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Moral education trends over 40 years: A content analysis of the *Journal of Moral Education* (1971–2011)

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In 2011 the *Journal of Moral Education* (*JME*) celebrated its 40th anniversary of publication. It seemed appropriate to examine and reflect on the *JME*'s achievements by reviewing its evolution and contribution to the emerging field of moral education and development. Moral education trends, as reflected in the 945 articles published in *JME* from 1971 to 2011, were investigated by content analysis. The research objectives were: to discover the trends in moral education as represented by published articles and special issues (by analysis of disciplinary approaches, key topics, research methodologies and age-related educational levels) and to examine the international and gender-related development of the journal and the influence of its contributors (by analysis of first authors and editorial board members). The findings identify important concerns, key research topics and neglected areas in moral education and development. Analysis offers an insight into the contribution of *JME* as the main international interdisciplinary journal in this field, to the history of moral education, to theory and practice and in the changing socio-cultural contexts of the past 40 years. Discussion of the findings is offered, limitations are acknowledged and implications for future directions for the journal considered.

Keywords: moral education; content analysis; *Journal of Moral Education*

For most of the 40 years since its inauguration in the UK in 1971, the *Journal of Moral Education* (*JME*) has been the only international and interdisciplinary journal in the field of moral education and development. It has thus been in a unique position to 'reflect and influence research, curriculum development and evaluation in moral education and moral development throughout its lifespan' (Taylor, 1996a, p. 5). To consider the history of *JME* is in effect to examine the trends of

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moral education and development, both in theory and in practice, over the past 40 years. It presents a distinctive opportunity to examine how the field has defined itself and what approaches to moral education and development in theory, research and practice have been represented in a journal which espoused and maintained a pluralist, inclusive, non-partisan position as it became more academic, proactively international and reflective of cultural diversity and interdisciplinarity.

Thus to honour the *JME*'s 40th anniversary of publication it seemed fitting to analyse and document the journal's contribution to the field. Such a project was also timely as the second researcher, the retiring editor, had access to the *JME* archives, which provided the changing socio-cultural background and historical memory which could be drawn upon in interpreting the findings from this content analysis. A full complementary historical description and evaluation based on a comprehensive review of *JME*'s archives (96 editorial board meeting minutes from 1974 to 2011 and 14 *JME* Trust AGM meeting minutes from 1998 to 2011) and other documentation is available in the *JME* archives (Taylor 2012; and, in brief, as a supplementary file to this paper, Taylor 2013). This sets out the journal's status and organisation, publishing arrangements and implications for financial policy, editorial board composition and structure, editorial management, policies, issues and practices and the promotion of *JME* and moral education in its evolution over 40 years. The historical overview provides the background context for the *JME* content analysed in this paper.

Furthermore, in the increasingly international context of the *JME* and the field of moral education, it seemed appropriate, complementary and challenging for us, as researchers with different disciplinary backgrounds—the first researcher is an educationist (having studied psychology and philosophy) with a focus on civic and moral education; the second with a background in philosophy and a career in educational research; from different socio-cultural contexts, in the east (Taiwan) and West (UK); and as both a relatively recent member of the *JME* editorial board, since 2005, and its long-term editor since 1976—to collaborate on this project and to test our assumptions, perceptions and interpretations of the field through this cooperative process.

Research questions

This study's purpose was to explore moral education trends as reflected in *JME* from 1971 to 2011. The two main research objectives were: (1) to discover any trends in moral education through a quantitative content analysis of papers published in *JME* across four decades, noting any changes over time and offering a qualitative interpretation drawing on *JME* archive data; and (2) to record and analyse the contributions of authors and editorial board members to the development of *JME* and the field of moral education from 1971 to 2011.

During the initial process of project discussion we considered what data would be available to be mined from published papers, including those in special issues;

from editorials; from the *JME* archive of editorial board meeting minutes and Journal of Moral Education Trust (JMET) AGMs, recording policy development and decision making; and from memorabilia. From these data sources we decided that there was a reasonable expectation of being able to address and answer the following research questions:

- (1) To what extent have disciplinary approaches (philosophical, psychological, sociological and cultural, educational, cross-disciplinary/interdisciplinary) and sub-disciplinary approaches been represented in *JME*?
- (2) To what extent have particular topics (key concepts, curriculum programmes, projects and models, evaluation and assessment instruments, scholars and their theories, as well as the country/countries and/or regional focus of papers) been represented in *JME*?
- (3) What issues and trends in moral education have been addressed by *JME* special issues and why?
- (4) To what extent have different research methods (quantitative, qualitative, mixed) and methodologies (questionnaire survey, types of interviews, types of observation) been represented in *JME*?
- (5) To what extent have different age-related educational levels (elementary school, high school) been represented in *JME*?
- (6) What background information is available about authors whose articles have been published in *JME* (number of authors of a paper, number of papers published by one author, gender of first authors, their countries and regions based on the location of the institution with which the first author was affiliated)?
- (7) What background information is available about members of the *JME* editorial board and editors (length of service, editorial and managerial responsibilities, gender, countries and regions based on the location of the institution with which the editorial board members were affiliated)?

By undertaking this large task of analysing 40 years of published papers and reviewing supporting documentation on the management of the journal, we hoped to discover research trends, key concerns and influences, as well as neglected areas in the theory and practice of moral education and development, to offer interpretative comments and consider implications for future research and publication.

Methodology

This documentary research used content analysis to investigate moral education trends over 40 years as reflected in *JME* from the first issue, Volume 1, No. 1, published in October 1971, to Volume 40 No. 4, published in December 2011. Over the 40 years, 139 issues and 945 papers have been published. The number of issues and papers published has increased over four decades, reflecting the move from three to four issues a year, with a change from academic to calendar year in

1982 (Volume 11) and then permanently to four issues in 1994 (Volume 23), and the increased pagination of each volume of the journal (from 216 pages per volume in 1976–1984, to 240 from 1985, to 288 from 1991, to 544 from 2000). Thus: 1971–80, 28 issues with 198 papers; 1981–90, 30 issues with 192 papers; 1991–2000, 37 issues with 251 papers; 2001–11, 44 issues with 304 papers. Two researchers (in Taiwan and the UK) led this project and, together with 11 graduate students (including two research assistants, whose majors were civic and moral education at National Taiwan Normal University, Taiwan), we undertook a content analysis of all 945 articles from October 2009 to February 2012. The content analysis methodology involved five main steps which were worked out by extensive detailed communication in English between the two researchers, by email and Skype between Taiwan and the UK and by discussion in person whenever conference participation allowed us to meet.

First, we defined the content to be examined and articulated the research questions listed above based on our experiences of research, editing the *JME* and what it was feasible to obtain from interrogating available original data. In conducting a quantitative analysis of 945 papers from the regular and special issues we included substantive editorials but excluded brief editorial introductions, review articles, books and curriculum material reviews, notes and news and conference reports.

Second, we developed categories relating to the seven research questions, drawing on our knowledge of the field. For example, in the first category, Disciplinary Approaches, the five main disciplines fit with the theoretical foundations of moral education and the 61 sub-disciplinary approaches¹ reflected the field as it emerged and grew over 40 years. With regard to research topics and key concepts of papers, as *JME* only had a keyword system for its first four volumes, we drew upon an embryonic keyword system from a register of *JME* editorial board members' and referees' interests and expertise, adding items from topics and concepts found in a random selection of journal articles and special issues and cross-checking with the list of entries and the index of *Moral Education: A Handbook* (Power et al., 2008) as well as the index of *Handbook of Moral and Character Education* (Nucci & Narvaez, 2008). We discussed the list several times in 2009 with the aim of being as comprehensive as possible, eliminating duplication and rarely occurring topics, allowing for changes in word usage over time and grouping and cross-referencing some key concepts, arriving at an original list of 224 key concepts.

We then tested category validity by consulting 14 professorial colleagues in a range of countries, whose expertise was representative of the main disciplines in the field of moral education and development, by email early in 2010, inviting them to comment on the objectives of the project and its categorisation. As a result of the feedback we received from 10 scholars we made some revisions to the sub-disciplinary approaches and key concepts. Table 1 describes schematically the categories of content analysis which we investigated.

The first researcher and her two research assistants developed a coding scheme and two coding books. The first coding book, in English, was for use by the two researchers who coded Category 1. Disciplinary Approaches and Category 2.1

Table 1. Categories of content analysis of the *JME* articles**1. Disciplinary approaches**

(5 main disciplines and 61 sub-disciplinary approaches listed,¹ multiply coded with up to 5 codes by the two researchers, based on title, abstract and whole article)

2. Research topics

- (2.1) Key concepts (224 key concepts listed,² multiply coded with up to 5 codes by the two researchers, based on title, abstract and whole article)
- (2.2) Curriculum programmes, projects and models (7 listed, plus other and none,³ multiply coded with up to 7 codes by 11 graduate students, based on title, abstract and whole article)
- (2.3) Evaluation/assessment instruments (10 listed, plus other and none,⁴ multiply coded with up to 10 codes by 11 graduate students, based on title, abstract and methodology of article)
- (2.4) Distinguished scholars and their theories (22 listed, plus other and none,⁵ multiply coded with up to 22 codes by 11 graduate students, based on title and abstract of article)
- (2.5) Country/countries/region focused on (195 listed,⁶ multiply coded with up to 195 codes by 11 graduate students and two researchers grouping them, based on title and abstract of the article)

3. Special issues

(Qualitative analysis)

4. Research methods and methodologies

- (4.1) Research and evaluation methods (8 general methods listed,⁷ plus other, multiply coded with up to 8 codes by 11 graduate students, based on the methods of the whole article)
- (4.2) Specific methodologies of empirical research (24 specific methodologies listed,⁸ plus other and none, multiply coded with up to 24 codes by 11 graduate students, based on the methodologies of the whole article)

5. Educational levels

(7 levels listed,⁹ plus none, multiply coded with up to 7 codes by 11 graduate students, based on the title and whole article, according to the author's/authors' definition)

6. Authors and their backgrounds

(Single code assigned by 11 graduate students and two researchers grouping them, based on the information provided by author(s))

- (6.1) Number of authors; name of first author
- (6.2) First author's background: gender
- (6.3) First author's background: country and region¹⁰ of affiliated institution

7. Editorial board members and their backgrounds

(Single code assigned by 11 graduate students and two researchers grouping them, based on the information given in each issue of *JME*)

- (7.1) Editorial board members' backgrounds: gender
- (7.2) Editorial board members' backgrounds: country and region of affiliated institution

Topics: key concepts. The second coding book, in both Chinese and English, was used by the students to code the remainder of the categories (see Table 1).

Third, it was thus important to test multiple-coder reliability, which was done using Cronbach's alpha.¹¹ The two researchers undertook a pilot by coding the same 10 articles independently for Category 1 and 2.1. The first researcher tested the inter-coder reliability, which was 0.63 for Category 1 and 0.62 for Category 2.1. We then had some interesting, detailed and focused discussion about our individual perspectives on general principles and specifics of coding and our interpretations of some of the sub-disciplines and key concepts, exploring our thinking and logic, which were related to our different disciplinary and cultural backgrounds. We then coded a further four papers independently and the inter-coder reliability was retested and found to be 0.86 for Category 1 and 0.80 for Category 2.1. In addition, the first researcher conducted a one-day training workshop with 11 prospective graduate student coders, involving explanation of the categories, joint coding of a sample paper, individual coding of four papers on various topics and from different time periods, testing of reliability and discussion of coding difficulties. As the graduate student coders were working in English as a second language they had to read and re-read the papers in order to undertake the coding, especially for the more difficult categories, such as Category 5. The inter-coder reliabilities of Categories 2 to 7 of the 11 graduate students were very high: the average was 0.96 and the range was from 0.81 to 1.00.

Fourth, the graduate students and the two researchers coded a total of 945 articles (whole population) in 139 issues, as indicated in Table 1, drawing as appropriate on the title, abstract and the body of each paper. The first researcher coded papers in almost two-thirds of the issues for Category 1 and 2.1 (n=90) and the second researcher coded papers in just over one-third of the issues (n=49); each researcher coded at least one issue from each volume (usually the first researcher coded issue two and three or four, depending on which of these issues was not the special issue of a volume, and the second researcher coded the first issue of each volume), and the coding of the special issues was divided between us in the same proportion as for regular issues. The graduate students, who were supervised by the first researcher, coded Categories 2.2–2.5, 4.1 and 4.2, 5, 6.1–6.3 and 7.1–7.2.

Fifth, the first researcher conducted a numerical and statistical analysis with Excel and SPSS 20.0, and wrote a first draft of the empirical paper. The first and second researchers discussed the analysis and interpretation of the findings and the analysis was extended several times. The second researcher edited and interpreted the quantitative analysis by drawing on a review of *JME*'s history of policy and practice. In order to address the detailed execution and interpretation of the research during the whole process of the project we continuously examined, discussed and reflected on the influence of our cross-cultural and interdisciplinary perspectives, noting their similarities and differences.

A major work of this kind, whose subject matter spans four decades, undertaken by researchers in two different cultures across the world must face some challenges and limitations. In the case of some analyses which we should have liked to conduct (nationality of first author and editorial board members, and referees, for example), data could not be interpreted with sufficient accuracy or were not available for the whole period under review. Moreover, whilst it is generally acknowledged that *JME* has made a leading contribution to the field of moral education and development, this review *only* draws on the papers published in *JME* and not on papers on moral education and development published in other journals or books. Thus we cannot make generalisations about the field of moral education and development as a whole.

Findings

1. Disciplinary approaches

We wished to discover the extent to which different disciplines and their sub-disciplinary approaches have been represented in *JME* over 40 years. The theoretical background of moral education was divided into five main disciplinary approaches (philosophical, psychological, sociological/cultural, educational and cross-disciplinary/interdisciplinary). Within these five main approaches we listed 61 sub-disciplinary approaches (philosophical 15; psychological 13; sociological/cultural 12; educational 13; cross-disciplinary/interdisciplinary 8; see Note 1). We selected up to five sub-disciplinary approaches for each article, which could relate to any of the five main disciplines when coding; therefore, totalled frequencies are greater than 100% and it is likely, especially as *JME* is an interdisciplinary journal, that a paper was coded as having more than one main disciplinary approach. The mean number of disciplinary approaches coded per paper was 2.5; it was difficult to discern theoretical perspectives in some early papers. Table 2 shows the results of disciplinary approach by decade.

Education was the most frequently occurring main disciplinary approach ($f=874$, 92.49%); that almost every paper should have an educational dimension is to be expected, since *JME* is a journal of moral education. Psychological approach ($f=518$, 54.81%) and philosophical approach ($f=467$, 49.42%) were similarly represented main disciplines over the first 40 years of *JME*. Sociological/cultural approach ($f=243$, 25.71%) and cross-disciplinary/interdisciplinary approach ($f=223$, 23.60%) were found to occur less frequently in the journal overall. The findings also showed an identical pattern for the five disciplinary approaches in each decade (see Table 2).

In order to see if there was any change in the representation of disciplinary approaches in papers published over the four decades, the first researcher carried out a Chi-square test for each approach to reflect the row (code) and column (paper) marginal frequencies as well as the overall number of papers (see Table 2). The findings indicated that although the papers were multiply coded and the num-

Table 2. Disciplinary approach by decade

Disciplinary approach		1971-1980		1981-1990		1991-2000		2001-2011		Total	Chi-Square (test for different decades for individual approach)	
		observed	expected	observed	expected	observed	expected	observed	expected		$\chi^2_{(3)}$	level of significance
Philosophical approach (sum of 15 sub-items)	frequency	75	97.85	106	94.88	99	124.04	187	150.23	467	20.69***	$\chi^2_{(,99)}=16.268$
	percentage	37.90%		55.20%		39.40%		61.50%		49.42%		
Psychological approach (sum of 13 sub-items)	frequency	114	108.53	105	105.24	128	137.59	171	166.64	518	1.06	$\chi^2_{(,95)}=7.815$
	percentage	57.60%		54.70%		51.00%		56.30%		54.81%	n.s.	
Sociological/cultural approaches (sum of 12 sub-items)	frequency	35	50.91	36	49.37	82	64.54	90	78.17	243	15.11***	$\chi^2_{(,99)}=11.341$
	percentage	17.70%		18.80%		32.70%		29.60%		25.71%		
Educational approach (sum of 13 sub-items)	frequency	202	183.12	193	177.58	194	232.14	285	281.16	874	9.60*	$\chi^2_{(,95)}=7.815$
	percentage	102.00%		100.50%		77.30%		93.80%		92.49%		
Cross-disciplinary /interdisciplinary approach (sum of 8 sub-items)	frequency	32	46.72	39	45.31	54	50.23	98	71.74	223	15.59***	$\chi^2_{(,99)}=11.341$
	percentage	16.20%		20.30%		21.50%		32.20%		23.60%		
Total (total 61 sub-items)	frequency	458		479		557		831		2325		
	Number of articles	198		192		251		304		945		

Note: All the 945 articles (whole population) published over 40 years were multiply coded for 61 sub-disciplinary approaches.

ber of papers increased across the timeframe covered by the review, the pattern across decades and approach was not simply due to chance or a systematic increase in pages per volume across the decades. With the exclusion of psychology, all of the approaches show statistically significant patterns of difference according to Chi-square analysis. The expected numbers for the psychological approach were roughly observed so this approach was stable over the four decades. By comparison, the observations were less than the expected frequency for the philosophical approach in the first and third decades (1971–1980, 1991–2000) whilst the opposite occurred in the second and fourth decades (1981–1990, 2001–2011). In contrast, education over-performed in the first two decades, under-performed during the 1990s and nearly met expectations during the most recent decade—suggesting a declining trend overall. Finally, like sociology, cross-disciplinary approaches under-performed until the 1990s with a large jump in the fourth decade, showing an increasing pattern. Taken altogether, it appeared that philosophical, sociological and cross-disciplinary approaches increased at the expense of educational but not psychological approaches (see also Figure 1).

In terms of sub-disciplinary approaches, cognitive developmental theory was the most frequently represented in *JME* ($f=268$, 28.4%), closely followed by teaching and learning strategies of moral education ($f=219$, 23.2%). Philosophy of education ($f=113$, 12.0%), educational administration and policy on moral education

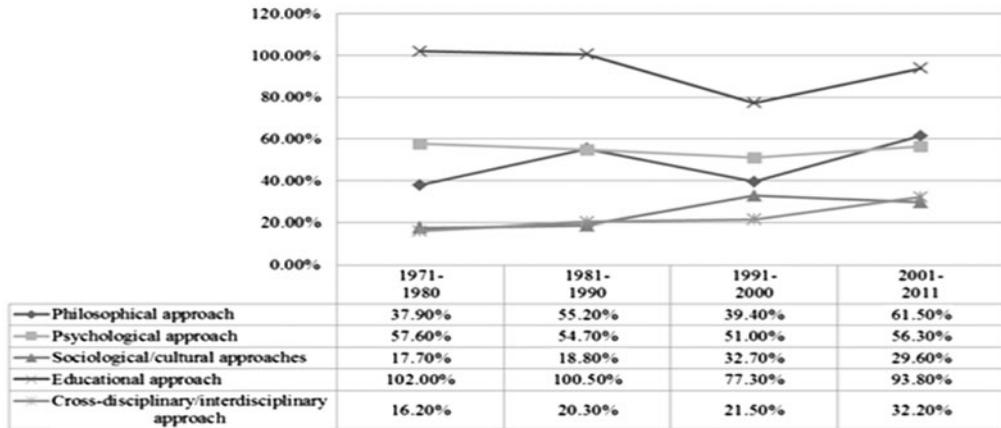


Figure 1. Trends of the five disciplinary approaches over the past four decades (by percentage)

($f=112$, 11.9%) and curriculum content of moral education/curriculum programmes ($f=107$, 11.3%) were each represented in more than 10% of papers. These findings on the content of the journal are largely a reflection of its remit. Only two (bioethics and evolutionary psychology) of 61 sub-disciplinary approaches were not represented in articles published in the past decade (2001–2011). This suggests greater disciplinary specialisation and fragmentation and greater diversity of approach being represented in the journal over 40 years.

2. Research topics

Research topics in the *JME*, including key concepts, curriculum programmes, evaluation/assessment instruments, distinguished scholars and their theories and country/countries/region focused on were coded by the research team as outlined in Table 1.

With regard to 2.1, each paper was coded using the original list of 224 key concepts. During the coding process we added a further 30 key concepts which were not in our original coding frame in order to properly reflect the research topics which we found in the papers over the 40 years (total 254). We selected up to five key concepts for each whole article when coding; the average number of key concepts coded per paper was three, therefore totalled frequencies are greater than 100%. Although the meaning of some of these key concepts changed through the decades, the researchers coded the data in accordance with the terms used by authors. At the analysis stage we examined the key concepts and merged some overlapping key concepts so that the total became 223. Overall we found 210 key concepts (181 originally listed plus 29 added) actually occurred in *JME*, and 13 were not used (see Note 2).

A total of 154 of these key concepts occurred more than twice. The three key concepts most frequently represented in the journal, each coded over 100 times, were moral reasoning/sociomoral reasoning ($f=113$, 12.0%), virtues/moral values

($f=105$, 11.1%) and moral judgement ($f=102$, 10.8%). More than 1 in 10 of the papers published in *JME* over the 40-year period dealt with these key concepts. Other key concepts which occurred frequently were religions ($f=95$, 10.1%), justice/fairness ($f=86$, 9.1%), moral development ($f=78$, 8.3%), teaching and learning ($f=68$, 7.2%) and socialisation/political socialisation ($f=60$, 6.4%).

The researchers classified the 30 top key concepts, which were each coded at least 26 times, into eight groups (see Table 3). The largest group—representing nearly half of the papers (48.3%)—was cognitive. The second group, including justice, rights and responsibility, related to over one-quarter of papers (27.9%). Three groups, labelled affective, values and socialisation, each related to around one-fifth of papers.

Further analysis of each whole paper showed that a minority of *JME* articles ($n=174$, 18.4%), had between them a number of curriculum programmes, projects and models (see Note 3) as research topics. The 10 most frequently occurring were: national or state-sponsored programme ($f=30$), reflecting the editorial policy of encouraging country-based state-of-the-art papers; Just Community ($f=17$); Child Development Project (CDP) ($f=10$); Kibbutz programme ($f=6$), Philosophy for Children/Thinking Skills ($f=5$); Four Component Model (FCM) ($f=4$); Deliberative Psychological Education Model ($f=3$); Facing History and Ourselves (FHAO) ($f=3$); Lifeline Programme ($f=3$) and Values Clarification Programme ($f=3$).

Only 18.2% ($n=172$) of *JME* articles mentioned in their methodology section a number of evaluation/assessment instruments (see Note 4) as research topics. The nine most frequently occurring (more than once) were: the Defining Issues Test (DIT1, DIT2) (J. Rest and neo-Kohlbergian approach) ($f=54$), the Moral Judgment Interview (L. Kohlberg) ($f=37$), the Moral Judgment Test (MJT) (G. Lind) ($f=18$), Skoe's Ethics of Care Interview (ECI) ($f=4$), Sociomoral Reflection Measure (SRM) (J. Gibbs) ($f=4$), Rokeach Values Survey ($f=3$), Dental Ethical Sensitivity Test ($f=3$), Loevinger Sentence Completion Form ($f=3$) and The Enright Forgiveness Inventory (EFI) ($f=2$). Again the cognitive developmental approach predominates in these instruments used.

Their titles and abstracts indicated that in almost half ($n=434$, 45.9%) of *JME* articles, various distinguished scholars and their theories (see Note 5) were research topics. The 27 scholars who occurred as research topics more than once were ranked as follows: Lawrence Kohlberg ($f=214$), Jean Piaget ($f=56$), James Rest ($f=40$), Carol Gilligan ($f=28$), John Wilson ($f=23$), Aristotle ($f=17$), John Dewey ($f=17$), Immanuel Kant ($f=15$), Émile Durkheim ($f=13$), Richard S. Peters ($f=9$), Nel Noddings ($f=7$), William James ($f=6$), John Rawls ($f=5$), Albert Bandura ($f=4$), Confucius ($f=4$), Socrates ($f=4$), Lev S. Vygotsky ($f=4$), Jane Loevinger ($f=3$), Martin Hoffman ($f=3$), Elliot Turiel ($f=3$), Erik Erickson ($f=2$), Michel Foucault ($f=2$), Sigmund Freud ($f=2$), George H. Mead ($f=2$), John S. Mill ($f=2$), Martha Nussbaum ($f=2$) and Plato ($f=2$). Confucius was the only non-western scholar to feature as a research topic.

Table 3. Frequency of the top 30 key concepts in *JME* classified into eight groups

Group			Frequency of response	Frequency of group (percentage of 945 articles)
Name	Ranking	Key concept		
Cognitive	1	moral reasoning/socio-moral reasoning	113	456
	3	moral judgement	102	(48.3%)
	6	moral development	78	
	10	moral dilemmas (moral dilemma discussion)	51	
	14	reasoning/reason	44	
	16	moral reasoning stages	42	
	29	discussion/dialogue	26	
Justice	5	justice/fairness (e.g. distributive justice, restorative justice, social justice)	86	264 (27.9%)
	17	human rights/children's rights/minority rights	41	
	21	responsibility/duty	35	
	22	decision-making	34	
	23	autonomy	32	
Affective	9	emotion/affective domain/moral emotion	56	199
	11	care/caring/ethics of care	49	(21.6%)
	19	relationship/relations/teacher-student relationships	39	
Values	26	moral atmosphere/moral culture/ethos	28	
	2	virtues/moral values	105	189 (20.0%)
	12	adolescent development and values	48	
Socialisation	20	values education	36	
	8	socialisation/political socialisation	60	165 (17.5%)
	13	moral behaviour/action/socio-moral action	45	
	18	citizenship education	40	
Religion	25	attitudes	29	
	4	religions (e.g. Judaism, Islam, Christianity/Protestantism/Catholicism)	95	138
	15	religious education/development	43	(14.6%)
Pedagogy	7	teaching and learning	68	94
	28	curriculum and instruction	26	(9.9%)
Sex education	4	sex education	32	8 (0.8%)

In particular, further analysis showed that the theory and work of Lawrence Kohlberg increased as a research topic especially during the past two decades: from $f=50$ (25.25%) (1971–1980), $f=31$ (16.15%) (1981–1990), to $f=57$ (22.71%) (1991–2000) to $f=76$ (25%) (2001–2011). The work and thought of James Rest, Carol Gilligan, Aristotle and William James increased in popularity as research topics in the past one or two decades. However, research topics with a focus on Jean Piaget, John Wilson and Richard S. Peters decreased over the decades. Whilst some of these findings may have been augmented by the publication of special issues (i.e. on Rest's Defining Issues Test; 31(3), Thoma, 2002; and the work of William James; 32(4), Snarey, 2003), the special issue may not always have had an additional effect (c.f. John Wilson's contribution to philosophy and moral education; 29(3), Halstead & McLaughlin, 2000).

The majority of papers ($n=545$, 57.7%) did not focus on any specific country in their title or abstract. Of the 42.4% ($n=400$) of *JME* articles which highlighted a specific country or countries as the substantive research context, 39.6% focused on one country and 2.8% focused on two or more countries. A total of 51 countries were explicitly mentioned as research topics. The top 28 countries, which were all mentioned more than twice in titles or abstracts of papers, were ranked as follows: United States of America ($f=118$), United Kingdom ($f=83$), China ($f=28$), Israel ($f=19$), Canada ($f=16$), Australia ($f=11$), Germany ($f=10$), Nigeria ($f=9$), Finland ($f=8$), Netherlands ($f=8$), Spain ($f=7$), Latin America (no countries specified) ($f=7$), South Africa ($f=6$), Chile ($f=5$), Japan ($f=5$), New Zealand ($f=5$), Russia (USSR) ($f=5$), Sweden ($f=5$), Taiwan ($f=5$), India ($f=4$), Italy ($f=4$), Malaysia ($f=4$), Norway ($f=4$), Poland ($f=4$), Singapore ($f=4$), Brazil ($f=3$), Mexico ($f=3$) and Pakistan ($f=3$). Those countries which formed a research focus were classified by geographical region into Europe (37.3%), North America (33.9%), Asia-Pacific (17.0%), South America, Central America and the Caribbean (6.1%), Middle East and South Asia (7.1%) and Africa (5.8%) respectively (see Note 10).

Furthermore, the number of countries which formed research contexts of *JME* papers substantially increased by decade, from 9 (1971–1980), to 10 (1981–1990), to 15 (1991–2000) and especially in the past decade, to 42 countries (2001–2011). In particular, the frequency of moral education/development in USA as a research topic increased overall, especially in the past decade – from 16 (1971–1980), to 5 (1981–1990), to 35 (1991–2000), to 62 (2001–2011). By comparison, moral education in the UK as a research topic decreased overall – from 41 (1971–1980), to 2 (1981–1990), to 20 (1991–2000 and also 2001–2011), reflecting change of educational emphasis. Israel as a focus for moral education research (total 19 articles) was mainly seen in the decade of 1991–2000 (13 articles), due to a special issue (Dror, 1995). China has grown as a research context for *JME* papers (total 28 articles) mainly during the past decade (19 articles, 2001–2011), partly because of a special issue (Li et al., 2004) and the stimulus it gave to an emerging group of international moral education scholars in China and the Asia-Pacific region.

3. *JME* special issues

Thus in considering the content of *JME* it was also important to recognise the contribution of special issues, hence the third research question: what issues and trends in moral education have been addressed by *JME* special issues, and why?

Although shortly after becoming editor the second researcher suggested an occasional special issue (Editorial Board (EB) minutes, 23.11.76), it was not until 1983 that the first special issue was published. Its subject was a relationship fundamental to the nature of the field—moral education, religious education and ethical theory—which was a matter of ongoing topical concern in the UK and of lifelong interest to the guest editor, the then chair of the editorial board, Harold Blackham. This combination of pertinence of topic and motivation of guest editor has characterised the evolution of special issues. Since 1983 there have been 27 special issues published annually, with only two exceptions (1985, 1989). A full list of the special issue titles, their guest editors, year and issue of publication was published in the *JME* 40th anniversary special issue in 2011 (40(3), 433–434); for the background context and issues see Taylor (2012).

Over the years the emerging goals of special issues have varied, but they have generally fallen into three main, sometimes overlapping, categories:

- to address topical concerns and/or key issues—e.g. the special issue in 1987 was a topical concern, ‘Feminist perspectives on moral education and development’ (guest editor Mary Brabeck), and Lawrence Walker acted as a guest editor of a key issue in 1999 addressing ‘The family context for moral education’;
- to provide an overview of an area of work in the field or in-depth recognition of a scholar and his work—e.g. ‘In honour of Lawrence Kohlberg. Some directions of current work’ (Dwight Boyd) in 1988 and ‘Towards an integrated model of moral functioning. On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of Lawrence Kohlberg’s doctoral dissertation’ (Don Collins Reed) in 2008;
- to give attention to a neglected topic, or to explore new directions of work or cultural/regional orientation not dealt with fully in normal submissions (e.g. Mark Halstead addressed the neglected and new area of work relating to Islamic values and moral education in 2007; and more recently, as a result of networking and development supported by JMET, work highlighting regions and cultures neglected in the western orientation of the journal was showcased in two special issues: ‘Moral and citizenship education in Latin America: towards reconciliation, community development and democracy’ (Susana Frisancho, Maria Cristina Moreno-Gutiérrez & Monica J. Taylor, 2009) and in ‘Moral education in sub-Saharan Africa—culture, economics, conflict and AIDS’ (Sharlene Swartz, 2010), which received the first *JME*-Taylor Prize in 2011.

The editors of special issues have mostly had a close connection with *JME*, many of them serving on its editorial board. Five special issue editors have acted in that capacity more than once: Mary Brabeck and Mark Halstead each served as both a guest co-editor and editor; Brian Gates and Mal Leicester each served as guest editors twice; and Monica Taylor has acted as a co-editor and also as a special issue editor twice. These were special issues celebrating *JME*'s 25th and 40th anniversaries: the former reflected on what was then the state of moral education; the latter offered an opportunity to 15 scholars worldwide, at different stages of their careers, to reflect on their own learning, personally, professionally and politically, in relation to the field (Taylor, 1996b; 2011).

The special issue topics over almost 30 years have been timely, of their own natural epochs, reflecting or leading the field—topics which needed to be addressed or which could at last be addressed with work of sufficient quality. Special issues 'have been creative, have broken new ground, have filled a gap, or have offered overviews... they have often taken the place of where we've thought the field needs to move on to... so have often been at the cutting edge' (Taylor, in Taylor & Narvaez, 2011, p. 5). Overall special issues have been innovative and informative, and have often been much appreciated by *JME* readers for introducing new work, highlighting low-status issues and giving recognition to people, cultures and regions. As a result special issues have stimulated research and new submissions from colleagues in related fields, and also from un- or under-represented regions.

4. *Research methods and methodologies*

The 945 papers were first coded for up to eight general methods (as a study reported in a paper might have used more than one method; see Note 7) and 'other' (which might not have been specifically named). Papers were then coded as to whether or not they were based on empirical research; if so, they were coded for up to 24 specific methodologies (see Note 8) plus 'other'. The findings showed that papers published in *JME* used a range of general methods of research and evaluation, as follows: literature review (51.4%); theoretical inquiry (24.0%); quantitative research (19.6%); critique, commentary and response to commentary (14.3%); historical research (9.5%); qualitative research (8.9%); mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative) (8.1%); and documentary analysis (7.5%); with almost no 'other' methods named. However, the percentage of papers which used literature review as a research methodology *per se* (not just as a background for the research questions) has varied over time and decreased markedly in the past decade, going from 66.2% (1971–1980), to 46.6% (1981–1990), to 71.3% (1991–2000), to 28.4% (2001–2011). By comparison, the percentage of papers which have used historical research (7.6%, 0.5%, 12.4%, 14.2%) and qualitative research (5.1%, 3.1%, 9.2%, 14.9%) increased over the past two decades. There were no clear trends with regard to theoretical research.

Further analysis showed that a small majority of papers ($n=537$, 56.8%) were *not* based on empirical research. However, 43.2% ($n=408$) of articles published in *JME* over four decades were based on empirical research and the percentage of empirical papers published has increased over time from 37.4% ($n=74$) (1971–1980), to 38.5% ($n=74$) (1981–1990), to 42.6% ($n=107$) (1991–2000), to 50.2% ($n=152$) (2001–2011). In total, 22 specific methods of empirical research (which excluded telephone interview, panel interview and grounded theory as listed, but included one ‘other’, action research) were ranked as follows: questionnaire survey ($f=120$); quasi-experimental research (pre-post test with a comparison group or groups in educational settings) ($f=58$); structured/semi-structured interviews ($f=54$); face-to-face interviews ($f=51$); participant observation ($f=40$); descriptive research (e.g. case study, series of cases) ($f=35$); controlled experiment (randomly assigned) ($f=29$); cross-sectional study ($f=29$); test/measurement development ($f=28$); discourse analysis ($f=27$); group interviews ($f=27$); quantitative content analysis ($f=26$); qualitative content analysis/thematic analysis ($f=22$); longitudinal/repeated-measures ($f=21$); narrative (e.g., oral history, life story interviews) ($f=19$); naturalistic observation ($f=11$); meta-analysis ($f=6$); focus group ($f=6$); ethnographic approach ($f=6$); phenomenological research ($f=4$); internet survey ($f=2$); action research ($f=1$). As some types of research (e.g. qualitative content analysis, ethnography) are both more labour intensive and difficult to obtain research sponsorship for, it is not surprising, especially in a relatively young branch of educational inquiry, that empirical research has more often focused on quantitative surveys (usually of more readily accessible higher education students) or quasi-experimental research. However, the percentage of empirical papers using types of interview is noteworthy and probably reflects the use of influential measures such as Kohlberg’s Moral Judgment Interview (see research topic 2.3).

5. *Age-related educational levels*

The age-related educational levels to which papers published in *JME* referred were divided into seven levels (see Note 9) and no specified educational level. Since it was possible to code any one article according to more than one level, the analysis counted both percentages and frequency of occurrence.

A small majority of papers ($n=539$, 57.0%) did not refer to any specific educational level. These were generally philosophical, historical or theoretical papers. In articles which related to a specific age-related educational level, by far the most frequently occurring level ($f=208$, 22.0%) was that of middle school/high school (secondary education; students aged approximately 11/13–15/18). Papers relating to this educational level included those which researched the perceptions and attitudes of students, their moral reasoning, educational policies, curriculum, teaching and learning and teachers’ attitudes. Elementary school (primary education; students aged approximately 5/7–11/12) was the focus of 14.7% ($f=139$) of papers, and 8.5% ($f=80$) of papers related to higher education/tertiary education (college/university). Junior college, further education and vocational school (students aged

approximately 16–19) were the focus of only 4.2% ($f=40$) of papers and the finding for adult and continuing education was similar (4.1%, $f=39$). The early years of education were rarely the focus of papers published in *JME*: only 3.2% ($f=30$) of articles dealt with pre-school education (children aged approximately 3/4–6/7) and only a very few ($f=10$, 1.1%) related to moral education in early childhood (children aged 0–3/4).

The percentage of papers relating to moral education and development in higher education/tertiary education (college/university) slightly increased over the 40-year period: from 5.1% (1971–1980), to 6.3% (1981–1990), to 10.0% (1991–2000), to 10.9% (2001–2011). There was no significant change over time in respect of the percentage of papers relating to any of the other educational levels.

6. *Authors and their backgrounds*

An analysis was undertaken of the number of authors of each paper, the number of papers an author published in *JME* over the 40-year period, the gender of first authors and the country and regional location of the institution with which the first authors were affiliated. Trends by decade were also considered.

Most of the 945 papers published in *JME* over 40 years were single-authored ($n=692$, 73.2%), and a further 18.5% ($n=175$) of papers had two authors. Fewer than 10% of papers had multiple authors: 4.6% ($n=43$) had three authors, 2.4% ($n=23$) four authors, 0.8% ($n=8$) five authors, 0.2% ($n=2$) six authors, 0.1% ($n=1$) seven authors and 0.1% ($n=1$) eight authors. The article written by eight authors was published in Volume 28, No. 3 (Spinrad et al., 1999).

Among the different disciplinary approaches, the percentage of articles with one author and more than one author varied considerably: philosophical approaches accounted for 81.6% and 18.4%, respectively; psychological approaches for 67.2% and 32.8%; sociological/cultural approaches for 69.1% and 30.9%; educational approaches for 74.3% and 25.7%; and cross-disciplinary/interdisciplinary approaches 74.0% and 26.0%. Philosophical papers were least likely to be co-authored (less than one in five), whereas almost one-third of psychological and sociological/cultural papers had more than one author. Papers with more than one author were much more likely to be based on empirical research: 68.0%.

There were 718 separately named first authors of the 945 papers published over 40 years. Of these, 594 first authors had one article published, 73 authors had published two articles, 30 had published three papers and 21 authors had published at least four articles. Among the 21 first authors who had published four or more articles in *JME*, there were only six female scholars. Most of these 21 first authors hailed from institutions in predominantly English-speaking countries (UK 10, USA four, Canada three), with a few from western Europe (the Netherlands two, Switzerland one) and Scandinavia (Iceland one). Such findings reflect the tendency for academic life and the field to be male-dominated and for publishing in English (at least until relatively recently) to be less accessible to those whose

first language is not English and those outside the 'western' world. The most published first authors of papers (not including editorials) in *JME* were: with four papers, Helen Haste, Lisa Kuhmerker, Fritz Oser, Mark B. Tappan, Margaret Weldhen and Derek Wright; with five papers, Robin Barrow, J. Mark Halstead, Graham Haydon, Ann Higgins-D'Alessandro, Kristján Kristjánsson, Mal Leicester (Mal Phillips-Bell), Ben Spiecker, Jan W. Steutel and Roger R. Straughan; with six papers, Barbara Applebaum, Tom Kitwood and Lawrence Walker; with seven papers, David Carr; and with eight papers, Dwight Boyd. John Wilson was by far the most prolific published author in *JME* during the past 40 years, with a total of 15 articles. Coincidentally, most of these first authors had a close connection with *JME*, having served on its editorial board, a duty of which was to write for the journal.

Turning to analysis by gender, 73.2% (n=692) of the first authors of *JME* articles over 40 years were male and 26.8% (n=253) were female. There was a slight increase in the percentage of female first authors between 1981–1990 (28.1%), which coincides with the second wave of feminism and its reappraisal and the influential publications of Gilligan (1982) and Noddings (1984). There was no significant difference in the gender ratio of 2.75:1 male to female first authors over the past four decades ($\chi^2_{(1)}=2.693$, $p=.441>.05$). As we only collected and analysed data on the gender of first authors we do not know if further research would have found more females as second, third, etc. authors.

In addition, analysis revealed that the first authors' affiliated institutions were situated in a total of 50 countries. Over 40 years, a total of 653 papers (69.1%) came from just three countries—USA, UK and Canada—reflecting the strong transatlantic connection which was built up in the journal's organisation and editorial board from the mid-1970s and which was prevalent for almost 30 years. The top 12 countries in which the first authors' affiliated institutions were located were as follows: United States of America (f=298), United Kingdom (f=275), Canada (f=80), Australia (f=41), Israel (f=31), the Netherlands (f=29), China (f=19), Germany (f=16), Spain (f=12), Finland (f=11), Nigeria (f=11), New Zealand (f=10). When the countries in which the institutions to which all first authors were affiliated were categorised into geographical regions, the ranking was as follows: Europe (41.6%), North America (40.0%), Asia-Pacific (9.9%), Middle East and South Asia (4.0%), Africa (2.8%) and South America, Central America and the Caribbean (1.7%).

Importantly, the provenance of the papers published in *JME* over 40 years has grown with increasing globalisation in the past decade. The number of countries in which the institutions of the first authors of published papers were located substantially increased in the past decade, from 19 (1971–1980), to 24 (1981–1990), to 25 (1991–2000), to 40 (2001–2011). In particular, the number of papers whose first authors were affiliated to institutions in the USA has increased markedly in the past two decades, from 41 (1971–1980), to 49 (1981–1990), to 87 (1991–2000), to 121 (2001–2011). The *JME*'s increasing affiliation with the Association for Moral Education (AME), whose membership since 1998 has

included a subscription to *JME*, may have increased awareness of *JME* in the USA, AME's country of origin (as well as in other countries), and some significant overlaps in the executive boards of both organisations may also have had a bearing on this. By contrast, the frequency of papers whose first authors were affiliated with institutions in the UK has decreased from 97 (1971–1980), to 76 (1981–1990), to 55 (1991–2000), to 47 (2001–2011), probably reflecting the impact of government policy which emphasised citizenship education from the late 1990s. Several countries in which the institutions of the first authors were based were mainly represented in *JME* in certain periods: for example, 11 articles from Nigeria in the first two decades (four in 1971–1980 and seven in 1981–1990); 12 articles from Spain, of which eight were published in 1991–2000; and 29 articles from the Netherlands, of which 13 were published in 1991–2000 and 10 in 2001–2011. These findings are most likely due to special contacts between an editorial board member and a country, scholars in these countries being encouraged to publish more in English, and because of *JME* editorial board members encouraging others to write for the journal.

7. Editorial board members and their backgrounds

The *JME* editorial board is responsible for editorial policy, content and monitoring publishing arrangements through the work of the editor(ial team). Board members are expected to attend board meetings, referee articles, identify and encourage potential contributors, assist with the book reviewing process and actively promote *JME*. Thus their role is of significance for policy orientation and individual members have been influential on the development of the journal and its content.

During *JME*'s 40 years there have been six chairs of the editorial board: the inaugural chair, Harold Blackham (1971–1977), James Hemming (1977–1985), Derek Wright (1985–1989), Don Locke (1989–1999), who managed the transfer of *JME* from its parent body and the inauguration of the independent JME Trust, Brian Gates—both chair of the board and of the trust (1999–2006)—and Stephen Thoma (USA, 2006–), the first from outside the UK. Two UK-based editors have been chiefly responsible for the journal: Derek Wright (1971–1976) and Monica Taylor (1976–2011), with the support of Dwight Boyd (Canada) as North American assistant editor (1981–1996). Over 40 years the organisation of book and curriculum materials reviews has been undertaken by 13 different review editors, among whom was Peter Tomlinson (UK; 1977–1990), with emerging transatlantic and then worldwide coordination.

A total of 100 academics and educational professionals have been members of the editorial board over the 40 years of *JME*'s existence (for a full list see *JME*, 40 (3), pp. 436–439). More than half of the editorial board members (57) served for 10 or more years and 19 for over 20 years, as for the first 25 years or so board members were largely only replaced or increased on an *ad hoc* basis to include known and respected colleagues, nominated mainly by UK or North American

members. In the past decade new board members were identified according to strategic needs for disciplinary, geographical and cultural representation, nominated and elected by the entire editorial board. The 'ten-year rule' of maximum service was introduced in 1999 (EB minutes, 19.1.1998) but was strictly invoked for the first time only in 2011.

In all, 12 members of the editorial board were actively involved for 20–25 years: for 21 years Jan Steutel (The Netherlands); for 21.5 years Helen Haste (UK, plus as a trustee since December 1997 and chair of the JMET since January 2007), Robert Hogan (USA), Nobumichi Iwasa (Japan), Tom Lickona (USA), Ralph Mosher (USA), Adam Niemcynski (Poland) and Derek Wright (UK); for 22.5 years Norman Sprinthall (USA) and Harold Blackham (UK); for 24 years Lisa Kuhmerker (USA) and for 24.5 years Mal Leicester (UK). Five members of the editorial board have been actively involved for 25–30 years: Brian Gates (UK, 26.5 years), Dwight Boyd (Canada, 27 years), David Ingram (UK, 28.5 years), James Hemming (UK, 29.5 years) and John Wilson (UK, 29.5 years). Two members of the editorial board have been actively involved with *JME* for over 30 years: Peter Tomlinson (UK, 34.5 years) and Monica Taylor (UK, 35.5 years). Since several of these long-serving scholars gave special service to the editing (as assistant editor, review editor, special issue editor or co-editor, sometimes more than once) and/or management of the journal (chair of editorial board, trustee, chair of the JMET), sometimes acting in several capacities simultaneously or sequentially, as well as writing for it, the stability and quality of the *JME* may be said to have benefited greatly from their active commitment, care and contributions. They took the emerging field of moral education and development and *JME*'s role in it seriously, sustaining and promoting the journal and its well-being.

Analysis of the gender of all editorial board members over 40 years demonstrated the predominance of men—just 26.6% of board members were female. This compares very closely with the gender-related findings for the first authors of papers published in *JME* over 40 years. However, the percentage of female academics serving as editorial board members has significantly increased over the past four decades, from 12.9% (1971–1980), to 16.8% (1981–1990), to 28.5% (1991–2000), to 37.3% (2001–2011). The changing gender proportion of editorial board members reflects the increase of women in more senior academic positions over these decades, at least in Europe, and an emerging deliberate equal opportunities policy of the *JME* during the mid–late 1990s, with a conscious attempt (Letter from the then chair to editorial board members, 1.6.96) and decision (EB minutes, 19.1.1998) to appoint and elect more women to the editorial board, though it took another decade to achieve (EB minutes, 9.6.2005).

Over the past four decades 90% of board members have been affiliated to institutions located in the west, with the majority—almost two-thirds—in Europe (63.9%) and almost one-third in North America (28.0%). The remainder comprised representatives from Asia-Pacific (5.5%), Central and South America (2.2%) and the Middle East and South Asia (1.1%).

Editorial board members have been located in institutions in 19 countries, with a steady increase in the number of countries over the decades: from five (1971–1980), to nine (1981–1990), to 14 (1991–2000), to 19 (2001–2011). The two most frequently represented countries (according to their listing as the institutional base of editorial board members in each of 139 issues) were the United Kingdom (50.6%) and the United States of America (22.7%). The other countries in which the institutions of editorial board members were located were Canada (5.3%), Japan (2.4%), Germany (2.3%), the Netherlands (2.1%), Switzerland (2%), Australia (1.9%), Poland (1.8%), Belgium (1.6%), Brazil (1.3%), Russia (1.2%), Spain (1.2%), Israel (1.1%), China (0.6%), Costa Rica (0.6%), Iceland (0.6%), Taiwan (0.6%), and Chile (0.3%).

In some cases the country representation of members was mainly related to certain time periods, such as Israel in 1991–2000 and Australia in 1981–2000. Representation from Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, Poland, Russia and Spain increased over the past two decades. The beginning of the past decade marked increasing country representation, with the inclusion of an editorial board member from Chile, and in mid-decade also members from China, Costa Rica, Iceland and Taiwan. This, again, was the consequence of deliberate *JME* policy to make the editorial board more ethnically diverse and more culturally plural, as well as reflecting globalisation, enhanced virtual communication and increasing publication by a new generation of scholars whose first language was not English. As *JME*'s history shows, there were increasing informal and formal opportunities for editorial board meetings and members' academic interaction at conferences (since 1985 at AME; in 1996 at *JME*'s 25th anniversary conference in UK; at the annual conferences of the Asia-Pacific Network for Moral Education (APNME) since 2006; and at *JME*'s 40th anniversary conference with AME and APNME in China in 2011). Thus over time there developed a wider web of contact and connection, giving rise to elected board members from a more diverse constituency and with different orientations towards and experiences of moral education.

Trends of moral education research in *JME*

In many ways the history of *JME* over the past 40 years reflects that of increasing internationalisation and globalisation in academic and everyday life. *JME* started as a UK-based journal aiming to link theory and practice by providing material appealing to scholars and researchers, whilst stimulating teachers and having an impact on educational practice. Within five years it became both more academic and transatlantic in its orientation. By the late 1970s it was reaching out to commission and publish state-of-the-art papers from a range of countries from which it did not normally receive submissions, and in the 1980s it deliberately extended its network of scholarly contact, connection and advice in parallel with its global dissemination. However it took another 20 years, with new technology and instant worldwide communication, for international permeation of its content, structures

and processes. Whilst the work and output of *JME* has taken place in a globally changing context which has, in turn, influenced the concerns, issues, policies and practices of moral education, we lack the space to detail global events which form the backdrop and grounding for moral education or to review the history of the form and content of moral education *per se* over the last 40 years—these would be important topics for other papers.

Moreover, our aim here has been specifically to consider the contribution the *JME* has made to moral education during this time. Thus this review does not claim to represent the published domain of theoretical and empirical research in moral education as a whole. Authors who have published in *JME* (and those who have not) have also (or alternatively) chosen to publish in journals in their own cultural and/or linguistic contexts (e.g. USA, UK, China, Taiwan) and in other general or specific disciplinary journals (e.g. in education, philosophy, psychology). Such practices, often to maximise academic interests, professional goals and funding requirements, may be perceived as influencing or even constraining the frameworks illustrated in the pages of *JME*. However, a strength of this *JME*-based content analysis is that it offers a grounded view of the nature of moral education research. From this some clear patterns have emerged over 40 years, and we highlight and comment on the most noteworthy and those which present further challenges.

As might be expected for a journal from a western country published in English, analysis shows that over 40 years the content of *JME* has been western-dominated in its orientation. Within this tradition the three main constituent disciplines of moral education and development—education, psychology and philosophy—have predominated, largely operating on parallel lines. Although cross-disciplinary and sociological research approaches are increasing, there has been a lack of deep interdisciplinary permeation, so that in the application of the disciplines to research questions in moral education we have not typically found that the conceptual and analytic philosophical approach has been used to clarify the questions of moral psychology, nor have its empirical findings fed back into philosophical thinking, and rarely have these disciplines been embedded in the socio-cultural context of the research.

Although the vast majority of papers (92.7%) were closely related to the discipline of education, focusing most frequently on teaching and learning strategies, administration and policy and curriculum content, and with an orientation to secondary education, only one-fifth of papers directly related to a specific curriculum programme, projects or models or focused on evaluation/assessment instruments. This may have been partly influenced by the journal's policy not to publish reports of new measures, which might be seen as the province of psychometric journals. Thus the journal's scope might be more comprehensive, especially in dealing with the connection between practice, empirical research and curriculum development. Unlike the great majority of countries in Europe and North America which have no specific timetabled subject called moral education (though it takes place in many curriculum areas and in cross-curricular work), formal moral education cur-

ricula have existed in several Asia-Pacific countries for more than half a century (e.g. subjects such as 'Ethics and Life', 'Morality' and 'Civics and Morality' in Taiwan; Lee, 2004). The development of a closer connection between educational theory, curriculum and evaluation in moral education in a greater range of age-related educational levels, as well as interchange experience between academics, researchers and practitioners in the east, west, north and south, should be encouraged.

Psychology (54.8%) was found to be the most stable foundation discipline of moral education papers published in *JME* over 40 years. In moral psychology the clear trend was to cognitive developmental and socio-cognitive theory, with the dominant group of key concepts being cognitive (moral reasoning, moral judgement, etc), a strong cognitive dimension to evaluation and assessment instruments and Lawrence Kohlberg and his cognitive developmental theory the most frequently occurring research topic, continuing to increase over the past two decades. Reviews have shown the cognitive dominance in educational psychology since the 1960s (Pressley & Roehrig, 2003, p. 334), with Piaget and Kohlberg's theory widely recognised in relation to moral and values education in numerous European countries by the early 1990s (Taylor, 1994, p. 41), and this trend has continued in *Contemporary Educational Psychology* where the 'most prevalent theoretical perspectives of the articles published from 1995 to 2010 were cognitive and social cognitive in nature' (Mitchell & McConnell III, 2012, p. 139). However, in the absence of an overarching theoretical perspective on human psychology, and given that moral aspects of life tend to be multifaceted and can require and benefit from a consideration of various approaches, further thought might be given to how a wider range—such as humanistic psychology, social-learning theory, social-domain theory, information-processing theory, socio-cultural psychology and emerging neuroscience and behavioural genetics—might be better represented in *JME*.

Philosophy (49.4%) was also a major discipline of moral education, almost equal to psychology. However, in the papers published in *JME* over 40 years, philosophical approaches were under-represented in 1971–1980 and 1991–2000, but exceeded expectation in 1981–1990 and greatly so in 2001–2011. The philosophy of moral education was dominated by analytic philosophy, conceptual analysis and meta-ethics, these sub-disciplinary approaches being dominant in the work of several philosophers which frequently formed research topics of papers in *JME*, and the three most published authors in *JME* were philosophers mainly from a conceptual-analytic tradition. Thus a cognitive approach was also prominent in philosophical trends, as Paul Hirst, an early *JME* board member (1971–1984) has indicated (1998, pp. 1–21). Richard S. Peters, based at the Institute of Education, London University—where the analytic approach to philosophy of education became established—played a central role in applying conceptual analysis to moral education until the early 1980s, when Hirst (1998, p. 16) argued that 'analytical work was leading to a new consideration of issues well established in the whole history of philosophy' (e.g. MacIntyre, 1981; Rorty, 1979). More diverse

philosophical approaches (e.g. neo-Marxism, critical theory, existentialism and post-modernism) have yet to be fully reflected in *JME*, which has only occasionally published papers drawing on ethics in continental European or eastern philosophies and, in the past decade, on virtue ethics.

Analysis of gender-related data in *JME* showed that, despite gender-related changes in western societies over 40 years, the ratio of male to female *JME* first authors remained stable at 2.75:1. What does this mean in terms of this field? It seems unlikely that there are fewer women than men interested and involved in moral education and development. We do not have empirical data to show if, compared with men, fewer women submit papers for consideration for publication, or if women are less likely to have their papers accepted for publication. A report by the American Association of University Professors (West & Curtis, 2006) which examined several indicators (e.g. full professor rank, average salary) to evaluate the situation of female professors at more than 1000 institutions across the USA indicated that, despite equal opportunity laws, female faculty still face a disadvantageous academic environment and their status continues to lag behind that of male faculty. Indeed, there remains much to be done in promoting a better gender balance in the field of moral education and development—one which purports to be concerned with gender equality and equal opportunities as ethical issues. As a result of the *JME* editorial board adopting such a policy in the late 1990s, over the last two decades, especially in the new millennium, the ratio of male to female board members improved to around 6:4, compared with almost 9:1 in the journal's earliest years. However, since papers are peer-reviewed anonymously it is difficult to envisage what might effect the publication of papers by more female scholars of moral education unless they have a much greater submission rate.

Much of the management and output of *JME* over its 40 years shows western dominance—in the provenance of its authors, the country focus of research topics, the institutional and country affiliation of editorial board members. Even with concerted efforts it took until the past decade of international electronic communication for editorial board members, authors and special issue topics explicitly recognising other regions, cultures and ideologies to be systematically included. In line with global trends, we might take as an example the increasing reflection of the Asia-Pacific region in the journal in the last decade, with some of its countries forming the topics of papers and a growing number of authors and the inclusion of editorial board members from this region. In particular, *JME* has reflected the rise of China and societies with Chinese cultural roots—Confucius was the only non-western philosopher and China was the third most frequent country (after the USA and UK) as a research topic. Kelly and Krisolds (1999, p. 10) argued that 'the Asian Miracle' was not just about economics but has always been interwoven with discussions about cultural identity, political reform, environmental impact and human development, so increased recognition of China and other Asia-Pacific countries in *JME*, especially in view of their emphasis on moral education, is part of the evolution of global and the *JME*'s own natural eras. It is not surprising that

balancing globalisation, regionalisation and localisation of moral education and the development and improvement of cultural interaction has emerged as a central issue with moral resonance and implications. The relationship between the legacies of the old nineteenth-century western European world and thinking, the twentieth-century dominance of America, and the twenty-first-century rise of China and other developing economies and cultures, and how this global interplay affects moral issues, education and development, will form the backdrop to academic papers in *JME* in the foreseeable future.

Some reflections and implications for *JME*

From the quantitative analysis, contextualised by the historical review, we can see how over the past 40 years *JME* has reflected the changing trajectory of research on moral education and development in the ebb and flow of theoretical perspectives, the fashions and fads of concepts, old dominations and new directions. From a qualitative chronological processing of the content of the papers we may perceive and briefly outline some broader trends and changes with emerging spaces for new perspectives.

Generally speaking, in the 1970s moral education in the western tradition, particularly in the UK and USA, had a close connection with religion, though there was concern about the breakdown of the old authorities with the increasing influence of the mass media and child-centred development. With the growth of secularism, individualism and pluralism in the 1980s a distinction between religious education and morality/moral education became more widely accepted, though questions about moral expertise and the implications of relativism abounded. In the 1990s scholars and professional educators broadened the sphere of moral education and merged new content into the concepts and topics of moral education, with a greater emphasis on citizenship education and civic consciousness (e.g. democracy, peace, anti-racism, equal opportunities). The early twenty-first century has seen a return to virtue ethics, with more attention given to emotions and affective education, and a changing focus from behaviour to being. In the past few years new scientific developments have stimulated an emerging interest in the neurobiological basis of morality.

Since the mid-1970s, despite criticism, Kohlberg's cognitive developmental approach and the theories of his followers played a dominant—almost exclusive—role in moral education, until the past few years, when there has been a lack of consensus and absence of one main theoretical framework, opening up space for alternative paradigms. Over the years a number of key concepts and terms have been changed through usage and lack definitional agreement (e.g. moral development, moral reasoning and moral judgement), but can be open to debate from different perspectives. Papers published in the early issues of *JME* were sometimes opinionated, often without empirical evidence, less 'objective', more engaged than current academic papers. Moral education should have scope

for new voices and orientations which draw on empirical data to make reasoned arguments. Latterly there has been increasing sophistication and complexity in some moral psychological research, with greater academic rigour and empirical papers more nuanced and culturally differentiated. There may be a sense of crossing disciplinary boundaries and seeking new cultural horizons. Furthermore, as *JME* has endeavoured to showcase government policies, goals and curricula of moral education in different regions and countries, it is important to appreciate their socio-economic and cultural contexts as frameworks for the characteristics, processes and practices of localised moral education. Moral education, however individual in its research orientation, has pro-social ends and means. Analysis of *JME*'s content also draws attention to a number of neglected topics, for example key concepts not found in *JME* articles (e.g. applied ethics, business ethics, post-modernism); the relative lack of sociological and interdisciplinary research; and a near absence of papers on moral education in childhood and early learning.

Analysis provides empirically based information for reflection on the field of moral education, but it may pose more questions than provide clear answers, and may raise some issues for future goals and practices for *JME* (see Taylor & Narvaez, 2011). First, debates within the journal's editorial board about balancing moral theory, research and keeping a relationship with practice; fostering greater interdisciplinarity—not just the parallel inclusion of different disciplinary perspectives—and cross-cultural research; and, incorporating its international remit, the relationship of education and development and respective disciplinary contributions in the journal's title, have all occurred throughout the life of the journal and bear revisiting. Moreover, in a journal focusing on moral *education*, it has been and should continue to be particularly important to ensure that academics engage explicitly with the educational implications of their research. Secondly, over 40 years *JME*'s editorial policy has been to try to relate to global change whilst recognising and engaging with cultural diversity, exploring how the challenges and trends of multiculturalism, interculturalism and post-modernism play out in local contexts. Thus *JME*, through the journal and the promotional activities of the JMETS, has served as an international, regional and local platform and network to try to relate to diverse needs and interests. Is this to be sustained, and if so, how? Though it can take a long time to raise awareness and effect change in terms of subject matter and orientation of submissions, this can be encouraged through new topics for special issues. In particular, *JME* could pay greater attention to the moral education issues of the Middle East and South Asia, South America and Africa, which are likely to gain greater prominence because of economic and political considerations. Also the field could benefit from both in-depth analysis of its strengths and weaknesses as well as overviews, learning from revisiting earlier work to inform future directions and aspirations. Third, greater overall diversity, with representation of broader disciplinary and interdisciplinary backgrounds and a more gender-balanced editorial board, as well as more female first authors, should remain objectives of the editorial board.

Finally, when planning its reorientation with a new editorial team and its goals for the next five years or decade, the *JME* editorial board should consider several questions, such as how much should be left to chance (i.e. through submitted papers); how much should be encouraged (e.g. by commissioning papers in neglected areas to spearhead the field); how much can and should a journal do—what is its mission; and what does that mean in terms of editorial involvement, mentorship and the ethics of the journal's own conduct? As an independent journal *JME* may be a special case because of opportunities for promotion and development through the JMET and the role of the trustees, in working with the editor(s) and editorial board/trust members in order to exercise the trust's responsibilities to meet its objectives.

Our undertaking of this project may be seen as a particular example of cross-cultural collaboration on a topic of common interest and shared value. We would advocate that more such is needed in moral education research. Though the content analytic process was the same for each researcher, our experience and learning was somewhat different: for the first researcher, whose close association with the journal began as an elected editorial board member in 2005, it was an in-depth encounter with the history of the journal and, through that, to background and broader issues in the field; for the second researcher it was a trip down memory lane, explicitly recalling the people, papers, policy-making and practices which nurtured and sustained the *JME*. In addition to the laborious work of coding and undertaking the quantitative analysis, there were many painstaking exchanges—across cultures, geography and time zones—of interrogation and explanation regarding the technical and linguistic challenges of presenting data until we reached an agreed level of confidence in its description and interpretation. We remain convinced that our cross-cultural and interdisciplinary collaboration added stimulus, a wider frame of reference and complementary perspectives to the final work.

As *JME*'s 40th-anniversary special issue showed, our personal, professional and political moral learning is not static, but evolves, and may be recursive (Taylor, 2011). Indeed, review of the journal's history shows many of the same issues have been considered time and again by the editorial board in evolving its guiding principles (Taylor, 2012). So at a time of managerial change and on the occasion of the middle age of a journal, it might be appropriate and profitable to revisit the journal's past to better understand why and how it has developed and to provide a firm foundation for future editorial policy decisions and practices. In undertaking this content analysis in conjunction with the historical review, we hope to have shown how publishing in the *JME* has contributed to the building of the field and its characteristic trends and to have recognised the significance of the contributions of authors and editorial board through their work leading, reflecting on and critiquing the field in its first 40 years. It is our hope that the *JME* will continue to be the leading interdisciplinary journal in moral education and development for the next 40 years and beyond.

Supplemental data

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Notes

1. The five main disciplinary approaches and their sub-items used for coding were:

PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACH		SOCIOLOGICAL/CULTURAL APPROACH	
1	Socratic or Platonic moral philosophy	29	Structural functionalism
2	Aristotle and virtue ethics	30	Conflict theory
3	Critique of virtue ethics	31	Interactionism and social action
4	Utilitarianism	32	Social constructionism
5	Kant and deontology	33	Anthropology
6	Pragmatism	34	Critical theory
7	Analytic philosophy, conceptual analysis and meta-ethics	35	Post-modernism
8	Feminist ethics	36	Post colonialism
9	Continental European philosophies	37	Post-structuralism
10	Eastern philosophies	38	Cross-cultural studies
11	Philosophy of religion and spirituality	39	Other sociological theories
12	Professional ethics	40	Other cultural studies
13	Environmental ethics	EDUCATIONAL APPROACH	
14	Bioethics	41	History of moral education
15	Other theories of moral philosophy	42	Philosophy of education
PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH		43	Educational administration and policy on moral education
16	Psychoanalysis and psychodynamic psychology	44	Curriculum content of moral education/curriculum program
17	Behaviourism	45	Curriculum critique
18	Evolutionary psychology	46	Teaching and learning strategies of moral education
19	Humanistic psychology	47	Moral education for teachers
20	Cognitive-developmental theory	48	Moral education for parents, adults and community leaders
21	Social-learning theory (traditional learning theory)	49	Information technology, media and moral education
22	Social-cognitive theory	50	Initial teacher training
23	Social-domain theory	51	In-service teacher training
24	Information-processing theory	52	School-based teacher training
25	Religious and spiritual development	53	Other educational theories
26	Social psychology	CROSS-DISCIPLINARY/INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH	
27	Neuroscience and behavioural genetics	54	Philosophical moral psychology (or philosophical uses of empirical moral psychology)
28	Other theories of moral psychology	55	Socio-cultural psychology
		56	Communism and anti-communism, socialism
		57	Issues of social justice
		58	Multiculturalism
		59	Racism and anti-racism
		60	Theory of democracy/liberalism
		61	Other cross-disciplinary and interdisciplinary theories

2. A list of key concepts is available from the first researcher.
3. The curriculum programmes, projects and models listed were: Child Development Project (CDP); Eleven Principles of Character Education; Integrative Ethical Education Model (IEE); Just Community; Philosophy for Children/Thinking Skills; national or state-spon-

- sored programmes; education-like programmes outside of schools (a. after-school programmes; b. youth programmes; c. sports programmes); others; no specific curriculum programmes, projects and models.
4. Evaluation/assessment instruments listed were: Defining Issues Test (DIT); Eisenberg's Pro-social Moral Reasoning Test; Moral Justification Scale (both care and justice orientations); Moral Judgment Interview (MJI); Moral Judgment Test (MJT); Rokeach Values Survey; Schwartz Values Survey (SVS); Skoe's Ethics of Care Interview (ECI); Sociomoral Reflection Measure (SRM, SF, etc.); The Enright Forgiveness Inventory (EFI); others; no specific evaluation/assessment instruments.
 5. The distinguished scholars and their theories were as follows: Arendt, H.; Aristotle; Bandura, A.; Dewey, J.; Durkheim, E.; Freud, S.; Gilligan, C.; Hartshorne, H. & May, M. A., James, W.; Kant, I.; Kohlberg, L.; Loevinger, J.; MacIntyre, A. C.; Nietzsche, F. W.; Noddings, N.; Peters, R.; Piaget, J.; Plato; Rest, J.; Turiel, E.; Vygotsky, L.; Wilson, J.; other; no specific scholar(s) listed.
 6. The 195 countries were based on the list of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of China (Taiwan), available online at <http://www.mofa.gov.tw/EnOfficial/Regions/AreaInfo/?opno=cb88453f-2569-4ef4-a220-8b58c732c517>, and referenced the United Nations Statistics Division <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/methods/m49/m49regin.htm#americas> (accessed 12 July 2010).
 7. The general methods listed were: theoretical inquiry; documentary analysis; literature review; historical research; critique, commentary and response to commentary; quantitative research; qualitative research; mixed methods (both quantitative and qualitative methods); others.
 8. Specific methods of empirical research listed were: descriptive research (e.g., case study, case series); quasi-experimental (a pre-post test with a comparison group or groups in educational settings); longitudinal/ repeated-measures; cross-sectional study; controlled experimentation; questionnaire survey; test/measurement development; meta-analysis; quantitative content analysis; face-to-face interviews; telephone interviews; group interviews; panel interviews; Internet survey; structured/semi-structured interviews; narrative (e.g., oral history, life story interviews); focus group; naturalistic observation; participant observation; ethnographic approach; phenomenological research; grounded theory; discourse analysis; qualitative content analysis/thematic analysis; others; and not empirical research.
 9. Educational levels listed were: early childhood (aged 0–3/4); pre-school education (approximately aged 3/4–6/7); elementary school (primary education) (approximately aged 5/7–11/12); middle school/high school (secondary education) (approximately aged 11/13–15/18); junior college, further education and vocational education (approximately aged 16–19); higher education/tertiary education (college/university); adult and continuing education; no specified educational level.
 10. The countries which featured as research topics, countries of the institutions to which first authors were affiliated and countries of the institutions to which the *JME* editorial board members were affiliated were classified by the researchers into regional groupings, as follows: Africa (nine countries, plus 'Africa' generically); Asia-Pacific (11 countries, including Australia and New Zealand); Europe (20 countries, including Scandinavian countries and Russia (USSR)); Middle East and South Asia (seven countries); North America (two countries); South America, Central America and the Caribbean (nine countries, plus 'Latin America' generically). The specific countries and their number varied according to research topic and the countries of the institutions to which first authors and *JME* editorial board members were affiliated.

11. The formula is: $Cronbach's\ alpha = m(Meanr) / [1 + (Meanr)(m-1)]$ (where Meanr = the mean of all inter-coder correlations for a given variable and m = the number of coders) (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 166).

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