



3

Parsing Dignity for Organizations

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3.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses the question: What form of business enterprise promotes human dignity best? A four-step analysis is used to answer this question. Since dignity can be understood in multiple ways, the first step considers diverse sources of reflection about dignity: from propositional (scientific) knowledge to personal individual experience, presentational knowledge (art), and practical knowledge. The second step analyses how these different kinds of knowing are reflected in several approaches to dignity found in the business literature. The presented approaches are examined in the third step, resulting in ten elements of dignity necessary to scrutinize different forms of enterprise. Lastly, we explore how family businesses, limited liability companies (LLCs), public companies, and

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cooperatives meet the dignity criteria when it comes to governance and decision-making in organizations more broadly.

3.2 Kinds of Knowing About Dignity

We start with kinds of knowing because the bias in recognizing scientific or philosophical knowledge as superior to other kinds may be the first harm we make to human dignity. Although we admit human rights in general, we may not recognize all types of knowing as legitimate, with practical consequences. We thus reduce our potential for understanding the human condition and its consequences for participatory decision-making.

According to Heron (1992), universities sustain a strong Aristotelian bias favoring propositional knowledge, that is, considered rational. Emotionally loaded experiential statements or the often-tacit character of practical knowledge infringe upon the conventional rules of logic and evidence. He instead proposes using a multi-dimensional account of knowledge to create holistic knowledge, adding practical, presentational, and experiential knowledge that validates propositional knowledge. All four kinds of knowledge also validate one another. For example, as we will see in the following subsections, propositional knowledge often departs from what is practically done in management and the economy. Each kind of knowledge has its specific validation criteria and thus should not be considered inferior to other kinds. The four kinds of knowledge constitute a systemic whole, in which experiential knowing at the base of the pyramid supports presentational knowing, which supports propositional knowing, which upholds practical knowing. A more detailed elaboration of the concept can be found in Heron (1992).

3.2.1 Experiential Knowledge

Experiential knowledge is based on our participation in life and our sensations and empathy related to it. In this kind of knowledge, one does not recognize dignity until one experiences losing it. Every one of

us has probably experienced what it means to be humiliated or hurt. We consider it an attack on our dignity. The natural reaction is revenge and aggression; if this experience is shared with others, a tribal mentality is born whereby we are those who have dignity, and others do not (Hartling & Lindner, 2016). An important part of our experience is being a witness, a role allowing for empathy toward those who suffered, although we were not personally hurt (*ibid.*). It may be painful to be aware of our or others' wounds. But we also compare ourselves with others regarding personal possessions, entertainment, education, etc., and consider we lack dignity if we are bereft of them, as we think we deserve the same. This view of dignity harmonizes with the contemporary neoliberal concept of human rights, which are supposed to lead to personal wellbeing (Stetson, 1998).

3.2.2 Presentational Knowledge

Presentational knowledge is experience recorded in such a way that it can be communicated to others. It may be expressed in all kinds of art, with fiction and movies being excellent sources of dignity themes.

Many religious and mystical texts belong to this category. In their holy scriptures, all eight major religions in their doctrines proclaim the love of the enemy (Templeton, 1999) and equality (Knox & Groves, 2006). For instance, the essence of the Christian view of dignity can be found in the stories of the good Samaritan helping a Jew who belonged to the tribe of the enemy. Another story is that of Jesus, performing a job of a slave washing his disciples' feet (to represent equality). The stories about Christ reveal him as not only equating rich and poor, free and slaves, but considering all people, both Jews and gentiles, men and women, as brothers and sisters, as well as sons and daughters of God. Throughout human history, and up until the present, such an understanding of human dignity ends with death or persecution. Many true stories of dignity all throughout history are tragic martyr stories.

Although not always called by this name, the topic of dignity has been present in the fine arts from Antiquity. Achilles in Homer's *Illiad* is seeking his dignity in heroic deeds (Korus, 2012), and Sophocles's

Antigone is risking her life to bury her brother's body to secure his dignity. They are followed by Plato, St. Augustine, More, Campanella, Bacon, Morris, Beecher, Blake, and many others.

The representation of workplace dignity in art has started to gain some interest in the propositional knowledge area (e.g., Pless et al., 2017; Stephens & Kanov, 2017). Moreover, there will be more and more places where dignity violations in the colonies are uncovered (e.g. Chew, 2021), as is made plainly obvious by the Black Lives Matter Movement, for example. In academic work, we often underestimate the influence of presentational knowledge, but we have to remember that those works impact the imagination of the general public. For instance, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is considered to have highly influenced the American Civil War (Kaufman, 2006); similarly, Doris Lessing and others claimed that Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's *The Gulag Archipelago* destroyed an empire (Scammell, 2018), all for the sake of dignity and the freedom related to it. Presentational knowledge should be studied carefully if we want to understand all dimensions of dignity in organizations.

3.2.3 Propositional Knowledge

Heron describes propositional knowledge as intellectual statements, both verbal and numeric, conceptually organized in ways that do not infringe the rules of logic and evidence (Heron, 1996, pp. 32–33). It is usually associated with academic or scientific knowledge. However, it should not be mistaken for empirical knowledge, and aspects that are related to managerial practices can be tied back to theology, philosophy, sociology, psychology, and biology. In their book on intentionality, Searle and Willis (1983) show that individual sciences describe our reality on different levels.

This section on propositional knowledge starts with a discussion of theology, followed by philosophy as the higher teleological level was traditionally studied by these two disciplines. To understand their role today, we have to be aware of the division within the propositional knowledge domain. Before Galileo, science took responsibility for its discoveries and did not popularize those that could harm humans.

The split between morality and science can be traced back to Galileo, who made strict methodological but not moral demands on science. In this way empirical science evolved independent from moral judgment, leading to more and more barbarian practices, and abandoning human dignity (Henry, 2012).

Theological Reflection

For centuries, both in antiquity and in the Middle Ages, the consistency of the natural order with the moral order was a matter of course, even though it required effort. Chaudhuri (1998) gives a short overview of dignity in different religions and their consequences for jurisdictional systems. Generally, almost all dignity researchers mention the theological idea of man being created as an image of God. The most frequently mentioned consequences of this are free will, equality (Mieth, 2014), the universality of dignity, and its unconditional character (Dierksmeier, 2015).

The first theological statement pertinent in management is human participation in creation. Participating in God's creation makes human participation in the world, not a value that we can choose or not, but an element of our dignity (Kijas, 2012). Furthermore, theology considers cognition leading to an understanding of oneself and the world also an element of human dignity (Kijas, 2012). If we are to love other people, we have to understand them.

After participation, the second theological consequence of man as "Imago Dei" is the trinitarian character of God. If God is present as a love relationship between three persons, then human dignity also has to be relational by nature (Dobrzyński, 2012; Hanvey, 2013; Kijas, 2012). If so, sufficient individual autonomy has to be coupled with our social nature for a complete image of dignity (McCrudden, 2013). Another consequence of this relational character is seeking the common good on a global scale. The idea of individual, social (tribal), or even national wellbeing is unacceptable from this point of view, as all humankind is one family (Dobrzyński, 2012).

Suppose we consider the previous consequences as horizontal ones, as they are reflected in human relationships. The third important dimension of dignity, from a theological point of view, is its vertical nature. Dignity is expressed in man's dialogue with God; the human is created to be saved and to live eternally in God (Hanvey, 2013). Sacrifice and suffering are integral elements of human dignity in this view (Kijas, 2012). From this point of view then, cognition, free will, care for the community, and participation are all elements of dignity.

Dierksmeier (2015) claims that if we make human dignity derivative of God's nature and thus dependent on theological premises, then such foundation may not be convincing if someone does not share the faith. The view that God is a human creation derives from an idealist point of view, it is argued, where dignity too is just another human construction.

Philosophical Reflection

Plato and Aristotle linked dignity with human rationality. It had to be achieved through the guidance of others, and according to Aristotle, in self-mastery where understanding of one's purpose of existence plays a crucial role (Dierksmeier, 2015). Dignity had a conditional rather than universal character. Some human beings like women or non-Caucasian races were seen as "natural slaves", lacking the capacity of purposive reasoning. This view had obvious economic and managerial consequences because it gave the intellectual elite the moral right to lead the so-called unwise even against their will (Dierksmeier, 2015).

In the seventeenth century, Emmanuel Kant was the philosopher who finally separated philosophy from theology, and dignity from God. Once dignity is detached from God's law, humans can design the course of life and their ideas as they wish, and what follows can also redefine their dignity accordingly. From this perspective, no past existence, customs, or circumstances create boundaries (Dierksmeier, 2015). It is in the era of Enlightenment that the idea of human rights was first proposed. Although mainstream thinking about dignity follows the

Kantian approach, alternative views are present in the existential perspective (Kierkegaard, 1995 [1847]; Marcel, 1964), in personalism (Maritain, 1973; Wojtyla, 1979), and in phenomenology (Spiegelberg, 1971).

Contemporary thinking is highly influenced by liberalism, which distorts human self-understanding and defaces human dignity (Stetson, 1998).

Sociological Theories

The distinguished figures of sociology analyzing dignity were Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, and Max Weber. The challenges to dignity were, respectively: (1) the control of labor by capitalists and their exploitation of workers, resulting in alienation from meaningful work; (2) the breakdown of social norms or rules governing workplace relations due to the drive toward endless expansion generated by modern industry; and (3) the imposition of bureaucratic rationality in the world of work and the resulting stifling of human creativity.

In more recent analyses, based on ethnographic detail from diverse settings, ranging from automobile manufacturing to medicine to home-based sales and temporary clerical work, Hodson (1996) finds that four significant challenges to dignity at work are: (1) mismanagement and abuse; (2) overwork; (3) limits on autonomy; and (4) contradictions of employee involvement. Hodson also analyses successful strategies in which workers maintain and defend their dignity. These are (1) resistance; (2) citizenship; (3) the creation of independent meaning systems; and (4) the development of social relations at work (Hodson, 1996). Interestingly, all of these phenomena have a dynamic, processual character and are much closer to the idea of dignity as a potential that has to be developed, rather than just an ontological state of humans.

Psychological and Biological Reflection

Dignity is not recognized as a phenomenon in mainstream psychology (Skinner, 1971), but we find reflections about dignity at work from significant representatives of humanistic and positive psychology (e.g.,

Frankl, 1985; Fromm, 2006; Jung, [1957]1990; Maslow, 1968; May, 1953; Robbins, 2016; Rogers, 1985). Fascinating is the view of human dignity as the hermeneutics of love which is practically exemplified by the likes of Martin Luther King Jr., Gandhi, the Dalai Lama, Mother Theresa, St. Therese of Lisieux, St. Francis of Assisi, Thich Nhat Hahn, Al-Ghazali, Rumi, and Thomas Merton (Robbins, 2016).

Few people remember that it was in the eighteenth century that we were given a distinct name by a Swedish biologist, Carl Linnaeus, who, by not being able to find anatomical differences between primates and humans, had to refer to our features of self-awareness and thinking, as reflected in the term he used—*homo sapiens* (Cribb, 2016). Contemporary biologists also see the purposefulness of behavior from their own point of view. It turns out that “even the ‘growth behaviors’ of plants and the ‘chemical behaviors’ of the individual cells in our bodies are in some sense intelligent and purposive, wisely directed toward need-fulfilling ends” (Talbot, 2017, p. 63). This biological observation is an important aspect in finding and defining a sense of human work as an element of human dignity (McGranahan, 2020).

Another stream of research both in psychology and in neuroscience is about how dignity feels because such knowledge can also guide our organizational life. Hicks refers to Miller’s notion of “condemned isolation”, in which people feel locked out of the possibility of human connection (Hicks, 2018). Hartling and Lindner (2016; Hartling, 2007; Lindner, 2006) studied humiliation and confirmed that social pain, associated with the experience of disconnection and rejection, is as real as physical pain. There are many other studies supporting what was so far only an element of experiential or presentational knowing (Kendler et al., 2003; Leary et al., 2003; Nohria et al., 2008; Thomas & Lucas, 2019). Less spectacular, but nonetheless devastating for our happiness, is the abnegation of dignity in the drive for profit and consumption (Pirson, 2017). Babiak et al. (2007) see this drive as the consequence of psychopaths being more successful in recruitment and promotion because of their ability to be charming, thus giving the impression of being good leaders. They also fit the necessities of the bureaucratic workplace, and most of all, better fit the rapidly changing and dehumanized business environments.

3.2.4 Practical Knowledge

Practical knowledge, evident in knowing how to exercise a skill, is for Heron (1996) the fulfillment of the quest for knowledge, as it is based on all other forms of knowing. It is essential to realize that practice does not always align with the propositionally formulated concepts upon which they sit.

Donna Hicks, skilled in resolving painful conflicts and negotiations all around the world, summarizes her experiences: “Honoring dignity is love in action. Human connections flourish when dignity is the medium of exchange” (Hicks, 2018, p. 59). Her Dignity Model comprises Acceptance of Identity, Recognition, Acknowledgment, Inclusion, Safety, Fairness, Independence, Understanding, Benefit of the Doubt, and Accountability (Hicks, 2018). This view of dignity is unconditional. Everyone has it. All we have to do is take care of it and protect it both in ourselves and others. However, she realizes that we do not always do so, hence she enumerates the most frequent temptations¹ to abandon real dignity for the sake of fake dignity. This concept of dignity resembles what we will find in theological discussion, sociological concepts, and ethnographic research. Hicks confirms these conclusions of the dynamic character of dignity, stating that dignity consciousness means that we are connected to our dignity, the dignity of others, and the dignity of something greater than ourselves. This latter form of connectedness may take different interpretations, for example, as a higher power or a connection to the natural world and the planet.

Similar to dignity researchers, Hicks stresses the need for developing dignity consciousness. This is done in three stages: (1) dependence; (2) independence; and (3) interdependence. Her inherent dignity concept, emphasizing the interpersonal dynamics of dignity, effectively surpasses the most popular wellbeing and human rights understanding of dignity because she stresses our responsibility for fulfilling it.

¹ These include: Taking the Bait, Saving Face, Shirking Responsibility, Depending on False Dignity, Maintaining False Security, Avoiding Confrontation, Assuming Innocent Victimhood, Resisting Feedback, Blaming and Shaming Others, Gossiping, and Promoting False Intimacy (Hicks, 2018).

Respecting dignity is something that we need in all social contexts of human life. This is evidenced in the development of many standards, tools, and frameworks in which dignity plays the central role (e.g. Tiwari & Sharma, 2019; the Equality Act of 2010²; National Council of Dignity³; Dignity at Work Act⁴; ISO26000⁵).

3.2.5 Summing up—four Ways of Knowing

Experiential, presentational, propositional, and practical knowledge create a multi-dimensional, systemic, and holistic account of knowledge. Each type of knowledge is not inferior to the others, and instead, they build on and support each other. The four types of knowledge can be summed up as:

- Experiential: based on our participation in life and our sensations and empathy related to it.
- Presentational: experience recorded in such a way that it can be communicated to others through all kinds of art.
- Propositional: consisting in intellectual statements, which are conceptually organized in ways that do not infringe the rules of logic and evidence.
- Practical: the exercise of a skill based on all other forms of knowing, but in practice, it does not always align with the propositionally formulated concepts upon which they sit.

² <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>.

³ Dignity in Care, https://www.dignityincare.org.uk/About/The_10_Point_Dignity_Challenge/.

⁴ <https://dignityatworkact.org/>.

⁵ <https://www.iso.org/iso-26000-social-responsibility.html>.

3.3 Dignity in Management Studies

3.3.1 Dignity Models Used in Management

One of the most recent reflections about dignity comes from humanistic management scholars. Pirson divides managerial practices into economic and humanistic approaches. Within the economic approach, dignity may either be (1) completely neglected (Pure Economism), (2) protected (Bounded Economism), or (3) promoted (Enlightened Economism) (Pirson, 2017). The weakness of all “economisms” is that they fail Kant’s means-ends test. For Kant, a person could only represent the end of the action. At the same time, in the economic approach, the human being and their dignity are the means for achieving some external outcomes (ends) of an organization.

The humanistic approach in organizations is meant to change the situation because it rests on two pillars: dignity and wellbeing. In the stated assumptions, the overarching goal of organizational activity is meant to be shared wellbeing, based on the idea of creating the common good. Unfortunately, without shared ownership, the concept of shared wellbeing is just theoretical wishful thinking (Cribb, 2016). In the humanistic approach, all stakeholders are, in theory, invited to participate in meeting the goals of the organization. The concept of wellbeing is defined after Aristotle’s *eudaimonia*. Literally translated, it means “good spirit”, but it is usually translated as happiness. Aristotle linked the state of happiness with virtues so that, according to him, *eudaimonia* is “virtuous activity in accordance with reason” (Pirson, 2017). In the context of our previous discussion, this concept of dignity is related to a person’s reasoning and development of virtues. We will return to these issues below, when explaining other possible conceptions of dignity in management.

There are two kinds of humanistic approaches delineated by Pirson. In Bounded Humanism, wellbeing is the objective, but the focus is on defending it against autocratic or paternalistic practices. An essential question for the Bounded Humanism pedagogy is what it means to lead a good life (Pirson, 2017). In Pure Humanism, apart from protecting wellbeing and dignity, the focus is on finding organizing practices that would

promote dignity. The promotion of dignity is also the objective of educational efforts. In this approach, dignity is recognized in the educational process and efforts to develop the virtues and character of all involved (Pirson, 2017).

Another conceptualization of dignity in management is the organizational dignity theory, a concept in which the subject of dignity is not a single person but an organization instead (Teixeira, 2021). The development of this theory started with the following question: What do the stakeholders review when they evaluate the consequences of the actions that organizations carried out for the stakeholders' dignity? First, the stakeholders are assumed to evaluate organizations in terms of (1) cultural elements (practices supported by values); (2) an ethics orientation (deontological or teleological); and (3) a more personal or social-oriented focus (stakeholder focus). Then the stakeholders classify the organizational dignity (from high to low) in the organization's moral, legal, and pragmatic aspects. What is meant to be original in this approach is that organizations, rather than persons, are allocated with dignity for their relations with stakeholders. But, in fact, organizational dignity is nothing more than a measurement construct, which represents the aggregation of many aspects of individually measured dignity. We should note that the same author conducted research confirming a strong relationship between organizational dignity and personal well-being (Teixeira et al., 2021).

The above presentation is just a selection of organizational models referring to dignity. In fact, every theory addressing values refers to dignity. A review of such models can be found in Cheng and Fleischmann (2010), Bal (2017), and Bolton (2007).

3.4 Critical Analysis of the Models

With an overview of all kinds of knowledge about dignity and attempts to formalize them in management science at the individual and organization level, we take a look at which aspects of dignity are captured above, which ones are not, and which crucial elements promoting dignity

should be present in evaluating organizational forms. By way of a critical analysis of the presented models, we extracted ten aspects of dignity that are necessary for a more complete conceptualization of dignity in management, as follows:

3.4.1 Elementary Aspects of Human Rights Coupled with Dignity

It is difficult to reconcile the recognition of human dignity with the facts that, according to the World Health Organization (WHO),⁶ 811 million people in the world are undernourished; two billion people still do not have basic sanitation facilities such as toilets or latrines.⁷ The list of unmet basic human needs is longer. Poverty and lack of sanitation is followed by economic neocolonial exploitation; illiteracy; racial, ethnic, sexual, and age discrimination; humiliation and religious persecution. Today, every company and every consumer, whether knowingly or not, operates in the global market and influences these statistics; but the temptation of low prices and large profit margins is usually strong, so we (un)consciously support the lack of respect for human dignity. Meeting the elementary human needs described in the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) or the European Convention on Human Rights (2021) is a ground level for any discussion of dignity. But we cannot resolve the debate concerning dignity on this basis alone. Although all presented management concepts accept universal human rights, few of the companies who declare abiding by them are prepared to inform their stakeholders to make them more aware of human dignity in their purchasing and investment decisions.

We contend that respecting human rights in the global business context should be the first criterion in evaluating an organization for the promotion of human dignity.

⁶ <https://www.who.int/news/item/12-07-2021-un-report-pandemic-year-marked-by-spike-in-world-hunger>.

⁷ <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/sanitation>.

3.4.2 Understanding and Protection of the Social, Political, and Economic Environment

Unlike sociological, psychological, or bioethical approaches, none of the management conceptualizations of dignity presented above account for the environment at large. Companies and their managers are legally, economically, and educationally pressured to assume those human rights conceptions of dignity that are the most popular, and perhaps the most acceptable for policymakers.

Klang (2014) and Kamir (2019) warn that popular social media platforms and services are not neutral in what they disseminate. Instead of stable knowledge (*episteme*) of the world and its perennial problems, people are influenced by ad hoc knowledge (*doxa*) which is based on the opinions of others (Dierksmeier, 2015). This also is true about self-knowledge and understanding of others (Hicks, 2018). The texts we usually read about dignity refer to the concept of dignity as individual human rights. The collective economic, social, and cultural rights that we mentioned before are progressively ignored (Morin, 2012).

Reliance on stable, universal knowledge of collective economic, social, and cultural processes, therefore, forms the second criterion in recognizing dignity in an organization.

3.4.3 Community Orientation vs Individualism (Selfism)

How, when, and by whom did it come about that nature, family, community, moral law and religion were changed in the Western mind from identity-giving, happiness-producing networks of meaning into their opposites— self-alienating, misery-inducing webs of oppression? How was the me-centered world formed? (Highfield, 2012, p. 18)

Many authors answer Highfield's question (e.g., Verhaeghe, 2014). It originated with (misconstruing) Kant, who contended that a human being is "free from all laws of nature, obedient only to those laws which he himself prescribes" (Morin, 2012, p. 182). His philosophy was the

foundation of the individualist tradition and practice of the Enlightenment, which misinterpreted human nature, sometimes against his intentions. In the nineteenth century, Marx ridiculed it as “Robinsonades” (Pirson, 2017). For him, social determination plays a fundamental role in personal conditions developing into common and general conditions (Henry, 2012). We already mentioned that our deep social nature as an element of dignity has been confirmed by all natural and social sciences. Unfortunately today, utilitarianist/individualist thinking has influenced the development of a subjective view of the good and has promoted our personal flourishing in this world as the exclusive human goal (Highfield, 2012).

The third element of dignity is the interpersonal, social, and collective nature of humans, which should be recognized in organizational practice.

3.4.4 Human Need for Participation

According to the theology of dignity, God invited the man to participate in the creation of the world. Secular humanism also considers participation as a vehicle for human development and growth. This ability and potential are essential elements of human dignity, and, undoubtedly, people encouraged by the competitive spirit of capitalism use this capability. However, in a capitalist organizational context, there are strict limitations on the extent to which worker participation and creativity can be engaged. Even in economic models, as described by Pirson, the employers encourage employees to be innovative to supersede the competition (Crowther & Gomez, 2012). But practically, lack of competence and lack of ownership limits the employees’ scope of participation (McGranahan, 2020). As a result, a universal inherent dignity becomes dignity conditioned by virtues and education. If we assume full participation (see Prokopowicz et al., 2008; Stocki et al., 2012) as an indispensable element of dignity, then the organizational model and practice should include educational efforts and governance that make participation real (Dierksmeier, 2015; Ober, 2014). Hicks’ model, which is oriented toward leaders, does not sufficiently recognize the nuances of participation. The humanistic model does so only partially.

We conclude that enabling unconditional full participation should be the fourth element of a dignity-oriented management practice.

3.4.5 Common Good and the Language of Competitive Market

Real competition⁸ (Shaikh, 2016) encourages exploitative behaviors, which destroy human dignity. However, it would be naive to think that free-market or ethical conduct would mediate the conflict between the rich and the poor (Crowther & Gomez, 2012). More importantly, neoliberal policies have redefined human rights to protect the current market order (Whyte, 2019). This new view of human dignity is reduced to the capacity to assert claims about different rights (Anderson, 2014). As a result, we have an expanding set of asserted human rights: the rights of privacy; the rights of children; the rights of criminals; and the rights of everyone to everything (Stetson, 1998). Behind every such right, there is a business opportunity and implicit assumption that the free market can resolve the situation better than the existing non-market institutions. Common good, guarded by common sense and simple cooperation, is not taken into consideration. With the successfully undermined reference point for real, as opposed to “free market” dignity, the future of dignity rests in organizations that declare, abide by, and are living examples of dignity in action. In such organizations, people have autonomy and the right to plan and control their future (Raz, 1979). Still, such autonomy cannot rest on ephemeral market forces, but rather must rest on stability based on values and shared access to knowledge, allowing responsible decision-making that accounts for the common good. Aside from Hicks’ model, the humanistic model also recognizes the common good and the interest of all stakeholders as an element of dignity, whereby shared and organizational wellbeing reflects its social character.

The fifth element of dignity is the concern for the common good and protecting the interests of all stakeholders.

⁸ Real competition assumes markets in which firms have market power (oligopoly, monopoly, etc.).

3.4.6 Transformation Through Altruism, Sacrifice, Suffering, and Courage

Pirson realizes that humans are social and moral beings ready for trust, forgiveness, altruism, and love (Pirson, 2017). Gomez and Crowther (2012) and Hicks (2018) remind us of the need for love in organizations. However, suffering and sacrifice are not positive elements of Pirson's theory. Like many others, he does not mention that the traditional value of dignity was defended in the Roman Empire by the martyrdom of some two million Christians (Moss, 2012). A similar prosecution in defense of dignity was present throughout history, as exemplified by the previously mentioned outstanding figures of non-violence movements throughout the twentieth century. In an organizational context, sometimes workers must risk their lives to defend their dignity. Workers' movements such as "Solidarity" in Poland (Staniszki, 2019), or the movement of *Empresas recuperadas* (recovered businesses) in Argentina (Rebón, 2005), are examples of this risk. There is also a whole list of company whistleblowers who, for the sake of the public good, risk their careers, family life, and sometimes life to defend the truth and human dignity in general (Lennane, 2012).

When we look at how the terms like *wants*, *needs*, and *rights* are used today, it can seem as if the era of corruption, exploitation, and abuse is over, and people do not know what to do with their "freedom" (Stetson, 1998). Meeting "wellbeing" needs and rights, according to this neoliberal logic, may look like something closer to securing a consumerist lifestyle than risking defending something vital. As a result, people feel resentment when confronted with the demands of traditional morality and faith, associating them with traditional politics (be they social democratic, socialist/communist, fascist, etc.), which operates as a potentially distinct source of identity and cooperation via political parties, labor unions, etc. This artificially created, me-centered, neoliberal self is afraid to lose its supposed "dignity" (Highfield, 2012). Defending civic dignity in a workplace requires courage, which should also be an element of management (Ober, 2014). Organizations should not be created to

protect the rights of one group at the cost of another. Instead, in a world where most people are members of an organization, these should be tools for transformative change. Unfortunately, this aspect is absent in all of the presented management models.

Considering the human search for meaning (Frankl, 1985), the ecosystem's purposefulness, and the worker's need for meaningful work (McGranahan, 2020), we should expect courageous and transformational leadership from organizations to make the world a better place. This is the sixth element of dignity in organizations.

3.4.7 The Possible Conflict Between Persons, if They Differ in Their Goals

In defending dignity, there are danger zones. This results from the arbitrariness of jurisdictional control, which does not have a stable basis (Morin, 2012). Even the most quoted dignity document—the Universal Declaration of Human Rights—has conflicting rights, as access to resources, especially property rights, may conflict with workers' rights and protection of the vulnerable from specific injustices (Anderson, 2014). Danger zones are places where maximization of welfare of one group of persons creates a loss of such welfare in another group. De Tocqueville saw the role of government to be to balance the rights of individuals in such a way that all are met to the extent possible (Crowther & Gomez, 2012). Mediation efforts are also a possibility, but they have greater chances of success if the power of individuals is similar (Crowther & Gomez, 2012), which is rarely the case in investor-owned organizational models. Finally, there is a virtue that may solve this issue over the conflict of rights—it is self-restraint, another uncommon virtue that, together with courage was traditionally the basis of dignity (Ober, 2014). In fact, out of all the presented models, the organizational dignity and humanistic management models share a multi-stakeholder (or network) governance approach that balances conflicting dignity interests, as a radical departure from power structures that are based on hierarchy and financial wealth.

As the seventh element of dignity, organizational practice should prioritize sharing power, solving conflicts, and striving for the common good for which persons are ready to constrain their own welfare.

3.4.8 Power Relations, Especially Those Related to Ownership

In the previous subsection, we mentioned the possibility of mediation if we have a conflict between sides of equal power. Unfortunately, it is rarely the case that all sides are equal. Varying access to information, capital, education, mobility, etc., makes our societies highly unequal. Moreover, private property rights over resources (the basis of the so-called “free market” economy) ensure the institutional protection of many inequalities (Lindemann, 2014). For Foucault, power has a relational character; it is also related to knowledge (Townlwy, 1993). We may say that no power can take our dignity away if we do not allow it to. The champions of dignity throughout history attest to this. Louback (2021) analyses discourses of dignity where stakeholders refuse to be governed. Still, some management and governance systems enable egalitarianism, while others dictatorship. In Open Book Management (OBM) companies (Case, 1996), or in worker cooperatives (Mill, 2012), the ownership is widely distributed among workers. This is complemented by much higher levels of business literacy. Other companies enable dictatorship; for instance, the strong lobbying influence of large corporations is an exercise of power that leads to legalized infringements on democracy, as decision-makers are under pressure from those who can afford to lobby (Morin, 2012). For example, pharmaceutical companies are the largest spenders on lobbying in recent years.⁹

Dignity practice should recognize power control systems in an organization, particularly the significance of ownership rights as a power tool (McGranahan, 2020), and calibrate decision-making rights and systems to avoid unfair and unequal bases for the resulting distribution of power, as the eighth element of dignity.

⁹ <https://www.investopedia.com/investing/which-industry-spends-most-lobbying-antm-so/>

3.4.9 Values

Many violations of human dignity are caused by conflict. Conflicts cannot be solved without courage, self-restraint, and education. These require agreement on a similar hierarchy of values. Workplaces, where people spend most of their time, are the places where dignity is practiced daily; therefore, the management's values and their concepts about dignity have a tremendous impact beyond the organization.

Dignity conceptualizations should result, at the organizational level, in a coupling of the intrinsic dignity values of freedom, love, care, responsibility, character, and ethics with the goals of wellbeing and common good that result from the Declaration of Human Rights. This relates the organization to the wider society and natural environment to protect all of its stakeholders.

3.4.10 No Regulator for the Global Market and International Corporations

When Adam Smith wrote *The Wealth of Nations* (Smith, [1776]2010), the free market experience he witnessed was radically different from what we face now (Chang, 2014). Then, the world was run by rich states which controlled the market. Apart from the East-India Company, the firms were relatively small. Today, global corporations more potent than most states, control the market. We already showed how human rights are transposed into consumer rights under global neoliberalism. In the absence of a global democratic government, the question is if any institutions can be conceived of to protect human dignity, which goes beyond the human rights rhetoric. Although not very successful, the United Nations tries to tackle this issue with programs promoting corporate social responsibility, such as the Global Compact (Crowther & Gomez, 2012). We have also mentioned the use of standards, tools, and frameworks in which dignity plays the central role, such as ISO26000 for social responsibility, as guidelines for integration of corporate social responsibility into organizational practices. We certainly need some global institutions that would recognize the dignity issues on an international level.

Some attempts toward this end are being made by The Trade Union Advisory Committee (TUAC)¹⁰ to the OECD and European Works Councils.¹¹ In 1997, The InterAction Council, consisting of political and religious leaders, proclaimed an alternative to declarations of rights—the Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities.¹² Apart from advancing this Declaration, the group started a discussion about a Universal Declaration of Human Obligations. We can find some versions of it in Humanistic texts.¹³ It was meant to establish a common ground for all major world religions. The Catholic Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace has issued a reflection entitled “Vocation of the Business Leader” (Naughton & Alford, 2012). Unfortunately, in common with previous documents, it does not address many of the issues we enumerated in this chapter. In the absence of satisfactory national and global institutions to protect human dignity, there exist independent citizens’ initiatives such as Corporate Watch¹⁴ or Fairtrade International,¹⁵ which try to address global and intergenerational dignity independently.

Management practice can benefit from an independent external body that can verify the protection of dignity of all its stakeholders. We consider the external control mechanism as the tenth element of dignity.

3.4.11 Summing up—Enumeration of the Ten Critical Aspects of Dignity

In this part of the chapter, we analyzed the following ten aspects of dignity resulting from our earlier discussions regarding kinds of knowledge and conceptions of dignity in different disciplines:

1. *Human rights coupled with dignity*—Recognizing human rights in the global context.

¹⁰ <https://tuac.org/about/>.

¹¹ <http://www.worker-participation.eu/European-Works-Councils>.

¹² <https://www.interactioncouncil.org/sites/default/files/udhr.pdf>.

¹³ <https://www.humanistictexts.org/undo.htm>.

¹⁴ <https://corporatewatch.org>.

¹⁵ <https://www.fairtrade.net/about>.

2. *Universal knowledge repository*—dignity in an organization should rely on stable, universal knowledge of collective economic, social, and cultural processes.
3. *Human social nature* recognized as an element of dignity.
4. *Universal participation*—unconditional full participation as an element of dignity.
5. *Universal common good*—common good and the interests of all stakeholders as an element of dignity.
6. *Transformation*—the organization's role to courageously make the world a better place.
7. *Self-constraint to avoid conflict*—solving conflicts and establishing a common good for which people are ready to constrain their welfare.
8. *Control of power*—installing power control systems in an organization.
9. *Values*—the organization's values through which it is vigilant to the social and natural environment to protect all of its stakeholders.
10. *External verification*—Organizations need an independent external body to verify the protection of dignity of all its stakeholders.

These ten aspects result from all forms of knowledge discussed earlier in the chapter. Aspects 7 and 4 result from experiential knowledge; aspects 5 and 9 result from presentational knowledge; aspects 1, 3, 6, and 8 result from propositional knowledge; and, finally, aspects 2 and 10 result from practical knowledge.

This list is certainly not exhaustive in regard to the aspects of dignity that could be drawn from our introductory analyses of kinds and disciplines of knowledge. Instead, we have chosen ten elements that are most relevant for organizational practices.

3.5 Different Organizational Forms and the Ten Aspects of Dignity

To clarify how we can use the ten aspects of dignity in managerial practice, we selected four business legal forms to explore how they can enact dignity in their daily operations. The four forms are family firms, limited

liability companies, public companies, and cooperatives. Let us briefly overview the peculiarities of these four forms of enterprise.

A. Private enterprises and family firms. These are the oldest and most frequent forms of business; they are usually small in size but most numerous. Legally all the owners' possessions are a liability. The few owners are identifiable and influential, and capital and legal issues are less critical than psychological and social aspects of their functioning in power relations and action. As family ownership is a complex phenomenon, there are immense differences between firms in their governance and the role of non-family employees. The main features are a focus on long-term endurance, lack of a shareholder value logic, loyalty, and identification with family values (Brundin et al., 2008).

B. Private limited liability companies. These are capital investor companies, where liability is limited to the specific capital gathered by a group of investors. Power is distributed according to the rule: "one dollar, one vote". These companies are profit-driven with slight differences in corporate governance between the Anglo-American model, which gives priority to shareholders, and the continental European and Japanese models, which also recognize the interests of other stakeholders (Crowther & Gomez, 2012). These are relatively small companies with non-anonymous shareholders. That is why from an investment and time horizon perspective, they have some features in common with family companies.

C. Public joint-stock companies. When a private limited liability company offers its shares to the general public and is available in the stock market, it becomes a public company. Power relations change because the company must generate profit for its anonymous shareholders who take no responsibility for its actions. The stock market logic is concentrated on short-term profit, which is carefully analyzed based on quarterly reports by stock market analysts and financial journalists. Governance is reduced to a game between major stock owners and top management who change coalitions and strategies to make their companies bigger and more prosperous through mergers and acquisitions. Huge public relations departments and numerous lawyers ensure that potentially damaging information about the company does not permeate to the general public, as it may influence its stock value.

D. Cooperatives. These companies are created to meet the economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations of their members. It means that profit is not maximized as in investor companies but balanced to account for other needs and stakeholders. Participation in governance by all members is secured through the rule “one member, one vote” regardless of the level of investment by particular members. What differentiates co-ops from all other companies discussed above is a set of cooperative values and principles, which act as ethical and practical guidelines for co-op members and leaders, including democratic governance. The members are expected to adhere to values of *honesty, openness, social responsibility, and caring for others*. In addition, the co-ops should abide by the values of *self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity, and solidarity*. These ten values are translated into seven action principles that are practical rules for running a co-operative.¹⁶ Cooperatives create a network of federations and associations that help them to implement these values and principles (Novkovic, 2006).

We must realize that those pure legal forms are often mixed to create an enormous array of possibilities. For instance, many family companies with major family shareholders decide to become public and sell part of their shares on the stock market. On the other hand, governance of some large consumer co-ops is practically reduced to an elite of members and management. Small limited liability companies may create larger corporations, etc. Still, in the discussion of dignity, it is worth seeing what challenges each enterprise form has to meet (Table 3.1).

In liberal thought, firms exist to make it more efficient for individuals to pursue their self-interests (Crowther & Gomez, 2012). In this sense, all four types of companies recognize individual wellbeing as an element of dignity following the most common logic of human rights. Below, we propose a short description of each kind of enterprise regarding the ten aspects of dignity.

¹⁶ <https://www.ica.coop/en/cooperatives/cooperative-identity>.

Table 3.1 Recognition of ten dignity aspects for four kinds of enterprises

Aspect of dignity	Family companies	Limited liability companies	Public companies	Cooperatives
Human rights coupled with dignity	✓	✓	✓	✓
Universal knowledge repository	–	✓	✓	✓
Human social nature	✓	–	–	✓
Universal participation	–	–	–	✓
Universal common good	–	–	–	✓
Transformation	–	–	–	✓
Self-constraint to avoid conflict	✓	–	–	✓
Control of power	✓	✓	–	✓
Values	✓	✓	✓	✓
External verification	–	–	✓	–

3.5.1 Family Companies

Family companies are no exception to pursuit of self-interests (according to liberal thought), although we can speak of a broadened self, which includes family members. However, these businesses go beyond liberal thinking. Family companies certainly are much more solidaristic than liberals might recognize. First, there are significant cultural differences between family companies worldwide, so they do not refer to any universal repository of knowledge. Relationships are crucial for their effectiveness, and natural family communication processes shape them. Usually, only the family members participate in the decision-making. Second, these companies place a priority on the family's common good, so an appeal to the universal common good may occur but is likely secondary to that of the family interest. As this is the oldest form of enterprise, they would instead return to an honor-based society, where dignitaries (here family members) have duties to their inferiors (employees)

—according to the principle *noblesse oblige* (Anderson, 2014). This social service would be an element of the dignity of the owner's family, but compliance of the employees would also be an element of their dignity. This is nothing more than perceiving dignity from the Enlightened Economism point of view. There is no prescribed commitment to societal transformation, thus a family business can be a leader or laggard in this regard. Examples of many family companies show that family members are ready to constrain their self-interest to protect the interests of the family business. The decision-making power is controlled by the family hierarchy rather than by capital or merit, so a restricted number of family members with opposing interests makes the companies vigilant to changes in the world. So far, no external institution certifies their conduct, although they create associations for defending their interests and for exchange of experience and knowledge.

Summing up, dignity is an essential aspect of family businesses, and it goes beyond self-interest and wellbeing. Family values, reciprocal loyalty, and respect of the family and the employees make this form exceptional. Yet this identity lacks joint participation, assurances of universal common good, as well as any commitment to make the world a better place.

3.5.2 Limited Liability Companies

Beyond the ordinary view of dignity as wellbeing, humanistic management scholars see Kantian human-oriented dignity involving freedom, love, care, responsibility, character, and ethics as aligning with business goals (Gomez & Patino, 2012; Pirson, 2017). Unfortunately, this is true only from a long-term perspective, while limited liability companies and public companies are focused on the short-term perspective of rewarding investors with profits. This recalls Friedman's famous statement that the "social responsibility of a business is to increase its profits". So, in practice, business performance and human dignity are rarely compatible (Morin, 2012). The traditional Master in Business Administration (MBA) curriculum could be considered a good approximation of the universal knowledge repository for limited liability companies, with an

abundance of case studies and a network of business schools worldwide. Relational practices have been managed in the domain of human resource management (HRM). Even the name of the discipline indicates that human beings are considered mainly as commodities in this approach (Crowther & Gomez, 2012). As long as investors' capital plays a crucial role and is the link with control and power, there is no possibility of universal participation as an element of dignity. Still, for the motivational benefits, there are attempts to introduce the involvement of employees in governance (Laloux, 2014) and decision-making, and to broaden employee ownership, as is the case of employee stock ownership plans (ESOPs).

Under utilitarianism, any means of achieving profit for the investors was seen as acceptable until quite recently (Gomez & Patino, 2012). Only lately, have we been witnessing some greater concern for a business's supply chain. Exploitation, child labor, and sweatshops are common among limited liability companies operating in poorer countries that supply to huge international firms all around the world (Crowther & Gomez, 2012). Therefore, we can hardly speak of the universal common good or an attempt to transform the world as an inherent characteristic of this business model. Self-constraint is forced on the companies by still fragile consumers' and workers' movements and institutions such as Fair Trade or the International Labour Organization (ILO). Where possible, trade unions organize to temper the power of capital, although they have been on the decline since the 1980s marking the peak of neoliberalism. The companies are exposed to brutal competition, so they have to be very vigilant. So far, there has been no effective way to control the conduct of these companies (Dibra, 2016). The existing regulators focus on the local market, while capital mobility is global, so control of corporations operating in global markets is a challenge (Crowther & Gomez, 2012).

Summing up: dignity is an unwanted disturbance in LLC businesses. If employees' dignity is recognized, it is done so instrumentally as an element of Human Resources (HR) policy, with the primary goal to increase profits. Recognition of dignity is either forced by international movements and institutions or is part of some public relations strategy.

3.5.3 Public Companies

Publicly traded companies share most of the weaknesses of limited liability companies. But there are some significant differences we would like to point out in this overview.

First, there are two critical differences regarding power relations. One is the companies' lack of a risk-reward relationship, which leads to irresponsible corporate behavior and arguably to a loss of dignity (Crowther & Gomez, 2012). There are too many vested interests related to public companies and their managers, so they practically cannot fail. Their preservation is illustrated by stories of companies like Union Carbide, Enron, Monsanto, Pfizer, Nestle, Toyota, and Volkswagen whose management rarely suffer serious consequences in spite of many possible victims of their malpractice (e.g. Arnold et al., 2020; Moorhead, 2007; Vlasic & Apuzzo, 2014). The second difference between public and non-public investor-owned companies is that, through incentive schemes, between five and ten percent of the average corporation is owned by its executives regardless of the financial results of the company (Crowther & Gomez, 2012). As one author observed, some companies have apparently become "Too big to fail" (LePatner, 2010). The idea of the common good is also difficult to realize because these companies see people as their commercial targets (i.e. primarily as customers) (Gomez & Patino, 2012). As consistently argued in this chapter, by making human beings objects, they deprive them of their dignity and change the world but for the worse, and not for the better. The reason for self-restraint on the part of these companies is the pressures emanating from the stock market, but also activist investors, progressive initiatives (e.g. Global Compact), various global standards and disclosure requirements, or media, which are external, though relatively weak, evaluator of their activity. To distinguish themselves from the rest of the corporate world, some corporations resort to various programs and indices verifying their ethics and social responsibility, e.g., FTSE4Good Index, Dow Jones Sustainability Index, Corporate Responsibility Index, Wilderhill Clean Energy Index, Dow Jones Islamic Market World Index, Stoxx Europe Christian Index, Respect Index, and others. While "stakeholder capitalism" is on the rise as illustrated by increasing attention on

impact investing, ESG frameworks and measures (environmental, social, governance), and B Corporations, evidence points to the continued dominance of the investor focus in corporate practices to the detriment of social concerns and wellbeing (Bakan, 2020; Johnson, 2021).

Summing up: although public companies share the features of LLCs, the scale of their operation and lobbying possibilities leaves many of them unpunished in spite of violating the dignity of their suppliers, customers, and employees. Investors' drive for profit makes many corporate social/environmental responsibility efforts and programs ineffective in general.

3.5.4 Cooperatives

Cooperatives, in their approach to wellbeing, go beyond material aspects. The very definition of a cooperative includes economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations of members (ICA, 1995), treated really as the primary, qualitative objective of business (Dierksmeier, 2015). So, by definition, they recognize human social nature. Cooperatives balance (1) the ability to gain a livelihood for oneself and family, (2) self-respect, and (3) socially responsible individual contribution (Ponce, 2012), thereby aiming for universal common good. In their control of power, cooperatives implement the dignity concept that many authors only assume in theory (Miller & Telles, 1974; Pirson, 2017; Ponce, 2012). This concept goes much further than the logic of individual rights, in that it also includes the capacity for collective processes and practices of self-management, participation, and equity—that is, the aspect of universal participation.

The cooperative universal knowledge repository is recorded in the set of values enumerated previously, and in the seven cooperative principles. Co-ops also frequently refer to their historical tradition and practice all around the world. Unfortunately, cooperative business education is not as popular as MBA programs. But, unlike in other forms of business, there is a strong tendency in cooperatives to organize internal forms of education for their members, which is strengthened by the *Cooperative Principle 5—Education, training, and information*. Many

cooperative values refer to the quality of social relationships in the co-ops (particularly values—*honesty, openness, and caring for others*). *Principle 6—Cooperation among cooperatives* encourages the building of relationships and creating networks with other co-ops. This allows the spreading of good dignity practices in cooperatives.

With the principles of *1—Voluntary and Open Membership*, *2—Democratic Member Control*, and *3—Member Economic Participation*, cooperatives practice stakeholder democracy (Dierksmeier, 2015). The principles assure active participation and, where difficult, at least the passive representation of all concerned in questions of strategy and governance (as postulated for dignity by Dierksmeier, 2015; Evan & Freeman, 1988). Democratic member control (one person, one vote) allows for the bottom-up control of power, and for the recognition of dignity related to this. In multistakeholder cooperatives, control is exercised not by one, but by two or more distinct types of co-op member (Novkovic, 2019). Many cooperative values and principles, but particularly the value of *solidarity* and *Principle 7—Concern for Community*, ensure that co-ops and their members are oriented toward the common good. This is what proponents of humanistic management (Pirson, 2017) and of the broadened dignity concept (Crowther & Gomez, 2012) call for businesses to do.

Co-ops are most successful in the poorest areas of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. They are also helping regions abandoned by global companies, as in Argentina and the USA (e.g. Detroit). So they practice altruistic behavior which is necessary for real dignity, as postulated by Crowther and Gomez (2012), and the environmental consciousness proposed by Gomez and Patino (2012).

Co-ops are exceptional in recommending to their members a set of values that are the guidelines and recipes for both individual and collective self-constraint and problem-solving. The members who understand these recommendations can complain if a conflict arises from violating them. As a result, co-ops may more easily become “virtuous organizations” (Gomez & Patino, 2012). Vigilance is a strength of cooperatives.

Many tools exist that can verify adherence to the cooperative values and principles. Yet, except for verification of the legal and administrative data in the application to incorporate or apply for a cooperative association membership, there is no international standard or procedure by which to objectively verify cooperatives' alignment with the cooperative values and principles. Some limited attempts to certify cooperatives for adherence to the principles have been made in Latin America (see Marino, 2015), but it is not widespread. Although many organizations claim the "cooperative" label, they do not always adhere to the high standards of the formal movement, established by its founders in the nineteenth century and updated several times since.

As was shown by Michie et al. (2017), there is a renewed interest in cooperatives following periods of widespread corporate failure. A recent report confirms that during the Covid-19 crisis, not only did the cooperative world survive, but many co-ops in Europe increased their sales (The World Cooperative Monitor, 2020).

Summing up: co-operatives, unlike any previous business form discussed, fulfill all ten critical aspects of dignity. Yet, perhaps their specificity in a concrete cultural context and their independence make universal, external verification difficult, and hence this is the weakest of all the dignity aspects for cooperatives.

3.6 Conclusions

We began this chapter with a discussion of the universal character of human dignity. We referred to four kinds of knowing to show how dignity is not simply another philosophical concept, but a crucial element of our daily experience and culture. We showed how referring to all kinds of knowing, and not only to propositional knowledge enriches our understanding of dignity. With this multidimensional knowledge of dignity, we delved into the treatment of dignity by various academic disciplines. Relying on a single discipline may flatten the complexity of the concept of dignity, and we therefore argue that only a trans-disciplinary approach can grasp its essence. Subsequently, we described several models of dignity that are proposed in management studies and

analyzed them from the perspective of the different forms of knowledge presented before. In a critical analysis regarding all kinds of knowledge and management models, we extracted ten aspects that are necessary for a proper conceptualization of dignity in organizations. Finally, we selected the four most popular legal forms of private enterprise and analyzed to what extent they respond to the ten aspects of dignity. We found that cooperatives respond to nine out of ten aspects, the highest score of any of the studied business forms.

Interestingly, many authors quoted in this chapter on dignity do not even mention cooperatives. The cooperative model has vanished from most standard economics texts (Kalmi, 2007), as from the minds of management theorists and practitioners. With the renewed interest in cooperatives of late (Michie et al., 2017), we urgently need a cooperative theory of dignity, encompassing all its aspects and enabling the promotion of cooperatives as the best business organizations in recognizing and promoting human dignity.

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