

# Re-examining the Identity and Values of the *Christian Business Academy Review*

**BENTON JONES**

Bryan College

**LYNN RUSSELL**

Bryan College

**JAMIE SUMMERVILLE**

Bryan College

**JERON SUMMERVILLE**

Bryan College

**ABSTRACT:** To inform its readership and potential contributors, this paper revisits and builds on the work of Dulaney's (2014) study of the *Christian Business Academy Review (CBAR)*. In this article, the researchers analyze *CBAR* titles and abstracts and titles from the *Academy of Management Learning and Education (AMLE)* for the period from 2014 to 2023 and compare those results to Dulaney's original findings. To further name the specific discourse of the journal, the researchers conducted a thematic analysis of the *CBAR*'s abstracts. The results of this study show the *CBAR* to be a dynamic and growing venue for both single and multiple authors to engage in the sharing of ideas and resources related to the teaching of a great variety of business topics from a Christian worldview and to college teaching as a profession. Perhaps most importantly, the *CBAR* has remained true to its stated purpose.

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## INTRODUCTION

Business is a naturally multi-disciplinary field. From its beginnings as applied economics (Cherrier, 2013), business has been divided into academic fields such as management, marketing, accounting, finance, and entrepreneurship (Wren & Bedeian, 2020) as well as the enduring field of economics, which at smaller schools is now a subset of business (e.g., Lee University, Bryan College, Anderson University) but remains its own entity at larger schools (e.g., Auburn University, Harvard University, Dartmouth University).

Given the multifaceted nature of business, it might seem that this field is so broad that its disciplinary boundaries are endless, making it difficult to quantify and, therefore, to study. Yet countless editorial bodies of journals, including the *Christian Business Academy Review (CBAR)*, have placed

boundaries on their publications to provide scholarship to better serve their readers. The *CBAR*'s stated "focus and scope," as noted on the journal's public website is "promoting Christian business education through publication of faith-based articles" (Christian Business Faculty Association, 2023). This focus encompasses the whole field of business but places limits on its scope through the lens of Christian faith. The identity of *CBAR* clearly links the field of business education to Christian faith.

This statement about *CBAR*'s identity has led the researchers to this current study. While it is helpful to know that *CBAR* values business in reference to Christian faith, in what ways do the journal's titles and abstracts explicitly discuss this identity to the extent that they accurately reflect the articles' content? What does this journal specifically value regarding business, Christianity, and faith? These research

questions have guided the following study where the scope of the journal is explored through a quantitative and qualitative analysis of its articles' titles and abstracts to provide a more nuanced understanding of *CBAR*'s identity and values.

To do this work, the researchers first reviewed the current scholarship on how to study academic journals' content, including article titles, abstracts, authors, word frequencies, word clouds. Next, the researchers duplicated Dulaney's (2014) treatment of article authorship and the content of titles to examine ways the journal has (or has not) changed in the past decade within itself and compared to the *AMLE*. Lastly, the researchers conducted a thematic analysis of the journal's abstracts to identify more specifically the major topics of *CBAR*. This article ends with a summary of findings, implications, and suggestions for further research in studying journals' identities and values.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review consists of two parts. The first part maps the discourse around journal articles' authorship and the content of titles. The second part addresses the

importance of scholarship and stability of mission in academic journals generally, then explains the approach taken in this study.

### Article Titles

A growing body of literature has taken interest in what goes into an article title. Several studies have focused on how the title impacts the number of citations the paper receives (Nair & Gibbert, 2016; Van Wesel et al., 2014). Indeed, the title is the first pitch authors have at introducing their work. Mabe and Amin found that 5,000 science readers estimated that they scanned over 1,000 titles, read over 200 abstracts, and ultimately read less than 100 articles per year (as cited in Lewison & Hartley, 2005). With titles playing the role of an informative headliner to help the reader determine what articles to read, a quantitative analysis of titles has been used to provide insight into the content that is frequently published in the focal journals (Dulaney, 2014).

Previous studies have identified several areas of interest, including the frequency of word use, the number of authors, the length of titles, and colonicity. Of these, the literature seems ambivalent to the impact of title length and colonicity (Appiah et al, 2019; Lewison & Hartley, 2005).

Table 1: *CBAR* and *AMLE* Titles - Top Ten Words Comparison

2006-2013		2014-2023	
CBAR	AMLE	CBAR	AMLE
Business	Management	Business	Business
<b>Christian</b>	Education	<b>Christian</b>	Management
Teach(ing)	Business	Student(s)	Education
Student(s)	Learning	teaching	Learning
<b>Integration</b>	Introduction	<b>Integration</b>	School(s)
College(s)	Social	Course	Research
<b>Faith</b>	Research	<b>Biblical</b>	Academic
Management	Leadership	Learning	Impact
Education	Academic	Leadership	Teach(ing)
Faculty	MBA	Education	Role

Thus, only authorship and title content are addressed in this study. Bavdekar (2016) referred to the title as the “gateway to the contents of a scientific article” (p. 53). Other studies have likewise expressed that a “good” title is one that is informative and relevant to its content (Lewison & Hartley, 2005; Nair & Gibbert, 2016). In a comprehensive study, Whissell (2012) examined titles published in *American Psychologist* ranging more than sixty years and encompassing more than 12,000 publications. Whissell found that titles indeed reflect which topics are more popular within that field. Similarly, business is a multifaceted discipline, and the title plays a significant role in indicating the intended topic of an article. Thus, a quantitative analysis of titles should reveal which topics receive representation in the *CBAR*'s publication and should inform potential contributors of the relevance of their considered contribution.

### Thematic Analysis

Thematically, Dulaney (2014) presented the frequency of words in titles, comparing the results from the two journals (*CBAR* and *AMLE*) with an explanation of the meaning of the similarities related to subject matter and differences related to the difference in worldview. Dulaney's conclusion was that the two journals both serve the same constituency of business faculty, with the caveat “that ‘learning’ appears [in the top 10 in the *AMLE*] while the word ‘teaching’ replaces it in the *CBAR*. Both are active verbs related to education, but they represent a very different angle of approaching the material. While learning is centered on self, teaching is focused on others” (Dulaney, 2014, p. 96). That treatment of the titles for thematic analysis was repeated for both the *CBAR* and the *AMLE* for the 2014-2024 period. Excluding the terms specific to the Christian lens of the *CBAR* (indicated in bold) Table 1 shows that the two journals continue to be quite similar in the terms used within titles to describe their business and teaching focus. Both journals devote much of their publication to the general area of business and to management specifically, with

application to teaching and learning. Thus, *AMLE* remains a valuable secular journal for use in evaluating the *CBAR*, its faith-based counterpart.

The previous study also offered thematic analysis of abstracts combined with titles for the *CBAR*, resulting in the emergence of the word “student” vaulting to first place, further supporting the “teaching” approach found in the titles. A word cloud shared provided a powerful visual of the *CBAR*'s faithfulness specifically to its stated goal of providing articles that inform “scholarly skills” and “pedagogical exploration.”

The current study has adapted and expanded Dulaney's approach by comparing two time periods of the *CBAR* and *AMLE*: the previously studied eight-year period and the ten-year period since the original study. In addition, the current research has expanded its scope of analysis in the titles and abstracts of the *CBAR* to include inductive and deductive thematic coding, resulting in a more detailed narrative of what the editors and readers of the journal value.

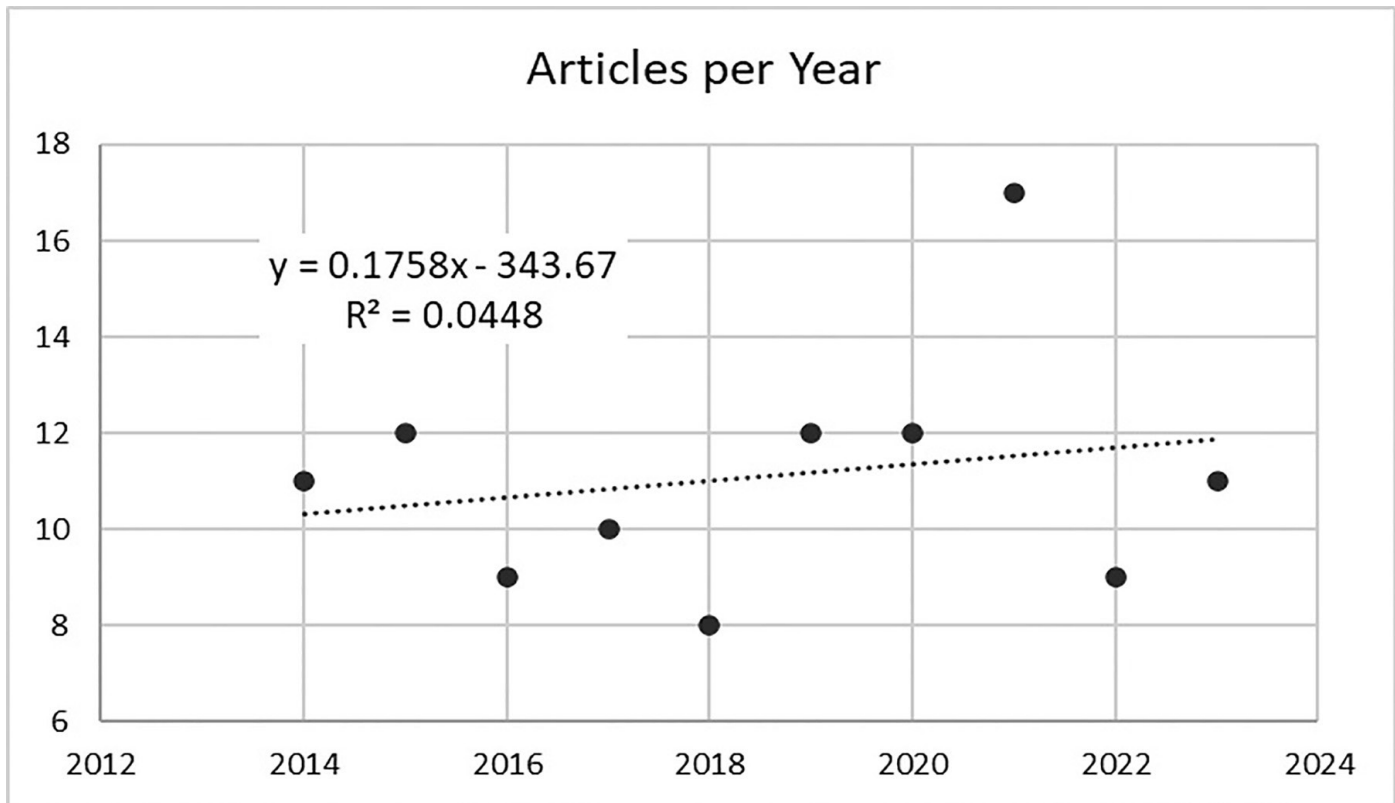
### QUANTITATIVE PROCESS, RESULTS, AND ANALYSIS

To repeat the calculations on titles and abstracts as performed by Dulaney (2014), but for the period after his study, the authors collected the titles and authorship from all articles appearing in the *CBAR* and *AMLE* from 2014 to 2023 along with the abstracts from the *CBAR* during this period. The titles, authors, and abstracts along with volume number and year were manually entered into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet for each article. A systematic sample of the titles was double-checked in Microsoft Word for correct spacing.

Regarding authorship, the decrease in the proportion of *CBAR* articles (with one author from 67% to 54%) is noteworthy because Dulaney (2014) pointed out that the high percentage of articles with one author showed that *CBAR* provided “a more accessible venue for individual authors to voice their thoughts with the academy” (p. 96). Related to titles and authorship, Lewison and Hartley (2005), in their

**Table 2: *CBAR* and *AMLE* Authorship Comparison**

Number of Authors	2014-2023		2006-2013	
	<b>CBAR</b>	<b>AMLE</b>	<b>CBAR</b>	<b>AMLE</b>
1	54%	19%	67%	38%
2	27%	33%	21%	31%
3+	19%	48%	12%	32%

Figure 1: *CBAR* Articles Published by Year

review of more than 216,000 titles across five different years (1981, 1986, 1991, 1996, and 2001) observed an increase in the number of articles involving two or more authors; therefore, the numericity of authorship was again considered. Thus, it was important to also compare the proportion of solo-authored articles in the *CBAR* with articles published in *AMLE*. The summary of this data collected is displayed in Table 2. Clearly, the percentage of articles with one author published in the *CBAR* is much higher than in *AMLE*. It is likely that the increasing publication requirements of teaching institutions where solo research is more common to seek publication has affected the increase in single author publication in both journals (Bailey, 2023). Teaching faculty are seeking to publish more often.

A review of the number of articles published in each edition of the *CBAR* is shown in Figure 1. This view revealed that the number of journal articles is increasing at a rate of approximately one article per five years. This finding seems to indicate increased interest in the topics published in this journal and is likely also influenced by increased publication requirements (Blake & Tjoumas, 1990), especially at “teaching” institutions (Bailey, 2023; Segarra et al., 2023).

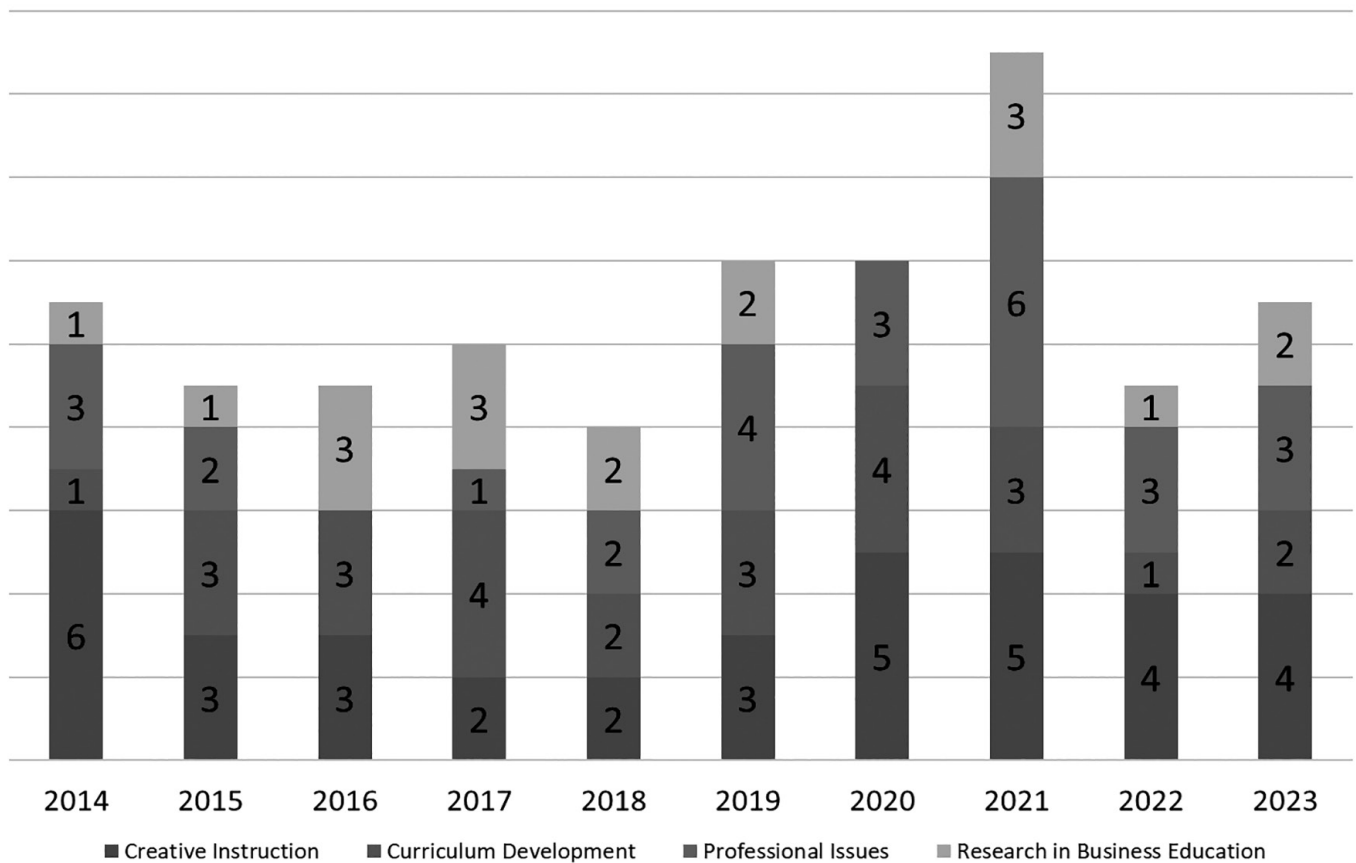
### Article Category Representation

Among the self-defined *CBAR* article categories of “creative instruction,” “curriculum development,” “professional issues,” and “research in business,” each of these categories has been well-represented over the studied period, with no apparent trend toward or away from one area. The most represented categories of “creative instruction” and “professional issues” show a clear relationship to the classroom and workplace themes uncovered in the thematic analysis discussed in detail later in the qualitative section of this article. Figure 2 shows the frequency of each type of article published in these categories during the studied period.

Creative instruction makes up approximately one third of published articles at a rate of approximately four per year. Curriculum development articles were published at approximately three per year. Within the creative instruction and curriculum development categories, authors offered many resources for business faculty use, referring to these resources with various titles, such as approach, framework, curriculum, and best practices. Similarly, the professional issues category is well-represented, published at approximately three articles per year and aligned with the journal’s role as a resource for instructors involved in the larger operation of their institution and to the profession of teaching business. Research in business education was the least-published cat-

Figure 2. *CBAR* Article Category Representation by Year

## CBAR Article Category Representation by Year



category at approximately two articles per year. Contributors to this journal seem more likely to have affiliations with teaching institutions than with research institutions, so the frequency of publication of research is not surprising (Bailey, 2023; Segarra et al., 2023). Case studies and book reviews were published at approximately one per year.

### Word Clouds

The last repeated step from Dulaney's previous study was the creation of a word cloud of the most used words in *CBAR*'s titles and abstracts. Figure 3 shows the word cloud from the titles and abstracts from articles published from 2014-2023.

With the exclusion of prepositions, grammatical articles, and the word "paper," the results of this word cloud show that the top five words of *CBAR* abstracts were "business," "Christian," "student(s)," "faith," and "faculty." The top five words of *CBAR* from Dulaney's study were "business," "Christian," "teaching," "student(s)," and "integration."

The top two words—"business" and "Christian"—have not changed in the last decade, indicating how *CBAR*'s identity is clearly communicated. Researchers seem to know

what this journal is about and what this journal publishes. However, the top third, fourth, and fifth words have slightly changed in the last decade. The word "student" has moved from fourth to third place with the word "teaching" no longer making the top five words of the journal. Additionally, the word "integration" is replaced with the word "faith." While these words are by no means significant changes, they do represent subtle variations in how the focus on faith integration while teaching students is expressed.

In summary, a quantitative analysis of titles, abstracts, types of published contributions, and word clouds shows a robust journal that is serving its readers within its scope and mission in various ways. Further, it shows that the *CBAR* remains a viable venue for publication within the nuanced field of faith integration in collegiate business education.

### QUALITATIVE PROCESS, RESULTS, AND IMPLICATIONS

While the quantitative section of this article primarily repeats and updates a prior study, the qualitative section of



Figure 3: Word Cloud



this article extends the previous study to examine in depth what specific content scholars are discussing. In essence, while the quantitative section discusses topics of the journal, it fails to capture *how* these topics are being discussed. For example, it might be interesting that the topics of Christian, student, and faith are brought up in the journal, but how are these topics being discussed? In what ways are scholars using these words? To answer these questions, the researchers used a qualitative method of data collection, coding, and reliability to name the ways that scholars discuss the major topics of the journal. Therefore, this section outlines the qualitative process used by the researchers and analyzes the major results and implications.

### Process

One major quantitative component of this article is the representation of topics in the form of a word cloud,

and notably the words “student,” “Christian,” and “faith” appear in the top five most common words in the journal’s abstracts. Though these words are certainly interesting to consider, they do not unpack the types of conversations and topics around these words that would reveal *how* scholars are discussing students, faith, and Christianity. To study these word cloud topics in more depth, the researchers decided to use a qualitative coding method to understand the content and context behind the words “student,” “faith,” and “Christianity.”

This method consisted of three stages: collection, coding, and reliability testing. The first stage of this process was the collection of data, which involved all abstracts from *CBAR* during the period 2014–2023. The second stage of the process was the coding of the data, referred to as a category or thematic creation (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Creswell & Creswell, 2018, pp. 193–296; Geisler & Swarts, 2019). It

was in this stage that the researchers decided on the coding framework of both predetermined and emergent codes. Predetermined codes are themes chosen before data is analyzed; it is the predetermined lens in which the data is categorized. Emergent codes are themes that present themselves as the researcher experiences and categorizes the data. In this type of coding, the researcher does not work with a set lens in the beginning but rather decides on the themes as he or she reads through the data, letting the themes emerge more organically than with the predetermined coding method. For this study, the researchers used the predetermined codes of “student,” “Christian,” and “faith.” Within these predetermined codes, additional emergent codes were created to name additional categories within the original predetermined categories of “student,” “Christian,” and “faith.” These emergent codes attempt to categorize what Geisler and Swarts (2019) call the “phenomenon of interest” (p. 124), which in this case, would refer to understanding the context of how business scholars of *CBAR* are discussing the predetermined codes. Using the qualitative coding software MAXQDA, the authors were able to narrow down the large database of journal abstracts to only include abstracts with the predetermined codes, so each researcher had access to a PDF file including only the abstracts from the identified predetermined code. Next, each researcher separately created emergent codes for each PDF. Whether on the computer or by hand, they individually came up with their own categories for the three predetermined codes. The last stage of this qualitative process was comparing the emergent codes created by the three different researchers to examine where the researchers came to the same or similar conclusions about the abstracts, thus verifying the emergent codes’ reliability.

It should be noted that the three researchers of this study come from three different areas of scholarship: business management, mathematics, and technical communication. The differing positionalities of the researchers bring a diversity of backgrounds to coding, which they believe elevates the reliability of the codes since these scholars came to the same conclusions, even from diverse fields of research and inquiry.

### Results: Codes and Cognates

The results of this qualitative process included both (1) two emergent codes and (2) a list of business cognates that further expound upon the emergent codes.

After the researchers completed their separate coding of the data, they came to the following two emergent codes: “classroom” and “workplace.” The code of “classroom” refers to information learned in the physical or online spaces of the classroom, while the code of “workplace” refers to

information from or about specific workplace environments. Table 3 provides some additional examples from the study’s abstracts for the emergent codes of classroom and workplace. The bold words indicate the words that most strongly relate to the emergent code.

Obviously, the codes of classroom and workplace are not completely independent from each other. For example, if an author discussed how to teach a specific workplace software from a company that would potentially hire many of her graduates, then in many ways this abstract would have to be coded with both codes of classroom and workplace. While there are certainly exceptions, the researchers of this study concluded that most articles leaned more towards one or the other, even if there was some overlap between the two emergent codes. Another way that the words “classroom” and “workplace” are not independent from each other is the reality that a classroom is a workplace for the professors who teach in that space. By the word “workplace,” the researchers were trying to capture the places in which students might be employed, not the learning space in which they learned about their major. Again, these emergent codes are by no means independent, but they still reflect the type of discourse that business professors are writing about in *CBAR*.

But even with these caveats, these two emergent codes reveal several interesting findings about the *CBAR*. First, it reveals the transformational nature of the faith-based, Christian learner. With classroom and workplace appearing in all three predetermined codes, it reveals how the journal is not putting boundaries on the applicability of faith, Christianity, and learning to all areas of life because all these concepts are equally important in both spaces. There is never a time when one’s faith is only applicable to the classroom and not the workplace. Even the predetermined code of student is equally as applicable to the classroom and the workplace as the codes of faith and Christian because it implies that learning is never complete; one can be a student in the workplace as much as the classroom.

Second, these two emergent codes reveal how the authors of this journal are thinking about teaching in both the spheres of the classroom and the workplace. With the journal mainly publishing in the categories of “creative instruction,” “professional issues,” and “curriculum design” (see Figure 2), it is reasonable to conclude that most of the authors who are choosing to publish in *CBAR* are teacher-scholars—academics whose main job is to teach with some to no course release for scholarly publications. The reality that both the workplace and classroom appear in the journal suggests that these teacher-scholars are bringing the workplace to the classroom and the classroom to the workplace and not focusing on the classroom exclusively. With the

Table 3: Text Exemplifying Codes

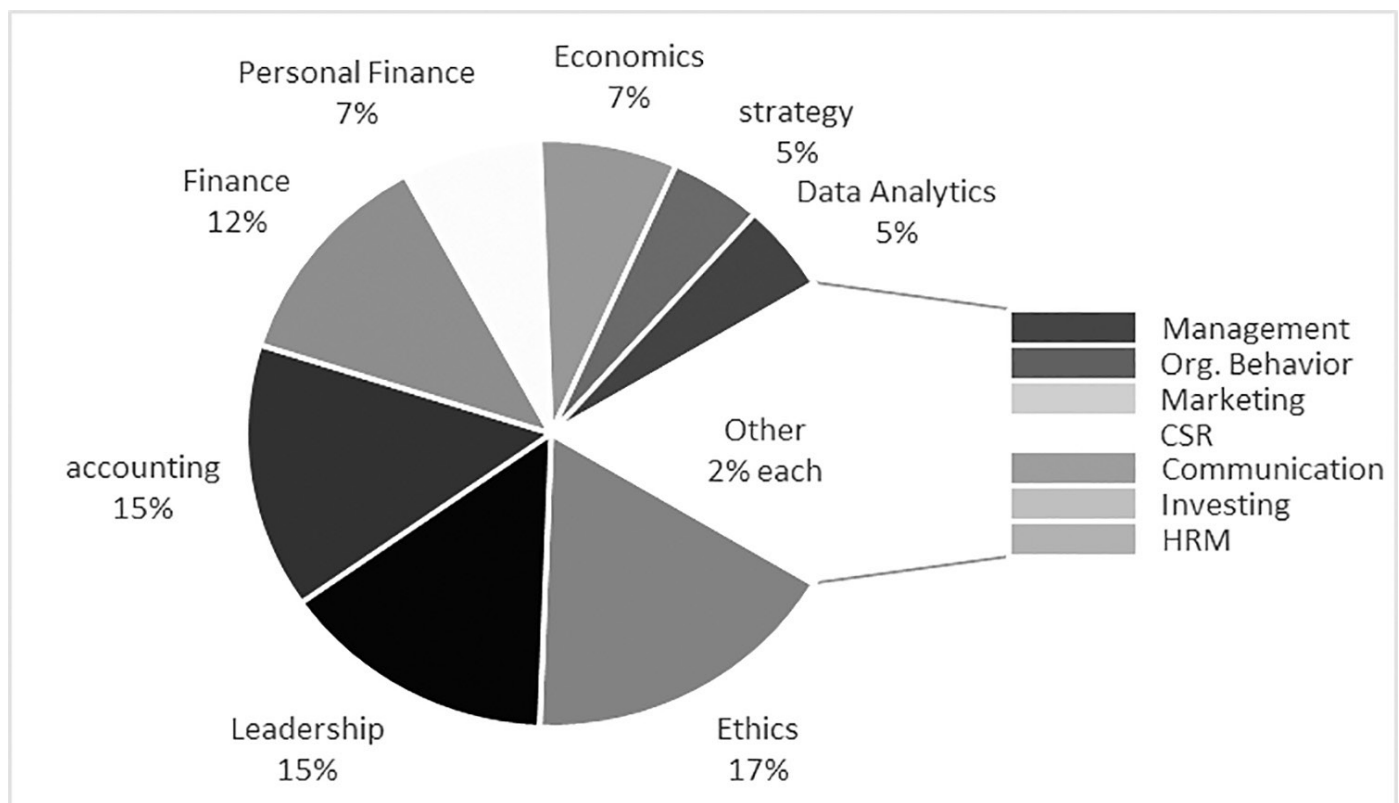
Predetermined Codes	Emergent Codes	Examples from CBAR Abstracts
Faith	Classroom	“The purpose of this content is to illustrate what a <b>classroom</b> aiming to reflect on faith identity, commercial activity, and the history between them could be for prospective faculty” (Bosch et al., 2015)
	Workplace	“This paper is a qualitative study centering on interviews with 28 business leaders about how they apply their faith to their <b>occupation</b> ” (McMahon, 2014).
Christian	Classroom	“Learning needs of postmodern business students that Christian business faculty must meet to teach faith and business integration are identified. Concrete examples of adjustments that may be required of Christian business faculty to meet these <b>new learning needs</b> are given [...]” (McMahon, 2015).
	Workplace	“After examining the literature on customer-oriented sales and servant leadership, the paper employs the results of a qualitative survey of a sample of <b>Christian salespeople</b> to identify the characteristics of a serving salesperson” (McQuiston, 2018).
Student	Classroom	“When teaching business communication, Christian faculty can integrate the virtue of love to help students cultivate ethical reasoning and bring cohesion to disparate <b>writing and speaking assignments</b> ” (Iluzada, 2019).
	Workplace	“This paper proposes a theory for addressing the challenge of preparing students to maintain integration of faith with business while starting <b>careers</b> ” (Herrity, 2015).



**Figure 4. Cognates by Frequency 2006-2013**



**Figure 5: Cognates by Frequency 2014-2023**



education discipline focusing so much on transfer theories of learning (Hajian, 2019), it is a compliment to the journal that its authors are effectively transferring the knowledge of the workplace to their students to then empower their students to transfer their knowledge to the workplace—and the core aspects that are being transferred the most are the topics of faith, Christianity, and learning.

To further explore these three important emergent codes, the researchers decided to categorize the results into business cognates which provided additional details within the broad categories of classroom and workplace. The common cognates of “management,” “marketing,” “accounting,” “finance,” and “economics” were used in addition to cognates that seemed to be central to some articles. A full list of article titles used is provided in the Appendix. This cognate analysis shows thorough and variegated coverage of these various fields of business within *CBAR*. Figure 4 shows the coverage of cognates in the previous period of review from 2006-2013. Figure 5 shows the same view of the current review period from 2014 to 2023.

This analysis also highlights that “ethics” is a frequent and important topic within the *CBAR*. This is an encouraging finding because it indicates that Christian business faculty teach their business students about protecting their faith from and relating their faith to their work as agents of God who manage God’s resources and people. As noted previously, there is overlap between topics, which obfuscates the clear categorization of cognates. Specifically, “ethics” can be considered a cognate to be studied separately from other areas within a business curriculum, but the *ethics* of any cognate may be studied within that cognate. In this review, articles which approached general “business ethics” were separated, while those providing a direct application of “ethics” within a specific cognate were categorized within that cognate. Thus, as one would expect in a journal about faith integration, there is considerable overlap between “ethics” and these cognates.

It should be noted here that “management” is likely far more represented than such a simple breakdown indicates as most of these other cognates are taught from a perspective that the students will likely be managing these aspects of a business. Thus, for example, “marketing” is often taught as “marketing management” but would be represented in an analysis as “marketing” rather than “management.” Overall, the cognates represented in *CBAR* articles showed that each contributed less than 15% of the articles during each period, representing a broad and balanced treatment of business sub-disciplines. As noted in this paper’s introduction, business is an umbrella term that represents a multi-faceted field of many individual areas of study, and these areas of

study often overlap in theory, instruction, and practice. In categorizing each article, only the cognate at the forefront of the topic based on the abstract was considered. This review suggests that the *CBAR* does not favor one area of business over the rest and that the journal publishes articles pertinent to many fields of interest to Christian business faculty.

## DISCUSSION

A false dichotomy in non-profit education can be that institutions must either resist change or drift away from their mission. Mission drift is a concern for non-profits (White, 2007), with some arguing that mission drift will happen naturally (Bennett & Savani, 2011; Hackler & Saxton, 2007). But, for educational institutions—including academic journals—remaining current is also important. Senge (1990) identified healthy change through organizational learning as different from mission drift. Oster (1995) noted that the mission of an organization serves the dual purpose of motivating and setting boundaries for organizations (p. 22). Thus, revisiting the content of a journal to ensure alignment with its mission is a helpful exercise to ensure that academic journals are remaining current while maintaining their mission. For example, Dyck and Starke (2005) reviewed Bible verses cited in 10 years of the *Journal of Biblical Integration in Business*, finding four major themes in the journal which were in line with the stated purpose of the journal.

Faculty writing and research expectations and requirements have been increasing for decades (Blake & Tjomas, 1990) and continue to increase at “teaching” schools (Bailey, 2023; Segarra et al., 2023). Some academics claim that this increase itself is a mission creep away from the primary role of teaching (Henderson, 2009), while others support expanding the definition of professor to include some research (Gump, 2006). Some go further to stress the argument that active research by teaching faculty is imperative for evidence-based management (Kassiola, 2007). Academics have many options when they choose to write for journal publication, but affinity toward the readership of the journals seems to be the most important (Niles et al, 2020). Regardless of one’s stance on the necessity or benefit of faculty writing and research, faith-based journals such as the *CBAR* are important to support Christian faculty at teaching institutions.

### Suggestions for Future Research

For future research, the authors of this study suggest that a review of this type be performed periodically to

determine changes in the content of articles published in the journal. It was not the intention of this research project to identify or suggest journal topics that could or should be added to the *CBAR*, as Cafferky (2017) provided for the *JBIB* after 10 years of publication. Such a project would likely require a different technique, such as bigram analysis (Camargo et al., 2018) or heat mapping of network analysis (Cho et al., 2017) and delving into the content of each article. As stated in the introduction, the identity and values stated by a journal should directly correlate to the actual content of the journal, so it is important to continuously affirm and/or reevaluate identity and values to ensure continuity within publications.

In this review, the researchers simply compared two periods of publication from both the *CBAR* and *AMLE* and provided an updated “state-of-the-journal” view, with further quantitative analysis by performing a thematic analysis in addition to the word cloud/frequency reporting. As Dulaney (2014) did in his original work, which inspired and provided form for this work, comparing this journal quantitatively and qualitatively to other journals could be done on many axes: to other Christian business journals, to secular management journals, and to other teaching/faculty journals. In conclusion, these studies are critical to mapping the identities and values of journals, ensuring that the identity and values of the journal matches the contents of its articles.

### CONCLUSION

In summary, this review of *CBAR* publications over a ten-year period as compared to the previous review of the journal’s first eight years of publication shows a stable platform for business faculty to share resources, insights, methods, and research. The quantitative analysis of the language of the journal revealed no marked shifts when repeating the previous study but shows sustained activity throughout each of the four types of articles published. The increase in the number of articles published in the *CBAR* over the past ten years shows growth in faculty interest in publication. The qualitative analysis performed through thematic analysis revealed a strong commitment to serving the readers of the journal through a wide variety of pedagogical topics related to classroom and workplace, and an analysis of cognates within business confirmed this focus on faith integration and revealed a broad and balanced application of faith integration within various disciplines. Through this study, the researchers concluded that the *CBAR* remains, as Dulaney (2014) noted, a platform in which individual authors share insights, resources, and research to better equip instructors

of business. The authors of this research, based on these findings, commend the *CBAR* to its readership as a lively and growing resource for Christian business faculty. The authors further commend the *CBAR* to potential contributors as a lively and growing venue for single and multiple author contributions throughout the various subdisciplines of business. We hope that this analysis and the summaries provided are helpful in determining the relevance of potential contributions to the “focus and scope” of the *CBAR*.

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