present at the conference to participate, it is likely that this research represented a strong selection bias as well as a geographically limited view of what is a very international field. Furthermore, this research is now over a decade old.

Sabrin's (2002) work provided a ranking of school and author productivity within business ethics. This ranking was based on the total number of pages and articles published in business ethics journals as well as mainstream management journals. In the study, Sabrin identified 13 journals that focused primarily on business ethics research. However, the inclusion of these 13 journals was not based on prior research nor was the list based on input from peers. Sabrin did not differentiate between the journals in terms of quality, but rather treated all as equally worthy of consideration. As a result, we cannot accurately determine the caliber or quality of any of the business ethics journals that were used as a basis for Sabrin's research.

Finally, Paul (2004) used citations as a measure of relative influence to compare three well-known business ethics journals to the *Academy of Management Journal* and the *Academy of Management Review*. While this study provides a more focused assessment of relative journal quality than Sabrin (2002), it unfortunately considers only three of the many outlets in which business ethicists might publish their work and it uses a fairly narrow benchmark in comparing these journals to only two mainstream management publications.

While these three papers add to the literature and provide some indications of journal quality, business ethics academics still do not have a comprehensive evaluation of the quality and ranking of ethics journals. Based on prior work, we do not know whether there are certain ethics journals that are regarded as best outlets to publish in or whether the views held by ethics scholars around the world are consistent when it comes to evaluating quality. We also do not know whether ethics scholars would prefer to publish their research in ethics-specific journals or in more general management journals.

The purpose of this article is to provide answers to these questions, which should be useful to ethics scholars worldwide who are trying to publish their research in the best journals.

Establishing journal quality

Typically, journal quality is established using one of three techniques. These techniques include analyzing acceptance rates, analyzing citations, and consulting the opinions of researchers within a field. Each of these methods has its own inherent strengths and weaknesses, and each of these methods has been used to evaluate journal quality in various fields. In the following paragraphs, we will illustrate some of the advantages and disadvantages to each of these approaches.

Many studies use an opinion-based approach to establish journal quality, because it provides an accurate measure of perceived journal quality within a field (Axaroglou and Theoharakis, 2003). The opinion-based approach provides a quick “snapshot” of what researchers in the field currently feel and think and does not suffer from the time lag that other methods such as citation analysis rely upon. While databases, impact factors, and advanced technology have increased the use of acceptance rates and citation analysis to establish journal rankings, the opinion-based approach has been considered to be the most common and widely accepted method (Gomez-Mejia and Balkin, 1992). Furthermore, opinion-based evaluation is the basis for nearly all evaluation within an academic setting. For example, academic research goes through peer-review evaluation before publication. Similarly, faculty promotion and tenure is based on peer-review input. The opinion-based approach, however, is not without criticism. Some researchers suggest that this approach is too subjective since there is no clear definition of what constitutes journal “quality.” Other researchers claim that the approach may be biased since some people may vote for journals that they personally publish in (Wicks and Derry, 1996). As a result, some scholars feel that citation analysis, which is based on empirical data, is more objective and accurate than studies based on peer evaluation.

While citation analysis may seem more objective than an opinion-based approach, even citation

analysis is not completely independent. Before citation analysis can be performed, researchers must determine which articles and journals to include in the study (Lowry et al., 2004). For this reason, researchers have suggested that the generalizability of citation analysis results is limited (Chua et al., 2003). Other researchers have suggested that journal impact factors based on citations are biased (Seglen, 1997) and that journal ranking-based citations measure influence instead of quality (Beed and Beed, 1996). Further, citation analysis must somehow account for the different periodicity and ages of different publications. A journal that is published monthly which has been around for 40 years is likely to be more heavily cited than a quarterly journal that is newer, even though the quarterly journal may be of considerable higher “quality.” A final limitation to citation analysis is that some editors and journals may encourage citation within their own journal to boost the journal’s citation ranking. Research has even suggested that many researchers, on a personal level, already engage in such activity (Hyland, 2003).

Finally, while acceptance rates may seem both subjective and unbiased, Extejt and Smith (1990) suggest that acceptance rates do not necessarily correspond to high quality. Some journals may receive a high volume of mediocre submissions and only publish a small fraction of them, in which case acceptance rate would not necessarily signal high quality. Similarly, acceptance rates may be skewed by journals that publish quarterly issues compared to journals that publish bi-monthly or monthly issues.

Because of the inherent limitations in both citation analysis and acceptance rates and because the business ethics field is relatively new, we felt that the opinion-based approach would provide a more accurate reflection of the business ethics field as it currently stands. Indeed, we may not know the true impact and quality, from a citation-based approach, of much of the business ethics research that has been published within the field over the last 20 years for many years to come.

The survey

The survey that was used to gather data on journal quality was administered to active scholars in business ethics. The survey was designed by business

ethicists at research institutions in both the United States and Europe. After the initial survey was designed, the research team met four more times to revise the initial survey. Upon completion of the fifth iteration of the survey, the survey was sent to active business ethic scholars in Europe, the United States, and South America to identify cultural differences and to verify that the questions presented in the survey would adequately capture the ideas, opinions, and thoughts of the entire business ethics academic community. The feedback received from these scholars was then implemented into the sixth and seventh iterations of the survey. Once the research team approved the eighth iteration, the survey was then sent to a professional survey methodologist. Input from the methodologist was then inserted into the ninth and tenth versions of the survey. The tenth version of the survey was used to collect the data for the research.

The survey was administered electronically using Qualtrics survey software. Invitations to participate in the survey were sent via e-mail to all listserv members of the SBE, the Social Issues in Management Division of the Academy of Management, the International Association for Business and Society, the European Academy for Business in Society, and the European Business Ethics Network. After consultation with various business ethics scholars, we selected these five organizations because of the common view that these organizations were a good representation of the business ethics academic community.

As the survey was sent to many individuals on five different listservs and as many individuals belong to more than one listserv, it is difficult to accurately estimate our response rate. This is further complicated, because many of the individuals included in the five listservs are professionals who are not actively involved in teaching or researching business ethics. In order to minimize the likelihood that these individuals would skew the results, we simply asked the recipients to disregard the email if they were not actively engaged in researching business ethics. This may introduce a small amount of bias into our sample as some may have disregarded this message and taken the survey anyway.

In order to encourage individuals to answer each question honestly, the entire survey was completed anonymously. While we felt that having the entire

survey be anonymous would be beneficial, we understood that it would create certain inherent limitations, especially when trying to determine response rate. However, the survey used in this research received a total of 280 responses to the questions regarding journal quality. For any opinion-based journal ranking, the number of respondents is quite high when compared with previous research regarding journal quality having as little as 34 responses (Wicks and Derry, 1996), 30 responses (Macmillan, 1989), and 42 responses (Gomez-Mejia and Balkin, 1992). Finally, to prevent "ballot stuffing," the survey was programmed to prevent participants from taking the survey more than once from the same computer.

Two e-mails, roughly 1 week apart, were sent to the members of each of the listservs. Two weeks after the final reminder e-mail was sent, we assumed that the survey responses were complete and initiated the data coding and analysis process.

In order to gather the data to establish journal quality, the survey provided a list including 25 business ethics journals. Providing such a list and using a web-based delivery system is consistent with previous research because it allows respondents to focus on journals with which they are familiar (Brown and Huefner, 1994; Lowe and Locke, 2005; Zeff, 1996). Respondents were then asked to simply click on those journals that they perceived to be the top four business ethics journals from the prepared list. Once respondents had identified their top four business ethics journals, a follow-up question provided a list of the four journals that they had previously selected. Respondents were then asked to rank the previously chosen journals from 1 to 4 with 1 being the best journal. This type of weighting method is consistent with opinion-based rankings of journal quality in other fields by assuming linearity between preferences (Graham et al., 2005; Lowry et al., 2004).

All rankings were then weighted toward the rank order of the selected journals. For example, the first choice journal received four points, the second choice journal received three points, the third choice journal received two points, and the fourth choice journal received one point.

To account for the possibility that we had overlooked a high-quality journal in our list, the survey provided an opportunity for respondents to list

additional journals not included in the survey. While respondents identified several journals that we had not considered, no journal received enough votes to warrant inclusion.

Results of the analysis

Survey responses identified a clear set of preferences for business ethics journals among researchers. The results suggest that the top 10 business ethics-specific journals are listed in Table I.

The perception that the *Journal of Business Ethics*, *Business Ethics Quarterly*, and *Business and Society* are the three leading publication outlets in business ethics research is perhaps not a surprise, since these journals were among the top-rated journals in the research by Sabrin (2002) as well as the research by Wicks and Derry (1996).

When respondents were asked, without limiting themselves to business ethics journals, to list in order their top four journals in which they would most like to publish their business ethics related research, they listed well over 100 journals in fields as diverse as management, accounting, philosophy, psychology, and law. However, only 10 of these journals received a combination of 15 or more votes from

TABLE I
Business ethics journals ranking

Rank	Journal	Weighted votes
1	<i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>	394
2	<i>Business Ethics Quarterly</i>	326
3	<i>Business and Society</i>	306
4	<i>Business Ethics: A European Review</i>	219
5	<i>Business and Society Review</i>	139
6	<i>Journal of Corporate Citizenship</i>	118
7	<i>Journal of Business and Society</i>	88
8	<i>Corporate Governance: An International Review</i>	67
9	<i>Corporate Governance: The International Journal of Business and Society</i>	58
10	<i>Business and Professional Ethics Journal</i>	58

TABLE II
Top journals to publish business ethics research

Rank	Journal	Votes
1	<i>Academy of Management Review</i>	103
2	<i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>	91
3	<i>Business Ethics Quarterly</i>	82
4	<i>Academy of Management Journal</i>	62
5	<i>Business and Society</i>	50
6	<i>Administrative Science Quarterly</i>	38
7	<i>Organization Science</i>	27
8	<i>Business Ethics: A European Review</i>	20
9	<i>Strategic Management Journal</i>	16
10	<i>Harvard Business Review</i>	15

respondents. The results to this question are provided in Table II.

The above ranking provides empirical support to suggest that, within the business ethics academic community, many researchers would rather publish in the top business ethics journals than in mainstream management journals. This is somewhat surprising given that, for the most part, publishing in the top mainstream management journals provides additional exposure when compared to business ethics journals.

While the results of this study suggest that the *Journal of Business Ethics* is perceived to be the most preferred journal in the business ethics field, it is interesting to note that when we run an ANOVA regression there is no significant difference between the *Journal of Business Ethics* and *Business Ethics Quarterly* at the $p < 0.01$ level.

Similarly, when we perform an ANOVA as well as several chi-square tests on the data, we see a potential bifurcation within the international business ethics community. More specifically, the data suggest that those individuals who perceive the *Journal of Business Ethics* as the best journal in the field tend to: (1) be from Europe, (2) be members of the European Association of Business in Society, and (3) report that ethics-specific research helps them achieve tenure. On the other hand, those individuals who perceive *Business Ethics Quarterly* to be the best journal in the field tend to: (1) be from North America, (2) be members of the Society for Business Ethics, *Social Issues in Management* of the Academy of Management, or the International Association of

TABLE III
Differences in business ethics community

Respondents who perceived the Journal of Business Ethics as best	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Were from Europe 2. Were members of the European Association of Business in Society 3. Reported that research helps them achieve tenure
Respondents who perceived Business Ethics Quarterly as best	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Were from North America 2. Were members of the Society for Business Ethics, Social Issues in Management of the Academy of Management, or International Association of Business and Society 3. Reported getting more financial support for their business ethics research 4. Had higher ranked MBA programs as ranked by various media outlets 5. Published more often than those who perceived the Journal of Business Ethics to be the leading journal in the field

Business and Society, (3) report getting more financial support for their business ethics related research, (4) have higher ranked MBA programs as ranked by various media outlets, and (5) publish more often than those who perceive the Journal of Business Ethics as the leading journal in the field. The results are summarized in Table III.

Discussion

The bifurcation of the international ethics community was not a new concept and was even suggested over a decade ago in an essay by Enderle (1996a, b). In the essay, Enderle suggests that the two groups, one in Continental Europe and one in North America, are “relatives and strangers at the same time” (Enderle, 1996b, p. 34). Enderle further suggests that each group has its own strengths and weaknesses, and has the opportunity to learn from one another.

In a sense, the preferred publication outlet of each group seems fitting since the Journal of Business Ethics was originally published by Kluwer Publishing (based in the Netherlands) and later merged with Springer, another European-based organization (Springer, 2009). On the other hand, Business Ethics Quarterly is published in the United States by the Society for Business Ethics at the Philosophy Documentation Center (2009) creating a natural fit for business ethics scholars based in the United States. Furthermore, of the 15 editors and/or section editors currently serving at the Journal of Business Ethics in 2009, only three were based in the United States, with the majority of the members serving based in Canada and Europe. On the other hand, of the 13 individuals serving in 2009 as editors, assistant editors and/or associate editors at Business Ethics Quarterly, nine were based in the United States and only four were based in Europe and Canada. Since editorial members play such an active role in reviewing, marketing, and managing any peer-review journal, the demographics of the editorial boards on each journal may provide some additional insight into the journal preferences for each academic community.

The bifurcation of the business ethics community along geographic lines is somewhat problematic as it creates several inherent limitations to the growth and potential contribution of the business ethics field. Ethics, by nature, is subject to the perceptions of any given culture. Indeed, there is no systematic application of moral principles to concrete problems (Wines and Napier, 1992). Intercultural comparisons and benchmarks create many misunderstandings and can even create biases and moral superiority (Enderle, 1996a, b). As such, the division of the business ethics community along geographic lines can produce misunderstandings and frustrations when bridging the research and findings from the two groups.

A similar limitation of the bifurcation of the business ethics community has to do with developing goals and agendas for the field as a whole – especially with regard to business ethics research. While various conceptual models of business ethics research tend to bind together disparate parts of the field, bridging these frameworks together becomes increasingly difficult as divisions and boundaries evolve (Kahn, 1990). The bifurcation of the business ethics field further complicates attempts to bridge

the gap between normative and contextual business ethics and descriptive and prescriptive research in business ethics.

The journal rankings provide important insight into the current state of the business ethics academic community by providing empirical support to what business ethicists perceive to be the top journals within the field. By comparing this study to the previous journal ranking studies in business ethics, we see that the *Journal of Business Ethics*, *Business Ethics Quarterly*, and *Business and Society* continue to be leading outlets for business ethics research regardless of which method was used to determine journal quality.

It is interesting to note that only 4 of the 10 journals on the list are included in the impact factor analysis provided by the Thomson Reuters Journal Citation Report (Thomson Reuters, 2009). The Journal Citation Report is a quantitative tool used to evaluate the frequency with which the average article in any given journal has been cited in a particular period. The journal citation report is also commonly used to evaluate journal quality within the social sciences. The four journals that are included in the Journal Citation Report are the *Journal of Business Ethics*, *Business Ethics Quarterly*, *Business and Society*, and *Corporate Governance: An International Review*. *Corporate Governance: An International Review* has the highest impact factor, despite it being ranked lower than the other impact factor journals on our list. One possible explanation for this may have to do with the fact that business ethicists who focus on corporate governance comprise a relatively small percentage of the overall academic community, thus resulting in a lower ranking on the business ethics journal list. However, because *Corporate Governance: An International Journal* is one of the premier outlet publications for research on corporate governance, articles within the journal are highly quoted by other researchers studying corporate governance issues, resulting in a higher impact factor for the journal.

Limitations of the study

Although this research has contributed to our overall knowledge of many of the business ethics journals, as well as provided a deeper understanding of the

current state of the business ethics academic community, it has several limitations. First and foremost, as discussed throughout this article, the rankings provided are based solely on the perceptions of various business ethics scholars. As such, the rankings are subject to various interpretations as well as the various biases of each respondent. As the data is self-reported, the study does not utilize other criteria for determining journal quality such as acceptance rates, impact factor, review processes, and so forth.

For many years, scholars have argued that the field of business ethics is troubled by a lack of direction and a unified concept of business ethics (Donaldson and Dunfee, 1994; Garriga and Melé, 2004). However, along with this criticism has come a greater examination of the field and a common understanding that the business ethics field is interdisciplinary, ever-evolving, and a critical element of managerial life (De George, 1989; Trevino and Weaver, 1994; Victor and Stephens, 1994). As the field is highly dynamic and continually growing, it creates certain limitations in journal ranking studies as key journals and subtopics change over time.

While the respondents of our survey are quite evenly distributed across academic position and tenure status, respondents could be biased toward rankings those journals that they either have published in or believe they are most likely to publish in – providing a ranking based on potential publication activity instead of publication quality. However, this type of limitation is inherent with all self-reporting journal rankings studies regardless of discipline.

As was discussed earlier, members of the Society for Business Ethics, Social Issues in Management, European Business Ethics Network, European Association of Business in Society, and the International Association of Business and Society were specifically targeted for this survey. These five associations were chosen because after formal discussions with business ethics scholars from Europe, South America, Asia, and Europe, it was determined that they provided a good representation of the entire business ethics academic community. Furthermore, these five groups composed a large percentage of business ethics scholars throughout the world. However, it should be noted that targeting these five groups inherently causes two limitations to the study. First, it is possible that our research could have benefited from including other business ethics

associations such as the Institute of Business Ethics (IBE), the International Society of Business, Economics, and Ethics (ISBEE), and/or various other institutes and associations. Second, while the majority of scholars within these five associations belong to more than one association, a scholar may perceive the official journal of his or her society to be the highest quality journal in the business ethics field. For example, *Business Ethics Quarterly* is specifically sponsored by the Society for Business Ethics, and *Business and Society* is specifically sponsored by the International Association of Business and Society. While the *Journal of Business Ethics* is not the official journal of any organization or institution, it does sponsor several conferences. For example, every year a special issue of the *Journal of Business Ethics* is dedicated to the best papers presented at the European Business Ethics Network annual conference.

A final limitation of the study deals with the ranking of business ethics-specific journals when compared to other mainstream management journals. As the nature of the question upon which the ranking is based simply asks respondents, without limiting themselves to business ethics-specific journals, to list the four journals in which they would most like to publish their business ethics related research, the ranking itself may contain some bias. This bias is the result of the variety of backgrounds from which the respondents come. This difference in background may cause many of the respondents to list their top journals within their respective field. However, because all the respondents participate in business ethics research, but do not all participate in mainstream management, the mainstream management journals may have received less support, causing the results to be somewhat diluted. However, even with this possible bias, the rankings do provide support to suggest that many business ethics scholars prefer business ethics-specific journals as their publication outlet of choice.

Future research

The worldwide survey that was conducted as the basis for this research provides a framework and foundation for more research into the current state of the business ethics academic community. This

research could possibly involve issues dealing with business ethics journal rankings to better understand the field as a whole and further investigation into the causes and consequences of the bifurcation of the international business ethics academic community.

Future research into business ethics academic journals must focus on better understanding the various niche journals as well as supporting disciplines within the business ethics academic community. For example, do business ethics scholars who research subjects such as corporate social responsibility and civil society differ in their preferred publication outlets when compared to business ethics scholars who research subjects such as corruption, corporate governance, or the philosophical foundations of business ethics? Furthermore, insights into the various niches within the business ethics academic community and how each of these subgroup niches affects the overall business ethics academic community would provide additional insight into the current state of the field.

Additional research could compare this study to other externally verifiable data to identify and further establish journal quality within the field. This research could determine if there are correlations between journal quality and rejection rates, impact factor, make-up of journal editorial boards, peer-review process selected, professional versus academic publications, and number of years of a given publication.

While this study focused on better understanding journal quality from the perspective of a business ethics scholar or an “inside-out” approach, the field could also benefit from better understanding how our peers outside of our own field view business ethics. This “outside-in” approach would help to better define our own community as well as how our own field inter-relates and contributes to other disciplines within business schools.

Finally, an area that is closely related to journal quality includes a study of both the epistemology as well as the methodology, which is commonly used in research that is published in the various business ethics-specific journals. It has been suggested that management, for the most part, has been especially influenced by positivism (Astley, 1985), and mostly quantitative methods. On the other hand, empirical research in the business ethics field has, traditionally, been strongly influenced by naturalistic approaches

like phenomenology and constructivism and, consequently, qualitative methods. As a result, many studies in business ethics have been viewed by researchers in other fields as somewhat “soft.” However, over time, research methods in management have converged with the research methods in business ethics (Gephart, 2004), and today many researchers in both the ethics (Fernandez-Izquierdo and Matallin-Saez, 2008) and management fields employ many different types of both qualitative and quantitative methods in the research process. Future research needs to address if there are methodological preferences in the different business ethics journals and how these preferences are related to journal quality. These are interesting questions that, unfortunately, still need to be answered.

Conclusion

This study provides additional insight into the current state of the business ethics academic community. It is a valuable tool for individual researchers, departments, and business schools as they evaluate and judge business ethics related research. This study is the first international and global study to use an opinion-based approach to establish journal rankings within the business ethics field.

This research provides several important findings for business ethics scholars. First, this research provides empirical support to suggest that many business ethics scholars would rather publish their business ethics related research in the leading business ethics-specific journals rather than other mainstream management journals. This finding should provide additional evidence for business ethics scholars as they demonstrate research excellence to their colleagues. Second, this research provides a ranking of the top 10 business ethics-specific journals. While such a ranking will surely spur additional debate and evaluation, the list should help researchers and practitioners know where to find cutting-edge research on business ethics as well as assist researchers to find appropriate publishing outlets. Third, this study provides support to suggest the existence of business ethics academic communities in both Europe and the Americas. We speculate that these two groups will continue to grow and develop and that the two groups will continue to be the supporting

foundation of the overall business ethics academic community.

Unfortunately, despite the numerous benefits of journals rankings, journal rankings can also be misused. For example, rankings should not be used as the only approach for evaluating a candidate for promotion or tenure. Since the impact of an article may take years to truly be understood, basing the quality of any contribution solely on the journal in which the article appears would be inaccurate. Along this same line of reasoning, scholars should not determine journal quality based only on one methodological approach regardless of whether the approach is opinion based, citation based, or acceptance rate based. Because of the inherent limitations of each methodology, it is important that scholars use multiple evaluation techniques when determining overall journal quality – especially when the journal quality is being used as a measure of one’s research contribution.

It is our hope that this research will increase the dialog between business ethics scholars and other management faculty. Such a discussion between ethicist and management faculty will hopefully address the role of business ethics research as well as the challenges of conducting good research, evaluating research, and the relationship between business ethics and management research. Furthermore, it is our hope that this research will provide a foundation for additional dialog and research about the field as a whole.

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