

# ERNOP Research Note



Academic articles on philanthropy through a practitioner lens

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## Do Nonprofit and Philanthropic Scholars Share a Common Language?

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Dating back to the 70s, the research field of nonprofit and philanthropy is still an emerging one: This article describes the emergence of the field and the development of a shared language among researchers.

It finds that knowledge on nonprofits and philanthropy became more cohesive over time: researchers use more shared language, especially since the early 2000s. Research topics that more productive scientists are studying have more shared language. More intensive collaboration among scholars is also associated with the use of shared language.

[#Networks](#) [#ScholarReputation](#) [#Nonprofitscholars](#) [#Gender](#) [#Consensus](#)

### Background & Context



- After its debut in the early 70s thanks to the contribution of scholars from various fields - with a heavy representation from psychology, then sociology and economics - a strong research community in nonprofit research has been forming since the 2000s. The consolidation of a distinct interdisciplinary field has been fostered by the remarkable creation of **academic associations** and **associated journals** that have given way to large numbers of publications.
- However, the cohesion of nonprofit scholarship deserves more attention than its volume: the exponential growth of literature does not necessarily come along with a shared language.
- The use of shared language is associated with three aspects of research:
  - the **networks**, as their role is fundamental to collaboration and its size
  - the **scholarly reputation** of scholars, forming collaborations and connecting different topics
  - the **topics** that scholars investigate.

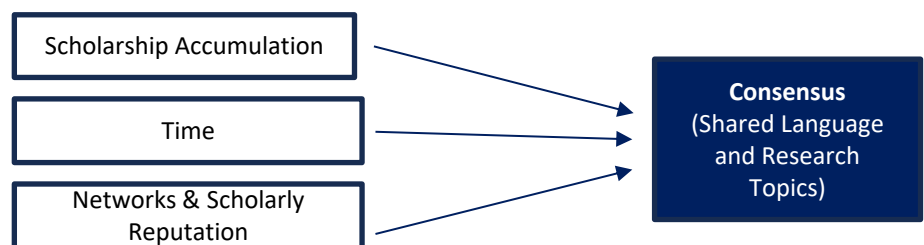
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### Take aways & Learnings



- The article addresses different questions:
  - For collaboration networks: do topics with more cohesive collaborations also use more shared language? Does specialization in topics reduce shared language? Do topics with larger teams use more shared language?
  - For scholarly reputation: do topics studied by researchers who are cited more often use more shared language?
  - For female authors: do topics studied more intensively by women use more shared language?
- For philanthropy practitioners, relying on academic research that shows evidence of consensus and strong intellectual cohesiveness is obviously of utmost importance.
- In the field, a **cohesive knowledge** body has been fostered by:
  - the **scholarship accumulation**: the more diverse the scope of the field, the higher the consensus.
  - the **collaboration network**: topics studied by larger teams of researchers use more shared language.
  - the **scholarly reputation**: researchers who are cited more often and who work in small, cohesive teams work on topics with more shared language.
  - the passing of **time**: the use of shared language has increased in the past decades.
- However, the article highlights **gender gaps** in a male-dominated field:
  - While 90% of the entire literature concentrate on 16 main topics, **only two of them (volunteerism and volunteers)** have more than 50% female researchers.
  - Female scholars are **cited less** often than male authors and tend to co-author more often with female scholars.



ERNOP Research Notes provide easy-to-read, practice-oriented summaries of academic articles on philanthropy and are written by practitioner experts. This ERNOP Research Note 2024/17 is published in June 2024 and has been written by Catherine Desjacques from the Universite de Rouen Normandie .More information can be found at [www.ernop.eu](http://www.ernop.eu).